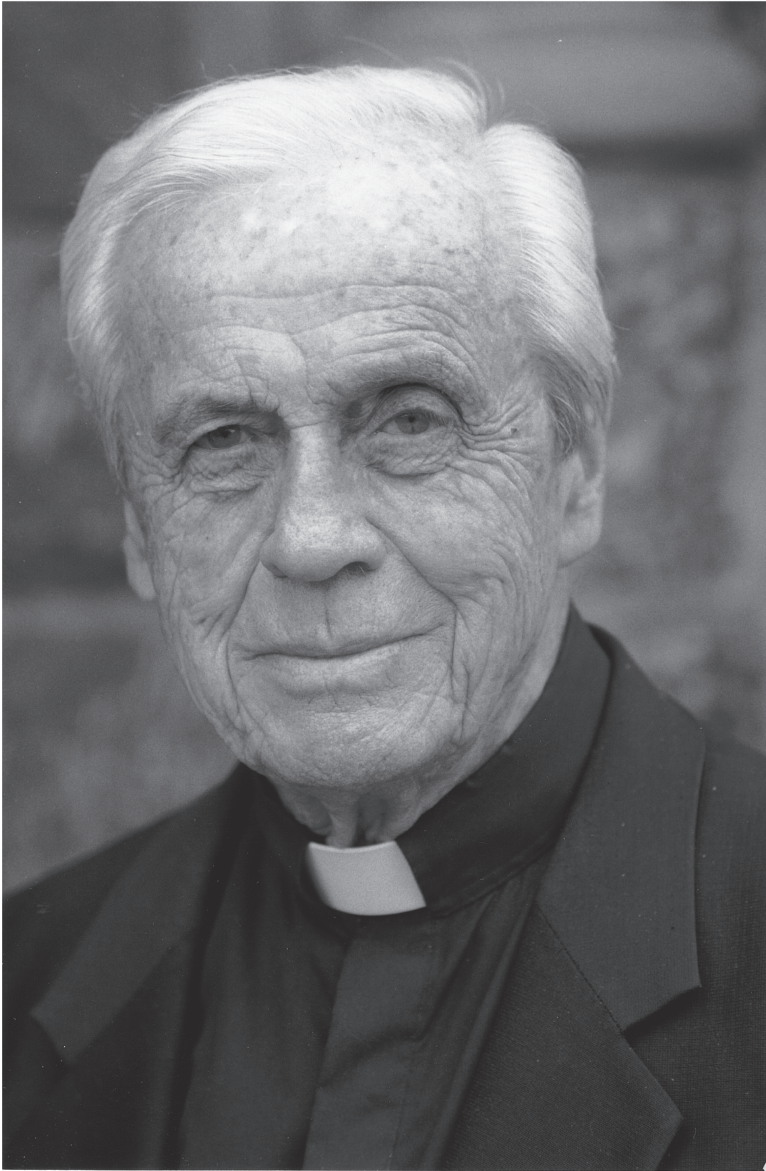


œ In Memoriam œ

Walter J. Burghardt, S.J. (1914–2008)



Editor in Chief, 1967–1990

AMBASSADOR OF CHRIST IN MEMORY OF WALTER J. BURGHARDT, S.J. (1914–2008)

LEO J. O'DONOVAN, S.J.

WHEN THE MASS OF CHRISTIAN BURIAL for Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., was celebrated at Holy Trinity Church in Georgetown on February 20, 2008, the readings were among the most frequently proclaimed and prayed in the contemporary church. His longtime friend and associate Katharyn L. Waldron read the stirring lines of Micah 6:6–8: “With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? . . . and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Walter’s cousin Danielle Burghardt McDavit read from 2 Corinthians 5:16–21, the text in which St. Paul defends his apostolate serving “the ministry of reconciliation” as “an ambassador for Christ.” With the parable of the Great Judgment in Matthew 25:31–46 as the gospel reading, James Connor, S.J.’s homily reflected on Walter’s theological accomplishments, his childlike simplicity, and his passion for social justice. Among the countless friends, students, colleagues, fellow Jesuits, and admirers who thronged the church and mourned him throughout the country and indeed the world, Jim’s brother Marty was typical in his sentiment: “I’m sorry to hear that Walter Burghardt died yesterday. Not for him, of course, but for the void he’ll leave.”

A DISCIPLE’S LIFE

Walter’s parents, Marya Krupp and John Burghardt, were immigrants from what is now Poland; they came to New York through Ellis Island a

LEO J. O’DONOVAN, S.J., earned his Th.D. under the direction of Karl Rahner, S.J., at the University of Münster. President Emeritus of Georgetown University and past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, he is now professor of theology at Georgetown University and visiting professor of theology at Union Seminary (2008–2009). A prolific author, his most recent publications include: “On Reading Rahner in a New Century,” in *Finding God in All Things: Celebrating Bernard Lonergan, John Courtney Murray, and Karl Rahner*, ed. Mark Bosco, S.J. (2007); “Wir und die Anderen: Sind Differenzen zwischen den Religionen eine Chance für den Religionsunterricht?,” *Informationen für Religionslehrerinnen und Religionslehrer* 4/2007; and “Globale Ethik zwischen Ideologie und Notwendigkeit,” in *Religionen und Globalisierung* (2007). Forthcoming is “Redemptive Mysticism in an Age of Doubt: Reflections on Mother Teresa of Calcutta’s Love of Christ Crucified for the Poor,” in *Geist und Leben* (German) and *Christus* (French). In progress is an essay on Josef Pieper’s philosophical contribution to contemporary Catholic thought.

year apart from each other. His mother worked for three years as a maid before she married. His father labored long years delivering milk from a horse-drawn wagon, eventually becoming manager of an apartment house where the family then lived. Devoting themselves entirely to the care and education of their elder son Eddie and his younger brother, the Burghardts were understandably proud when young Walter proved such a good student in grammar school that he was three times promoted in the middle of the year. At great sacrifice they sent both boys to St. Francis Xavier, a semimilitary academy in Manhattan.

In 1931, in the middle of the 17th year of his life, Walter Burghardt left New York for the Jesuit Novitiate at St. Andrews-on-Hudson, near Poughkeepsie, trading his Xavier uniform for a novice's habit. There was both pain and wry humor in the story Walter told so often afterward: The novice appointed to welcome him said to Walter, "Welcome, Brother Burghardt!" and to his father, "You have 15 minutes with your son."¹

Following the novitiate, but still at St. Andrew's, Walter pursued the traditional juniorate (or early college) years, the first focused on poetry, the second on rhetoric. During the latter, a Jesuit professor handed him the letters of Ignatius of Antioch. The young Jesuit's mind took fire, and the bishop-martyr became, as Walter later said, the springboard for his intellectual journey—as a later Ignatius, of Loyola, was to be for his spiritual way.

After three years of philosophical studies (1934–1937), the promising student became a promising teacher (of Latin, Greek, and English) at Regis High School in New York (where he also coached the freshman basketball team with great success!). Though he had been destined to study with the patristics scholar Joseph de Ghellinck in Louvain, the approach of war led to a cautious change in plan, and Walter was sent south to Woodstock College in Maryland, where in many ways he discovered not only theology (from 1938 to 1942) but also his most lasting home.

He loved theology, not as a requirement, but as the church's search for what God has said and is saying still (even if a "searching" style was not yet common at the time). John Courtney Murray had arrived at Woodstock in 1937 to teach, and the young theologian credited Murray's appreciation of

¹ Walter J. Burghardt, "Nourishing Head and Heart," *America* 194.10 (March 20, 2006) 13–15, at 13. Other autobiographical works include: "How Prayer Can Strengthen Your Love for God" (Interview), *U.S. Catholic* 52.12 (December 1987) 6–13; "Reflections on Aging: Personal and Theological," *New Theology Review* 4.1 (February 1991) 6–16; "On Turning Eighty: Autobiography in Search of Meaning," *Origins* 24.29 (January 5, 1995) 486–93; "Walter J. Burghardt, S.J.," in *Extraordinary Lives: Thirty-four Priests Tell Their Stories*, ed. Francis P. Friedel and Rex Reynolds (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria, 1998) 24–29; and, especially, *Long Have I Loved You: A Theologian Reflects on His Church* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2000).

the early Christian writers and his more historical approach to theology as formative of his own. In the Church Fathers he found centrally posed “the problem of the development of Christian thought through its historical past, and the problem of the address we are to make to our own intellectual and spiritual world.”²

After ordination to the priesthood in 1941, Walter had a fourth year of basic theology. In 1943 he undertook doctoral studies in patristics under Johannes Quasten at the Catholic University of America and wrote his dissertation on the image of God in man according to Cyril of Alexandria.³ Walter remained deeply indebted to the German exile and mentor, crediting him especially for “a sense of history, an awareness of cultural contexts, a realization that Christianity is inescapably involved in the ebb and flow of time, that affirmations and doctrines, words and syllables cannot be interpreted in isolation from their original milieu.”⁴ In 1946 Walter himself began teaching patristics at Woodstock and continued to do so until 1974, reminding his students always that the Fathers were not only teachers of Christian doctrine but also masters of the spiritual life. On joining the Woodstock faculty, Walter became managing editor of *Theological Studies* (hereafter, *TS*) and served in that capacity until 1967 when, on Murray’s death, he became editor in chief (see below).

The two great influences on his early years at Woodstock lived with him on the third-floor corridor there, in circumstances of considerable simplicity. The first and foremost influence was John Courtney Murray, the heart of whose theology came from Aquinas. Walter quoted two sentences from Aquinas again and again. The first: “Amor est vis unitiva et concretiva.” Love makes for oneness; the lover produces another self, or in Murray’s terms: “Love is a centripetal force.” The second: “Amor facit extasim.” Love carries the lover outside himself, outside herself; the lover becomes selfless. Or: “Love is a centrifugal force.”⁵ Who better to embody these correlative principles than the other neighbor, Gustave Weigel, who had come to Woodstock in 1948 (after being forced to leave Chile) and taught there until his death in 1964? Though not a theological innovator, Gus became an ecumenical pioneer through the sheer force of his affectionate, down-to-earth presence. Praising Weigel’s “refreshing realism” a few years after his death, Walter wrote, “How sum him up? Perhaps in the Bonhoeffer summation of Jesus: a ‘man for others.’”⁶ From these two men Walter learned a style that reflected theirs but was entirely his own.

² Burghardt, *Long Have I Loved You* 9.

³ Published as *The Image of God in Man according to Cyril of Alexandria*, Studies in Christian Antiquity 14 (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1957).

⁴ Burghardt, *Long Have I Loved You* 11.

⁵ *Ibid.* 32–33.

⁶ Walter J. Burghardt, “Man for Others: Reflections on Gustave Weigel,” *Wood-*

His world grew gradually—and then rapidly—still larger. Even before, but especially in response to, Vatican II, he began to think in methodological terms, more historically and experientially, more culturally and comparatively. He edited and studied Bernard Lonergan's writings, expressing his admiration in a special issue of *Continuum* in 1964. His growing appreciation of Karl Rahner was evident in his 1968 presidential address to the Catholic Theological Society of America. After his public disagreement with *Humanae vitae* in 1968, he was particularly gratified, as I know personally, when Paul VI nevertheless appointed him in 1969 to the newly established International Theological Commission, and then reappointed him to a second term.

In 1955 Walter attended the Second International Conference on Patristic Studies at Oxford (marveling that he was only 41 at the time) and in 1958 became coeditor of the series *Ancient Christian Writers*. With service from 1962–1970 on the Baltimore Archdiocesan Commission for Christian Unity, his ecumenical involvement began close to home and moved quickly outward. In 1963 he was invited to join the advisory council for the ecumenical center that Paul VI had requested Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C., to establish at Tantur in Jerusalem. From 1967–1970 he served as the first president of the North American Academy of Ecumenists. Awakening to the imperative of genuine dialogue with “my Jewish sisters and brothers,” in 1964 he had also made his first visit to a Jewish synagogue, the Reform Synagogue in White Plains, N.Y.—the first Catholic priest to be invited there.

When Woodstock College moved to New York City in 1969, Walter found it exhilarating to be in his home town again. He cherished the opportunities for exchange with faculty and students from Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University, and Jewish Theological Seminary. (He regretted that Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, who had greatly impressed him when they first met at Notre Dame in 1966, was unwell in those last years before his death in 1972.) When, much to Walter's dismay, Woodstock College closed in 1974, he accepted a position at the Catholic University of America, remaining there until 1978, when he became Theologian in Residence at Georgetown University. During those years, an event in which he was not a participant, the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1974–1975), nevertheless affected him deeply; its call for “the service of faith and the promotion of justice” as a single Jesuit vocation was to shape his thought and life increasingly over the next decades.

stock Letters 97 (1968) 604–7, at 607. This was nine years before Pedro Arrupe, General Superior of the Jesuits, gave his famous address on Jesuit education's call to educate “men for others.” On Bonhoeffer, see Burghardt, *Long Have I Loved You* 227–33.

When Walter decided to retire from *Theological Studies* in 1990, a final great phase of his active life still lay ahead—his project on preaching the just word, to which I will return below. But in addition to that work, in 1992, with Robert Birge and David H. C. Read, he was the cofounder and coeditor of *The Living Pulpit*, an ecumenical quarterly dedicated “to the art of the sermon.” And in 2000 Orbis Books published the book many readers cherish most, *Long Have I Loved You: A Theologian Reflects on His Church*, a “spiritual autobiography” charting the movements and tensions Walter and his church experienced in the second half of the 20th century. When his health began to decline, particularly his eyesight (due to macular degeneration), he moved first to the Jesuits’ Provincial Residence in Baltimore for several years (2004–2006) and then to Manresa Hall in Merion Station, Penn. He continued to read and write (using an electronic magnifying machine) and was proud to have contributed to a piece for an ophthalmology magazine. Again and again, over his last months, I heard how beautifully appreciative he was of the attentive and thoughtful care he received at the Manresa Hall infirmary.

Walter had published more than 25 books and well over 300 articles and had received 23 honorary degrees and numerous other awards. But no honor would likely have meant more to him than to be taken after Mass at Holy Trinity to the Woodstock Jesuit Cemetery and buried there near scores of fellow Jesuits, including his beloved friend John Courtney Murray.

THE EDITOR

Like so very many people, I admired Walter Burghardt the theologian, was graced by his preaching and priesthood, and loved the man. If I now try to suggest what I think his greatest contributions were, well, I cannot help myself. They were in fact threefold (Walter was notorious for his “threefold” idiosyncrasy): his service as an editor, his dedication to preaching, and the confluence of his theological learning and pastoral eloquence in the project to which he dedicated the last years of his life.

By any standards, Walter’s editorial work at *Theological Studies* was extraordinary—for 21 years as managing editor and then for another 23 as editor in chief. As he himself remarked in 1989, reviewing the journal’s first 50 years, it was not clear from the start that such a publication was warranted or possible. The theological atmosphere was restrictive—and soon to become more so. The range of possible authors was limited (by design) to the six theological faculties sponsored by the Society of Jesus in the United States. The clouds of another war were looming. And there was the practical question whether enough subscribers would be willing to invest five dollars a year in the idea.

Lo and behold, when the first issue appeared in February 1940, under the brief editorship of William J. McGarry, S.J., the lead article, “Did Saint Ignatius of Antioch Know the Fourth Gospel?”, was by a second year theologian, Walter J. Burghardt; he published the second half of his study in the next issue.⁷ John Courtney Murray, who succeeded McGarry in 1942, published his own first article only three years later.

The style of *TS* was established early: major articles, briefer bulletins or reports (“Current Theology”), and full book reviews and shorter notices. From the beginning (if at first very modestly) there were Notes on Moral Theology. Jesuit moralists John Ford and Gerald Kelly were the prominent early representatives in that discipline. (Ford’s famous essay on obliteration bombing appeared in 1944.) In systematic theology the journal deserves lasting gratitude for having published Lonergan’s five articles on the *Verbum* in Aquinas (1946, 1947, 1949). On issues of church and state, Walter watched with admiration as Murray struggled “to demonstrate the difference between U.S. church–state separation and the antireligious secularism of Continental democracy”—and was deeply distressed when his friend was silenced in 1955. Reflecting on the years that culminated in Murray’s participation in Vatican II, Walter wrote: “If *TS* had done no more for the Church and the world than publish the fruit of Murray’s research . . . between 1945 and 1966, it could have closed its theological shop at his death and murmured gratefully, ‘It is very good’ (see Gen 1:31).”⁸

There were also biblical articles, some of the earliest of which were highly technical. In the 1950s Elmer O’Brien provided surveys of ascetical and mystical theology with an incisive wit that Walter later admitted he missed. The appearance of historical studies, he believed, was largely due to Murray’s influence, a result not only of his church–state research but also of his method of teaching the Trinity according to the “modes” of expression from the scriptural, to the patristic, the theological, and the conciliar. After Walter’s own initial contribution on Irenaeus, he began to publish regular overviews of patristic studies, nine of which appeared between 1944 and 1984. He also authored major reviews of *Sources chréti-*

⁷ His typically judicious if somewhat studied answer? “The hypothesis of a textual dependence [of Ignatius’s letters] on the Fourth Gospel is by far the most satisfying. But, since our quest has been, and is, for scientific certitude, we must admit that we cannot at present see our way clear to a flat refutation of the hypothesis of oral tradition or (less likely) a Johannine school” (*TS* 1 [1940] 156). With Murray and Lonergan, Walter would later come to value theological understanding far more than certitude.

⁸ Walter J. Burghardt, “Epilogue: A Half Century of *Theological Studies*: Retrospect and Prospect,” *TS* 50 (1989) 761–85, at 771, 772.

ennes (1948), the *Vatican Encyclopedia* (1955), and the second edition of *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (1958).

The conciliar and postconciliar years were as momentous for the journal as for the rest of the church. Two years before his untimely death in 1967, Murray had been able to persuade Richard A. McCormick, S.J., to undertake the Moral Notes. Assuming the position of editor in chief, Walter came to count McCormick as *TS*'s most influential moralist, although—typically—he also published articles strongly critical of him.⁹ He was greatly energized by the promise of the council and counted two of its documents particularly important: *Dignitatis humanae*, the Declaration on Religious Freedom, and *Gaudium et spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. The innovation of the former, for which his great friend John Courtney Murray was so significant an architect, proclaimed to the world the Catholic Church's full commitment to religious freedom. For Walter's patristically focused eyes, it also made the study of doctrinal development more urgent than ever. It led him to pay greater attention to Christian freedom itself, a theme that grew steadily in importance for him over the next 25 years. In the Pastoral Constitution he cherished especially the themes of the church in service to the world, the true autonomy of the human, the call to dialogue, and the insistence on cultural context. It would be a fruitful exercise to count the number of times he quoted those Spirit-ed closing lines from no. 62: "all the faithful, clerical and lay, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought, and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence."¹⁰

When Woodstock College moved to Manhattan in 1969, Walter brought *TS* there as well. That year he redesigned the journal (with a new cover design and typeface) and added "Presenting This Issue" as its first two pages (the first time the editor's name had appeared as such in the magazine). That year's vol. 30 included, in addition to the moral notes by McCormick and Robert H. Springer, S.J., authors such as Edward Schillebeeckx, R. C. Neville, Gerald A. McCool, S.J., and George A. Lindbeck. The next year (1970), in "Presenting This Issue" Walter wrote: "We begin theology in the seventies by focusing on an extraordinarily live issue: abortion." (In 1964 the journal had published an exploratory article by Felix Cardegna, S.J., on artificial contraception. In 1978 it included even stronger, contrasting pieces on the subject by John Ford and Germain Grisez, on one side [infallibilist], and Joseph A. Komonchak, on the other [hermeneutical].)

⁹ See Burghardt, *Long Have I Loved You* 419–20.

¹⁰ On these two documents, see especially *ibid.* 77–88. It should be noted that this book also treats many other documents of the council at considerable length.

1970 also saw a publication that showed Walter at his most perspicacious: Gustavo Gutiérrez's "Notes for a Theology of Liberation,"¹¹ a paper Walter first heard with a group of North- and Latin-American bishops in Miami. Three years later a strong current of liberation thought began to flow through the journal's pages.¹² *TS* was increasingly addressing urgent cultural and social issues. Ecumenical contributions, beginning in 1967 with significant articles on the 450th anniversary of Luther's 95 theses, came now from Protestant scholars. The first article by a woman appeared in 1971, and the December 1975 issue, "Woman: New Dimensions," included seven women authors (of nine in all). In March 1974 there was a special issue on population. It had an article calling church officials to approach the problem "with broad vision," about which Walter later wrote:

It may be of historical interest to reveal that the editor was requested by the Vatican Secretariat of State, via Jesuit channels, not to publish the "challenge" article on the responsibility of the magisterium (which the respected Episcopal author had sent in manuscript to Rome FYI). On receiving the telex from Rome, the editor was able to respond with restrained happiness: the issue was mailed out yesterday. At which dear Father Pedro Arrupe . . . is reliably reported to have exclaimed, "Oh, thank God!"¹³

As Walter approached the last decade of his tenure, his hand at the helm remained sure. In 1977 he had introduced a board of editorial consultants from not only the Jesuit Schools of Theology of the time but also from schools such as Concordia University in Montreal (Michael A. Fahey, S.J.), Duke University Divinity School (Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm.), University of Chicago Divinity School (David A. Tracy), and Yale University Divinity School (Margaret A. Farley, R.S.M.). Closing *TS*'s 40th year in 1979, Walter presented "with understandable pride" Rahner's "Toward a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II" as well as John A. Coleman et al.'s "Theology and Philosophy in Public: A Symposium on John Courtney Murray's Unfinished Agenda." (There had been no article in the journal commemorating Murray immediately after his death.)

In the mid-1980s, with his sense for inclusion and balance, Walter welcomed Lisa Sowle Cahill and fellow-Jesuits David Hollenbach, John Langan, and William Spohn to join McCormick in writing the moral notes. (By the late 1980s the Notes would become still more genuinely international in scope.) Murray had written an article on "the moral problem of war" in 1959. The U.S. bishops' pastoral *The Challenge of Peace* (1983) occasioned many more. Significant historical contributions came from John W. O'Malley, S.J. (1983, 1988). Women authors had been appearing regularly

¹¹ *TS* 31 (1970) 243–61.

¹² See *ibid.* 62–63.

¹³ *TS* 50 (1989) 770.

since the mid-70s, but the 80s saw still more significant articles by Anne Carr, Sandra Schneiders, Elizabeth Johnson, Catherine LaCugna, Leslie Griffin, Susan Wood and Mary Ann Donovan, among others. In the 50th anniversary volume in 1989, seven of the 28 articles were by women. “What amazes me,” wrote the editor, “is that for 19 centuries we ‘did theology’ without them, without even missing them. Another strong if needless proof that theologians as well as the magisterium are in large measure captive to their culture.”¹⁴

Throughout his tenure Walter also supervised the publication of some 200 book reviews and shorter notices per year. He expressed special appreciation for editors who served these pages the longest, Matthew O’Connell and Joseph Tylenda, S.J. Those of us who were edited by him will never be able to express adequately our appreciation for the gifts he brought to his task: his knowledge of the tradition, his openness to the new, the elegance of his style, its concision alternating with supple breadth. A good friend said recently that he remembered above all how encouraging Walter was, and how he could say that he did not mean to correct you—but then do exactly that with laser-like precision. He loved the Word of God, served it with a language informed by the Spirit, and showed his Ignatian heritage with a sense for God’s glory in all things. The journal whose editorial reins in 1991 he handed confidently to Robert J. Daly, S.J., reminds one of him on practically every page.

THE PREACHER

Fittingly enough, Walter’s first book of homilies, in 1960, was called *All Lost in Wonder*.¹⁵ The title came from Gerard Manley Hopkins’s version of Aquinas’s *Adoro Te*:

See, Lord, at thy service lies here a heart
Lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art.

Typically, the book collected “Sermons on Theology and Life.” Drawn from a radio program on which Walter spoke between 1951 and 1959, “the sermons . . . stressed dogma rather than morality, belief rather than conduct, thought rather than action” (v). They were organized according to theological treatises of the time: God and creation, sin and Incarnation, the life of Christ and the life of the Christian, the Eucharist and the Passion, the Resurrection and the resurrected life, Mary, the theological virtues, and

¹⁴ Ibid. 782. On feminist theology, see *ibid.* 63–64, 289–327, 354–56. Of some special interest are 311–14, describing a 1967 seminar at Woodstock titled “Toward a Theology of Woman,” when the College had only Jesuit students.

¹⁵ Walter J. Burghardt, *All Lost in Wonder* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1960).

eschatology. The pieces are relatively short and devotional, almost Victorian in style. (Walter greatly admired Newman.) The well-known tripartite structure is there in many—though one, believe it or not, has four parts. The language is rich, informed by careful theology (clearly of its time), enlivened with poetry (Alfred Lord Tennyson, Francis Thompson, Omar Khayyam, Edmond Rostand), frequently citing contemporary example (Clint Eastwood would probably be surprised to learn that Walter quoted a letter from a Japanese soldier on Okinawa almost 50 years ago). World War II looms from the recent past, with many references to soldiers lost and families still grieving. Walter ventures to explain the meaning of ontology and cosmology. Rather more successfully he speaks of “the abiding meaning of Mary,” in whom, he tells his readers, “you glimpse your own destiny” (153).

What one remembers most, however, is how personally the author addresses his audience (first radio listeners, then readers)—and the incipient, personalist humanism that wells from this son of Ignatius of Loyola who quotes Ignatius of Antioch on the last page of his book. For all his doctrinal purpose, the preacher cannot avoid the existential challenge to readers he urges to be “fully human and completely Christian.” “You are a question mark that cannot be avoided—a living, breathing, perennial challenge to the little world in which you live. . . . Is this the way human life is meant to be lived?” (75–76).

Saints and Sanctity was another early collection of talks, some delivered first on radio, others in churches, and one in a penitentiary.¹⁶ The problem he posed throughout: “What is the significance of yesterday’s saint for today’s Christian?” (v). His method: to emphasize a trait particularly exemplary in a given saint’s life—the intelligence of St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, or the educational zeal of St. Peter Canisius. Some favorite contemporary authors make their first appearance (Anne Morrow Lindbergh). The aphoristic style continues, but has become more limber. The chief difference from the earlier book, though, is that Burghardt the historical theologian is here consistently evident. One does not sense the council (which ended as the book was published). But one senses an author ready for it.

Fifteen years later, working with Don Brophy, the managing editor of Paulist Press, Walter began a remarkable series of published homilies that comprised 14 volumes by 2006. The first of these, *Tell the Next Generation: Homilies and Near Homilies*,¹⁷ set the pattern for what was to follow, and with a title that might have stood for them all. Old friends appeared again

¹⁶ Walter J. Burghardt, *Saints and Sanctity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

¹⁷ Walter J. Burghardt, *Tell the Next Generation: Homilies and Near Homilies*

(Hopkins and Cyrano on the very first pages), but there was a new (conciliar) hope for homiletics in the air, and Walter plunged ahead with it joyously. Each homily (and occasional, near homily), with a brief introduction on its origin, constituted a minicourse in homiletics. Each was rooted in and remained with the liturgical readings. As one came to expect, each conveyed three points—but not always! (A good mutual friend in later years said she thought even Walter’s conversation unfolded in three parts, as in: “finding—God—everywhere.”) All required demanding preparation (“an hour for every minute” was the famous dictum; sometimes he began a homily five weeks in advance), and each included telling historical and current example.

Like Picasso, Walter admitted that he was a shameless thief: Coming upon Urs von Balthasar’s *Glaubhaft ist nur Liebe*, he intuited the thrust of the book and read no further—but wrote the lovely “Only Love Is Believable: Lent with a Loving Christ.” The collection’s introduction provided an overview of its author’s approach to *Preaching: The Art and Craft*, as a later book with Paulist put it.¹⁸ And, in addition to sermons for the liturgical year, it included homilies for baptisms and marriages, reflections on faith and justice, and an elegy for John Courtney Murray (“surely the most difficult of my homilies”).

When the “weaver of words . . . seduced by syllables” published his next book with Paulist, *Sir, We Would Like To See Jesus: Homilies from a Hilltop*, David H. C. Read, pastor of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, reviewed it in *America* and wrote: “Only in the sermons of Frederick Buechner have I found such fresh language, such poetic vision, such unexpected twists and such a deeply personal witness to Christ.”¹⁹ A fertile collaboration developed with the Presbyterian pastor and preacher, and Walter also made it his business to read Buechner, who became an enduring influence on his preaching. (Among Protestant authors, these two men, along with Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann and Lutheran theologian Joseph Sittler, were the major influences on Walter’s homiletics.²⁰)

One of my favorite titles in the series is *Grace on Crutches: Homilies for Fellow Travelers* (1986), inspired by Flannery O’Connor. Here the link between liturgy, Scripture, and the homily has become even more central,

(New York: Paulist, 1980). The list of titles up to 2000 is included in the bibliography of Burghardt’s publications found in *Long Have I Loved You* 485–503.

¹⁸ Walter J. Burghardt, *Preaching: The Art and the Craft* (New York: Paulist, 1987).

¹⁹ David H. C. Read, review of Walter J. Burghardt, *Sir, We Would Like to See Jesus*, *America* 147.21 (December 25, 1982) 417.

²⁰ See the multiple references in Burghardt, *Long Have I Loved You*.

as has the author's increasing concern for the movement from faith to social justice. On its last page, addressing students in Georgetown's Dahlgren Chapel, Walter asks (in his second and final point!): "While God is seeing to it that justice is done for yesterday, will you see to it that love is not lost today?" (208). But others may well prefer a later and also popular volume such as *Christ in Ten Thousand Places: Homilies toward a New Millennium* (1999), or *To Be Just Is to Love: Homilies for a Renewing Church* (2001).

In preparation for its 150th anniversary, Baylor University conducted an international study and in 1996 announced a list of the twelve most effective preachers in the English-speaking world. The alphabetical order was led by Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., senior fellow, Woodstock Theological Center, Washington, D.C. Was anyone who ever heard him surprised? What he generously said of Sittler, many would say of him: "His spoken word, even when unrehearsed, lent delight to the ear: measured syllables, rhetorical balance, lovely cadences, all with a view to gentle but forceful Christian persuasion."²¹ His mind was as intuitive as it was inquiring, as sympathetic as it was systematic. His rhetorical ability—his dexterity with the device of catalogue, his fondness for assonance and alliteration, his skill with the staccato and incomplete sentence after the ornately constructed one—was unique. So, too, was his ability to summarize another author's argument. (Suddenly you knew what you had really meant.) And throughout: the unending search, guided by the Word of God, to listen and to respond, and then to listen again. He asked the impossible of himself (who could really spend an hour on every minute of a text?) but set a star on the horizon of homiletics that will shine on and on.

THE JUST WORD

At the age of 78, Walter entered what he later called the most exciting period of his life. The time was so exciting for him, he would explain, because of his energy for "biblical justice's very definition: fidelity to relationships. What relationships? To God, to people, to the earth. Love God above all idols; love every human person as an image of God; touch all of God's nonhuman creation with respect and awe."²²

The immediate occasion for the project "Preaching the Just Word," to be sponsored by the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University, was a long conversation between Walter and James Connor, S.J., di-

²¹ Ibid. 144.

²² Burghardt, "Nourishing Head and Heart," *America* 194.10 (March 20, 2006) 15; see also George M. Anderson, "Preaching the Just Word: An Interview with Walter J. Burghardt," *America* 175.9 (October 5, 1996) 10–14.

rector of the Center. Gradually it became clear that there should be three (three!) key aspects of the project: it would be concerned with preaching; it would be related to the Jesuit mission of serving faith by promoting justice; and it would cast its net as widely as possible. The late, beloved Philip Murnion, director of the National Pastoral Life Center in New York City, urged that an undergirding spirituality was even more important than information, skills, or strategies, important as it was to consider these. With that priority in mind, it was decided that a special kind of retreat/workshop would be developed, convening typically over five-day periods in cities throughout the country.

The project had been seeded well before. Cardinal Joseph Bernardin's foreword to Walter's booklet *Seven Hungers of the Human Family* pointed out the centrality of his concern for justice.²³ I have already mentioned how influenced he was by the Society of Jesus' efforts to appropriate Vatican II and that he had begun to publish articles on various liberation movements in the 1970s. In 1980 he anticipated the project in an article with the very title "Preaching the Just Word."²⁴

In 1991 Walter led the first two retreats and was joined on the project in 1992 by his indispensable colleague and beloved friend, Fr. Raymond B. Kemp, who had been ordained for the Archdiocese of Washington in 1967 and had extensive experience with the African-American community at parishes such as St. Augustine and Holy Comforter-St. Cyprian. (Ray also served for five years under Cardinal James Hickey as Secretary of Parish Life and Worship.) Ray's own perspective on Walter's growing commitment is worth remembering: "He walked and prayed himself into it,"²⁵ observing life along North Capitol Street in downtown Washington while he lived at St. Aloysius Church and at the same time discovering ever new depths to the challenge of Scripture (like Karl Barth with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other).

For his basic conception of biblical justice Walter was indebted to Scripture scholars James P. M. Walsh, S.J., and, especially, John R. Donahue, S.J.²⁶ He also regularly invited other scholars such as Lawrence Boadt,

²³ Joseph Bernardin, foreword to Walter J. Burghardt, *Seven Hungers of the Human Family* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1976).

²⁴ Walter J. Burghardt, "Preaching the Word," in *Liturgy and Social Justice*, ed. Mark Searle (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1980) 36–52, 91–94. See also Walter J. Burghardt, "Preaching the Just Word: Problem, Preacher, Project," *Modern Liturgy* 13.2 (March 1991) 8–10; and Burghardt, *A Faith That Does Justice: Challenge of the Nineties to the Christian Community*, Warren Lecture Series in Catholic Studies 18 (Tulsa: University of Tulsa, 1991).

²⁵ From a private conversation with Kemp.

²⁶ John R. Donahue, *What Does the Lord Require? A Bibliographical Essay on the Bible and Social Justice*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2000).

C.S.P., Richard J. Clifford, S.J., Raymond Collins, Carolyn Osiek, R.S.C.J., Barbara Reid, O.P., and Sarah Ann Sharkey, O.P., to make biblical presentations. From Walter's description of the workshops' structure, the Ignatian inspiration of the topics is abundantly clear.²⁷

Less well known perhaps is the careful preparation and the brio that engaged project participants. (Then again, if you knew Walter, what else would you expect?) He scoured the daily press for information on hunger, prisons, poverty, natural disasters such as Katrina and the Asian tsunami, the war in Iraq, environmental degradation, and the new assault on America's immigration tradition. He read certain columnists avidly, whether for their substance or for their style—Paul Krugman and Maureen Dowd, for example—and had special appreciation for Bob Herbert of the *New York Times*. He had always rejoiced in the company of young people, not only for the promise of their youth but because they kept him abreast of how people at the time talked and played and what they found important. Now there are stories all over America of how he regaled Preaching the Just Word attendees with stories of John Courtney Murray, Gustave Weigel, and the preconciliar church. He learned a new appreciation for today's ministers of the Word and came to care deeply about what weighed upon them, held them back, or might block them from a more fulfilled life of service.

In 1994 Yale Divinity School invited Walter to give the Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching. Following in the footsteps of some of America's most distinguished homilists since 1871, including those who had most influenced him (Brueggemann, Buechner, Read, Sittler), he spoke on biblical justice, the Christian tradition on preaching and social justice, and the cry of the poor—"because social doctrine, however deep, remains at best a head trip unless it is touched to, in fact stems in large measure from, the less fortunate images of Jesus, those who share far more of his crucifixion than of his resurrection."²⁸ In a fourth lecture he addressed the emerging social issues of assisted suicide, understanding gay and lesbian people, and the role of women in the Catholic Church. (John Paul II's apostolic letter *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* appeared in 1994.)

Walter thought that his slender book *Hear the Just Word and Live It* had perhaps the greatest impact because of its stress on the *preacher's* listening.²⁹ He was also particularly proud of *Justice: A Global Adventure*, which he dedicated to Ray Kemp "for revealing by expression and example that

²⁷ Burghardt, *Long Have I Loved You* 161–79.

²⁸ Walter J. Burghardt, *Preaching the Just Word* (New Haven: Yale University, 1996) x.

²⁹ Walter J. Burghardt, *Hear the Just Word and Live It* (New York: Paulist, 2000) 113–20.

God delights in every human color,” and to Marian Wright Edelman of the Children’s Defense Fund “for ceaselessly striving to uproot and banish the tragedy of every sixth child growing up hungry and hopeless in the richest country on earth.” It seemed a fitting and moving valedictory when he wrote in his preface: “When my eyesight began to falter and I wondered whether this project could be completed, a dear friend of three decades and more stepped in with a practical solution: If she, Katharyn L. Waldron, contributed the final section not yet written, proofread again and again an expanding manuscript, and worked with me on revisions, this book would be published. The result? My own growing vision of justice is being brought to light despite the darkening of my world.”³⁰

TAKE, LORD, AND RECEIVE

In fact, however, we will continue to receive from Walter: not only what he had already published, but even a posthumous book of sermons in 2009 from Orbis (as yet untitled). Of course there are the memories that friends and readers continue to gather and share.

Walter Burghardt was a handsome man, more handsome even in his maturity than as a boy. I see him now once more, with great affection: the broad forehead and square face under the noble head of hair that grew even more nobly gray; the intense, searching blue eyes; the perpetual tan; the nervous twitch near his mouth that would run down his neck and work like an intended gesture; the expressive hands bent before his chest, folded inward to form a kind of cup (of kindness, emphasis, sympathy); above all, the honeyed, sonorous baritone that seemed capable of becoming music itself if he wished. He was tall but not too tall, with a strong but not lanky build, ideal in fact for the pulpit or the lecture hall. The gifts of his bearing were more than he needed for the desk, but ideal for classroom, church, convocation—or stage! From central casting, one might say, for a devout churchman of his time.

As we remember him less than a year after his death, the stories multiply; from students at Woodstock in the 1940s and 1950s remembering not only the classes or the *TS* office but also the image of Walter and John Courtney Murray teeing off at the college’s (quite primitive) golf course; from drivers who made up for the fact that he never learned the skill; from a high school sophomore stunned that Walter would do an interview with him for the school paper. And then there are the stories about the stage fright he suffered to the end (and translated into yet another saga of

³⁰ Walter J. Burghardt, *Justice: A Global Adventure* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2004) xi. It pleased him greatly that the book was translated into Polish, indicating that it indeed had global effect.

survival); about the kindness that one good friend, who knew his writing very well, still considered his greatest contribution (Henry James: “The most important thing in life is to be kind.”); and about the deep, warm chuckle that was at once his pleasure and your encouragement.

One of my own favorite stories is of the afternoon when Walter came out to visit with my mother and father and a dear friend from college. Pat was tall, beautiful, elegant. Charmed, Walter resorted to his most charming manner. “Why, Miss Fitzpatrick, you must work for *Vogue!*” “Well, actually, no, Father, for *Glamour,*” she said. Looking to recover his balance: “And may I ask what you do there?” (Perhaps she had an entry level development position, or a young copy editor’s role.) She smiled and modestly replied: “I’m the Art Editor.” It was a curiosity to see the great man momentarily speechless. And then we all laughed, Walter, of course, loudest of all.

He told probably the best stories of all himself, and often on himself. His greatest contribution to theology? The some 2500 articles he did *not* publish in *TS*, he often said. And he could combine the incredibly tender and the embarrassingly revealing: “I shall not dwell,” he wrote on his 80th birthday, “on the loss of father and only brother within three weeks of each other [while he was a second-year theologian]. I have to confess, however, that their deaths, both of cancer, have played a significant role in my development as a state-of-the-art hypochondriac. No one in human history, to my knowledge, has experienced as many fatal symptoms as I.”³¹

Walter had said that the ceaseless inspiration of his life had been the final meditation from St. Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises*, the “Contemplation for Learning to Love Like God.” As for many other Jesuits, its concluding prayer, “Take, Lord, and Receive,” was sung after Communion at his Mass of Christian Burial. But as with other Jesuits and indeed all men and women of faith, what Walter asked God to take and receive was a lifelong search to make room for the holy mystery he now enters eternally: the Father’s love through the crucified and risen Word and in the Holy Spirit, living forever in the Communion of Saints.

May he rejoice in that eternal communion of love and, as a beacon, call us to join him.

³¹ Walter J. Burghardt, “On Turning Eighty,” *Origins* 24 (1995) 491.