

DIMENSIONS

**NEWSLETTER OF THE THOMAS MORE CENTER
FOR THE STUDY OF CATHOLIC THOUGHT & CULTURE**

Rockhurst University

Vol. 22, October 2007

Table of Contents

Belief	<i>Richard J. Janet</i>	2
The God Beneath the Rubble, Pt. V . . .	<i>Father John Hix</i>	4
Book Review: W. David Buschaft, <i>Exploring Protestant Traditions</i>	<i>Wilburn Stancil</i>	12
Faith, Fantasy and Fiction	<i>Cameron Summers</i>	14
Propaganda and the Presidential Campaign of Alfred E. Smith	<i>Peter J. Bicak</i>	16
Office of Mission and Ministry	<i>Kevin Cullen, S.J.</i>	20
Essays on Catholic Culture	<i>Joseph A Cirincione</i>	21
Thomas More Center News		24

Belief

To the utter dismay of my wife and children, when I am at home I occasionally burst out into song at what they consider the oddest and most inappropriate moments. To make matters worse, the song is usually a sappy or maudlin old standard, often a forgettable pop ditty of the “bubble gum” variety or even an old show tune. One of my favorites is the theme song from the movie *Alfie*, a 1960’s film (recently remade) starring Michael Caine as a shallow English playboy confronted with the consequences of his meaningless lifestyle. “As sure as I believe there’s a heaven above, Alfie,” Hal David’s lyrics intone, “I’m sure there’s something much more, something even non-believers can believe in.” These lines inspire reflection on the fundamental human propensity to believe – in something, in anything. Even non-believers believe in something, if nothing else in the absence and folly of belief itself. *Homo credens*, we humans might accurately style ourselves.

I recently read a new book by the literary scholar N. John Hall, a CUNY professor who is well known for his works on Anthony Trollope and Max Beerbohm. *Belief: A Memoir* (Frederic C. Beil, 2007), chronicles Hall’s early life in northern New Jersey, including his Catholic childhood, seminary education, and his work in several parishes as a diocesan priest in the 1950’s and 60’s. The book is a well written, sensitive account by an obviously intelligent soul of one man’s loss of religious belief due to a dawning realization of the irrationality of faith. Hall’s narrative is honest and amazingly detailed, and I so much want to like and respect him for that honesty and for his revealing insights into the culture of American Catholicism just before and during the Second Vatican Council.

However, something prevents me from unqualified admiration of Hall’s memoir. Maybe it is the basic Victorian nature of the book – I could not help but repeat to myself often as I read the text that, as a reader, I have “been there and done that.” So many Victorian English accounts of unbelief trod the same ground as Hall. Substitute Charles Darwin and Ernest Renan for Hall’s references to Richard Dawkins and Will Durant, switch from mid-20th century Catholic New Jersey to 19th century Anglican Britain, add a sonorous Victorian tone in place of Hall’s light, contemporary prose and you might as well be reading Samuel Butler, John Tyndall or Thomas Huxley.

Even more importantly, however, is Hall’s inability to recognize in his story the role that the particularities of his own cultural and social experiences contributed to his unbelief. He only alludes to his growing skepticism regarding religious faith throughout much of the book, choosing to describe the colorful experiences of his own Catholic upbringing. Only in chapter eleven (“At Last”) does he finally address the issue directly, and then he prefers to attribute his

unbelief to a growing intellectual freedom that revealed religion as a “shibboleth” and “simple obfuscation.” Without faith, he writes, “the distinctive features of Catholic belief showed themselves in an embarrassing light. For Catholics are asked to embrace more irrational notions than followers of any other religion on earth.” For Hall, this realization brought “a joyous release, a blissful and mind-freeing deliverance.”

By this time, however, the discerning reader understands that Hall’s unbelief seems to have grown from his unfortunate exposure to an unthinking pastor who encouraged a moral scrupulosity in the young Hall, and to dull seminary professors who failed to excite his intellectual curiosity. Hall prefers to isolate the story of his “intellectual conversion” to atheism to one fairly analytical chapter, failing to acknowledge along the course of his otherwise anecdotal and very personal narrative that his own experiences – described so poignantly and vividly – contributed as much as to his loss of faith as did any kind of intellectual sophistication. My fundamental disappointment with Hall lies in his insistence on going public with his own loss of religious faith, replete with well-worn clichés about the irrationality of religion, and then extrapolating from his own experience to a general rejection of the rationality of Catholic Christianity. If he feels driven to share his story, then at least he might recognize the deeply psychological and sociological origins of his own loss of belief, and engage in reasonable exchange rather than bemused asides about the obvious silliness of religious faith. It’s as if he wants to be fair to the sensitive, faithful souls he encountered during his days in the Church, but cannot keep himself from ridiculing what might well be the very wellsprings of their sensitivity.

It seems to me that religious belief (faith) is something like marriage – a lived experience based on love, trust, reason and mystery. The bedrock foundation of a good marriage is, of course, a strong and constant love between husband and wife, but also the realization of reasonable expectations of each other. I love my wife partly because I know certain things about her. This knowledge creates certain expectations (of behavior and sentiment), without which marriage might devolve into some odd infatuation or fleeting passion. Even so, those rational expectations are tempered by a deep sense of mystery. There will always be things I do not and cannot know about my wife, and that ignorance secures rather than weakens our bonds. If for no other reason, I am driven to figure her out, but more fundamentally, I do not really want to know everything about her. Mystery keeps the relationship new and allows room for growth and discovery.

My basic problem with Professor Hall’s chronicle is that when his love and trust in the Church and in God waned, he expected absolute rationality to restore it. When these reasonable expectations were not met – for reasons he

assumes are obvious to a thinking person – he could no longer abide the mystery, which became a source of frustration rather than renewal for his faith. “To hide the irrationality behind the shibboleth of ‘mysteriousness’ was really no answer,” Hall writes, and “some things are beyond comprehension because they are absurd.” Like the cynical divorcee, he seems bemused by those who continue to live their commitments and accept the mystery. My spouse did not live up to expectations, so marriage is a failed institution. My experience of the Church is irrational, so religious belief is unfounded. It’s been said before - not always so stylishly as by Professor Hall – but with the same mixture of wistfulness and “facticity” (a word Hall uses regularly). Like others before him, Hall preaches to the same choir of unbelievers, choosing to ignore what’s going on with the rest of the congregation.

I am reminded of something I once read by Garry Wills (surely no unthinking, doctrinaire fundamentalist he), who, responding to a survey of journalists that asked simply “Why do you still believe?,” answered with a keen sense of the deep mystery of faith. How can I tell that Christianity is true, Wills wonders?

“As I would gauge the size of a vessel that has passed, by the turbulence of the wake it left behind. By [Christ’s] impact on the best and purest lives I know or have heard of. By the experience that the Gospel mysteries are the only language in which I can talk to the minds I most want communion with. . . . By a consonance of mysteries, each incomplete in itself but the correlate of others – myself one of those mysteries; and you another; and He another (the darkest). By a sense that everything has a meaning beyond its meaning, reaching toward Him. By a desperate process of guessing and hope. By prayer. By listening for a promise from my fellow crook.”

Richard J. Janet

The God Beneath the Rubble

Part V

[Ed. Note: This is the fifth installment in a series drawn from a manuscript by the late Father John Hix, a priest of the diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph who died in 2001. Father Hix’s entire manuscript is being printed in this newsletter with the permission of his nephew, Dr. Gerald Miller of the Rockhurst University faculty.]

**ADAM AND EVE: ORIGINAL SIN IN PARADISE –
Human Judgment Expels Divine Guidance
Genesis 3**

The serpent was the most subtle of all the wild beasts that Yahweh God had made. It asked the woman, 'Did God really say you were not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?' The woman answered the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden. But of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, "You must not eat it, not touch it, under pain of death".' Then the serpent said to the woman, 'No! You will not die! God knows in fact that on the day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil.' The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and pleasing to the eye, and that it was desirable for the knowledge that it could give. So she took some also to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized that they were naked. So they sewed fig-leaves together to make themselves loin-cloths.

The man and his wife heard the sound of Yahweh God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from Yahweh God among the trees of the garden. But Yahweh God called to the man. 'Where are you?' he asked. 'I heard the sound of you in the garden;' he replied 'I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.'

'Who told you that you were naked?' he asked 'Have you been eating of the tree I forbade you to eat?' The man replied, 'It was the woman you put with me; she gave me the fruit, and I ate it.' Then Yahweh God asked the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman replied, 'The serpent tempted me and I ate.'

Then Yahweh God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this,

*...You shall crawl on your belly and eat dust every day of your life.
I will make you enemies of each other:
you and the woman,
your offspring and her offspring.
It will crush your head
and you will strike its heel.'*

To the woman he said:

*'I will multiply your pains in childbearing,
you shall give birth to your children in pain.
Your yearning shall be for your husband,
yet he will lord it over you.'*

To the man he said, 'Because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat,

*Accursed be the soil because of you.
With suffering shall you get your food from it
every day of your life.
...With sweat on your brow
shall you eat your bread,
until you return to the soil,
as you were taken from it.
For dust you are
and to dust you shall return.'*

The man named his wife 'Eve' because she was the mother of all those who live. Yahweh God made clothes out of skins for the man and his wife, and they put them on. ...Yahweh God expelled him from the garden of Eden, to till the soil from which he had been taken.

The great volume of both explicitly stated and otherwise suggested meaning, found tightly compressed in the chapters of Genesis, especially the first three, is truly amazing. One is led to conclude that all who had roles in the process by which these passages attained their final expression were indeed *inspired*. It is surely by design, and not to be relegated to just some unplanned outcome, that the chapters possess so many facets, invite and reward examination from various perspectives, raise such a variety of issues and offer a wide range of considerations and insights. One contributing factor is the economy of words, perhaps imposed by necessity, as those responsible for composition wanted to convey as much meaning as they were able in as few words as possible. Such would lead to repeated re-workings of the accounts, with a concern for brevity while making additions to content and variations in the presentation, for the sake of greater enlightenment. Today, to the contrary, where words abound, we may explore thousands of words in search of a worthwhile thought.

The man and the woman, humankind's prototypes, inhabit a vast garden lush with a diversity of vegetation. The garden is endowed far beyond their own needs, providing bountiful sustenance for life of every conceivable kind, teeming in the air, water, on the earth's surface and beneath. They are the privileged companion-caretakers of paradise. All is new, including they to one another. Hand-in-hand, tingling with excitement and anticipation, they explore the domain which is their charge, thrilled and joyous at each of the beautiful and wondrous sights and sounds which captures their attention. Continuity and continuation is theirs through the coming generations of family with which their union will be blessed. Countless others of their kind will come to share their

responsibility and happiness, occupying ever wider areas of the garden, knowing its goodness and joy.

Then, as though from some distant, foreign land, the stranger appears. He is the Serpent: the base, slithering creature at once despicable and fearsome, devious and dangerous, capable of striking at any moment. One may anticipate that he will be brash and biting, but on this day he is disarmingly discreet; he is guarded, seemingly hesitant and tentative. He approaches the woman and initiates conversation.

Serpent: What is this I hear of your being denied permission to enjoy the fruit of these trees?

Woman: Oh, that's not at all the way it truly is. We are free to know the pleasures and benefits of all that these trees produce – well, almost all. There is one tree of whose fruit we are not to eat.

The sly, slinky one has voiced a patent falsehood. The concept of a forbidding God, arbitrarily denying his creatures delights within their reach, is now being formed in the woman's mind. Although such a thought corresponds to nothing in her experienced reality, it is there now as a question, a possibility, perhaps a concealed truth.

Oh, responds the Serpent, with feigned concern, *which tree is that?*

Woman: The one in the middle of the garden over there, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Tempter pretends to be both bewildered and sad that the young couple is being denied such an insightful gift.

Serpent: He told you not to eat the fruit of that tree? I must confess that I'm surprised. Did He volunteer any reason?

Woman: Certainly. He said that eating from that tree would result in our deaths.

The Serpent at first registers stunned disbelief, then takes on an amused look suppressed only with great difficulty.

Serpent: He told you that – really? Then, as if confidentially only to himself, but purposefully within hearing of the woman: He is slick, much cleverer than I had thought.

Woman: *Do you mean it's not true?*

Serpent: *Why don't we just drop the subject? That might be best. Let's just forget we had this talk.*

Woman: *No, I truly want to know. Isn't it so that we'll die if we eat from that tree?*

Serpent: Smiling, and with a very dramatic voice: *Die? Quite the contrary – the fact is that you will be fully alive for the first time.*

Woman: *Why would He tell us that? Why would He do this to us?*

Serpent: *The only motive I can think of is His desire to hold you back, to keep you in a position of inferiority. He's well aware of what will happen. You'll no longer be little children; you'll be grown up at last, sophisticated, with firsthand knowledge of both sides of reality, the good and the bad, not just the sweet, innocent part. That's the problem for Him, I guess – you'll be very much like Him.*

Woman: *I can't believe that He would treat us this way.*

Serpent: *Listen, I've talked far too much. Maybe it's best that you just forget everything I've said. He probably has a reason for keeping you from that tree. Be good little people and do what He says. Probably everything will be fine.*

And just as quickly and quietly as he first appeared, he's gone.

He has left their sight, and left his mark. The devastating moral damage to come is now incubating – the suspicion he has planted has been more than sufficient. All that the couple has known of God has been His life-giving and ongoing care, His lavish provisions for their well-being and happiness. They know nothing of this stranger, which is to his advantage. His is the voice without a history, speaking as it were from out of nowhere. He has no past record to serve as grounds for doubt, and he does speak smoothly, persuading effortlessly. What if the suggested possibility is true? Suppose that God's major concern is power, domination; that it suits His purpose to keep His creatures in a state of subjection, to smother human understanding and thwart personal growth – what then? Alternative perceptions and interpretations arise in answer to the premise suspicion. A new worldview is forming; now a mental construct founded on the notion of a restrictive, controlling, forbidding God.

It becomes clear to the woman and man that they are being kept from the full realization of their potential, being denied the direct and personal knowledge of which they are capable. Such a restriction is unacceptable. They

must attain the satisfaction of judging for themselves and assuming control of their own lives; they are seduced by the prospect of passing beyond artificially marked boundaries in order to have experiences until now denied them. The forbidden has become desirable by being forbidden – because forbidden. Henceforth, the forbidden will always possess a certain seductiveness as the rejection of restraint, the exploration of the uncharted, the fullness of experience. Individually subjective personal desire prevails; moral guidance and reason does not dissuade.

The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and pleasing to the eye, and that it was desirable for the knowledge it could give. So she took some of its fruit and ate it. She gave some also to her husband who was with her, and he ate it [Genesis 3:6]. He, who was divinely appointed to govern, is misled with embarrassing ease. She, who was to be helpmate, has provided an undoing.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized that they were naked. So they sewed fig-leaves together to make themselves loin-cloths [Genesis 3:7]. The man and woman have cast off restraint, they have gained purported enlightenment, have had their life-expanding experience. The result, however, is not at all as they had anticipated. They may laugh in celebration of their bold defiance, but it is an uneasy laugh. They may maintain for a time a show of contentment in their choice, but it is a superficial masking of a much deeper, lasting unhappiness.

The pair has lost their innocence; nothing will ever be the same as before. The forbidden, by their embrace of it, has become a part of their being from which they can never free themselves completely – it clings to them and irreparably deforms them. Their consciousness of themselves has been forever altered. They are permanently marked, stained. The attention of others, who cannot possibly really know of their guilt, now arouses a sense of it in them. It is as though it were as obvious as their skin. After their sin, they hope to be free of it, to have it undone, but such is impossible. They become aware of this hopelessness and must endure a continual inner frustration.

Their sin was the failure to completely trust in God, in His benevolence and wisdom. Now mistrust of others and the temptation of untrustworthiness in themselves have become essential features of their scarred worldview. Distinctions up to this time unconsidered, naturally occur to them in this new awareness. These differences – between what clearly seems to be and what actually is; between words said and true intent; between oneself and other; between one's preferred view and what one knows on the basis of evidence and reason; between the qualities and possibilities which present themselves in another and the person themselves – confuse them and cause anxiety. Countering their natural inclination to share in the joy or pain of others, a reflex

thought now offers a constant reminder to detach oneself—*It is not I*. Truly giving completely of oneself, putting oneself wholeheartedly into a caring relationship within this now-stained reality, will be virtually impossible. Even when there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary, nagging doubts will inhibit total acceptance and prompt holding oneself back. And yet, both sadly and perversely, one may put complete faith in the *doubt*—the conclusive detector of the true sham. We may never be confident that others are telling us what they really think, will do what they solemnly promise, and, as we know firsthand through ourselves, we can never eliminate the possibility of skilled deception as an ever available technique. There will be the persistent temptation to retreat from this unpleasant reality into the more agreeable inner world of one's own construction. It is the temptation to impose one's own vision on external reality, which can then be dealt with accordingly, as though the vision were true. Refusal to see another's *person* genuinely, allows someone's own, flawed vision to possess, to use or to reject others.

Furthermore, the man and woman have added to their consciousness the quality of unworthiness. They carry the burden of now knowing what before their fall from grace was inconceivable— that their natural condition has become one of limitations and, beyond that, their conduct has made them despicable, deserving of condemnation and death.

The man and his wife heard the sound of Yahweh God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from Yahweh God among the trees of the garden [Genesis 3:8]. Hiding from God became an added tragic consequence of their selfish grasping through defiance— an ever so sad reminder of the loss of an easy familiarity with the loving Lord, which they had known until now. Accustomed as they were to His encountering them as He made His rounds while the sun was not at its oppressive hottest, they now hid from the Divine Contact that they felt would only intensify their torment.

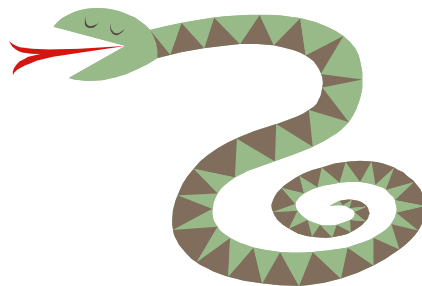
The interrogation which follows further exposes the fullness of inner and outer disorder that has become their existence. Their awareness of being tainted, marked, betrays their prior association with evil, and yet the guilty will not confess responsibility. Adam, with an appalling want of gallantry, blames the woman and, for good measure, God Himself: *it was the woman you put with me*. The woman, in turn, accuses the Serpent; while the latter is not asked nor offers defensive testimony and has no one left to incriminate.

Now Yahweh God, who has not been honored willingly as Lord Governor, will certainly be recognized as Lord Judge. A serpent's naturally base condition, wallowing in the dirt from which he cannot lift himself to stand erect, was the reason for his being chosen as the symbol of the Seducer. This Serpent, as

punishment, will suffer in combat with humanity – despite the early battle seemingly won for evil, the war will ultimately belong to the forces of Good. The pain of childbearing will be interpreted as a penalty for the woman’s offense, but she will pay much more dearly than that for failure to heed God’s direction. The introduction of practical inequality into the man-woman relationship, which until now had united companion-equals, will result in the woman finding satisfaction for her deep longings only at the price of subservience – she will face the predicament of incompleteness without him or oppression with him. [In the only instance of *one* determining what *both* will do, the woman sets the course of action – a detail not lost on Genesis’ authors/editors. She will have her way often, maybe always, but will need to employ all the art and guile at her command in the face of superior physical strength and an accepted claim of dominance.] Adam will be obliged to wrest his subsistence from an earth no more disposed to do his bidding than he was to do God’s. His life will now be an unending, exhausting struggle with limitations, and death his awaiting, inevitable fate.

The concluding portion of Chapter 3, as with its earlier passages, and indeed, the other chapters in Genesis, continues to be fraught with irony. God provides clothing for His wayward creatures, protective covering suggestive of a sort of armor for the concealment, not of flesh, but of mind and heart, behind which each may deceive in the effort to prevail in dealings with others. Surveying the wreckage of the life human and its environment, the Lord ruefully remarks how marvelously the promise of becoming like gods – knowing good and evil – has been fulfilled. Then, in the customary and touching manner of Scriptural efforts to save face for God, He is described as casting Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden – when we know all too well it was they that *expelled Him*.

Father John Hix



***Exploring Protestant Traditions:
An Invitation to Theological Hospitality***
A Book Review

W. David Buschart, *Exploring Protestant Traditions: An Invitation to Theological Hospitality*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2006.

The author (Ph.D., Drew) is professor of theology and historical studies at Denver Seminary and the founder of Credo Consulting, a theological consulting firm. His own theological identification, both institutionally and personally, is evangelical and reformed.

I was first attracted to this book as a possible text for a course I teach on Catholic and Protestant Theology. In teaching this course over the years, it has been difficult to locate a text that deals adequately and substantially with the diversity that is Protestantism. Having now used the text in a classroom setting, I can say that my response, and I believe that of my students, is positive.

The book's 10 chapters include an introduction, followed by chapters on 8 theological traditions, with a concluding chapter on Christian hospitality as a model for ecumenical relations. The 8 theological traditions treated are roughly in the chronological order of their historical emergence: Lutheran, Anabaptist, Reformed, Anglican, Baptist, Wesleyan, Dispensational, and Pentecostal. Buschart believes these traditions provide "orienting landmarks on the Protestant Christian landscape" (p. 17). One obvious question is why he has included Dispensationalism, which in itself has not produced any specific denomination, though it is a prominent theology in a number of evangelical denominations. Buschart believes that because Dispensationalism is such a comprehensive approach to interpreting the Bible and has been widely influential through independent Bible churches, books, mass media, and Bible schools and seminaries, it should not be "left behind." (his *bon mot*, p. 21).

The approach to each tradition is threefold: historical, methodological, and doctrinal. The historical section provides information on the origins and developments of the tradition. The methodological section explores the approach to theology that is taken within the tradition, notably the sources of theology and the hermeneutical approach to Scripture. The doctrinal section focuses on two doctrines that especially illustrate the distinctive character of a tradition (such as believers' baptism in Baptists or speaking in tongues in Pentecostalism). Buschart makes no attempt to critique any of the traditions but rather allows each to explain itself, utilizing source material from persons within the tradition.

One of the difficulties in treating the theological beliefs of a tradition is sorting through the diversity that emerges over time. Buschart's way of treating this problem is to focus on the "classical expressions" of the theological tradition, that is, those that extend back to the origins of the tradition and substantively represent the understanding of that community, even when the "classical expression" might not be the majority view today. So, for example, the classical Baptist principle of separation of church and state is more representative of that tradition than the practice of some contemporary Baptists whose activities in the public square would imply a very different perspective.

In his concluding chapter on theological hospitality, the author notes that in order to accommodate a wide range of beliefs, some churches have reduced their doctrinal statements to a minimum. Unity can't be achieved, he believes, by eliminating differences or avoiding theological commitment. But he does believe that in an era of diversity, it is possible to take a "both/and" view in which one stands in a particular tradition but also stands with others outside that tradition (pp. 257-58).) He argues that the unity among Christians is an ontological one—Christians are one body in Christ. However, Christianity is also marked by historic particularity, and that implies boundaries, or "identifying characteristics that distinguish one Christian tradition from another" (p. 259). The "trajectory toward unity will be manifest not in the eradication of all differences, diversity and boundaries, but in a grace-full reach and embrace from an incarnationally particular location amidst diversity" (p. 261).

Exploring Protestant Traditions can serve not only as a text for those of us who teach courses on Protestantism, but for anyone who is simply interested in learning about various Protestant traditions. The older *Handbook of Denominations in the United States* (now in its 12th edition) is a handy almanac for a quick and brief survey of a particular denomination, but does not provide the more in-depth information found in Buschart's book. Moreover, *Exploring Protestant Traditions* has the advantage of focusing on theological traditions and not simply denominations, which gives a more complete picture of the complexity of the unity and diversity within a theological family.

Wilburn T. Stancil, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair, Department of
Theology & Religious Studies

Faith, Fantasy and Fiction

It can be said that without imagination true faith is impossible. Imagination isn't simply the capacity for childish fancy, but the ability to make new ideas and to conceive of things that aren't readily apparent. God endowed human beings not only with reason, but with the ability to dream, and this is exactly why fantasy fiction is important to people of faith.

It might surprise some people to know that a great deal of fantasy is actually religious fiction. While it is easy to see such books as "The Chronicles of Narnia" and "The Lord of the Rings" as allegory, the connections between fantasy and faith are deeper than most people realize.

Both J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis were part of an informal literary society called "The Inklings," made up primarily of academics from Oxford. They would meet at a pub in Oxford, and discuss writing; many great fantasists were counted among their number, including the aforementioned Lewis and Tolkien, as well as G.K. Chesterton (author of *The Man who was Thursday* and *The Flying Inn*), Dorothy L. Sayers (author of *Busman's Holiday* and *Strong Poison*), and Charles Williams (author of *War in Heaven* and *Shadows of Ecstasy*).

Many of these works featured Christian themes; whether it was in Lewis' Anglican allegories, with the demonic Screwtape urging his protégé to abandon reason in tempting mortals; or in Chesterton or Tolkien's Catholic sensibilities, in which an ultimate victory over evil is possible; or through Williams' romantic mysticism, in which "love" and "God" are synonymous. The group remained viable for a good thirty years, with many writers joining and graduating from their number, and it had a profound effect on the way that fantasy was written.

While many publishers churned out works that were effectively nothing more than poor rewrites of the Inklings' groundbreaking work, other authors soon tapped into the same source of inspiration; even in science fiction, Christian themes appeared.

James Blish wrote *A Case of Conscience*, part of a series of books called "After Such Knowledge," which is a thought experiment about the nature of evil and the doctrine of original sin, in the context of the debate between nature and nurture. Simultaneously, Arthur C. Clarke began to publish stories, and every work by him is religious in some way, shape or form. Perhaps the best example of his is "The Star," an award-winning short story that marked one of the first appearances of the Society of Jesus in speculative fiction.

In more contemporary fiction, Christian themes have to jockey for a place amongst the pluralistic ideas of modern fantasy. Competing with agnostic, atheist, and Marxist ideas, fantasy informed by Christian--and specifically Catholic--sensibilities is actually doing rather well.

A good example is K.J. Bishop's *The Etched City*. While I am not familiar with Ms. Bishop's background, her work does show a peculiar catholic sensibility. Her works are set in a morally ambivalent world, flavored equally with traits Arabian and Western, Vedic and Victorian. A course of scenes involving discussions between a faithless priest (characterized similarly to the "Whiskey Priest" of Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*) and a philosophically minded, but cold-hearted, killer illustrate the catholicity of this work.

The priest's story is like that of the church's development; he begins as a prophet in the desert, healing the sick and calling down miracles from heaven, but becomes more and more institutionalized, eventually settling down and managing a hospital. While he knew he was doing good work, he longs for the days of asceticism and miracles--and he is only truly at rest when he finds a way to reconcile the two.

Another interesting work is *The Iron Dragon's Daughter*, written by the "ex-Catholic" writer Michael Swanwick. The book centers on the death of wonder; addressing the idea that fantasy is merely escapism, Swanwick rearranges fantastic elements--elves, dragons, faeries, and the like--into a grim, industrial wonderland, closer to Dickens' London than Tolkien's Shire. The story follows Jane, a Changeling girl stolen at birth from our world, and Melanchthon, the titular "Iron Dragon", a cybernetic monstrosity that shares its name with one of Martin Luther's compatriots.

Throughout the novel, Jane is forced to deal with tragedy after tragedy, made to realize fully her limitations and the imperfections of the world in which she lives. As a result, she falls into nihilism, only discovering grace to continue with life after all of her efforts to change the world she had grown up in failed.

Fantasy is a good exercise for the development of one's faith; not because so many works of fantasy are grounded in Catholic or Christian belief, but because fantasy is literature of the imagination, and imagination is the key to belief of any sort. According to Jesuit spirituality, God works continuously in all things and in all people; occasionally, it is hard to see God's hand in events. Imagination--the ability to consider things from different angles, and to create new ideas--is a great help in seeing God at work in everyday life.

It is through fantasy and science fiction that we develop our imagination and creativity--our capabilities to believe and to make the world a better place, respectively. In these stories, it is possible to not only see allegory, but also the capability to see the world as it is, and creatively imagine ways in which it could be a better place.

Cameron Summers
Student, Rockhurst University

Propaganda and the Presidential Campaign of Alfred E. Smith

In 1960, John F. Kennedy spoke to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association to help solidify his candidacy for U.S. President. Concerns that his Catholicism would beholden him to Rome were dismantled with simple and what ought to have been timeless phrases. "I do not speak for my Church on public matters -- and the Church does not speak for me," he said, and..."if this election is decided on the basis that 40,000,000 Americans lost their chance of being President on the day they were baptized, then it is the whole nation that will be the loser." At the time, two conclusions could be drawn. Looking forward, Kennedy's deft rhetorical effort seemed to put an end to concerns about the religious views of a presidential candidate undercutting the separation of church and state. As evidenced in 2004, it did not. Looking back, Kennedy could draw little from his Catholic Presidential candidate predecessor, Alfred E. Smith of New York, for Smith's unique situation provided no model. Smith's case, however, provides a rich case of anti-Catholic propaganda, and is often overlooked by propaganda scholars.

Al Smith was a four-term former governor of New York who ran for president as the Democratic candidate against Republican Herbert Hoover in 1928. As a Catholic, he faced a relentless propaganda campaign. Propaganda may be considered "black," by creating outright lies, overt deception, falsehoods, etc., "white," which casts a subject in an entirely favorable light at all times, or "gray," the relatively large range between wherein a variety of tactics are used to create or exploit conditions under which people make decisions. Deceptive practices to achieve this end may include fallacies such as hasty generalizations and name-calling, the transferring of negative feelings about one subject to another, testimonials, and other devices. Every president faces propaganda in a

context that forms a constellation of audiences, special constraints and rhetorical exigencies; the intensity of propaganda campaigns varies. In Smith's case, the campaign was well-organized and particularly vicious. Its modes of dissemination were print media, public address, and radio.

The Ku Klux Klan, members of the Republican National Committee, some Protestant leaders and others ganged up on Smith throughout his campaign. The Klan publication *The Railsplitter* devoted numerous editions to attacking Smith. The paper's masthead boasted two proclamations. On the left side, "We do not proscribe a Romanist in politics because of his religion, but because his religion makes it impossible for him to loyally serve his country when the civil law conflicts with the ecclesiastical. Do you get that?" On the right side, another logical fallacy; the conclusion appears acceptable, but the premises are simply wrong: "Infallibility destroys reason, puts a stop on investigation and muzzles inquiry. An unreasonable man is always unjust. The man who has no use for reason has no reason to use. By not using his reason he loses it." The Klan also considered Romanism a political party "with a definite political platform (or creed), and a definite constituency, consisting of the Catholic membership, who are instructed and commanded to vote always for the Catholic Candidate."

The attacks by the Klan were no surprise, but accusations of imminent Romanism were also initiated from prominent members of the Republican Party. Mrs. Willie Caldwell, a Republican National Committee member, wrote to Ms. Clara Lyon of Virginia Highlands, Virginia as a response to apparent local support Ms. Lyon was to provide to the Hoover campaign. Ms. Lyon made the letter public to *The Washington Post* which published it on September 29, 1928. Caldwell summarized her views on the nature of the religious question in the campaign:

"Mr. Hoover himself and the National Committee are depending on the women to save our country in this hour of very vital moral and religious crisis. We must save the United States from being Romanized and rum ridden, and the call is to the women to do so."

The authenticity of the letter has never been verified, but, since the letter was written on Republican National Committee Stationery and because Hoover publicly denounced the letter, its effects as part of a whispering campaign helped spread an undercurrent of unfitnes. The general theme of Romanism was developed in other publications as well, asserting that *The Catholic Sun* proclaimed that "'the Pope has given the order to make America Catholic' ...and Archbishop Ireland once said 'we can have the United States in ten years.'" Though "Romanism" was certainly used in other circles (the term probably

originated in the mid-1600s and was used in American politics in the 19th and 20th centuries), its use as a name-calling device in 1928 was classic propaganda.

Republican National Committee from Alabama member Oliver D. Street's *Al Smith's Membership in the Roman Catholic Church and its Proper Place as an Issue in this Campaign* attacked the Church as "an enemy of the separation of church and state, of religious liberty, of freedom of the press and of freedom of thought, conscience and speech." Street's letter was excerpted in the *Birmingham News* and reprinted in its entirety for mass distribution. Two of Street's generalizations are evident: the "proper place" of Smith's religion was squarely at the forefront of the campaign, and the way for Protestant voters to consider Catholic leaders was as "enemies," inherently opposed to the fundamental values of the country.

More virulent attacks surfaced from anonymous sources. Tracts from many sources attacked Smith personally and politically on many fronts, including his Tammany Hall roots and his anti-prohibition stance, but one tract in particular exploited perceptions of the goals of American Catholics. Authorship of the bogus "Oath of the Knights of Columbus" is unknown, but it was read into the Congressional Record in 1913 as part of a dispute between Thomas S. Butler, a Quaker, and Eugene C. Bonniwell, a Catholic, during a congressional campaign in Pennsylvania. Bonniwell accused Butler supporters of circulating pamphlets titled "The Murderous Oath of the Knights of Columbus." The pamphlets exhibited a full printing of the alleged oath of the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus. Though rebuked by the Knights and clearly distinct from the actual oath, it was prefaced with an appeal to Protestant voters to regard it as an example of the "murderous and traitorous" disposition a Catholic would bring to the presidency. Excerpts from the oath exhibit its black propaganda vitriol:

"I do now denounce and disown any allegiance as due to any heretical king, prince, or State, named Protestant or Liberals, or obedience to any of their laws, magistrates, or officers...I do further promise and declare that I will have no opinion or will of my own or any mental reservation whatsoever, even as a corpse or cadaver...but will unhesitatingly obey each and every command that I may receive from my superiors in the militia of the Pope and of Jesus Christ."

The re-emergence of these pamphlets during the Smith campaign served to transfer the negative feelings toward Catholics to politics at the highest level.

The "Ex-Priest's Wife, Mrs. James K. Boyland" and "Ex-Nun Neva Miller Moss" both provided testimonials regarding their mistreatment as clergy by the

Catholic Church. Advertisements for the lectures read that Mrs. Boyland's was delivered to women to present the message that her husband delivered to men only. Moss's lecture was titled "Behind Convent Walls" and ostensibly sought to rally support to help "Our Girls now unlawfully imprisoned in the Slave Pens of Rome." No evidence exists that James K. Boyland was ever a priest. Indeed, Moss was prosecuted in Virginia for impersonating a nun. These testimonials--powerful public address and mass-produced transcripts--perpetuated anti-Catholic sentiment.

In 1927, Episcopalian lawyer Charles Marshall wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly* an "Open Letter" to Governor Smith (before Smith was a candidate) in which he identified the key questions regarding Smith's membership in the Catholic Church. The article was commissioned by Ellery Sedgwick, the editor of the magazine, as a means of dealing with the issue in a public and apparently sophisticated way. The article dealt with what many saw as the central question: how can the leader of the United States remain true to his people and maintain allegiance to the Pope? Rhetorical scholar Michael Hostetler's overview of Smith's response to Marshall's question shows that Smith acknowledged the help of Father Francis P. Duffy for advice on theological matters, and Smith also attempted to dismiss the question as bigoted. Smith's response was received well by Democrats, but the letter had gray propaganda effects in that it framed the "Catholic Question," and it generated a public response from Smith.

Al Smith lost the electoral vote to Herbert Hoover 444 votes to 88. He carried only 8 states, failing even in his own. Measuring the effects of propaganda can be difficult; many factors probably led to his defeat. Yet, the Democratic Party and Catholics may have been spared the indignity of being associated with the inevitable economic depression that followed Hoover's election. The context within which contemporary Catholics face persuasion and propaganda efforts is much different than that faced by Al Smith. While Smith was attacked for being, in effect *too* Catholic by simply being Catholic at all, today's Catholic Democrats may be attacked for not being Catholic *enough*, evidenced by John Kerry's failed attempt to appease conservative voters in 2004. We live in an era far more technologically complex and, therefore, more sophisticated means of creating and transmitting propaganda exist. Religious propaganda is certain to surface again in the election of 2008.

Peter Bicak, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Chair,
Department of Communication

Office of Mission and Ministry

The Office for Mission and Ministry at Rockhurst University has grown in the last year. The Rockhurst community, through its Strategic Planning process, has presented directives for the University which asks for greater responsibility and animation from the Office. With the help of the Jesuit Endowment for Mission, Rockhurst University has been able to expand the Office.

In August Fr. Kevin Cullen, SJ became the first vice president for Mission and Ministry for Rockhurst. Fr. John Vowells, SJ remains in the Office as an assistant to the vice-president. Fr. Luke Byrne, SJ, Chaplain to the University, and the Campus Ministry Office now report to this Office.

By establishing this new structure, the University can focus its resources upon helping everyone to fulfill our mission as a Jesuit university. The objectives from our Strategic Planning process, with leadership and direction from this Office, will encourage the articulation and practice of our Jesuit values as a shared responsibility.

The Office of Mission and Ministry co-ordinates the University-wide process of orientating, animating, promoting, and maintaining the University's Ignatian heritage, Jesuit mission, and Catholic identity.

The Office develops programs and initiatives which engage students, faculty, staff, board members, regents, alumni, and donors in their understanding and appropriation of the University's distinctive Jesuit, Catholic identity and mission.

As we move ahead, may the application of our core Jesuit values transform us so we may continue to be women and men in service of others.

Kevin Cullen, S.J.
Vice-President for Mission and Ministry

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

Essays on Catholic Culture

The Thomas More Center for the Study of Catholic Thought and Culture at Rockhurst University has, from its inception, looked for ways to further people's understanding and appreciation of the Catholic intellectual tradition. Toward this end, the Center has remained open to many voices, including controversial and conflicting voices, in a search for truth.

In this spirit of open inquiry, Dr. Richard Janet, director of the Thomas More Center, developed a course on Catholic culture a number of years ago. Various people from Rockhurst and other institutions helped to teach this course to Rockhurst University students and members of the Kansas City community. The class presentations ultimately were put together as a collection of essays for a proposed volume on Catholic culture. We are pleased and excited that Lexington Books has agreed to publish the collection, targeting August 2008 for publication.

In the *Newsletter of the Thomas More Center*, Dr. Janet, author of the final summary essay of this proposed collection, explained the legitimacy and value of this attempt to highlight common elements of Catholic culture:

Not content merely to examine the multiple and diverse expressions of Catholicism as they manifest themselves in a pluralistic world, the contributors to this collection have endeavored to discover and analyze the possible roles and influences of common values comprising Catholic culture. For example, one of the bedrock foundations of the Catholic perspective has been recognition that faith and reason do not contradict but might complement each other. That idea inspired the development of a rich and complex Catholic thought and culture. Despite variations and differences among Catholic believers (e.g., due to ethnic influences, historical contexts, economic class, etc.), this collection of essays seeks common elements or ideas that may have spawned the very phenomenon of Catholic faith and continue to shape it. By contrast, the postmodern perspective that prevails in many quarters today would deny any effort to go beyond the expressions of Catholic thought and culture to find the roots of what we call Catholicism itself. The scholarship in this collection, inspired and informed by faith, is as legitimate as the faith-free inquiries of postmodernist thinkers and might even illuminate some areas of human thought and culture that would otherwise pass unnoticed.

The essays that comprise the collection fall into three major groups and a closing summary essay that highlight components of Catholic culture that have played important roles over the centuries in various places and among various communities.

- The first group (of three essays) explores **Catholic Culture and Everyday Life**.
 - Beginning with the initiation of adult converts, Rev. Paul Turner, a parish priest in Cameron, Missouri, and a well-known writer and speaker on the Catholic sacraments, considers *Catholic Initiation or Christian Initiation of Adults?*
 - Next, Rev. Michael McDevitt, a secular Roman Catholic priest in the diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, Missouri, explores *The Idea of the Parish* to get at Catholic culture.
 - And Dr. Gerald Miller, professor of economics at Rockhurst University, traces the notion of a living wage back over a century of Catholicism to Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* in his essay, *For the Laborer is Worthy of His Hire*.

- The second group (of four essays) moves out of the ordinary and everyday to detail **Catholic Culture and the Imaginative Life**.
 - In the first of the essays, on fiction writing, Ron Hansen (prominent Catholic novelist and professor of English at Santa Clara University) reflects on his craft in *Writing as Sacrament*,
 - While the second essay -- *Catholic Poetry: An Essai in Definition* -- by Dr. Patricia Cleary Miller, practicing poet and professor of English at Rockhurst University, finds the imaginative life is equally sacramental in the composition of poetry.
 - The two remaining essays review how specific Catholic writers practiced their sacramental craft in ways that not only reflect Catholic culture but help to define it, as well:
 - John Chalberg, a college history instructor at Normandale Community College in Minnesota and performer of a one-man show as G.K. Chesterton, looks into *Chesterton's Catholic Imagination*,
 - And Dr. M. Kathleen Madigan, professor and chair of Foreign Languages at Rockhurst University, promises in her essay, *The Sacramental and Twentieth Century French Literature*, to "focus on a work by . . . Georges Bernanos, in order to show how this quality of the sacramental is part of its essence; and then . . . [to] highlight this quality as a distinguishing trait of French Catholic literature."

- The third group (of three essays) explores **Catholic Culture and Postmodern Life**.
 - Two of the essays look at how Catholic culture's view of Church authority has changed over the years (becoming more narrow or restricted) perhaps in reaction to modernism and postmodernism:
 - The first of the articles in this group (which I composed), *John Dryden's Journey to Rome: Church Authority and Catholic Culture*, discusses a view of Church authority shared by Dryden, John Henry Newman in the 19th century, and John Neuhaus today -- a much broader view than is common in some quarters of Catholic culture;
 - The second essay in this group, *Today's Possible Contribution of the Ethicist in a Catholic University*, by Fr. Wilfred LaCroix, S.J., associate professor of philosophy at Rockhurst University, shows that ethicists can fill some portion of the role of moral theologians -- a role the Pope and Curia have circumscribed in reaction against the threats of modernism.
 - Lastly, Dr. Curtis Hancock, professor of philosophy at Rockhurst University, subjects modernist notions to a rational critique in *Philosophy and the Struggle for the Soul of Western Culture*, indicating "how modernism can be tested for its reasonableness" and showing "that it is highly problematic."
- One final summary article closes the collection by affirmatively answering the question, *Is There a Catholic Culture?* In his article, Dr. Richard Janet draws upon the ideas of Christopher Dawson in emphasizing that the culture of Christianity and specifically of Roman Catholic Christianity played pivotal formative roles in western culture.

Consistent with the Mission Statement of the Thomas More Center for the Study of Catholic Thought and Culture, the authors of this collection have aimed "to inspire both Catholics and non-Catholics alike, inside and outside the academic community, to deepen their own knowledge and appreciation of the Christian tradition" generally and Catholic culture particularly. The authors hope to encourage sincere and open dialogue about Catholic culture (in the best tradition of Catholic thought) both to further the inquiry after truth and to enhance fruitful reflection upon Catholic culture and its contributions over time and across cultures. The coming publication of our essays brings us a good deal closer to realizing our goals.

*Joseph A. Cirincione, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of English
Director, Ignatian Spirituality Center*

THOMAS MORE CENTER NEWS**IT'S ABOUT THAT TIME . . .****CA1500 INTRODUCTION TO CATHOLIC THOUGHT & CULTURE
(3 credits)**

No prerequisites – all are welcome!

Tues./Thurs. 11 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

FATHER KEVIN CULLEN, S.J.

(Vice-President of Mission and Ministry)

CA3500 THE JESUITS (1 credit)

No prerequisites – all are welcome!

Thurs. 12:30-1:45 p.m.

FATHER KEVIN CULLEN, S.J.

FATHER JOHN VOWELLS, S.J.

(two Jesuits for the price of one!)

**SIGN UP FOR SPRING 2007 CATHOLIC
STUDIES COURSES!!!**

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The annual Thomas More Center
Christmas Reception

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2007
3:30-5:00 P.M.

GREENLEASE LIBRARY MEZZANINE

Good food, fun and fellowship abound!
All are welcome!



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The Thomas More Center
is pleased to sponsor a

PUBLIC LECTURE

by

Father Jan Michael Joncas

*(renowned liturgical composer and theologian --
University of St. Thomas, MN and
University of Notre Dame)*

***The State of American Catholic
Liturgical Music in the 21st Century***

**Tuesday, March 4, 2008
7:30 p.m., Convocation Center
Rockhurst University**

(admission is free - to register call 816.501.4828)

