# THEOLOGICAL SOURCES OF JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY'S ETHICS

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THE EXPRESSION "theological sources" might suggest that this will be a bibliographical essay, an analysis of the biblical and systematic sources that shaped the social ethics of John Courtney Murray (1904– 67). After completing his doctoral (S.T.D.) studies in 1937 in a thoroughly European environment at Rome's Gregorian University, European theological and natural-law conceptions of modern society dominated much of Murray's early work on intercreedal cooperation and religious liberty.[1] But in the last ten years of his life, the systematic theology of Bernard Lonergan assumed a central position in Murray's trinitarian theology, his argument at Vatican II for religious freedom, and his postconciliar recommendations for Roman Catholic renewal.[2] Murray's dependence on, and deviation from, his own academic sources needs clarification. Yet here I have in mind another meaning of "theological sources."

By "source" I mean a relationship—and a difficulty—along the lines suggested by Charles Taylor's use of the term in his *Sources of the Self*.[3] In Taylor's masterful study, he "map[s] the connections between [modern] senses of the self and moral visions."[4] He describes the modern self as characterized by a new sense of inwardness, an affirmation of the ordinary, and "an expressivist notion of nature as an inner moral source." Taylor suggests that modern moral identity finds its definition both in the Western inward turn and in a largely unarticulated conception of the social and natural environments within which the self is located. Both the self and that larger human environment can be articulated as sources of moral insight, empowerment, and legitima-

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[1] For those early responses to European arguments on cooperation, see "Christian Co-operation," *Theological Studies* 3 (1942) 413–31 and "Current Co-operation: Some Further Views," *TS* 4 (1943) 100–111. For the European beginnings of his religious liberty argument, see "Freedom of Religion," *TS* 6 (1945) 85–113 and "Freedom of Religion, I: The Ethical Problem," *TS* 6 (1945) 229–86.

[2] As will be discussed in our third section below, by 1962 Murray thoroughly recast his trinitarian theology in terms of Lonergan's notions of emerging differentiations of human consciousness; see his *The Problem of God, Yesterday and Today* (New Haven: Yale University, 1964). The last section of his conciliar argument for religious freedom (*The Problem of Religious Freedom* [Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1964]) framed the foundational conflict over civil religious freedom in Lonergan's terms of historical vs. classical consciousness.

[3] C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1989).

[4] Ibid. x.

tion, as wellsprings of moral action. The difficulty facing modernity, as Taylor understands it, is our refusal to give voice to that largely unarticulated moral universe—"visions" that he considers necessary for the preservation and development of modern affirmations of the self and modern claims for human dignity. Modernity's strategic refusal to discuss the moral universe(s) within which the individual is located leaves us with only the languages of self-improvement and technological efficiency, as described by Robert Bellah.[5]

Taylor's claim that the West does in fact rely on moral "visions" of nature and human society about which it chooses to remain silent parallels recent discussions of Murray's public silence on the theological sources of his own work. For much of his life Murray claimed that mid-20th-century Americans could find a sufficient common ground for social cooperation in natural-law ethics and natural-law spirituality. During the composition of the essays that eventually formed his *We Hold These Truths*,[6] he valiantly defended the sufficiency of natural law and natural theism as moral anchors and sources for social action, searching there for a common ground that could be accepted by "all men of good will." Within a decade after his death, however, this claimed sufficiency was challenged.[7] Some critics focus on Murray himself. They assert (I think rightly) that even Murray's most "secular" or "natural" social arguments owe much to what he himself considered a distinctively Roman Catholic understanding of the relationship between nature and grace, that is, that characteristically Catholic conceptions of the Incarnation and Redemption shaped both his judgment of the possibility—and content—of public argument within religiously pluralistic America. Other challenges, however, have arisen from broader and newer concerns with our public discourse. Many claim that "we the people" systematically avoid public discussion of our deeper value commitments, leaving the public square quite naked. While it differs considerably whether we trace this avoidance to elitist, secularistic control of public media or universities, or to an inbred respect for the sacredness of the individual believer, we are still left with doubts that Murray's natural-law ethics and spirituality can forge a shared sense of public purpose sufficient for a nation that is becoming more, not less, pluralistic. Not only, then, is Murray's atten-

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[5] Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California, 1985).

[6] J. C. Murray, *We Hold These Truths* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1960). The composition of the various chapters spans the decade. The first, written in 1950, became the volume's last chapter, "The Doctrine Lives" (295–336), with only slight editing. Chapters 3 and 4, "Two Cases for Public Consensus" and "The Origins and Authority of the Public Consensus," were written in 1959.

[7] See a collection of brief essays that resulted from a workshop of the Catholic Theological Society of America: David Hollenbach, Robin W. Lovin, John A. Coleman, and J. Bryan Hehir, "Theology and Philosophy in Public: A Symposium on John Courtney Murray's Unfinished Agenda," *TS* 40 (1979) 700–715.

tiveness to the presuppositions of his own arguments called into question; the present sufficiency of natural-law ethics and spirituality is similarly challenged.

Expositions of explicitly Catholic conceptions of the self and its moral universe are missing from much, though not all, of Murray's published work. Here I examine two periods during which Murray did explicitly articulate what he considered Catholic sources of moral insight and public action. I will focus on his exploration of religious or theological sources up to approximately 1950 and, again, after 1964. In both periods he made strong claims for the social importance of Roman Catholic theological and religious viewpoints, in terms both of their motivational effectiveness and, importantly, their content.

In the Foreword to *We Hold These Truths,* Murray asserts that, in any study of the interaction of America and Catholicism, the pertinent question is "whether American democracy is compatible with Catholicism," not "whether Catholicism is compatible with American democracy."[8] At the very least, such claims remind readers that Murray was a Roman Catholic theologian. He framed his understanding of the self and its place within the universe of academic and spiritual traditions that were thoroughly Catholic. As I discuss below, he characterized the self, first in terms of the scholastic epistemological theory, then in terms of Bernard Lonergan's cognitional theories. While Murray's understanding of the self always included a strong affirmation of human rationality and therefore differs from some modern descriptions of the self, his attempts to unlock moral and religious forces nonetheless involved a turn to human inwardness, or interiority,[9] a turn that parallels many of the modern moves described by Taylor. In the following discussion, all references to the structures or intentionalities of human consciousness are within the realm of the inward or the self.

Similarly, Murray appears to differ from modernity in that he was guided by articulated Catholic visions of the moral universe. He always professed that the ultimate source of moral perfection and social transformation is God or, in the more particularistic terms of Catholicism, the God who became human in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Throughout his life, however, his notion of how and where the human person achieves efficacious contact with a living God shifted. In the following discussion, the term "source" designates both where in hu-

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[8] *We Hold These Truths* x.

[9] The term "interiority" is Bernard Lonergan's. To my reading, Lonergan's attempt in *Insight* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957) to ground truth claims in cognitional operations and his later attempt in *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) to ground moral and religious stances in intentionality analysis, can be understood as special cases of what Taylor more generally describes as the modern attempt to construct morality on the basis of the self. Lonergan's further turn toward the historical particular bears a family resemblance to Taylor's description of the turn-of-the-century Romantic return to the particular and concrete in Romanticism's partial rejection of Enlightenment conceptualism.

man experience moral agents achieve contact with God and how that contact shapes, and is shaped by, social interaction. As I discuss below, Murray's later acknowledgment that human society (which he earlier had called "temporal order") has in fact functioned as a source of God's presence significantly altered the type of ethics he thought worthy of a faith in an incarnated God.

My article explores changes in the way Murray conceived the self and its moral sources, formulated in a Roman Catholic key. It proceeds through four steps. First, I outline the way Murray initially understood theology as it impacts on social ethics, or the impact of Catholic doctrine on human action. I begin with Murray's insistence in the 1940s that only Roman Catholic doctrine could sufficiently defend the Western political experiment. This examination gets at the question: What can an explicitly Catholic theology bring to the public forum? To outline the "how" question, I backtrack to Murray's dissertation on Matthias Scheeben. There Murray attempted to extend the impact of revealed truth on the human person in terms of human interiority, of human inwardness as configured by scholastic epistemological theory. This section closes with a survey of Murray's first moves away from the inadequacies of his arguments from 1937 and 1940 as he struggled with the question of Catholic participation in postwar social reconstruction.

Second, I outline the manner in which, between 1950 and 1964, Murray worked within his claim for the sufficiency of natural law and natural theism for civic life. I must presume much of the substance of those arguments, a content and method that already have been well explored. Of primary importance, however, is the way Murray reconstructed natural-law theory and natural-law methodologies over these years, escaping thereby much of the individualism, conceptualism, and ahistoricity (abstraction) of his earliest theological arguments.

Third, I trace Murray's move into studies of past interactions between Christian communities and alien, often antagonistic, cultures. Especially his studies of Origen and of the Nicene and Chalcedonian Councils transformed his notion of the humanism that ought to guide Catholic action in the public order.[10] I argue that Murray gradually

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[10] Between 1950 and 1964, Murray challenged what he considered a public forum dominated by technical and utilitarian reasoning. To do so, he developed two distinct language sets: one drawn from natural law and natural theism, the other from what he called Christian humanism. His understanding of Christian humanism, with its explicitly Catholic understanding of the relations of nature and grace, will be outlined in the third section of this essay. Robert W. McElroy has extended Murray's arguments from natural-law and natural-theistic premises to embrace contemporary social and economic concerns (*The Search for an American Public Theology: The Contribution of John Courtney Murray* [New York: Paulist, 1989]). I and others have focused on Murray's Christian-humanism discussions, based on the judgment that those discussions (1) serve as a better basis for understanding even the policy recommendations of *We Hold These Truths*, (2)

reconceived the sources of God's dynamic presence in contemporary society, locating them within concrete human interaction, rather than in his earlier abstract notions of human interiority. I close this section with Murray's recommendations for a Church that now seeks God's effective presence in the time-conditioned societies that surround it, including the Church itself.

The final section considers shifts in Murray's ethical approach to public order, shifts that appear to follow from changes in the fundamental paradigm by which he understood human participation with God. I suggest three general stances that Murray shares with modernity, as the latter is described by Taylor. Then I examine changes in Murray's approach to ecumenical interaction. After Vatican II he entered, for the first time, into intercreedal, explicitly theological conversation with Protestants and even atheists. In these attempts at theological conversation, Murray was reconfiguring and practicing a public ethics more consistent with theological claims that guided his entire life's work, claims that he held to be unique to Catholic theology. Without passing judgment on the question of their uniqueness, I argue that Murray's later work offers a "vision" of our moral universe that is rooted in a rich, centuries-deep community and that remains respectful of the genuine accomplishments of modern society. Such a vision can aid in breaking the silence that Taylor considers so dangerous to both faith and civic life.

## PARTICIPATING IN THE BEATIFIC VISION

Three years after he completed his doctoral studies in Rome, Murray attempted to identify theological sources that might reverse the growing disintegration of international society. In three talks,[11] he appeals to turn-of-the-century European critiques of Western freedoms, finding in the prevalent understanding of those freedoms an inherent tendency to slide into fascist totalitarianism. "It is but one step from a

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are folded into, and masked by, what Murray claimed to be a purely natural theism, and (3) offer a better starting point for our present concern with the richness and depth of our public arguments.

[11] These were delivered at St. Joseph's College, Philadelphia, in February 1940. Copies, sometimes sketchy, of the talks can be found in Georgetown University's Lauinger Library, Special Collections, Murray Archives, file 6–422. The series title was "The Construction of a Christian Culture." An edited version of those talks has been published as "The Construction of a Christian Culture: I. Portrait of a Christian; II. Personality and the Community; III. The Humanism of God," in *Bridging the Sacred and the Secular: Selected Writings of John Courtney Murray*, ed. J. Leon Hooper, S.J. (Washington: Georgetown University, 1994) 101–23. *Bridging* includes many other primary Murray texts, most of which have been previously published elsewhere. In the remainder of my article, citations to any Murray work that is included in the *Bridging* collection will first list its previous publication (if any) and then its location in *Bridging;* individual page references will be to the citation's location in *Bridging*.

regime of liberty that recognizes no law that is not its own creation to a regime of law that recognizes no liberty that is not its own concession."[12]

Murray aims his sharpest criticism at America. In the spirit of European and papal condemnations of Modernism and Americanism, he claims:

It would seem that our American culture, as it exists, is actually the quintessence of all that is decadent in the culture of the Western Christian world. It would seem to be erected on the triple denial that has corrupted Western culture at its roots, the denial of metaphysical reality, of the primacy of the spiritual over the material, of the social over the individual.[13]

The American is best typified (in an image that will surface throughout Murray's work) as "the 'homo oeconomicus,' the business man, in a business suit, whose dreams of paradise are of a land in which there is no red ink," a person for whom there is no divine transcendence, spirituality, or collective responsibility.

Yet, unlike many similar European critiques, Murray is not willing to write off completely everything Western and Anglo-American.

At the basis of our culture is a spiritual idea, a religious truth that has been impoverished and deformed. The truth, I mean, that man is a person, sacred, inviolable, gifted with the divine prerogative of freedom and charged with all the responsibilities of that gift, that reach horizontally out to the farthest confines of human life and vertically up into the heart of eternity. The world owes that truth to Christianity; it did not exist before Christ; it came to earth in him.[14]

This Christian view of human dignity, particularly as it provided the foundations of American democracy, was corrupted by Calvinism.

In terms of three qualities of the Puritan soul, its anti-intellectualism and anti-humanism, its this-worldly morality, its intense individualism, you will, I think, find a major (though obviously not in itself adequate) explanation of the transformation of early American ideals of democracy.[15]

What might "rescue from its deep abasement the essential idea upon which a democratic culture must be erected, the idea of the dignity of human nature and of man's spiritual freedom?" Murray answers that only theological doctrine, specifically, the doctrines of the Incarnation, the Trinity, and the Cross, can function as a viable source for this rescue. Within the "sober fact" that God took on human nature, America again can claim the dignity of every human person, for "now," Murray is bold enough to claim, "a Humanity can and must be

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[12] "Construction," in *Bridging* 101–23, at 110–11.
[13] Ibid. 102.                              [14] Ibid. 105.
[15] Ibid. 104. Murray did claim that John Calvin, for "whose intellectual qualities and religious genius I have rather an admiration," was not to blame for these developments, without, however, spelling out how these Puritan shifts differed from Calvin.

adored."[16] With the notion of the Trinity, the West can develop a needed, analogous understanding of the fundamentally communitarian nature of the human person and of the necessity of self-sacrificial love for self-realization and social betterment. Finally, only by an appropriation of the upward movement of the soul to God as expressed in the Christ's dying and rising might Americans once again draw away from their fixation on material production to matters of the spirit. It is particularly the doctrine of the Cross that might paradoxically humanize contemporary society, for

when our hearts are lifted up to God in the desire of his pure light, then only are we truly in contact with the earth and able to exert upon the earth a redemptive action. Only the heart that is lifted from the earth can give to life on earth a meaning and a value, and rescue it from the tragedy of so many lives, futility. Only when our dwelling is in the heavens can we hope to fulfill our vocation on earth. Only when in the presence of God we possess ourselves can we give ourselves away to others.[17]

These 1940 talks dealt with what Catholic theology might bring to the public forum. And there is some suggestion of the "how." The movement between doctrine and human culture is clearly deductionistic: from doctrines of God as prime referent, the human person can then "apply" those ideal types of dignity, community, and transformation to the messier, fragile stuff of human existence. However, to get at how these graced doctrines might engage the full human person, it will be useful to outline the argument of Murray's 1937 dissertation.

### The Influence of Scheeben

In his careful study of Matthias Scheeben,[18] Murray explores Scheeben's understanding of Catholic faith. Faith is the human person's

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[16] Ibid. 106. Murray continues: "Let me put it thus strongly: the dreams of all idolaters have come true: a thing of flesh and blood has become so one with the divine that before it 'every knee must bend, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth' (Phil 2:11). Chalcedon does not shrink before that conclusion; rather it smites with its anathema Nestorius, who would not adore the man, Christ Jesus, with the same adoration that he gave to the Person of the Word. Equally Chalcedon teaches, in the eighth of the Cyrilline anathemas, one worship and one hymn of praise goes up to Emmanuel, God with us, for the Word has become Flesh. 'A human nature has become adorable and has launched, on metaphysical foundations, the cult of man.' Therefore '. . . now that man, since he is capable of divinity, is capable also and, for the first time, of full humanity.' "

[17] Ibid. 123. These of course are strong particularistic claims that, when combined with calls for Catholic religious establishment and political intolerance toward non-Catholics, were guaranteed to augment fears over Catholic political intentions. Put this strongly (in terms of necessity), it is but one small step to an argument that Catholics impose their faith for the sake of the *temporal common good,* a step that the Roman Catholics who silenced Murray were only too willing to make. As discussed further, Murray abandoned his claim of the necessity of Catholic doctrine in his later attempt to defend civil religious freedom. Yet Murray's insistence that even the most abstruse Catholic theological doctrines could have significant social impact, even to the content of the values we defend, never left him.

[18] *Matthias Scheeben on Faith: The Doctrinal Dissertation of John Courtney Murray,*

participation in God's knowledge. This is not God's knowledge of crea-
tures, nor even an image of God that is derived from creation. It is
God's knowledge of God's own self. Scheeben argued that, even before
death, the graced person shares in the beatific vision, that is, possesses
an immediate knowledge of God. Grace raises the human person to
"the knowledge proper to God, that through His light we may know
Him in His own light."[19] The metaphors are visual. "[W]e become like
to [God] *because* we see Him as He is,"[20] even though such a vision will
reach ultimate and complete fulfillment only after death. That knowl-
edge is supernatural. It is divinely infused, since the natural human is
incapable of attaining the divine. Even a sinless natural person would
be incapable of attaining the direct knowledge of God that Scheeben
claimed for the graced person. All that the natural person can do is
intend the divine. Simple natural intending of God, without direct
knowledge of God, does not define God's redemptive action in the hu-
man soul. "What nature cannot achieve is an *act,* tending to a super-
natural object in a particular way,—connaturally, and effecting with it
a particular union."[21] This immediate, direct knowing of God partici-
pates in the Son's knowledge of the Father. The saved, even in this life,
know the Father as the Son does.

While this understanding of participation in divine life is highly
individualistic, ahistorical, and conceptualistic, Murray applauds
Scheeben's attempts to move beyond at least the conceptualism inher-
ent in the visual metaphor. Contrary to much Catholic theology of the
time, Scheeben had turned to human psychology for analogies to di-
vinely infused faith (which Murray describes as Scheeben's insistence
on being "concrete"). The motive for this search for analogies was a
distinctly Catholic understanding that the naturally human is trans-
formed, not abandoned, by grace. Scheeben rightly, Murray insists,
saw grace effecting not only a transformation of the object of human
intellect (a vision proper to God), but also of human affectivity and
will. As purely natural, the human person can come to the veracity of
God and the fact of revelation, and then to the necessity of submission
to the God revealed.[22] That is, the natural person is open to an external
recognition that God has entered human history and offered God's full
self to humankind.[23] Yet, the natural will cannot reach, as it were, to

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ed. D. Thomas Hughson, S.J., Toronto Studies in Theology 29 (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin
Mellen, 1987).
    [19] Ibid. 65; Murray here cites Scheeben's *Natur und Gnade,* 3rd ed., ed. Martin Grab-
mann (Freiburg: Herder, 1933) 237.
    [20] Ibid. 71.                              [21] Ibid. 104.
    [22] Ibid. 108–9.
    [23] Defenders of political intolerance toward non-Catholics appealed to the *content* of
Catholic truth as necessary for the temporal common good. Here was another basis for

the level of the divine. Only grace can empower or lift up the human will to the supernatural.

So far, Murray insists that the human person is brought into God's very life by the presentation of a knowledge that is proper to God (the Son's knowledge of the Father) and raised to the level of the divine by a lifting up of the will. But Murray, with Scheeben, understands God's power as extending to the very roots of human intelligence itself. In a theme that later will be important to Murray's discussions of Christian humanism and, eventually, of ecumenical theology, not only has the human been made capable of reaching to an object that is beyond the natural, likewise the "light of faith . . . effect[s] the assimilation of the divine knowing power, which make[s] possible a participation in the divine knowing. Faith is the divinization of human intellect."[24] Not only is the appetitive will lifted up by an external force, and not only is the human person given a new object of knowledge. God's own act of knowing becomes immediately present *within* the act of human intelligence. The pure desire to know, which in its natural state, if it is to be true to itself, can reach to all creation and toward God, becomes by grace enveloped by God. God becomes present in the very act of human knowing.

Thus Murray defines graced participation in the divine foundationally in terms of visual metaphors for knowing and spacial metaphors of lifting up, while he insists that all that is naturally human— affections, will and knowing—are taken up into the redeeming presence of Christ. God's power permeates the full breadth and depth of the human person. In his attempt to extend the depth of God's gracious action, he also criticizes Scheeben on two scores. First, he finds Scheeben's understanding of our present participation in the beatific vision to be too static,[25] and he offers a Thomistic corrective. The "mystical elements" in Scheeben's thought obscured Thomas's recognition that what we presently can formulate about God is more defined by its negatives than by conceptually exact, positive propositions. That is, although the finite human mind can directly attain the divine, the positive conceptual side of that knowing is always moving toward fuller completion. Murray conceives participation in God's knowing more dynamically, locating the source of that dynamism in the structures of human consciousness (though not yet in its historicity and social embeddedness).

Second, he argues that particularly the Scheeben of the later *Dog-*

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a defense of intolerance located in the internal, dynamic structures of human consciousness. This argument for a natural necessity to respond to God's historical intervention was the core of the negative Catholic argument for intolerance, summed up in the phrase "error has no rights." In his first religious freedom argument, Murray himself accepted this notion of natural obligation.

[24] Scheeben, *Natur und Gnade* 246.    [25] Ibid. 80.

*matik* tended to reduce the act of faith to an "act of obedience."[26]
Scheeben's antagonism toward Liberalism's claim for the sufficiency of
natural reason, Murray suggests, led him in his later years to high-
light a grace-induced attitude of childlike obedience (which Murray
considers good) as the primary effect of participation in God's life. But
Scheeben also tended to reduce faith to "absolute obedience to a clear
demand," that is, to a filial legalism. Murray counters, with the help of
Newman, that if one moved from Scheeben's "big hate toward Liber-
alism," one might more adequately understand the sacrifice of intellect
(which all agreed is required by faith) as more like moving into un-
charted territory than like blind obedience to a clear demand. "Obedi-
ence of faith is not precisely that of Moses receiving the Law of Sinai,
but rather that of Abraham going out from country and hearth and
kin, into the land that God would show him, but of which he had as yet
no vision."[27] Murray here suggests a more dynamic notion of partici-
pation in divine life, metaphorically at least, as a movement through
history.

## The Laity's Mission

Toward the end of the Second World War, Murray took up Pius XII's
call for the participation of "all men of good will" in the needed social
reconstruction. Against some Roman Catholics, he argues that partic-
ipation by Catholics had to be total and fully integrated with non-
Catholics, that the damage done by the war did not allow half-hearted
or merely isolated action by Catholics.[28] While he now defends the
sufficiency of a natural theism for intercreedal ethical participation,[29]
he still insists that a holistic, theocentric vision is needed to move
Catholics to social action. In the face of the world-encompassing, athe-
istic vision of the Soviet East, especially young Catholics must be
animated by an even more comprehensive vision. "Against an all-
devouring *mystique* one must turn the full force of another *mystique*,

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[26] Ibid. 164.                          [27] Ibid. 179.

[28] For his reactions to American Roman Catholic rejections of full cooperation, see his
"Intercredal Co-operation: Its Theory and Its Organization," *TS* 4 (1943) 257–86, and
also his "On the Problem of Co-operation: Some Clarifications: Reply to Father P. H.
Furfey," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 112 (1945) 194–214.

[29] "In the perspective of this goal [i.e. the reconstruction of the temporal order], the
bases of the cooperative effort—the set of religious and moral principles which support
it—become clear. There are four such principles: (1) a religious conviction as to the
sovereignty of God over nations as well as over individuals; (2) a right conscience as to
the essential demands of the moral law in social life; (3) a religious respect for human
dignity in oneself and in others—the dignity with which man is invested inasmuch as
he is the image of God; and (4) a religious conviction as to the essential unity of the
human race. In terms of these four truths the natural order of justice between men and
nations is set up, made obligatory, and sanctioned" (*The Pattern for Peace and the Papal
Peace Program* [a pamphlet from the Catholic Association for International Peace]
(Washington: Paulist, 1944), in *Bridging* 6–27, at 14).

whose inner dynamism is still more triumphant and whose engage-
ment of the whole man is still more imperious."[30]
What theological sources for a lay mystique are capable of challeng-
ing the triumphant vision of atheistic Marxism? Murray now carves
out a new style of theology for the laity. The need for this new theology
rests in his recognition that the laity require some autonomy in social
action. Against some who, he judges, endanger the laity's special mis-
sion to the temporal order, Murray appeals to practical reasoning, the
application of Catholic principles to the complicated particularity of
temporal, political existence. In the use of practical reasoning the laity
must have some autonomy, for "only the laity, by reason of their par-
ticular situations, are in a position to solve [social problems]."[31] Here
doctrine functions simply and solely as a motivator to lay action, not as
immediately determinative of the content of the laity's action. Partic-
ularity and practical reasoning must intervene. Murray is no legalist.
This manner of distinguishing lay and priestly action in terms of
types of reasoning and of objects, however, leaves open the question of
how Catholic doctrine engages the lay person. Now Murray moves
back to doctrinal theology in order to sharpen, and restrict, its imme-
diately determinative role. As he earlier had argued for the necessity
of Catholic doctrines for human society, so again he asserts the neces-
sity of theological doctrine generally, now more clearly and distinctly
conceived as the redemption of theoretical reasoning.[32] But he also
distinguishes sharply between the task of redeeming human theoret-
ical reasoning and the task of applying a Catholic "vision" to the tem-
poral order. In the face of concerns that Catholics might become indif-
ferent to their faith, Murray isolates the pursuit of doctrinal truth to
the priestly class and ultimately to the bishops and the pope. The
priest must advance a *quoad Deum* theology—an understanding of
God "from the standpoint of God as God," which finds its unity in
"God's own vision of himself."[33] That is, the priest operates within a
theology that matches, in object and intent, theology as Murray de-
fined it in 1937 and 1940.
Yet, while this distinction between the permanent, intellectualist
realm of theology and the particularistic, fluid condition of social ac-
tion gave Murray grounds for lay autonomy, he now recognizes that

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[30] "Toward a Theology for the Layman: The Pedagogical Problem," *TS* 5 (1944) 340–
76, at 352. In the previous paragraph Murray described American society as itself cap-
tured by a *mystique:* "Even our particular American brand of laicism or secularism is
such a *mystique,* the more dangerous because of the quietness, brotherliness, and even
good humor with which it murmurs incessantly into millions of ears in hundreds of
places—office and shop, school, press, stage, dining room . . . ."
[31] "Toward a Theology for the Layman: The Problem of its Finality," *TS* 5 (1944)
43–75, at 70.
[32] Ibid. 51–52.                    [33] "The Pedagogical Problem" 360–61.

exclusively intellectualist doctrines could not function as a source for lay action. So, based perhaps on Newman's notion of "real apprehension" but more directly on Maritain's recommendations for lay theological education, Murray outlines a theology that is itself fluid and historically based. A lay theology, as distinct from seminary theology, is not derived from doctrinal theology, the *Summa theologiae* " 'writ-[ten] down' to the level of the layman, the college or university student."[34] It must be a *quoad nos* theology. Its starting point is to be the life, death, and resurrected presence of Christ Jesus.[35] Its terms are concrete, particular, and, thereby, capable of engaging the entire person in witness to the saving historical intentions of God.

This later move toward what is now called a historical or narrative style of theology was a genuine advance over Murray's earlier understanding of how theology can effect social transformation. In his lay theology, as well as in his calls for Catholic action within a triumphant mystique, there is a notion of faith as dynamic and affective, as well as rich in content. This is consistent with Scheeben's notion of grace embracing and transforming the full human person (interiority). Murray's new notion of lay theology is also consistent with the limits that Scheeben placed on the graced action of God. The impact is still only psychological and individual. Murray was not yet capable of visualizing God's redemptive, historical action beyond the individually psychological.[36] Yet, that which engages the full human person, or at least the psychological person abstracted from his or her social environment, is a historical reality. The source of transformation has shifted

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[34] "The Problem of Finality" 46.          [35] "The Pedagogical Problem" 366–69.

[36] With one exception, namely, the Roman Catholic Church as an institution. Lonergan describes the classicist cognitional theory that was operative in Murray's earlier arguments as incapable of conceiving the social in terms other than those of structured, permanent institutions (see *Method in Theology* [New York: Herder and Herder, 1972] 358–61, and "Revolution in Catholic Theology," in *A Second Collection*, ed. William F. J. Ryan, S.J. and Bernard J. Tyrrell, S.J. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974] 231–38, at 233). In that theory, there are two, and only two, "perfect societies," the church and the state. Both are conceived as embodiments of ideal types, rather than as dynamic, fluid patterns of human interaction over time. The villain for the classicist is temporality. While Murray never seriously entertained the notion that any particular civil state fully embodied the natural-law ideal of the state (since states exist only in the "temporal order"), his early treatment of the Church did not allow for historicity or finitude as other than accidentally constitutive of the Church. The Church is the realization of an ideal type. So also its mission flows out from a body of permanent, immutable knowledge. All church actions toward the world are conceived either as applications of ideal types within the limits of the possible or as proclamations of salvific truths that have achieved a permanence beyond any temporal, cultural embodiment. That is, movements toward the world are simply matters of application or communications. Within this classicist understanding of social presence, there is little room for a notion that the Church is primarily constituted by common meanings that develop over time, rather than by ecclesial institutions that share in the permanence of revealed truth. At this point Murray could find the salvifically dynamic only in individual interiority, even though he insisted on the social reality of the institutional Church.

from a realm of timeless doctrine to the historically particular. Though not yet a full locating of God's action in present social interaction, it is a move in that direction, made necessary by an understanding of what is needed to engage lay social action.

A final contrast in Murray's strategic use of scholastic conceptions of the humanly interior deserves highlighting. In his partial adoption of Scheeben, Murray turned inward and used his available faculty psychology to understand how the human person might be integrated into the life of God. The full human person—understanding and will, concept and emotion—is transformed by participation in the Son's knowledge of the Father. It is still only the individual that is so transformed. Although Murray sought to integrate as much of human nature as his faculty psychology would allow, he also used human interiority to divide. In his sharp distinction between practical and theoretical reasoning, he attempted to distinguish and grant strong autonomy to both the lay person and to the priest/theologian, each relatively confined to a distinct field of expertise. This strategic function of dividing on the basis of human cognition would be key to the arguments he developed between 1950 and 1964. Explicit discussions of broad human participation in God's life as a direct source of social integration would not resurface until the Second Vatican Council.

## A NATURAL-LAW INTERLUDE

Since Murray's earliest discussions of human participation in God's life envisioned human nature as empowered to reach God's own self-knowledge, it is not surprising that his earliest critiques of Protestant arguments for religious freedom were aimed at their alleged refusals to discuss religious freedom as an empowerment.[37] Eventually, however, Murray developed a successful natural-law argument in defense of civil religious freedom as an immunity, based on the rightful "moral claim that every man makes on others—on individuals, groups, political or social powers—that they refrain from bringing coercion to bear

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[37] "Freedom of Religion" 110. Murray repeatedly trapped his Protestant opponents in a catch-22. If they mentioned empowerment with any appeal to Scripture, they were asserting a theological claim that ran counter to Catholic insistence on the sole institutional centrality of Roman Catholicism in God's salvific plan. Yet, if they simply claimed that all churches share in the same immunity vis-à-vis the state (not mentioning a source of freedom as an empowerment), Murray countered that their arguments could only be grounded in an ecclesiology that asserted the equality of all churches before God. For this confused attempt at ecumenism, see also his review of M. Searle Bates's *Religious Liberty: An Inquiry, TS* 7 (1946) 151–63; "Dr. Morrison and the First Amendment," *America* 78 (March 6, 1948) 627–29; (March 20, 1948) 683–86; "The Catholic Position: A Reply," *American Mercury* 69 (September 1949) 274–83; (November 1949) 637–39; and "Paul Blanchard and the New Nativism," *Month* 5, New Series (April 1951) 214–15.

on him in all matters religious."[38] To defend civil religious freedom as an immunity that the Church must affirm, he suspended, for a time, any discussion of the "freedom that we are given in Christ Jesus." But he also had to allow for a type of development in the realm of theory that earlier he had not admitted.

Murray's argument for religious freedom as an immunity began in the distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge that he had employed in his intercreedal cooperation argument. In his first defense of religious freedom, in "The Ethical Question," he separates practical lay reasoning from priestly theology, highlights the prudential nature of policy determination (such as laws of establishment, concordat, or separation) in the realm of the temporal, then invalidates any legalistic or strictly deductionistic application of Catholic truth claims to that temporal order. Yet that argument collapsed; it would yield little more than political tolerance of non-Catholic believers.[39]

So, again, Murray distinguishes, now at the level of theoretical reasoning, between the principles of natural law and those of revelation. Whereas earlier he had treated the principles of both as ahistorical or essentially given throughout Christian history, he eventually allows that the more theoretical reaches of the natural law developed within history.[40] Not only can and must the applications of natural law change in response to social changes. The very content of natural law principles develops in response to social changes. Murray insists that a deeper understanding of human dignity and the limited role of the

[38] "Religious Freedom," in *The Documents of Vatican II,* ed. Walter M. Abbott and Joseph Gallagher (New York: America, 1966) 673–96, at 678 n. 5. In the terminology more characteristic of his ongoing argument for religious freedom, Murray continues this description of immunity rights: "This claim is twofold. First, no man is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his personal beliefs; second, no man is to be forcibly restrained from acting in accordance with his beliefs."

[39] I have elsewhere outlined seven successive stages to Murray's eventually successful argument for religious freedom. Many of the following claims concerning that ongoing argument can find support there; see John Courtney Murray, *Religious Liberty: Catholic Struggles with Pluralism,* ed. J. Leon Hooper, S.J. (Louisville; Westminster/John Knox, 1994) Introduction, 11–48.

[40] This movement in Murray's understanding of the contingency of (natural-law) theory can best be grasped by contrasting his treatment of principles in the following articles: "Freedom of Religion, I: The Ethical Problem" (1945); "The Natural Law," in *Great Expressions of Human Rights,* ed. Robert M. MacIver (New York: Harper, 1950) 69–104 (= *We Hold These Truths* chap. 13); "The Civilization of the Pluralistic Society" (1958) (= *We Hold These Truths,* Introduction); "Two Cases for the Public Consensus" and "The Origins and Authority of the Public consensus" (1960) (= *We Hold These Truths,* chaps. 3–4); and *The Problem of Religious Freedom* (1964). In 1945, natural law was an ahistorical, asocial, complete body of general truth statements. By 1950, Murray recognized some movement in the tertiary principles of natural law. By 1958, he called for a refounding of America's constitutionalism on critical, not on its previously naive, natural-law premises; and in 1960 he fully recognized the essentially social component of natural-law affirmations. Finally, by 1964 natural law has become a set of affirmations that "emerge" from particular historical societies as an "intention of nature" or a "dictate of reason."

state had emerged within Western societies, outside the Church and often opposed by the Church. These insights and commitments arose within history; they were conditioned by, but not derived from, multiple factors that were particular to those societies. In effect, Murray eventually asserts that historically particular societies were the primary source of the development of natural-law theory.

In his first, unsuccessful argument for religious freedom, Murray had claimed that the results of natural-law reasoning would not be reversed by revelation—again because of the unity of God the Creator and God the Redeemer.[41] After he had discovered that new moral truths, expressed as principles, did emerge outside the believing community, he continued to insist that these new truths could not be reversed by revealed sources. At issue, of course, was the moral legitimacy of the separation of church and state, but also of a new understanding of the human person and human society. Although he shies away from direct theological legitimation for modern religious immunity, he nonetheless calls the contemporary understandings of the limited state and of human dignity "intentions of nature." Those understandings and the institutions necessary for their support were moral demands that emerged within history, for a particular historical society, with their ultimate grounds in the specific will of the God of nature.

By 1964 Murray allowed that the broader social world could be a source of legitimate moral insight and will. He was now in a position to move toward a deeper understanding of human participation with a God who might redeem human societies (as well as human individuals) from within those societies.

### WHERE IN THE WORLD IS OUR REDEEMING GOD?

Given that compelling natural moral knowledge has in fact emerged from within the pluralistic societies of the West, where in this emergence, one might ask, is the God who not only directs human behavior, but also redeems the human spirit? Between 1950 and 1964 Murray was mostly silent on the issue. Only occasionally in his predominantly natural-law writings did a cry break out that reflected his earlier fear that contemporary society would collapse without public commitments to explicit Catholic truths, or to the Word Incarnate.[42] But those cries were muted.

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[41] "The Ethical Problem" 278.
[42] E.g., after describing the American public forum as succumbing to the "barbarism" of "technological secularism," and presenting education in "the tradition of civility" (natural law) as a corrective, Murray concludes: "I will end, as I always like to do, with a question, because all that I have said leads us to the threshold of the famous question of John of Salisbury. His question was whether or not civilization, that is, civil order, civil unity, civil peace, is possible without what he calls in a beautiful phrase 'the sweet and fruitful marriage of Reason and the Word of God'." ("The Return to Tribalism," *Catholic Mind* 60 [January 1962] 5–12; in *Bridging* 147–156, at 156).

Yet the "vision" that he had earlier recommended for American society found a home and nourishment in his studies of civil and religious education. In those studies, that vision often bore the name "Christian humanism." In 1940 Murray had first used the term in contrast to the alleged "anti-humanism" of Puritan America, as discussed above. Under its impulse, he tried to include within the redemptive power of God all those aspects of human nature that his scholastic notions of human interiority would allow.

By the mid-1950s Murray began to correct the deficient conceptions of human sociality and history that were inherent in his scholastic epistemologies. His path to those corrections was an extended study, with Maritain's guidance, of the working out of Catholic commitments within a concrete human society, namely, that of the third-century Christian community.[43] At its center was the figure of Origen.

Origen, Murray claims, had clearly grasped that God's intervention in human history bore seeds for the redemption of human cultures, not simply the redemption of human souls or rational powers. As the newly emergent Christian community faced the third-century world, there was a question that Origen could not avoid: Could a Christian humanism embrace a culture that first developed outside the community of faith? The problem involved a normative stance toward that complex human construct called Hellenism.

Further, unlike Murray's natural-law studies, this turn toward historical Christian interactions with an alien culture remained explicitly theological. Murray understood Origen to have found outside the Christian community goods that developed independently of Christianity, but also goods that could find unity within Christian self-understanding.

The question, as Clement of Alexandria had already put it, was whether there is "one river of Truth"; whether the two Testaments are finally One; whether the Logos, the Word, Who had come as Christ to be the Light of the world, was not somehow also the light that had beckoned to the soul of Egypt, burst upon the prophets, and illumined the intelligence of Greece. The question was whether Christianity, like Christ, was the Truth in which all truths are ultimately One.[44]

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[43] This turn paralleled a similar turn in his religious-liberty argument, from the cognitional abstraction of his collapsed argument in 1945 to his study of the history of Roman Catholic dealings with establishment and intolerance. His next three articles turned to post-Reformation studies of church-state relations: "St. Robert Bellarmine on the Indirect Power," *TS* 9 (1948) 491–535; "Government Repression of Heresy," in *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings* 3 (1948) 26–98; "Contemporary Orientations of Catholic Thought on Church and State in the Light of History," *TS* 10 (1949) 177–234.

[44] "The Christian Idea of Education," in *The Christian Idea of Education* (New Haven: Yale University, 1957) 152–63; in *Bridging* 133–41, at 137.

These studies, then, were and remained explicitly theological, guided throughout by explicit affirmations of the redemptive centrality of Christ.

In 1953 Murray grants two acceptable stances toward human culture, stances that he calls eschatological and incarnational. Both are forms of a Christian humanism, that is, are based on the belief that God will redeem human society. Yet they differ, as Murray describes them, in their response to the question "Is it basket weaving?"[45] That is, is Christian participation in the construction of culture simply a matter of filling up time until the Lord arrives in power, like the monks of old who simply wove and then unwove baskets? Or is human work for the construction of culture somehow a participation in God's effective presence and power in the social world?

By 1959 Murray argued that the stance of incarnational humanism is much more consistent with the animating spirit of Roman Catholicism.[46] One reason might be that at the time Joseph McCarthy, a Catholic, was hunting for Communists within American political and cultural institutions. Murray complained strongly that American Catholics were themselves capitulating to American anti-intellectualism and succumbing to "ethics of the tribe, a war-making group."[47]

More importantly, though, the stance of incarnational humanism is much more compatible with both Murray's earlier and later descriptions of human interiority. The theoretical methods that Murray had earlier assigned to the priest/theologian as an exercise in the redemption of human intelligence had, Murray now recognizes, first emerged outside the Christian community and then were brought into the living faith of that community. A constructive stance toward Hellenistic culture is, therefore, critical to defending the legitimacy of Roman Catholic, priestly theology and, with it, the comprehensive inclusion of human nature as Murray described them in the 1940s.

By 1964 and with the help of Bernard Lonergan, Murray develops a language that more adequately defines what he had been trying to defend in 1953. He does so in *The Problem of God*. Instead of practical reasoning and theoretical reasoning, the operative terms become biblical ways of understanding the realities of faith and systematic methods of approaching those realities, or "a mode of understanding that is descriptive, relational, interpersonal, historical-existential" and another mode "that is definitive, explanatory, absolute, ontological."[48] In

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[45] "Christian Humanism in America," *Social Order* 3 (1953) 233–44; slightly edited and republished as "Is It Basket Weaving?: The Question of Christian and Human Values," in *We Hold These Truths* 175–96.

[46] "The Liberal Arts College and the Contemporary Climate of Opinion" [1959]; in *Bridging* 142–46.

[47] See, e.g., "Challenges Confronting the American Catholic," *Catholic Mind* 57 (May-June 1959) 196–200, at 197, and "Return to Tribalism," in *Bridging* 148.

[48] *The Problem of God* 46.

his conciliar and postconciliar trinitarian studies, Murray now under-
stands the great church creeds to have brought the methods of Greek
systematic thinking to the defense of foundational Christian affirma-
tions of the Lordship of Jesus. The very term *homoousios* indicates that
something new is at hand, a new way of understanding the Church's
core proclamation of salvation.[49] The result is distinct from, though
consistent with, earlier Christian proclamations. Grace embraces an
alien culture, but, even more importantly, an alien way of knowing, a
cognitional stance that was not part of its original experience. In the
process, the Church preserves that different way of knowing, and yet
transformed or, one might even say, redeemed it.

Lonergan's notion that a new truth emerged in the Nicene appro-
priations of Hellenistic forms of reasoning allowed Murray to appro-
priate fully the Abrahamic stance toward Christian truth (rather than
that of Moses) that he had recommended in 1937 as a corrective to
Scheeben's fixation on certitude. The first section of *The Problem of
God* explores the biblical way of knowing God. It is a search through
history, now understanding history not simply as a metaphor for hu-
man interiority, but more fully as the primary arena of human contact
with God.

*The Problem of God* begins with Moses before the burning bush,
sweeps through the Incarnation to the Nicene and Chalcedonian Coun-
cils, pauses disparagingly at 19th-century scientism, and tackles the
problem of 20th-century social atheism, that is, atheistic existential-
ism and Marxism. While the high councils remain important for Chris-
tian faith, the driving force of faith in the world is the question: Is God
present to us in power?[50] The question repeatedly arises from within
specific communities, bearing the viewpoints and concerns of a people,
never free of historical particularity. In even the simplest cultures, the
question takes on several forms.[51] Yet the core statement of the ques-
tion is always existential, a search for the "active existence of God in
history, his presence in the midst of his people."[52] That is, in all ages,
humanity seeks God's life, primarily, within history, both in the emer-
gence of the human drive toward God (giving rise to the question) and
in the gracious signs of God's action (in forming a people).

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[49] Ibid. 45.
[50] Ibid. 10. On the basis of this understanding of power as effective moral action
toward social improvement, Murray was able to find some common ground with what he
called "post-modern" forms of social atheism, i.e. existentialism and Marxism. "In this
post-modern age the problem of God has come back in its biblical mode of position. I
should not say that it has come back. I should say rather that it has come up from the
depths where it always is—from the depths of history" (ibid. 119). Murray dismissed
19th-century scientistic atheism as only dealing at the level of understanding, not with
the core drives of the human spirit as found in social living.
[51] Namely, the existential and functional, noetic and onomastic; see *The Problem of
God* 17–21.
[52] Ibid. 17.

Given, then, that Roman Catholics have pursued and preserved two legitimate methods of coming to understand their God, the "simple" ways of biblical expression and the theoretical ways of Nicaea, are there any other distinct forms of knowing that have developed outside the Church to which the Church ought to be attentive? Murray tried after Vatican II to account for the emergence of a new recognition that God was at work within faith communities beyond the Church's boundaries, to which the Church must be attentive. He based this account on one more cognitional perspective or method that, he held, had newly emerged as a distinct mode of thought in the pursuit of truth. He had declared during the Council that the real issue dividing those who supported religious freedom and those who opposed it was the question of the development of doctrine. Some viewed development only within the general perspective of "classical consciousness." Others viewed development within the perspective of "historical consciousness."[53] Just as the Church at Nicaea had encountered and creatively transformed (redeemed) the methods of Greek systematic thought, so now the Church struggles with the new methods of historical thought. And, at the turn of the 20th century, most of the Catholic response had been polemical, primarily targeted at what the magisterium called Modernism.

So Murray revisits earlier Roman Catholic condemnations of Modernism, that "conglomeration of all errors." He insists that the Church's condemnation of the Modernist movement had been correct, at least insofar as the movement was a "false systemization" of the newly clarified historical nature of all human knowing.[54] And yet there was a truth in the Modernist movement that the Church missed.

The second great trend of the 19th century[55] was the movement from classicism to historical consciousness. The meaning of these two terms would require lengthy explanation, both historical and philosophical. Suffice it to say here that classicism designates a view of truth which holds objective truth, precisely because it is objective, to exist "already out there now" (to use Bernard Lonergan's descriptive phrase). Therefore, it also exists apart from its possession by anyone. In addition, it exists apart from history, formulated in propositions that are verbally immutable. If there is to be talk of development of doctrine, it can only mean that the truth, remaining itself unchanged in its formulation, may find different applications in the contingent world of historical change. In contrast, historical consciousness, while holding fast to the nature of truth as objective, is concerned with the possession of truth, with man's affirmations of truth, with the understanding contained in these affirmations, with the conditions—both circumstantial and subjective—of under-

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[53] *The Problem of Religious Freedom* 108.
[54] "The Declaration on Religious Freedom," in *War, Poverty, Freedom: The Christian Response* (Concilium 15 [New York: Paulist, 1966]) 3–16; in *Bridging* 187–99, at 195.
[55] The "first great trend" was the legitimate differentiation of the sacred and the secular that figured significantly in Murray's religious freedom arguments.

standing and affirmation, and therefore with the historicity of truth and with progress in the grasp and penetration of what is true.[56]

To the biblical and systematic ways of knowing God was now added a historical manner of knowing God. In affirming the conciliar "Declaration on Religious Freedom" and the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," the Church has embraced historical methods or historical consciousness, much as Nicaea embraced systematic methods, without fully realizing what it had done.

If, then, new substantive moral truths and methods of approaching revealed truths can arise within general culture, where is the Christian community to find God? Certainly where the Church is located. However, "the Council moved the Church squarely into the world of history."[57] In the process it has had to shed its "Platonic" notion of truth, with "ideas always up there in Heaven." Truth is now accepted as "an affair of history and [as] affected by all the relativities of history." Murray concludes that Vatican II "conceived the renewal of the Church to mean a turn to the sources of life of the Church—the sources in history which are also trans-historical: the event of Christ and the Word of Christ in the Gospel. This is where renewal must begin."

This new turn toward history demands a shift within the Roman Church itself. In response to 19th-century challenges to the authority of God, the Church, Murray claims, had emphasized the "principle of authority."[58] The ground for this emphasis was correct, for only in a lived relationship with God can humanity find its fulfillment. Yet the Church overreacted, leading to a "hypertrophy of the principle of authority" and a systematic ignoring of the wellsprings of its own life.[59] Those wellsprings are in "the principle of community," i.e., in divine love that binds church members to one another and to the God of history. Freedom and love are conjoined aspects of God's gracious action in the community of faith. Murray brings the principle that had been at the heart of his religious liberty argument, "as much freedom as possible," into the Church's own internal life. "The demand for due process of law is an exigence of Christian dignity and freedom. It is to be satisfied as exactly in the Church as in civil society (one might indeed say more exactly)."[60] This turning to the sources of religious

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[56] "Declaration on Religious Freedom," in *Bridging* 194.

[57] The direct quotes which follow in this paragraph are from a talk that Murray gave on May 5, 1967, three months before his death. A reconstructed version of this talk is published as "Toledo Talk," in *Bridging* 334–42.

[58] "Freedom, Authority, Community," *America* 115 (1966) 734–41; in *Bridging* 209–21, at 210–11.

[59] Ibid. 211.

[60] Ibid. 219. Note here that Murray is again talking about religious freedom as an empowerment, not simply as a civic immunity. Murray had argued for "as much freedom as possible" in the civic order precisely on common-good grounds (that the social good required broad and ongoing participation from all social sectors), not simply on individual-dignity grounds. In his last published address on religious freedom, he tried to

insight and will would situate the Church "squarely into the world of history," allowing the Church to engage the sources of its own life.

God's truth, God's offered salvation, is now to be found in the messy, limited, confused stuff of social living. Within concrete human societies there emerge both ways of knowing and rightful evaluations of human action to which the Church ought to be attentive.

### AN ETHICS THAT RESPONDS TO A HISTORICAL GOD

The preceding discussion demonstrates, I think, three distinct commitments that allowed Murray to move from an individualistic, atemporal notion of participation in the divine to a highly social notion of that participation. Those commitments were (1) to a "universalism" shaped by a strong affirmation that God redeems the full breadth and depth of human nature, (2) to the "concrete," lived reality of human life, despite Murray's own emphasis on theoretical reasoning, and (3) to a strong sense of human finitude before God. First, his commitment to incarnational universalism allowed him to adopt Scheeben's notion that God takes up the full (psychological) human person, then to extend that notion of God's redeeming presence to human historical societies. Second, with Scheeben's help, Murray brought grace closer to the lived reality of the human person; then, with his analysis of the "existential" choices that persons and societies face, he located both grace and the human person in their particular social worlds. Third, Murray's affirmation of human finitude before God begins as an Abrahamic correction of Scheeben (an openness to an undefined future) and ends in his straining to achieve common perspectives with non-Catholics and atheists.

Now the direction set by each of these commitments parallels, I think, three aspects of modernity as described by Taylor. Murray's incarnational humanism is echoed in what Taylor understands as Enlightenment universalism, particularly as that universalism was carried over into theories of human rights and its better theories of democratic institutions. Murray's drive to anchor his theology in the concrete (psychologically, and then socially) matches some 19th-century Romantic reactions against Enlightenment rationalism, particularly in the Romantic recognition that lived, concrete realities hold priority to abstract formulations, and that the unique particular ought to function as a normative source of moral guidance. Finally, Murray's growing sense of the finitude but essential open-endedness of human intelligence shares more in common with turn-of-the-century secular struggles with the creative role of human reason in constituting our

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reformulate a natural-law understanding of religious freedom in terms of empowerment ("De argumentis pro iure hominis ad libertatem religiosam," in *Acta Congressus Internationalis de Theologia Concilii Vaticani II*, ed. Adolf Schönmetzer [Rome: Vatican, 1968] 562–73; translated and published as "The Human Right to Religious Freedom," in *Religious Liberty: Catholic Struggles with Pluralism* 229–44).

common understanding (even our understanding of God) than it does
with the conceptualistic Scholasticism he inherited.

Between the studies of Taylor and Murray, then, there are sufficient
hints that the interaction between modernity and Catholicism has
been richer than is sometimes admitted. In fact, one might argue that
recent Catholic theological moves—toward universal-rights theories,
toward historical and narrative theologies (and, for that matter, stud-
ies of the historical Jesus), and toward the believers' role in constitut-
ing their own self-understanding—first achieved expression outside
the believing community, to which believers have been attentive. Mur-
ray claims as much in his admission that a broader understanding of
human dignity and the systematic and historical methods of reasoning
first emerged outside the Church. If such arguments are compelling,
they might contribute significantly to making explicit those unartic-
ulated "visions" that ground modern ethics—or to remaking those
visions, just as Murray had argued that a (revised) natural-law theory
could give American public philosophy a better, critical grounding.

A detailed evaluation of Roman Catholicism's actual dependence on
modern secular insights is beyond the range of this study. By way of
conclusion, however, I can more fully outline what appears to be an
ethical stance that is common to both Murray's and Taylor's ap-
proaches to the alien or the external. That stance is both the key to,
and the results of, their readings of modernity in its Liberal, Romantic,
and Modernist forms. Again, I take my lead from Murray, in this case,
his postconciliar approaches to ecumenism.

After the Council, Murray repeatedly insisted that now the Catholic
Church must approach conversations with Protestants and even athe-
ists "on a footing of equality," concerning not only natural moral
truths but also theological truths. Ecumenism in this broad sense did
not come easily to Murray. After the Council he wrote:

The men of my generation have been converts to ecumenism; we were not
brought up as ecumenists. Now we have to see to it that theological students
are, as it were, born ecumenists. Moreover, even at the moment, not to speak
of the past, ecumenism appears as a dimension added to theology from without.
We have to see to it that ecumenism becomes a quality inherent in theology,
as it is an impulse intrinsic to Christian faith itself.[61]

To advance theological discussions with Protestants, in 1965 Murray
delivered a dense Lonerganian analysis of trinitarian doctrine to a
gathering of Lutherans.[62]

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[61] "Our Response to the Ecumenical Revolution," *Religious Education* 42 (1967) 91–
92, 119; in *Bridging* 330–33, at 331.
[62] "The Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma," *Chicago Studies* 5 (Spring 1966) 65–80;
in *Bridging* 314–29. Given the article's terminological difficulties, one might question
Murray's willingness to be understood by Protestants. Yet he did in fact try to speak

Murray's discussions of theological truth with atheists, however, reveal more about the ethical dimensions of ecumenism as he finally practiced it. Early in his life he had in principle (though not in practice)[63] excluded atheists from cooperation in postwar reconstruction. As long as the theistic premise held the preemptive position of his early natural-law theory, he could find only pragmatic grounds for cooperating with those who denied the existence of nature's God.

Starting in 1964 he began a search for common theological ground with modern atheism. I have already mentioned the priority of the "existential question" in Murray's *The Problem of God*. The entire text, however, is directed toward the last section that is in fact Murray's first constructive theological engagement with existential and Marxist atheism. To set up his dialectical conversation, he initially spells out a biblical "problematic" between knowledge of God (gnosis) and denial of God (agnosis). He notes that the orientation of most biblical analyses of atheism had been polemical in that they drew sharp lines between those inside the community of faith and those outside the community.[64] In these polemical readings of their own worlds, those texts characterized the atheist as fundamentally destructive of the human good, human freedom, and responsibility.

Catholics, he contends, must now shed the polemical boundary-drawing of the biblical problematic, for in fact atheistic existentialists and Marxists share much with modern Catholics. Both are appalled by what they judge to be destructive of human freedom and dignity. Both are grounded in commitments to human betterment, shaped by a hope for the human good. Both recognize that proper responses to the contemporary world are existential, i.e. based on choice for the human good, not on conceptualistic arguments concerning God's existence.

On the basis of this shared hope Murray attempts to engage in a dialectical discussion with the modern atheist. After pointing out that

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with them concerning explicitly theological truths. The guiding problem that Murray presented to the Lutherans is one that played throughout his humanism studies, namely, whether the Christian churches could together embrace Hellenistic theoretical reasoning. Later, in a discussion with Anglicans of heresy problems within their own community, Murray continued to insist that "the spirit of theological inquiry is immanent in the very dynamism of Christian faith itself" ("A Will to Community," in *Theological Freedom and Social Responsibility,* ed. Stephen F. Bayne, Jr. [New York: Seabury, 1967] 111–16; in *Bridging* 222–26, at 222).

[63] See the conditions for cooperation in n. 29 above. See also his "Le droit à l'incroyance," *Relations [Montréal]* 227 (avril 1962) 91–92; translated and republished in *Bridging* 231–36. This piece was published in *Relations* along with a French translation of his religious-freedom argument ("The Ethical Problem" [1945]), an apparent use of Murray's earliest argument to support those who opposed any endorsement of religious freedom. By 1958 Murray could describe America as constituted by four communities (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and secular) that were in need of conspiring together, without offering any reason other than a pragmatic one for the inclusion of the last (*We Hold These Truths* 22–29).

[64] *The Problem of God* 23, 84–86, 118.

the normative biblical approach to knowledge of the ultimate always leaves the human person in a dialectic tension between what they can claim to know (gnosticism) and the ultimate incomprehensibility of ultimate reality (agnosticism),[65] Murray then describes the Marxist as one who claims to know all that is needed for human betterment (including the need to kill God), and the existentialist as one who claims to know nothing of the human good, who nonetheless heroically wills that good in the face of ultimate absurdity. These two modern forms of atheism slide exclusively into gnosticism or agnosticism, respectively. By so doing, Murray repeatedly asks, can either advance the human good that they rightly support?[66] Murray obviously thinks not.

While *The Problem of God* admits that Christian behavior sometimes has given rise to the atheistic response, it still bears a triumphalistic edge in that its claim for the biblical, existential stance is not bought into judgment of past or present lived Christian behavior. It also offers little hint that atheism as a modern social movement has much to teach Catholics about their God. Still, it is an attempt at a theological conversation with those movements, an attempt to find common theological ground in the pursuit of the human good, shaped by the theological terms of Murray's own sources.

By 1967 Murray moved toward what he called "internal links" between the believer and the atheist. He begins by stating unambiguously that "[social atheism] is now based on an affirmation, an affirmation of the human person, his dignity and his freedom. And this affirmation is accomplished by a will to achieve the dignity of the person by achieving his autonomy, by liberating him from the indignity and misery to which he is subjected throughout large areas of the world."[67]

To get at the links that the Christian has with this form of atheism, however, Murray does not mention the Church's commitment to human dignity as expressed in *Dignitatis humanae personae*.[68] Rather, he first offers a definition of the Church as a people of limited holiness. The Church itself is by definition only a partial realization of the kingdom, a sign and sacrament, "an eschatological reality in which there is an indissoluble tension between the 'even now' and the 'not yet.' Even now the Church is, and is one, and is holy, and yet the

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[65] "In the things of God it is perilous to misplace either one's agnosticism or one's gnosticism. The risk is to lose one's God, who is lost both when he ceases to be God, because no longer unknown, and when he ceases to be our God, because not known at all" (ibid. 65). See also his treatment of Thomistic analogy (ibid. 68–69).

[66] Ibid. 119–21.

[67] "The Unbelief of the Christian," in *The Presence and the Absence of God,* ed. Christopher Mooney (New York: Fordham University, 1969) 69–83; in *Bridging* 266–78, at 267.

[68] Vatican II's Declaration on Religious Freedom.

Church is not yet one and is not yet holy."[69] Then he comments on contemporary attempts to understand "the belief of the unbeliever" and the modern atheist as "the anonymous Christian," claiming that these conceptions "serve to enlarge and to deepen our notion of faith and to bring us back to a more biblical notion as opposed to the more intellectualized version of faith which was prominent in the scholastic tradition."[70]

Yet precisely what are those internal links between believers and unbelievers? Murray answers that, because believers have been significant causes of modern atheistic responses, the Church shares in the modern defections from belief. Here he mentions "the disunity of the Church herself" and "the present funeral mass" as being a scandal. Elsewhere he argues that the Church had violated its own distinction between the sacred and the secular, particularly by violating the demand for respectful autonomy toward the institutions that embody that distinction.[71] This distinction, with its source in Pope Gelasius I's distinction between church and state and its gradual incarnation within Western societies, represents a legitimate development, consistent with the Christian gospel, of a truth which the Church has repeatedly violated.

So far Murray has argued that the Catholic community responded inadequately to the world, an inadequacy measured against its own founding commitments, much as he had earlier argued that existentialism and Marxism responded inadequately as measured by the human good that they try to develop and the human subjects who are perpetually situated between what they know and what they do not know. In that respect, both Catholics and atheists share a common finite human nature. During the Council, Murray deepened that link in terms of the theological category of sinfulness. He wrote:

With regard to the document on religious freedom [Section 12 of *Dignitatis humanae personae*], I can testify here personally to great opposition on the part of the Fathers to any notion that the Church herself had been guilty of default, defect and sin against the proclamation of that Christian and human freedom which is inherent in the Gospel. It was I who finally devised the formulation in Section 12: "even though there were some people among the people of God who did not act up to the example of Christ in regard of Christian freedom." That is the best we could get from the Fathers, and you have no idea what a strain it was to get this much into the documents, namely that somehow or other, here and there, now and again, one or another person in the history of the Church may not have lived up to the fullness of the Christian revelation.[72]

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[69] Ibid. 269. On the previous page Murray acknowledges his debt to Edward Schillebeeckx and Juan Alfaro.

[70] Ibid. 272.     [71] "The Declaration," in *Bridging* 190–94.

[72] "The Unbelief," in *Bridging* 273–74.

Nor was Murray willing to allow that Christian sinfulness resides simply in its members, but not in the Church itself.

While it is true that the Church incurs guilt only through her members, it is nonetheless also true that the guilt her members incur can rightly be predicated of the Church herself. In other words, you could apply to the Church in an orthodox sense the famous Lutheran dictum with regard to the individual: *simul justus et peccator,* at once just and a sinner.[73]

Sin, therefore, is not simply a lack in its members. It is a lack in the full Church itself, part of its being "not yet" the full witness to God's embracing love.

Why this talk not only of Catholic corporate finitude, but also of its sinfulness? There is of course the historical record. Human goods have emerged both within and outside the professing community, and in fact some believers have fought those goods. A degree of intellectual integrity would carry Murray this far. Yet in my judgment more is going on. Murray is trying to practice what he recommends for his Church, namely that the Church move "squarely into the world of history . . . [which is] a turn to the sources of life of the Church—the sources in history which are also trans-historical: the event of Christ and the Word of Christ in the Gospel."[74] That is, he is trying to practice an ethics that is proportionate to this vision of God's redemptive action toward all that is human.

So, in his final years, Murray entered into a very concrete dialectic[75] with his old nemesis, the atheist, and followed a theologically informed—one might even say, conversionist—method for bringing that old conflict into a new framework. First, admit to the good outside. Then, concretely acknowledge mutual finitude and sinfulness. Finally, reach for new perspectives that might breach the walls that divide. In that reaching, God is present. In the construction of a new perspective, God's present will is found.

Here is a vision and a practical ethics that cut across the general biases of an age and the personal biases of individuals, but also against

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[73] Ibid. 275.                              [74] "Toledo Talk," in *Bridging* 335, 338.

[75] I have described these practical moves toward mutual understanding as a dialectic. Yet they are not dialectical simply in the sense of removing inconsistencies within the individual knowing subject or within an abstracted hierarchy of commitments. It is a dramatic dialectic between concrete actors in a lived social environment, among peoples who are isolated behind walls of mutual incomprehension, fed most likely by mutually blinding hostility. The truths by which this incomprehension is resolved are anticipated as possible, not as immediately at hand, much as Abraham moved toward a future land that he could not visualize. Participation in that dramatic dialectic requires virtues such as charity as an initial stance toward the alien (rather than as simply governing one's reactions to the alien once the truth has been found). Those virtues are the conditions for the possibility of recognizing the truth spoken by the alien, not simply attitudes that one assumes for the sake of individual integrity or of solidarity with the Christ who died and was raised. They are the conditions for the possibility for reaching and participating with the Christ who is even now present wherever that Christ might choose to act.

the group biases that often serve as refuges from general and personal bias. That vision challenges any theory, any personal stance, any form of tribalism that denies the practical possibility of God resolving old conflicts by newly lifting up human society to the level of the divine. That ethics takes practical steps toward the emergence of those new ideas or perspective by which an age, an individual, and a group might effectively live in God's transcending presence.

In the trajectory of Murray's systematic theology, then, there are three biases—biases now in the sense of three habitual stances: first, an openness to substantive outside influence; second, a predisposition to recognize the good in the alien; third, an expectation of future resolutions of conflict in terms that are presently not available. That these three stances find parallels in modernity suggest that interaction with the modern world can be a fundamentally constructive enterprise. That they can be rooted in the very concrete, lived reality of Catholic faith offers a vision that can help fill up the silence of an inarticulate society.

Yet recent experience has taught us that any one of these stances, adopted singly by believer or nonbeliever alike, does little more than contribute to a deepening public silence (even amid cries of war). An exclusive commitment to static universalism (whether it be Murray's early natural-law theory or Enlightenment scientism) slides easily into elitism and totalitarianism. An exclusive affirmation of concrete dignity allows only incommensurable horizons across which there can be no substantive, mutual understanding. A casting solely into the future (by, say, exclusive appeal to marginal visions of the good) leaves us no criteria by which we can judge competing notions of the social good. That is, all three stances are needed in order mutually to correct each other, much as Murray argued for a perpetual but necessary tension between human gnosticism and agnosticism, between our knowledge of God and our ignorance of God. Murray's God was, throughout his life, a God of the particular and the universal, of the past and the future. That his faith might live, he needed to correct aspects of his own theory and practice, correcting in both anything that legitimated ignorant hostility or encouraged the ethics of the tribe.