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Faith and Justice in the Era of Trump: Part II

The divisive election campaign of Donald J. Trump, his policy proposals, his election as president of the United States, and his appointments to senior administrative posts have greatly alarmed those committed to faith and justice. Consequently, *The Ecumenist* asked a number of scholars to provide for the Winter 2017 issue a brief theological or ethical reflection on Trump's election and its consequences for American society and the global community. Despite the tight deadlines, the response was overwhelming. Consequently, *The Ecumenist* was able to publish only five of these reflections in the Winter issue, and moved the rest to the Spring issue. These reflections address topics such as Islamophobia, interfaith dialogue, gender, ecology, neo-liberalism, and the future of civil discourse in public life. *The Ecumenist* is grateful to these contributors for their generosity and passionate commitment to justice, human dignity, and the common good.—Don Schweitzer, editor, *The Ecumenist*

The People Who Voted for Trump

By Gregory Baum

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It is difficult to analyze the reasons for the unexpected election of Donald Trump as president of the United States. What has taken place, it would seem, was an interplay and convergence of several currents of opinion.

Three currents

It seems that the Christian religion had something to do with Trump's electoral victory. According to the

Pew Research Center, voting for Trump were 58% of Protestants, 60% of white Catholics, and 81% of white born-again Christians, a dramatic contrast with the low support for Trump by 26% of Hispanic Catholics, 24% of Jews, 29% of believers in other religions, and 26% of non-believers.¹ The progressive social teaching of the Christian churches had comparatively little influence upon their members. Nor did white Catholics listen to the voice of Pope Francis. The voting pattern shows that a significant motive for supporting the Trump campaign was the nostalgia of pious Christians for the white, churchgoing America of the past, now threatened by the unbelief of the educated classes and the foreign religions brought by recent immigrants.

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A number of commentators argue that intolerance, xenophobia, and racism had something to do with the election of Donald Trump. As evidence, they point to the drastic increase of hate crimes in the US in 2015.² In Britain, in the period before and after the Brexit referendum, incidents of anti-Muslim hatred increased by more than 300 percent.³ The link between these two events is made in the article “Brexit, Trump and Hate Crime: What Does the Data Tell Us?” published in *Euronews* eight days after the election.⁴

A very different analysis shows more respect for the suffering of the people. The decline of industrial America has produced insecurity, loss of income, and often want among workers, employees, and owners of small businesses. Indeed, as I was writing this article, David Seljak, editor of the *Ecumenist*, alerted me to a recent study by economists Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, and Gabriel Zucman that shows that while the American economy has more than doubled in the last 35 years, half of the population has been completely shut out from the benefits of this growth. Even after taxes and transfers, some 117 million Americans have experienced very close to zero economic growth since the 1970s.⁵ Shifting industrial production to parts of the Third World, increasing the automation of factories at home, closing coal mines because they contribute to climate change, and streamlining the bureaucracies of large organizations, public and private, are among the policies that created unemployment, obliged people to accept low-paying jobs below their competence, and produced a sense of insecurity among people who are still employed. Present-day neoliberal capitalism, moreover, enables the giant corporations to compete with and eliminate small and medium-sized companies, a phenomenon that produces anxiety and fear even among the middle classes.

When the causes of economic anxieties are not correctly analyzed, troubled people are tempted to look for scapegoats to blame for their plight, such as women, immigrants, Muslims, or Jews. Bernie Sanders offered an analysis of America’s economic decline and proposed a number of urgent remedies, proposals to which Hillary Clinton foolishly turned a deaf ear. Donald Trump recognized people’s suffering, and yet he offered no analysis of it; all he promised was to “make America great again.” His disrespectful remarks about women, refugees, immigrants, Muslims, and undocumented migrants appeared to encourage the search for scapegoats to blame for present-day suffering,

These three different analyses of Donald Trump’s election victory—the nostalgia of pious Christians, xenophobia and intolerance, and the economic decline triggered by neoliberal capitalism—may all be true at the same time. They designate different currents that interact in the creation of public opinion.

Reacting to Trump’s victory

Some people opposed to Trump’s political discourse and his vision of America denounce the people who elected him as intolerant, racist, anti-immigrant, or even as agents of white supremacy. Rabbi Michael Lerner, the founder of the Network of Spiritual Progressives and *Tikkun* magazine, warns against this rhetoric of contempt.⁶ Such accusations, he argues, show no respect for the suffering of the people and pay no attention to the economic conditions that make people fearful, narrow, and angry. Shaming the supporters of Trump, Lerner believes, is wrong because these people already believe themselves to be despised by the intellectual elites, the news media, and other agents of politically correct public discourse. And pious Christians, the rabbi adds, are disturbed by the secularism of progressive political leaders, who are unwilling to articulate their ethical values and unable to acknowledge any spiritual concern. Lerner recommends respectful dialogue with the supporters of Trump, exposing them to considerations they have overlooked. Moreover, he wants progressive political leaders to adopt a public discourse that respects the religious beliefs and values that prompt some people to struggle for social justice and promote human rights.

Following the same logic, progressive Christians should intensify their dialogue with conservative members of their church, read the Scriptures with them, and wait to be addressed by God’s word. Catholic bishops should communicate more effectively to the parishes the Church’s social teaching and the recent appeal of Pope Francis.

When Hitler became chancellor of Germany in January 1933, some outstanding theologians, Protestant and Catholic, proposed that what was needed was not rejection and denunciation, but greater openness to the world, attention to people’s suffering, and the search for the hidden truth in the ideas of national socialism. This was undoubtedly a grave mistake, which many of them discovered a few years later. Yet I am convinced that the American situation of 2016 is in no way a parallel to the German situation of 1933. America is protected by its constitution, venerated by the people for over two

centuries, even if occasionally disregarded by government, while the democratic constitution of Germany was instituted only in 1919, was not supported by a substantial minority of Germans, and even provided legal mechanisms for making it ineffective. Because there is no parallel, I am persuaded by Rabbi Lerner's reasoning behind calling for a change in the discourse of progressive leaders and sustained dialogue with the supporters of Donald Trump.

Naomi Klein also respects the people in a wide sector of society. She says, "Economic pain is real and not going anywhere—four decades of corporate, neoliberal policies and privatization, deregulation, free trade, and austerity have made sure of that."⁷ But she does not give up on the people who voted for Trump. She thinks that if there was a political party with bold and genuinely redistributive economic policies, many Trump supporters would vote for it.

Within the churches, I believe, a greater effort should be made to acquaint members with the ecclesiastical teaching on social justice. The Catholic bishops have known how to communicate their teaching on abortion and homosexuality to the faithful, but they have not made the same effort to teach them the social doctrine of the Church. In his exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* of 2013, Francis has criticized putting the main emphasis on issues of personal ethics to the exclusion of consideration of social justice (nos. 34, 35). He now wants the focal thrust of Christian ethics to respond to the present ecological crisis, analyzed in his encyclical *Laudato si'*, as including other social crises, a tormenting social process causing great suffering for a growing sector of humanity and threatening our entire civilization. When the US bishops' conference met in Baltimore in November 2016, the bishops declared their solidarity with legal and undocumented immigrants against Donald Trump's threatening remarks, but kept their pastoral policy focused on marriage, health, and sex-related issues. Archbishop Joseph Tobin, appointed cardinal on November 19, 2016, expressed his regret that the bishops had not included the ecological crisis among their principal concerns. According to a report in the French Catholic newspaper *La Croix*, the American bishops did not elect bishops in favour of Pope Francis' pastoral approach to positions of leadership.⁸ Religion is both part of the problem and part of the solution.

1 "How the Faithful Voted: Preliminary 2016 Analysis," Pew Research Center, Nov. 9, 2016. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis/>

2 Eric Lichtblau, "U.S. Hate Crimes Surge 6%, Fueled by Attacks on Muslims," *New York Times*, Nov. 14, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/15/us/politics/fbi-hate-crimes-muslims.html/>

3 Dan Bilefsky, "As Migrants Face Abuse, Fear That 'Brexit' Has Given License to Xenophobia," *New York Times*, June 27, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/28/world/europe/as-migrants-face-abuse-fear-that-brexit-has-given-license-to-xenophobia.html/>

4 <http://www.euronews.com/2016/11/16/brexit-trump-and-hate-crime-what-are-the-facts/>

5 Patricia Cohen, "A Bigger Economic Pie, but a Smaller Slice for Half of the U.S.," *New York Times*, Dec. 6, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/06/business/economy/a-bigger-economic-pie-but-a-smaller-slice-for-half-of-the-us.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=second-column-region®ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news/>

6 Michael Lerner, "Shaming Whites and Men Has Backfired." Nov. 11, 2016. <http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/shaming-whites-and-men-has-backfired/>

7 <http://www.commondreams.org/news/2016/11/11/naomi-klein-delivers-sydney-peace-prize-lecture-against-backdrop-trump-win/>

8 Céline Hoyau, "Les évêques américains se posent en garde-fous de Trump," *La Croix*, Nov. 16, 2016.

Interfaith Dialogue, Trump, and Religious Intolerance

By Leo D. Lefebure

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As a candidate during the presidential campaign, Donald Trump repeatedly employed inflammatory rhetoric to stir up strong emotions. For example, he cast doubt on the loyalty of Muslims in the United States, demanding that American Muslims register in a national database and calling for a ban on all Muslims entering the United States "until we can figure out what's going on." During the heated campaign, Trump made many statements that presented falsehoods and innuendos, played upon prejudices, evoked a sense of grievance, and incited vehement anger toward his perceived foes. He blamed immigrants from Latin America for alleged criminal activity and economic harm to the United States, made offensive comments about women, attacked members of the press, and charged China with responsibility for America's shifting economic situation, especially the loss of manufacturing jobs. In the wake of Trump's infamous Twitter attacks, some of his followers threatened physical violence toward his critics. As a result, Fox News journalist Megyn Kelly required bodyguards. In the aftermath of the election, many Americans fear that Trump's rhetoric and the decisions of the upcoming Trump administration will seriously damage the social fabric of American life. American re-

ligious leaders, many of whom have worked for years to shape better interreligious relationships in an often challenging climate of opinion, now face difficult choices in responding to the heated rhetoric.

Trump appealed to strong feelings of discontent over where the United States is heading and promised to restore an earlier era of alleged greatness. However, earlier eras involved systematic racial discrimination, and Trump's rhetoric revived memories of white supremacy. Trump openly questioned the competence and fairness of a judge of Mexican descent simply because of the person's ancestry. Some of Trump's comments were welcomed by white nationalist groups as supporting their agenda of establishing a white, racist America, and Trump's heated rhetoric has incited expressions of white nationalist enthusiasm that have not appeared so boldly and openly in the public arena for many years. The appointment of Stephen Bannon as chief strategist and senior counselor to President Trump is cause for concern; Bannon earlier led the alt-right news outlet Breitbart, which propagated falsehoods, conspiracy theories, as well as racist, Islamophobic, and anti-Semitic perspectives. Conspiracy theories propagated by right-wing groups have already led people to take action. On Sunday, December 4, Edgar Maddison Welch went into a pizzeria in Washington, DC, with a gun, searching for an alleged ring of pedophiles, which alt-right news sources led him to believe were associated with former Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. He fired his weapon in his attempt to find proof of the alleged conspiracy. Religious views appear to have played a role in his belief system; Welch's Facebook page expressed concern for the End of Days and the Second Coming of Christ. In an atmosphere where "fake news" abounds, Trump and some of his advisers, including Stephen Bannon, seem to have little regard for accuracy of public statements. It will be of the highest importance to hold officials in the Trump administration to the highest standards of honesty and decency.

Much of the power of Trump's rhetoric comes from his skillful targeting of particular groups as scapegoats. Scapegoating is one of the most powerful dynamics in social life, and it is not new to American life. René Girard's analysis of mimetic rivalry, the surrogate victim mechanism, and Christian revelation stresses how humans repeatedly shape societies around the need for scapegoats. One of the oldest and most powerful ways to gain support is to channel animosities toward individuals or groups who are perceived as the source of the

community's problems. By placing the blame on those perceived as marginal, as outsiders, communities purchase, for a time, a fragile sense of identity and security. Girard interprets biblical revelation as the progressive unmasking of the scapegoat mechanism as God repeatedly takes the side of victims and, in the person of Jesus Christ, dies a violent death in a violent world, unmasking the falsity of the dominant powers. Various religious traditions possess resources for critiquing and rejecting the temptations of the scapegoat mechanism and shaping healthy communities based on respect.

While the inflammatory rhetoric of Trump was unprecedented in recent presidential campaigns, it drew upon a long-standing tradition of American prejudice against religious and ethnic minority groups deemed suspicious. Historically, some Americans have vehemently suspected the loyalty of Catholics, Jews, Mormons, Muslims, American Indians, as well as all immigrants from Asia and their descendants. While many claimed that Trump's proposed ban on Muslims entering the United States was unconstitutional, his demand evoked the precedent of the *Chinese Exclusion Act* of 1882, which banned all Chinese from entering the United States and barred them from US citizenship. This act was passed by the US Congress, signed by President Chester Arthur, and upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States; it was not repealed until 1943, when the United States was an ally fighting with the Chinese against the Japanese during the Second World War. One Trump supporter cited the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II as a precedent for Trump's plan for American Muslims today.

While the United States has a long history of ambivalence and ambiguity regarding interreligious relations, the nation was founded on the principles of the free exercise of religion and the prohibition of the establishment of any religion by the federal government. Especially in recent decades, much work has been done to reject the traditions of anti-Catholic, anti-Jewish, anti-Mormon, and anti-Muslim rhetoric and action. In response to Trump's incitement of interreligious animosity, many religious leaders in the United States have reached out to each other for cooperation and mutual support. After Trump announced that he would require Muslims in America to register with the government, some have spoken of a new "Muslim-Jewish alliance after Trump." Recalling that the Nazi regime in Germany required Jews to register, some American Jews stated that if registration were to be required, they would register, too. The

day after the election, the American Jewish Committee and the Islamic Society of North America announced the formation of the Muslim–Jewish Advisory Council, an advocacy group to fight bigotry in all its forms and to promote interreligious harmony and respect. In Houston, people from various religious traditions gathered at a mosque to offer interreligious support to the American Muslim community. In a time of ominous uncertainty, such steps and many others like them across the country give hope that religious leaders from many different traditions can come together to reaffirm the American heritage of respect for religious liberty and diversity.

Feminism, Fakery, and Fascism

By Heather Eaton

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Democratic political landscapes are becoming unstable. Many people believe that their elected liberal democracies have cast them aside; they feel left behind by neoliberal economic and governing systems that concentrate wealth and power in the hands of a few. Terrorism dominates the headlines. Countless people are on the move, seeking refuge in Euro-Western countries. Meanwhile, these countries watch, and are implicated in, the calculated devastation of Syria and elsewhere. Intolerance and anti-immigration sentiments are growing, as are a host of anti-gay, anti-Muslim, anti-black, and anti-feminist sentiments, along with what Chris Hedges terms “the anti-politics that define the corporate state.”¹ We see a growing cultural, racial, and ethnic nativism and xenophobia throughout Europe, Australia, and North America.² In addition, the fake-news and post-truth era is firmly established; misinformation, advertising, beliefs, and opinions fuse and dominate the information age. Empirical confirmation is extraneous to public debates.

Enter Donald Trump. It is trendy to single out Trump and berate his vagaries and vulgarities. I believe he is a product and producer of (as well as a player in) these shifting political landscapes. Of the unlimited possible cogitations about this man, my comments have a feminist focus.

Trump’s misogynist views are apparent. His ownership of the beauty pageants Miss USA and Miss Universe is the tip of a massive iceberg. There is a long list, over decades, of offensive interactions and comments. The manner in which Trump interrupted, criticized, insulted,

and patronized Hillary Clinton is on a continuum with his statements about particular women being bimbos, fat, pigs, dogs, slobs, and disgusting animals. Women should not breastfeed in public and should be punished for having abortions, he claims. The litany of sexual comments, along with the 12 pending sexual assault claims, is still only the visible part of the iceberg.³

Trump’s views and comments about women are shocking. Perhaps it is not surprising that he and other men in similar dominions hold such views. He prides himself on being forthright, telling it “like it is” as a refreshing form of public honesty. What is shocking is his insolence in proclaiming these views in public. It is worrisome that Trump will be one of the most powerful and influential political leaders of the world.

As a political leader, his views and style are intensely problematic in several ways. One is that he holds racist, sexist, homophobic, and xenophobic views, and aligns himself with white male supremacist clans. A second is that, as president, he has a public platform to express, endorse, or fail to oppose these positions. Third, Trump is a bully. He is what Oswald Spengler calls a “monied thug.”⁴ He scorns people he assumes to be weaker than himself. A fourth problem is that Trump has been part of a super-rich, elite world where he gets, says, and buys what he wants. He brags about avoiding taxes or profiting from the financial compensation from hurricane Katrina. Fifth, he persuaded swaths of the American public—through distortion, fabrication, and emotional rhetoric—that he represents the interests of the working poor and those who are under- or unemployed. Trump’s stance on women and gender are part of this larger package.

Corporate America and Fortune 500 companies now have progressive gender policies. Over the past decades, publicly traded companies have had to develop and act upon sexual harassment policies. While these policies are not effective at all levels, any leader, or even middle manager, cannot talk the way Trump does and keep their job. The same is true in government departments. Such people would be terminated for harassment.

While the focus on Trump and his improprieties is warranted, I fear it ignores the more potent social dynamics determining the tenor and force of political norms and government. For example, in Canada and many Euro-Western societies, gender equality—at least in opportunity—is reputed to be obtained. Yet while much has been gained for some women in some contexts, these gains overall are minimal and unstable.

Furthermore, there is little widespread understanding of and concern for gender inequality and injustice. From a feminist perspective, it is startling to see the extent of the irrelevancy of gender in contemporary political discourse.

Although terrorism and national security dominate political discourses, domestic violence—intimate terrorism—in Canada should be seen as a national security issue and constant threat. Every six days, a woman is murdered in Canada. Matthew Behrens writes that “the single greatest threat to the national security of over half of the country’s population is male violence against women.”⁵ Violence against women is on a continuum that spans from beauty pageants and sexist comments to assault and murder.

The impetus and goals of the women’s movement and ongoing feminist analyses are threefold. One is to acquire equity, equality, and autonomy for women. Two is to understand and eliminate the systematic, albeit variant, oppression of women. To transform this ubiquitous domination of women requires in-depth analysis of how such oppression is sustained by cultural, structural, and symbolic systems. Three is to stop the widespread violence against women. The tenacious and global oppression of women is the most prevalent human rights abuse. Although progress has been made in each of the goals mentioned, it is not nearly enough, and losses have occurred.⁶

And along comes Trump. But he is not alone. Enough people voted for him to indicate they agree with his views, trust his promises, or hope to be seen on the political landscape. It must be noted that millions of women voted for Trump, and evidently their views resonate enough with his orientation. Elsewhere in the world, populist uprisings challenge liberal democracies with anger, frustration, and a rejection of elitist politics. This has left gaps for Trump, and others, to seize the political space. A hard right is coalescing with demagogues such as Vladimir Putin in Russia, Victor Orban in Hungary, Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, Matteo Salvini in Italy, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, Marine Le Pen in France, Nigel Farage in the UK, and to some extent Stephen Harper and Kelly Leitch here in Canada.

It is worth considering how quiet the religious voices have been in response to Trump. While the American Christian right is vocal about, and somewhat divided on, supporting Trump, it is the lack of public presence from progressive religious voices that is disturbing. There was no coordinated analysis, media presence, public

confrontation of Trump’s views, or scrutiny of the risk to society he will pose as president. Undoubtedly, many religious adherents were involved in civic protests. However, there are few discernible voices from any religious community or multi-religious groups addressing the issues of social ethics, political and private power, democracy, human rights, the plight of marginalized people, ecological protection, climate change, economic injustices, or any other customary concerns of progressive religious commitments. This disjuncture between socially engaged progressive religions, political engagement, and democracy is stark.

From a broader perspective, where is there an alliance between progressive religious and political efforts? Where is the political left? What are their projects? And where is their public presence? Some would suggest that the political left is in disarray because of concentrated corporate economic power, which has severely debilitated democracy. It seems that progressive social and religious movements are no longer active political projects; they are unable to articulate a vision. According to political philosopher Michael Sandel, the frailty and absence of viable leftist political projects is of great concern. They have not been able to foster an attractive alternative to the current demise of democracy. Others suggest that the prevailing concern for politics of difference, identity, and recognition hampers a politically effective cultural left.⁷

Unless there is a sustained focus on the systematic and multifaceted oppression of women and gender injustice, women will lose rights. The media circus combination of Donald Trump’s flippant misogyny and the faux feminists of celebrity culture (such as Angelina Jolie, Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, Lena Dunham, and Tina Fey)⁸ make public discussion about feminism, gender, and women’s rights almost impossible. “Feminism” is being invaded by celebrities in pop culture who claim to be feminists—although they seem to know little to nothing about the meanings and movements of feminism—and they manipulate their interpretations of the term for personal gain and social status. It is not just a question of the absence of religious voices on the political and media landscapes. It may be that the public space for social critiques, feminist evaluations, and conventional leftist analyses and resistance is closed. The result seems to be a political, moral, religious, and intellectual vacuum.

The only way forward is revolt.⁹ This social vacuum must be filled with social resistance and a coordinated commitment to economic, social, ecological, and gender

justice. As we all enter the era of the Trump dystopia, a way forward must be forged anew. Religious voices must be partners in this revolt and in new pathways for constructive social transformations.

1 Chris Hedges, "We Are All Deplorables," Nov. 20, 2016, http://www.truthdig.com/report/page2/we_are_all_deplorables_20161120/

2 George Monbiot, "The Golden Arches Theory of Decline," Dec. 10, 2016. <http://www.monbiot.com/2016/12/10/the-golden-arches-theory-of-decline/>

3 One can find a list of demeaning comments Trump has made about women dating back 30 years: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/politics/donald-trump-sexism-tracker-every-offensive-comment-in-one-place/>

4 Oswald Spengler, "The Decline of the West," quoted in Hedges, "We Are All Deplorables," 2.

5 Matthew Behrens, "The Terror at Home that Canada Will Not Name," *Rabble.ca*, Dec. 21, 2016. <http://rabble.ca/columnists/2016/12/terror-home-canada-will-not-name/>

6 See Heather Eaton, "Gender Injustices," *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, Willis J. Jenkins, Mary Evelyn Tucker, and John Grim, eds. (Taylor and Francis: New York, 2017), 324–42.

7 Hedges, "We Are All Deplorables."

8 Teresa Navarro, "Faux Feminism Epidemic: How Celebrities are Using the Feminist Movement for Their Own Self Gain," *RATSmagazine*, Aug. 4, 2015. <http://www.ratsmagazine.com/culturerat/2015/8/3/faux-feminism-epidemic-how-celebrities-are-using-the-feminist-movement-for-their-own-self-gain/>; "Beyonce's Faux Feminism Hurts the Cause," *The Daily Aztec*, May 9, 2014, <http://www.thedailyaztec.com/53769/opinion/beyonces-faux-feminism-hurts-the-cause/>

9 Chris Hedges, *Wages of Rebellion: The Moral Imperative of Revolt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2015).

Rebuilding Ecological Bridges to the White House

By Idara Otu

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The American cosmologist Thomas Berry (1914–2009) begins his *eco-classicus* entitled *The Great Work: Our Way to the Future* thus: "History is governed by those overarching movements that give shape and meaning to life by relating the human venture to the larger destinies of the universe."¹ Berry's assertion evokes reflection on the political movement upon which Donald Trump rode to victory during the recent presidential election. The Trump political movement is a metamorphic force that might reshape the US ecological vision. Although there is no formal ecological manifesto of the Trump presidency, his campaign pledges provide reasons for examining some potential consequences of their implementation.

The United States and the Global Community

In June 2015, when Trump publicly declared his intention to run for the Republican presidential nomination, he pledged to construct a "great wall" across the Mexico–US border. The image of this great wall looms over the Trump presidency. The question here is not whether the US government should protect the lives and property of its citizens. Instead, one wonders about the symbolism of this great wall for the US on our shared planet earth. How this great wall will affect the delicate ecosystem and animal migration along the Mexico–US border is a question that has largely been ignored. Both nations share a habitat, which is home to diverse populations of mammals, birds, and plants, including the endangered Mexican wolf and the North American ocelot.²

For ecological scientists and theologians, Trump's insouciance toward the environmental impact of walling the border was not a surprise, given his four-year-old tweet that the "concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive."³ President Trump supports withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement, which aims to maintain global temperature rise below 2°C above pre-industrial levels by 2100. He has promised to decelerate the implementation of the US Clean-Power Plan that would lower carbon emissions by 32 percent below 2005 levels by 2030 and promote investment in renewable forms of energy. He prefers reviving the coal-mining industries to increasing investment in clean energy companies. In line with these campaign pledges, Trump has nominated a climate change skeptic to lead the Environmental Protection Agency.⁴ Trump's statements on climate signal a withdrawal of the US government's commitment to protecting the global commons, a stance that could be adopted by other nations. In renegeing on the Paris Agreement and other climate pacts, the US government could undermine the progress achieved so far in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

A Faith Response

In his ecological encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis writes, "International negotiations cannot make significant progress due to positions taken by countries which place their national interests above the global common good" (#169). Taking such positions is partly what led to the limited implementation of the Kyoto Protocol; once the US refused to ratify Kyoto's targets, many other nations followed suit. However, Pope Francis argues that since the earth is "our common home" (#1), what

happens to the earth affects every person. Any US anti-climate agenda would influence other nations' climate policy directions. As one of the world's largest emitters of carbon per capita, the US should play an essential role in limiting global temperatures. Pope Francis asserts: "Reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most" (#169). While every nation has an obligation to reduce its ecological footprint, the US—as the most powerful economy in the world—has a special responsibility to the most vulnerable nations, the world, and future generations. The ecological crisis remains a sign of the times—one that humanity no longer can afford to deny.

Climate change threatens our common home. We have already glimpsed its effects, including extreme temperatures, unprecedented droughts, rapid melting of glaciers and concomitant sea-level rise, devastating hurricanes and floods, biodiversity loss, and species extinctions.⁵ These anthropogenic effects do not respect race or borders. They transcend great walls and will remain with humans for centuries. Redirecting the ethical course of industrialization toward a mutually healthy human–earth relationship requires building bridges. Pope Francis traces the root pathology of the eco-crisis to this very point: "We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and a future to be shared with everyone" (#202). Pope Francis further attests: "Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth" (#92). According to Berry, through human reconnection with the earth, the mental fixation of our times that arises from creating divisions can be healed by envisioning the universe not as "a collection of objects but a communion of subjects."⁶ Rediscovering creation as an intricate web of relationships leads inexorably to consciousness of the interdependence that characterizes the earth.

Ecological Advocacy and Collaboration

Having a climate skeptic in the White House portends a strained global collaboration on climate change. Whether Trump succeeds in implementing his campaign promises either through the use of executive powers or the support of a Republican-controlled Congress has yet to be seen. Nevertheless, his anti-climate views reveal how humanity stands in need of a profound ecological

education. Ecological scientists and theologians are obliged to fine-tune approaches to communicating the magnitude of the environmental challenges ahead of us.

Ecological advocacy with empirical data is a valuable approach in engaging the Trump administration. This demands a harmony of local and global ecological movements speaking out in defense of the voiceless planet earth. Environmentally aware members of Congress have a duty to advocate for pro-climate policies on Capitol Hill. Interfaith and ecumenical coalitions for climate change are credible voices for ecological responsibility, and cannot remain silent. Ecological advocacy prioritizes dialogue that involves openness toward mutual exchange of ideas and exploring areas of shared values. Examples of this abound. The former US vice-president and environmentalist Al Gore had a conversation with Trump in December 2016. Emerging from that meeting, Gore gave hope to optimists saying that he had "a very productive session with the president-elect," exploring "a sincere search for areas of common ground."⁷ Meanwhile, hundreds of US-based environmental scientists and academics sent a letter to Trump reaffirming the reality of climate change and offering suggestions on relevant eco-friendly initiatives for the US government.⁸ Such ecological advocacy is commendable and should be sustained. It is the antidote for any anti-environmental propaganda.

Although most of the world would mourn the loss of the US from global climate pacts, there are hopeful indicators that other world leaders are forging ahead. On November 17, 2016, nine days after the US presidential election, the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change issued the "Marrakech Action Proclamation for our Climate and Sustainable Development," an important ecological bridge among nations to protect the global commons. Leaders of governments reaffirmed their commitment to implement the Paris Agreement and work toward reducing carbon emissions. This is a remarkable milestone indicating the progress that can be achieved when nations collaborate on action for climate change.

In reshaping the post-modern ecological map, global collaboration remains critical for the future of our common home. Hence Pope Francis writes: "I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all" (#14). The means an effective outcome

lies in fostering ecological bridges between humans and the earth, and among the nations of the world.

1 Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 1.

2 Lindsay Eriksson and Melinda Taylor, "The Environmental Impacts of the Border Wall between Texas and Mexico," <https://law.utexas.edu/humanrights/borderwall/analysis/briefing-The-Environmental-Impacts-of-the-Border-Wall.pdf/>

3 Donald J. Trump, @realDonaldTrump, Nov. 6, 2012, www.twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/265895292191248385/

4 See Eric Lipton and Coral Davenport "Scott Pruitt, Trump's E.P.A. Pick, Backed Industry Donors over Regulators," *New York Times*, Jan. 15, 2017, A1.

5 Joshrom Kureethadam, *Creation in Crisis: Science, Ethics, Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 121–55.

6 Berry, *The Great Work*, 82.

7 John Schwartz et al., "Trump Meets with Al Gore on Climate Change While House G.O.P. Rebuffs Tariff Plan," *New York Times*, Dec. 5, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/05/us/politics/donald-trump-transition.html?_r=0/

8 "An Open Letter from Scientists to President-Elect Trump on Climate Change," <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/an-open-letter-from-scientists-to-president-elect-trump-on-climate-change/>

President Trump and the Spiritual and Political Challenge of Climate Chaos

By Stephen Bede Scharper
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"There is a fifth dimension.... It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of [our] fears and the summit of [our] knowledge.... It is an area we call the Twilight Zone."

Rod Serling's famed series introduction may have seemed eerily apt for many Americans and others as they witnessed the formerly unthinkable: the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States and his official inauguration on January 20, 2017. But, bewilderingly, and with appearances to the contrary, this is neither a *Twilight Zone* episode nor a special edition of *The Apprentice*. No credits will roll signalling the end of this show, allowing us to turn off our screens, shake our heads, and segue back from entertainment to reality. A Trump presidency is real, and it is here, ready or not.

And this new reality reveals many gathering, forbidding clouds on the environmental horizon. Within minutes of Mr. Trump taking the oath of office, for example, his team wiped clean any mention of climate change or global warming from the White House website.

Such a move is frighteningly consistent with Mr. Trump's dismissal of climate change science, as evinced by a tweet he sent on January 29, 2014, which read: "Snowing in Texas and Louisiana, record setting freezing temperatures throughout the country and beyond. Global warming is an expensive hoax!" Earlier, on November 6, 2012, he had tweeted, "The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive." Mr. Trump later said he was only joking.

His sundry transition team members and Cabinet nominees, however, are no laughing matter.

Mr. Trump tapped Myron Ebell, a leading skeptic of the scientific consensus on climate change, to head his transition team. He also chose Rex Tillerson, chief executive of Exxon Mobil, to serve as Secretary of State.

And his choice to lead the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Scott Pruitt, is certainly no joke. As Oklahoma Attorney General, Mr. Pruitt is infamous for his cozy ties to the oil and gas industry, and for suing the EPA on behalf of those industries to obliterate clean air and water regulations.

As Eric Schaeffer, former director of EPA's office of civil enforcement, observed recently in *The New York Times*, earthquakes, once a rarity in Oklahoma, now occur several times a day on average, with hundreds being recorded each year. Despite findings from state geologists that these quakes are linked to oil and gas operations injecting wastewater underground, Mr. Pruitt "did little, if anything" to address the issue. He was receptive, however, to the over \$300,000 in campaign contributions from the oil and gas sector.

Mr. Pruitt's disdain for the environment prompted Casey Camp-Horneck, writing in the Washington-based newspaper *The Hill*, to claim that making Mr. Pruitt head of the EPA is akin to "putting [General George] Custer in charge of Indian Affairs."

The Pruitt nomination, coupled with Mr. Trump's earlier statements that he would "cancel" America's commitment to the UN Paris climate accord and end the "war on coal," have alarmed both secular and faith-based environmentalists in the US and around the world.

"As a religious environmentalist I am dismayed and scared for what this means for the poor, for creation and for all of our descendants," declared Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb, chair of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, in a recent Religious News Service interview. Rabbi Scherlinder Dobb was

giving voice to many concerns within faith communities as Mr. Trump assumes power.

Such fear was reflected in a petition released in January by the Catholic Climate Covenant demanding Mr. Trump “demonstrate bold leadership” on climate by following through on three fronts:

- 1) keeping the US in the Paris Agreement and honouring its pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions between 26 percent and 28 percent (from 2005 levels) by 2025;
- 2) paying the US \$3 billion pledged to the Green Climate Fund to assist developing nations in climate mitigation and adaptation measures, including sustainable energy; and
- 3) implementing the Clean Power Plan, the US EPA’s rules to reduce carbon emissions from coal- and gas-fired power plants.

The petition, endorsed by the Global Catholic Climate Movement, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, the Sisters of Mercy, Franciscan Action Network, and many other Roman Catholic groups, states, “Climate change is already harming millions of people across the U.S. and around the globe.” Citing the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) support for a national carbon pollution standard and Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’*, On Care for Our Common Home, which declares an “urgent need” to reduce fossil fuel use, the petition concludes: “We urge you to take swift and meaningful action before it is too late.”

Moreover, on January 17, twenty US interfaith groups sent a strongly worded letter to US senators, objecting to the nomination of Mr. Pruitt as head of the EPA. The letter states that Mr. Pruitt would potentially put “vulnerable communities at risk for environmental harm and prioritize polluters over human health.” The faith organizations, including Interfaith Power and Light, the National Council of Churches, and Young Evangelicals

for Climate Action, urge the Senators to consider rejecting Mr. Pruitt, “who has a demonstrated history of ties to special-interest groups, has fought against the very agency he may head, and has worked at cross purposes for healthy communities and a healthy environment.”

As these responses suggest, the Trump administration, while it poses grave challenges, cannot impose despair. The spiritual and political roots of modern environmentalism are long and deep in the US. From the celebration of wildness in Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), the sublime nature prose and conservation legacy of John Muir (1838–1914), the revolutionary “land ethic” of wildlife ecologist Aldo Leopold (1887–1948), through the DDT-busting efforts of Rachel Carson (1907–1964) and the influential spiritual writings of “geologist” Thomas Berry (1914–2009), the US has been graced with a pioneering tradition of environmental reflection and advocacy—now, fortunately, embraced by many religious communities. In such soil, and with such long and tangled roots, it may not be so easy for the Trump administration to tear up the environmental gains across the US political landscape.

In preserving this legacy, faith groups will be called to a critical and special role. As author and activist Mary Jo Leddy recently shared with me, the most important thing faith communities can do now “is to provide an alternate point of reference—to remind people that the earth is in God’s hands and each of us has a place in the world.” While noting that the constant tweeting from Trump “can throw us all off centre,” she avers that “our faith can remind us of who and what we are for, what we believe in and hope for.” For Mary Jo Leddy, “If we are only against Trump we may become like what we are fighting against ... disorderly and provocative.”

As we enter a “disorderly” Trump presidency—this middle ground between light and shadow, science and superstition, facts and fears—the steadfast, compassionate, and grounding role that faith communities can and have played may prove pivotal, not only for environmental protection, but for our collective sanity.

Divine Kenosis as Discipleship: Building the Human Community out of Mercy

By Jean-Pierre Fortin
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Introduction

In a homily delivered on Palm Sunday four years ago, Pope Francis singled out the relevance of the theme and reality of mercy for the meaningful articulation and embodiment of the Gospel today. The Pope thus preached, “Jesus has awakened great hopes, especially in the hearts of the simple, the humble, the poor, the forgotten, those who do not matter in the eyes of the world. He understands human sufferings, he has shown the face of God’s mercy, and he has bent down to heal body and soul. This is Jesus. This is his heart.”¹ In his recently published *The Name of God Is Mercy*, the Pope unequivocally asserts the importance of mercy for the very existence of the world: “Without mercy, without God’s forgiveness, the world would not exist; it could not exist.”²

In what follows, I will attempt to demonstrate that Walter Cardinal Kasper’s defence of the primacy of mercy, lauded by Pope Francis, finds both confirmation and support in Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Christology and Teresa of Calcutta’s discipleship. Balthasar’s systematic articulation of the category of kenosis provides coherence and grounding to Kasper’s analysis. Teresa of Calcutta’s holy life provides experiential concreteness and depth to Kasper’s description of Christian discipleship. In the humanity of Jesus, Balthasar finds full disclosure of the divine. Jesus transformed the humiliation, forsakenness, death, and defeat he endured into the most powerful locus for the manifestation of absolute, undefeated, and indefeasible love. Teresa of Calcutta’s lifelong dedication to the poor strikingly instantiates how, amidst hopelessness, the God of Christ empowers his disciples to have a share in his redeeming suffering. In the grace of obedience, she was led to experience spiritual desolation to bring into the slums the God working out miracles of mercy. Supported with Balthasar’s kenotic theology and in Teresa of Calcutta’s living ministry, Walter Kasper’s theology of mercy is shown to reflect most accurately the essence and power of the triune God, reaching out to and providing solace to all in need.

Biblical Foundation and Systematic Articulation

In the foreword to his *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, Kasper claims that systematic theology has yet to produce a suitable treatment of mercy.³ He now deems necessary the reformulation of the theology of divine attributes in light of such a treatment,⁴ for sound up-to-date exegetical, historical, and theological evidence calls for conceiving the divine essence and its active manifestation in history as and in the form of mercy.⁵ Kasper finds support for his claims first in the evolution of 20th-century Western philosophy, and more particularly phenomenology. From Martin Heidegger to Jacques Derrida, Paul Ricoeur, and Jean-Luc Marion, he perceives the development of a concept of God allowing for the existence and expression of a love that both transcends and includes justice. Mercy embodies this absolute love breaking into history as “a free, nonderivable happening, which itself again can only be accepted or rejected freely.”⁶ In the Old Testament notion of *hesed*, he deciphers a fundamental articulation of divine mercy, understood as “unmerited loving kindness, friendliness, favor.”⁷ Mercy is the proper act of a God who freely reveals Godself to and enters in covenantal bond with the people of Israel. The embodiment of God’s faithfulness to self and others, mercy is “God’s option for life,”⁸ that is, the always renewed opportunity offered to humans freely to repent and resume authentic life in God.⁹ Divine transcendence is affirmed with the exercise of God’s infinite power to forgive. Forgiveness is of the essence of God, which therefore finds expression in and as unlimited and undeniable mercifulness.¹⁰

Kasper sees the biblical notion of mercy culminating with Jesus Christ, for in and through him, the divine outpouring of love is found to “exceed every measure,” when and as the Son of God assumes human nature and sinfulness on behalf of and in order to make a definitive offer of redemption to all humans. The God of Jesus Christ embraces the condition of the poor, vulnerable, rejected, and oppressed by embodying and redeeming

humanity in suffering and death. Divine kenosis, accomplished and lived in Jesus, thereby constitutes the primary manifestation of God's inner essence, because it is the ultimate expression of mercy: giving one's (divine) life out of love.¹¹ God's mercy liberates humankind from the yoke of sin and guilt for a new existence as instrument and channel for grace. Human beings are called and empowered to become living expressions of mercy in a world seemingly bereft of God. "Mercy is God's gift and, simultaneously, our task as Christians. We are supposed to enact mercy. We should live it in word and deed and give witness to it. In this way, our often dark and cold world can become somewhat warmer, lighter, more endearing, and more worth living because of a ray of mercy."¹² Divine mercy is especially made incarnate in the lives of saints who, "in the dark night of faith, and in God's abandonment of Jesus on the cross, were able to endure, in a substitutionary way, for those who are caught in the night of unbelief and distance from God."¹³ To share in the passion of their Lord is the vocation of all Christians. In and through their forgiving actions, words and prayers, divine mercy is revealed and effectively made available to all, forging new human existence and community.¹⁴

Kasper thus coherently and consequently proposes to understand mercy as a form of love transcending the demands of justice which finds paradigmatic expression in God's self-communication to and infinite forgiveness of humankind. In Jesus Christ, in and through the act of kenosis, divine self-communication and forgiveness are embodied and lived out as a self-sacrifice in which all human beings are invited and empowered freely to partake.

Conceptual and Pastoral Limitations

Kasper's theological account of mercy is biblically grounded, constructively innovative, and contextually relevant. These strengths, however, do not prevent his account from being somewhat weakened by an inconsistent understanding of divine kenosis, a notion and reality essential to the systematic treatment of mercy. Drawing from the theology of Augustine and Bonaventure, Kasper understands the Trinity as a communion of love. Self-communication is intrinsic to the divine essence.¹⁵ He conceives this immanent self-communication as the necessary precondition for the Trinity's self-communication *ad extra*—that is, in and to creation—for otherwise, the Trinity would have to be subject to developmental change. Kenosis, the self-withdrawal

and infolding of God, is thus understood as that which enables the existence of the Trinity and defines the possibility of creaturely existence. "Because everything that concerns God is simply infinite, the Father can communicate his godhood to the Son and to the Spirit through the Son only by retreating in his own infinity and giving space to the other in himself. This kenosis of God is the presupposition for the fact that God, who is infinite, can make room for creation."¹⁶

The latter two inferences, though, do not follow. As Thomas Aquinas clearly foresaw, in the *Prima Pars* of his *Summa Theologiae*, divine self-communication does not involve perfecting change on the part of God, only on the part of creation.¹⁷ God is not bound to creation out of material or hypothetical necessity; rather, creation is by nature absolutely dependent on God. God creates without being created. God induces transformation in creatures without being transformed. God reveals Godself to creation without being revealed to Godself. God is capable of pure dynamism, a form of movement which does not suppose the pre-existence of a passive potentiality (i.e., matter) within the source of movement. The Father does not possess an essence or a self that exists independently from the Son and the Spirit; the Father eternally exists in and as relation to them. For the Son to be begotten and the Spirit to proceed, the Father must not retreat within, but rather go out of Godself wholly and essentially, in and as absolute self-gift setting into existence its responding recipient. Uncreated spirit does not need to fear losing oneself in and through the act of self-giving, for spiritual realities (such as truth, love, and joy) do not suffer depletion when shared—rather the opposite.

Kasper's systematic reflection also seems not to take sufficient account of the experience of radical evil, so determinative of contemporary Western spirituality. After Auschwitz, to speak of God, grace, and love (of which mercy is a paradigmatic expression) without addressing the unfathomable mystery that is human freedom's infinite power of (self-)destruction is, for Christians, both irresponsible and inadmissible.¹⁸ Kasper's analysis of the agonizing Jesus' recitation of the first verse of Psalm 22, related in Mark 15:34, too quickly perceives in Jesus' cry of abandonment the expression of trust and hope.¹⁹ The text itself and contemporary context of interpretation both invite the reader to dwell longer in the crucified Jesus' experience of forsakenness. The extreme humiliation of death on the cross constitutes the ultimate expression of powerlessness. In the darkness of

Golgotha, God is nowhere to be found, even and especially for the dying Jesus. Jesus' despair cannot easily be washed away, certainly not by the invocation of an afterlife that would see God repair all injustices committed and permitted to endure in this world, and to which Kasper appears too keen to have recourse.

In every situation, no matter how embattled or hopeless it may seem, we may be certain that God is by us and with us and "that all things work together for good for those who love God" (Rom 8:28). This certitude articulates a hope that is not realized in this world or in this life, but that is directed beyond this world toward the resurrection of the dead and eternal life. Only there will every injustice be requited and only there will everyone receive his or her due. Only then will all tears be dried and wiped from our eyes.²⁰

The light of divine grace cannot be brought into the night of faith from outside; it must be perceived present and at work within. The adaptation of the spiritual senses to such dire circumstances demands much time and effort.

Over and beyond a relative inability to inhabit and partake in the condition of the crucified Jesus, Kasper's perspective also lacks a robust account of human sin and guilt, particularly with respect to those who claim to be followers of Christ. Speaking to preachers about the new evangelization, Kasper tends to present the church and the ordained clergy in a way that estranges them from the world and which, thereby, entitles them to bear judgment on it as if they had no part in it or were not responsible for its present state. "The new evangelization can say to those who are alienated from God and the church that God was graciously and mercifully near to them, even when they imagined that they were far from him, and just like the father in the parable of the prodigal son, who went out to meet him, God has waited for them, in order to welcome them back to him and to reinstate them in their rights as his sons."²¹ The failures of the church – the community of believers, lay and ordained – their implications and consequences in and for the world, as well as the ensuing need for repentance and forgiveness, are not clearly and responsibly acknowledged. Christians must be ready to bear the cross of their own sins if they are to be faithful to Christ after Christendom (to borrow a famous title from Stanley Hauerwas), in and for the 21st century. Kasper himself recognizes both the difficulty and the necessity

for the church to accomplish such a task. "For the future of the church, it is essential to come to a reinvigorated penitential order and a renewal of the sacrament of reconciliation. ... Certainly no one finds it easy to humbly confess his or her sins and, often enough, to confess the same sins over and over again."²²

Walter Kasper's theological account of mercy is therefore confronted to and must overcome three distinct shortcomings and challenges. First, kenosis, the founding act and source of divine mercy, cannot be understood as an act of self-withdrawal, because such an act constitutes and embodies the very denial of mercy, which rather is consecrated in and as self-giving. Second, God, grace, and love must be perceived and embraced within the experiences of vulnerability, suffering, and forsakenness themselves, not presented and articulated as substitutes or compensations for the latter. Third, being faithful to Christ entails assuming one's own burden of sin both as an individual and a member of the human community. For Christians, this means and entails asking for forgiveness as members of the church who fail to bear faithful witness to the Gospel and to Christ.

Kenosis: Essence and Expression of the Trinity

To enable Kasper's theology of mercy to successfully meet these shortcomings and challenges, I propose to consider Hans Urs von Balthasar's kenotic Christology and Teresa of Calcutta's spirituality of discipleship, for these respectively provide a theology for and bear a living witness to what it means to believe in and follow Christ through the night of faith.

For Hans Urs von Balthasar, the primary access to any understanding of kenosis lies in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus conveys the divine solely by means of what he receives. To measure the depth of Jesus' love and trust in God, of his self-donation in innocence to God, we must take a closer look at his experience of forsakenness. While he was carrying his cross to Golgotha, Jesus found himself completely alone, deprived of immediate contact with his Father. He could no longer fathom the purpose his life and upcoming death were serving. Surrounded by darkness, Jesus chose to remain faithful to his Father.²³ By means of his radically selfless behaviour, Jesus, who reveals the Father's divinity, also discloses his own. Only God can obediently suffer total forsakenness to the end. Only God, who is Love, can be so absolutely rejected.

It is precisely now that the Word who has been reduced to silence receives his absolute transparency to the Father, who expresses himself in him in a way without precedent. ... Only God himself can go right to the end of the abandonment by God. Only he has the freedom to do this. The Father shows that this is so, when he raises the Son and elevates him to be the *Kyrios* over all; but one who receives the dignity that belongs to God must already have possessed this, and only renounced the enjoyment of it. ... Only one who has known the genuine intimacy of love, can be genuinely abandoned (not merely lonely).²⁴

In his definitive overcoming of evil and death through absolute vulnerability, therefore, Jesus Christ has shown that, like his Father, he enjoys the fullness of divinity.²⁵ To sacrifice his own human life (offer his death), Jesus Christ had to experience essential self-emptying (*kenosis*) twice. Letting go of the divine glory he commonly shared with the Father (as second Person of the Trinity), he assumed the human condition (in the incarnation), which he then sacrificed in accordance with the Father's will, out of infinite love (in his death by crucifixion).

In and through the free sacrifice of his powerless humanity, Jesus Christ reveals a God who is and gives unconditional love. It is precisely because God is triune that such expression of absolute self-giving love is made possible. God in the Father graciously gives himself entirely to his Son, who in return entirely entrusts himself to the Father. To do so, the Son humbles himself to the point of assuming human nature, suffering death and utter forsakenness, bearing the weight of all human sinning (thus giving back, in some sense, the form of God to the Father). While doing this, he remains united by a Love – the Holy Spirit – so absolute that it embraces the distance separating forsaken humanity from the absolutely transcendent and ineffable God (his Father). In the person of Jesus, limited humanity acts as the sacrament of unbounded goodness expressed toward others. With Jesus, finite humanity consecrates the infinite gift of transcendence itself; the unfathomable love of God for humankind, a love that knows no end.

Balthasar's kenotic Christology supposes divine alterability (i.e., God's supernatural ability to move and be moved) and anthropomorphism (the humanity of Christ reveals the inner life of the Trinity). The triune God is a living and loving God, and both life and love involve movement. Commenting on Balthasar's theology, Gerald O'Hanlon convincingly argues, using an argument simi-

lar to Thomas Aquinas's, that divine movement is not to be equated with natural movement, because God is pure spirit and therefore pure dynamism.²⁶ Christian theology cannot avoid setting the humanity of Christ as foremost access to the being and foundation for the understanding of God. Jesus Christ is the fullness of revelation and the culmination of salvation history as related in Scripture. Scripture and salvation history are kenotic from beginning to end because the life and death of Jesus Christ are intrinsically kenotic.²⁷ In the divine self-emptying self-gift is found the essence of revelation, that is, the primordial revelation of the divine essence. In and by means of the finitude of Jesus' humanity, the fullness of divinity is powerfully conveyed. For Christians, anthropomorphism simply is inevitable. The challenge is to make suitable use of anthropological mediations to speak and think about God, in due awareness of their intrinsic limitations. The humanity of Christ is itself made accessible in and through the humanity of the saints in whom resides "the source, ever flowing, ever fresh, of the theology of the Passion."²⁸ Teresa of Calcutta, I dare to suggest, precisely is such a figure of holiness in and through which the passion of Christ is most accurately revealed and powerfully active.

Discipleship as Kenotic Disposition

In September 1946, Mother Teresa received a particular summons from God: to minister to the poor in their midst. "While I was going by train from Calcutta to Darjeeling to participate in spiritual exercises, I was quietly praying when I clearly felt a call within my calling. The message was very clear. I had to leave the convent and consecrate myself to helping the poor by living among them. It was a command. I knew where I had to go, but I did not know how to get there."²⁹ As she engaged the poor and devoted herself to their service, Teresa was led to embrace her own spiritual poverty. The acknowledgment of the great gift she received daily from the materially poor first came when she understood that these people were actually allowing and enabling her to be and fulfill herself by expressing her love to and for God.³⁰ Then came the awareness of Christ's humility and humiliation, which opened a space for and traced a way to true happiness. Teresa was led to grasp the full importance of Jesus' passion and resurrection, finding in the Eucharist the daily spiritual food she needed to be able to love and serve God in and through the person of the poor.³¹ Service to God in the poor thus corresponds and fulfills human nature's fundamental

craving for God. To receive and live from the fullness of God, the faithful servant must completely get rid of her human self. “To give ourselves fully to God is a means of receiving God himself. I for God and God for me. I live for God and give up my own self and in this way induce God to live for me. Therefore, to possess God we must allow him to possess our soul.”³² Hence, though requiring complete involvement and relentless effort, holiness is by no means a human achievement; it rather consists in the presence and operation of God within and through the person, used as an instrument for the expression of the divine will. Through the person and actions of the faithful servant, Jesus relieves himself (in the person of the assisted poor) for himself (his incarnation of absolute love being the paradigm and goal of all human actions). The work speaks for itself: Christian discipleship embodies the Gospel in lived testimony and action. The body of Christ that is the church takes form in and through the expression of disinterested love.³³ The Missionaries of Charity, the religious congregation that Teresa founded after her conversion experience, are called to bring and find Christ where acute suffering and misery are part of daily existence, where no one else dares to venture.³⁴

For Teresa of Calcutta, revelation does not consist in and is not principally mediated by means of rational accounts or theories, but in and through the experience and offer of loving service to and for others.³⁵ Revelation is not the prerogative of the faithful servant, who exercises no control over it, finds no personal enlightenment and consolation in embodying and enacting it, but must rather endure excruciating spiritual deprivation and forsakenness. True disciples are invited to share in Christ’s redeeming suffering, to undergo a passion of their own, no less. In and through their self-sacrificing ministry, the external and internal sinfulness enslaving the poor are in Jesus freely and vicariously assumed, and the poor themselves liberated for an existence lived in faith, hope, and love. “I have come,” relates Teresa, “to love the darkness. For I believe it is a part, a very, very small part of Jesus’ darkness and pain on earth. ... Jesus can’t go anymore through the agony, he wants to go through it in me. ... If we really love souls we must be ready to take their place, to take their sins upon us and face the anger of God. ... We must be living holocausts, for the world needs us as such. ... Those who spend their time giving light to others, remain in darkness themselves.”³⁶ To bring God to others in need, to serve Jesus and make him present in and through her very person and actions,

Teresa of Calcutta was ready to sacrifice her personal salvation and endure everlasting spiritual desolation. True saints do not remain idle in heaven, for holiness shines all the more brightly in the dark. “If I ever become a saint – I will surely be one of ‘darkness.’ I will continually be absent from heaven – to light the light of those in darkness on earth.”³⁷

The proposed theology of vulnerability and suffering as privileged loci for the powerful manifestation of God draws inspiration from the work of Sarah Coakley and Susan M. St Ville. Fully aware of the use made of this kind of theology to subject women (and other vulnerable persons and communities) to sexual, physical, and psychological abuse, these two scholars nevertheless argue that without it, “a feminist reconceptualising of the power of the cross and resurrection” is not possible. For Coakley, true Christian discipleship and authentic humanity entail “self-effacement” and “space-making” by which means the person yields to “divine power which is no worldly power” and is thereby made a member of Christ’s body.³⁸ For St Ville, what she calls “the spirituality of radical acceptance” does not spell spiritual passivity, but rather includes “resilience” and “incipient strength” in that by renouncing worldly powers (including her own), the human person “positions herself as open and readied for the fullest possible response from the divine.” In this attitude of receptive awareness, “the faith that the divine will offer the transforming love necessary for every new situation, securing the self for a time but also undoing the self toward further growth when appropriate,” concretely shows and is embodied.³⁹ True empowerment is a gift received from God, when and if the human person assumes her essential vulnerability, suffering and tackling the human predicament in, with, and for God. Lasting transformative action is the product of divine power flowing through the human person who receives and channels it, without attempting to keep and make use of it for her own benefit.

Mercy: Communion in Discipleship

When supplemented with Hans Urs von Balthasar’s kenotic theology, Walter Kasper’s theology of mercy is provided with sure grounding to assert the prime importance of mercy for the faithful description and understanding of the Christian God. Since divine life is most aptly characterized in terms not of self-withdrawal, but of gratuitous self-outpouring and sacrifice, mercy defines and embodies the active manifestation of the divine essence and power in this world. Divine revelation

and truth are not abstract entities to be owned selfishly, but transformative events and encounters intended to be shared altruistically. In and through Jesus Christ, God shows and becomes infinite mercy, which remains present and effective today in those persons who move from self-assertion to self-offering and discover in the poor, the suffering, the rejected, and the oppressed their own Lord in need. Like Jesus, Christians are not called and sent on mission to earn salvation and acquire spiritual graces for themselves, but to be completely diffusive of the divine power operating in and through them. These “other Christs” (*alteri Christi*⁴⁰) accept all they are, have, and do as gifts from God—not to be kept from, but rather to be offered to others. Experiencing spiritual desolation, they bring the light and sustenance of the eucharistic bread into the homes of the poorest of the poor, in whom they find and serve Jesus Christ himself. The personal experience of sharing in the Lord’s passion embodies and enacts the redemptive inbreaking of irreducible Otherness into the lives of the marginalized and oppressed.

Teresa of Calcutta’s lifelong service to the poorest of the poor paradigmatically instantiates this kenotic spiritual disposition and mode of existence. Throughout her life, spiritual desolation reflected intense partaking in the very passion of Christ where, in complete freedom, the disciple assumes human sins and guilt (her own and others’) out of sheer love for God and humankind (in God). The church is built by being open to finding God outside her confines, becoming a sacrament of divine salvation by welcoming, healing, and empowering the other in need—this other being embodied, in the first place, in the person of the ministering Christian herself. In every gesture or word of mercy, therefore, resides an effective mediation of divine life enabling human beings to foresee and enact communal existence in and as service. Mercy indeed constitutes the powerful manifestation of a loving God in a world most in need of gracious care. On September 4, 2016, in a homily commemorating the canonization of Teresa of Calcutta, Pope Francis himself acknowledged this essential truth: “God is pleased by every act of mercy, because in the brother or sister that we assist, we recognize the face of God which no one can see. Each time we bend down to the needs of our brothers and sisters, we give Jesus something to eat and drink; we clothe, we help, and we visit the Son of God. In a word, we touch the flesh of Christ.”⁴¹ May the mercy of God, then, enable us to find and bring Christ to one another in every gesture, small or great, of assistance given and received in heartfelt trust and love.

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Opening Western Rationality to Transcendence

Jean-Luc Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. xviii + 137 pp.

Jean-Luc Marion is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the Université Paris-Sorbonne, and holds chairs at the University of Chicago and the Institut Catholique de Paris. Here he distills several decades of his work in phenomenology and relates it to Scripture and the doctrine of the Trinity. Marion argues that revelation gives rise to a tension between the transcendence it discloses and knowledge of reality gained elsewhere. This tension can be resolved by attending to how phenomena become present by giving themselves. Different phenomena give themselves to different degrees. The most intense experience of this occurs with saturated phenomena, which give themselves without limit, transforming those who experience them into witnesses to what they reveal.

Marion then turns to Thomas Aquinas, arguing that the tension outlined above is present and unresolved in Aquinas' attempt to develop a science of revelation. This led to subordinating revelation to human categories of knowledge. Marion then turns to attempts to understand revelation in the Enlightenment. Here again, finite reason attempted to master what was by definition a manifestation of the infinite. In this approach, a person seeks to rationally comprehend the transcendent so as to love it. Marion proposes an alternative, intimated in the thought of Augustine, William of St. Thierry, and Pascal: for what exceeds the limits of finite reason, charity that the transcendent awakens in the finite subject must be the condition of knowledge. Marion calls this the logic of uncovering. He opposes it to logic of unconcealing, which is the basis of metaphysics and which seeks to grasp phenomena as objects. The latter logic is not adequate to the experience of revelation, particularly to the manifestation of the risen Christ, which happens as an event and which cannot be grasped as an object. Marion then describes Jesus Christ as the paradigmatic saturated phenomenon. A witness to Jesus Christ knows what they speak of, since they speak of intuition they have

received, but they do not understand this in the sense of being able to grasp it with a concept.

To understand how the saturated event of Jesus Christ is perceived, Marion turns again to the New Testament, beginning with the notion of the mystery of the kingdom of God in the synoptic gospels. The uncovering of this demands of those who would perceive it a conversion to the divine point of view, the charity disclosed in the face of Christ. This conversion is provoked by the excess of love revealed here. This uncovering is understood in Trinitarian terms as the economy of self-revealing love. Marion argues that it is the Holy Spirit that enables one to recognize the revelation of God in Jesus Christ by awakening within one love for God. In so doing, the Holy Spirit gives itself. Contrary to Kant's judgment that the doctrine of the Trinity is of no practical value, Marion argues that it describes the practical essence of God, the way in which God is revealed. He concludes that revelation does not demonstrate the existence of God, but represents a call to which people are invited to respond by allowing it to transform their horizon of understanding.

But after one responds in this way, what happens to reason's ability to conceptualize, to strategize, to develop technologies of healing, or greater productivity, or more equal distribution of goods and services? As God is revealed as love, God is known as what Duns Scotus called the doable knowable, so that effective witness to revelation of God sometimes involves putting into practice the love revealed there. For this, concepts of God and the explanatory power of reason are needed. Marion has succeeded in showing how Western reason can be opened to a transcendence greater than explanatory reason can grasp. But it remains to be seen how reason's explanatory power can be integrated with this openness.

Don Schweitzer, St. Andrew's College, Saskatoon

Massacre in the Mosque

By Gregory Baum

Centre justice et foi, Montréal

The massacre at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City on Saturday evening, January 29, killed six men and gravely wounded eight who were praying in the mosque. This event produced heartbreaking suffering in the families of the victims, generated insecurity and fear among Muslims in the Quebec capital and throughout the province, and profoundly shocked and grieved the entire population of Quebec. The attacker was a young man, Alexandre Bissonnette, a student at Laval University whose hostility to immigrants and women was well known, but whose capacity for violence no one suspected.

A consoling event was the outburst of solidarity: demonstrations of sorrow and sympathy with the victims, their families, and all Muslim Quebecers were held in Quebec City, across Quebec and throughout the rest of Canada. Provincial and federal political leaders as well as mayors and civic representatives found strong words to declare that this terror attack has wounded the whole of society, that the hatred of minorities violates the democratic values to which Quebec and the whole of Canada are committed, and that Muslim citizens have the right to feel respected and live securely in the society they have adopted. Cardinal Lacroix, Archbishop of Quebec, and Christian leaders across the province held religious services to pray for the families of the victims and proclaiming Christ's great commandment, the love of neighbour.

For days, newspapers and television programs dealt with the terror attack, its meaning and its consequences, and with measures society must take to assure the safety of Muslim citizens and their freedom to worship God following their faith. Churches, universities, and many other social institutions published declarations calling for a respectful and peaceful *vivre ensemble* and raising questions about the hidden and open racism in Quebec society.

The public debate that was taking place recalled the debate following the Polytechnique Massacre at the Université de Montréal on December 6, 1989, where a young man, Marc Lépine, entered a classroom and shot 28 women students, killing 14 of them. Was this crime committed by a lone wolf, a passionate woman-

hater? Was this an unrepresentative event at odds with Quebec's public culture? Or was this crime, as some argued, the violent acting out of patriarchal anger against modern, independent women that was widespread in society? After the massacre at the Quebec mosque, a similar question emerged in the public debate. Was Bissonnette a lone wolf driven by personal hatred, or was his crime a violent expression of hostile sentiments widespread in society?

The Jesuit-sponsored Centre justice et foi, with which I have been associated for 25 years, published a text asking us not to reduce the terror attack to a crime committed by a single person, but to be ready to raise critical questions regarding our own society. In its review *Relations* and its bulletin *Vivre ensemble*, the Centre has, over the years, denounced the high unemployment rate among Quebecers of Muslim/Arab origin and other signs of conscious or unconscious racism in society. With several other organizations, such as La ligue des droits et libertés, the Centre has asked the government to appoint an inquiry commission on racism in our society. Recognizing Quebec's cultural insecurity on the English-speaking North American continent, the Centre warns Quebecers that clinging to a static sense of their identity will lead to the decline of their society; at the same time, the Centre assures them that by redefining their identity in a corporate effort in which the newcomers fully participate, they will protect the distinctness of Quebec society and make it flourish under the new conditions of pluralism.

Every day, newspaper reports and TV interviews produce information that helps Quebecers understand this horrible attack on Muslims that disturbed their peace and challenges their self-understanding. *Le Devoir* of Thursday, February 2, explained that small groups of right-wing extremists have multiplied in recent years and, lately, have acquired greater visibility, held demonstrations in some towns, and made contacts with right-wing extremists in France. These groups were encouraged by international events such as Brexit and, a few months later, the election of Donald Trump as US president. *Le Devoir* reports that a few university researchers follow the activities of these extremist groups,

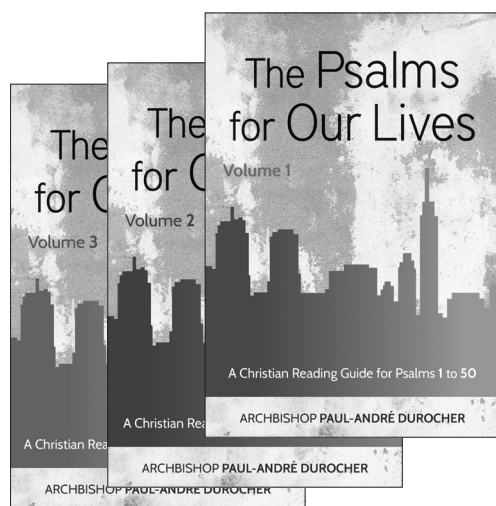
but most Quebecers, including me, knew nothing about them. The researchers estimate that between 150 and 200 Quebecers are involved in these groups.

Second, and this is more serious, a committee of prominent Muslim Quebecers sent a letter to the Quebec government in September 2016, reporting that attacks on mosques and insults of Muslims on the streets have recently increased. The committee is asking the government for appropriate action to assure the security of Muslim Quebecers. The government replied to the letter with beautiful words, but no action. The committee suggested that the charter of Quebec values proposed by the Parti Québécois government in 2013 had frightened Muslims, because to symbolize the secular character of the State, the charter intended to forbid all employees of the government, including teachers and hospital nurses, to wear visible signs of their religious faith, such as the Islamic veil. The proposal gave rise to a public debate between the Parti Québécois and the provincial Liberal party, often making use of exaggerated accusations—words that disturbed the Muslim community. When the Parti Québécois lost the 2014 election, the new Liberal

government dropped the proposed charter, and, seeing itself as a strong promoter of pluralism in Quebec, found it difficult to believe that racist threats to the Muslim community had increased. With tears in his voice, Joël Lightbound, the Liberal member of Parliament for the federal riding in which the Islamic Cultural Centre is located, admitted to the national assembly after the event that more should and could have been done to protect the Muslim community.

We read in the same issue of *Le Devoir* that Quebec premier Philippe Couillard and PQ leader Jean-François Lisée have agreed to engage in a peaceful conversation in order to define together the secular character of the state in a manner that respects religious minorities and assures their freedom of worship. We must pray and hope that the deaths of six Muslim faithful while at prayer at their mosque will lead to greater empathy for and acceptance of Muslims in Quebec and throughout Canada.

Gregory Baum is the founder of *The Ecumenist*. He lives in Quebec.



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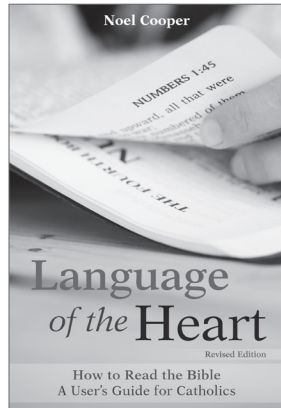
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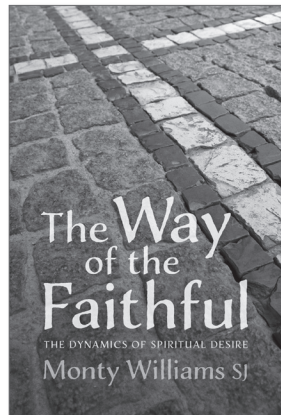
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