

From the Editor's Desk

Theological Studies

2014, Vol. 75(3) 483–484

© The Author(s) 2014

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0040563914543757

tsj.sagepub.com

The popular media of my youth told us that we were awaiting the messianic Age of Aquarius, the New Age movement described by Neville Drury in *The New Age: Searching for the Spiritual Self* (2004) as “drawing on both Eastern and Western spiritual and metaphysical traditions and infusing them with influences from self-help and motivational psychology.” The time, it seemed, longed for some kind of togetherness, unity despite all the differences, a wholeness that might engender shared joy. Certain drugs, it was hoped—then and now—would enable the process. That longing, I suspect, is as old as the human race. By our differentiating power of self-reflection, we human voyagers recognize our differences and long to be affirmed in them as unique. But overindulgence in that direction quickly throws us into existential loneliness and a longing to swing back toward communion.

Anthony Godzieba, in his plenary address opening this year’s meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America, presented a creative and stimulating treatment of the meeting’s theme, “Identity and Difference, Unity and Fragmentation.” Drawing on Vatican II’s *Unitatis redintegratio* and its call to restore “unity among all Christians” and so to avoid the kind of divisions that make it appear “as if Christ himself were divided,” Godzieba (together with the other CTSA presenters) argued that the Church’s integrity is a both/and reality and vocation, not either/or. This should be obvious, since the human race itself requires, for integrity, the both/and of unique persons recognized as simultaneously one in their humanity. But this imperative has seldom carried the day, and for many still does not. Hence the seeming intractability of racism, among other consequences of fragmentation.

But achieving the kind of unity called for and represented by Christ himself (Jn 17:21 *et passim*) is not a simple matter, given our concupiscent tendency toward egocentrism, a proclivity of self-defining groups as well as individuals. Holding identity and difference together is a matter of grace; the many forces driving them apart are what we call sin. Yet Godzieba illustrated the successful achievement of such a graced integration by a magisterial analysis of J. S. Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*. It was not lost on me that for an audience of mostly Catholic scholars he had (presumably deliberately) chosen a committed Lutheran artist to illustrate the graced integration of identity and difference.

I do not want to slight any of the fine articles in this issue of *Theological Studies*, but space allows me to highlight only two that especially bear on the discussions at the CTSA meeting.

Alberto Melloni points out that Giuseppe Dossetti's mostly behind-the-scenes contribution to Vatican II was as Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro's peritus. Melloni argues that Pope Francis's call for "a poor church for the poor" did not arise from some private revelation. It might seem so, since the theme of a church called to exemplify Christ's poverty is not clearly evident in the conciliar documents and postconciliar magisterial statements. It took Francis to retrieve what Lercaro and Dossetti had strongly promoted. Melloni writes: "[A] theology of poverty and the poor Christ was not born in the darkness of personal asceticism (though this was not lacking), but in the light of the conciliar event and in the universality of its ecclesial dimension." Thus, in Melloni's view, inspired by the Dossetti/Lercaro archival documents, poverty should (in my own way of pressing the matter) be included along with "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" as a mark of Christ's church. After all, poverty simply names the human condition of the individual person before the whole community and especially before our Creator God. So too, I suggest, "poverty" names the church's condition. What have we that we have not received (cf. 1 Cor 4:7)? Our authentic richness, both as individuals and as church, stems from our unity with the whole and the Wholly Other. Ironically, poverty is what makes us rich as transcendent beings. This should not surprise us, since Christ's own radical poverty (*kenosis*) is what saves us and makes the church a mediator of salvation, or, to speak with *Lumen gentium*, the sacrament of the world's salvation.

The same theme is highlighted in Christopher Ruddy's article on Joseph Ratzinger's theology. Ruddy argues that "the few" are the starting point from which God saves "the many." He sees Ratzinger's "vicarious-representative" theology, based on this starting point, as carried through his soteriology, Christology, and ecclesiology. As such, it states the "vicarious-representative heart" of his whole theology. Ruddy foregrounds Ratzinger's term "pro-existence" to describe "Jesus' mode of existing for others in substitution for them" (*Jesus of Nazareth*). This mode exemplifies and incarnates Jesus' radical poverty in the Mystical Body's reception of the outpouring of his self in obedience to the Father and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Love that binds the Trinity into unity. It is the Trinity's difference and identity that casts both Christians and the Christian church into God's image and likeness as God's presence to and for all of us and our world. This Triune Presence is what invites us and our church to manifest to the world God's tri-unitarian likeness and so to draw fragments into the Creator's design, a design that is at the origin of a masterpiece such as the *Goldberg Variations*.

David G. Schultenover, S.J.
Editor in Chief