

HOPE, MODERNITY, AND THE CHURCH: A RESPONSE TO RICHARD LENNAN AND DOMINIC DOYLE

JAMES GERARD MCEVOY

CHRISTIAN HOPE IS SORELY NEEDED today, in the Church and the world alike. The articles by Richard Lennan and Dominic Doyle explore how hope can transform ecclesial life and contribute sympathetically yet forthrightly to overcoming the challenges presented by modernity. My response endeavors to draw together some of the authors' perspectives and amplify others while sketching a line of thought about hope and modernity. Two further works feature prominently in this discussion. The first is a recent article, discussed by Lennan and much admired in theological circles, Constance FitzGerald's "From Impasse to Prophetic Hope: Crisis of Memory."¹ The second is Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*, a study of the contemporary place of religion.²

Lennan's article fits neatly into the field of ecclesiology, giving an account of ecclesial life from the perspective of Christian hope and contending that the Church can be conceived of as a sacrament of hope.³ While acknowledging that the term itself is not found in Vatican II's documents, Lennan exposes this line of thought both in the council's documents and in its theological methodology. His essay begins with an articulation of the connections between hope, the Church, and sacramentality. Hope is a particular response to God's presence: in Rahner's words, "a radical

JAMES GERARD MCEVOY received his Ph.D. from Flinders University, Adelaide, and is now senior lecturer in theology in the Department of Theology at the same university and at Catholic Theological College. Specializing in theological anthropology and fundamental theology, he has recently published: "Proclamation as Dialogue: Transition in the Church-World Relationship," *Theological Studies* 70 (2009); "Living in an Age of Authenticity: Charles Taylor on Identity Today," *Australasian Catholic Record* 86 (2009); and "A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan about Church and Government," *Heythrop Journal* 48 (2007). In progress is a monograph on the church-world relationship.

¹ Constance FitzGerald, "From Impasse to Prophetic Hope: Crisis of Memory," *CTSA Proceedings* 64 (2009) 21–42.

² Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap of Harvard University, 2007).

³ Ecclesiology has been the abiding passion of Lennan's theological career, reflecting on the contours of the Church's life in order to address its contemporary tensions, dilemmas, and challenges. His most recent major contribution to this field is *Risking the Church: The Challenges of Catholic Faith* (New York: Oxford University, 2004).

self-submission to the absolute uncontrollable,” and therefore remains open to the God who always transcends our knowledge of God.⁴ Yet hope about the future is based on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Further, the revelation of God in Christ through the Spirit is not only the basis of Christian hope but also the sacramental source of the Church.

Having articulated hope's connection with the Church and sacramentality, Lennan, guided by the work of Louis-Marie Chauvet, identifies four interrelated implications for ecclesial life. First, because the Church is a sacrament, it is indispensable for the life of faith: “the Church is the only guaranteed means of access to Jesus as crucified and risen” (260). Second, as a sacrament, the Church calls believers to conversion and must itself engage in continual renewal, including self-criticism and dialogue. Third, the Church must live at the service of the presence of Christ, constantly discerning his presence and not putting limits on the grace of Christ, even inadvertently. Fourth, Lennan emphasizes the eschatological dimension of hope: the fullness of that for which the Church hopes is still to come. Therefore, in Chauvet's arresting image, as a sacrament of hope the Church “radicalizes the vacancy of the place of God” (263). In a further section, Lennan shows that as a sacrament of hope, the Church is impelled to engage with social ills.

Doyle mines Aquinas's theology of hope in order to reflect on the Church's present struggles, in particular the clergy sexual abuse crisis and what he calls the trauma of modernity.⁵ In quoting Aquinas's definition of hope as “the movement of the will toward a future, difficult, yet possible good” (275), Doyle proposes a dialectical view of the relationship between faith and hope: hope overcomes the internal tensions and incompleteness present in the experience of faith. One of these internal tensions resides in the nature of faith itself: faith arouses the believer's desire for our eternal future while not providing an intellectual grasp of that future. In this context, Doyle sees hope reaching out to the reality that faith knows opaquely. Another tension in the experience of faith is the propensity to equate Christian life with doctrine and social boundaries. Yet when hope enables believers to seek a difficult, future good, they avoid that

⁴ Karl Rahner, “On the Theology of Hope,” *Theological Investigations*, vol. 10, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury, 1977) 242–59, at 251.

⁵ Doyle's publications on Aquinas's theology of hope include “*Spe salvi* on Eschatological and Secular Hope: A Thomistic Critique of an Augustinian Encyclical,” *Theological Studies* 71 (2010) 350–79; and “Retrieving the Hope of Christian Humanism: A Thomistic Reflection on the Thought of Charles Taylor and Nicholas Boyle,” *Gregorianum* 90 (2009) 699–722. He has signaled the forthcoming publication of a monograph entitled “The Promise of Christian Humanism: Thomas Aquinas on Hope” from Crossroad/Herder & Herder.

crippling propensity and are led into a fuller expression of Christian life. In Doyle's words: "The advent of hope makes Christian belief more believable, since it not only proclaims God's truth, but also manifests God's mercy and power through a nonpossessive attitude of humble reliance on divine help and patient expectation of an eschatological goal" (281).

In his second section, Doyle argues that the dynamics of hope—its striving toward a future good—fosters a nuanced approach to modernity. The ultimate good of eternal life, sought by the hopeful person, gathers within it many secondary goods, including goods that have come to prominence in modernity. So the practice of hope enables believers to discriminate between modernity's shortcomings and its achievements. In this context, Doyle discusses the work of two Christian humanists, Nicholas Boyle and Charles Taylor, as examples of hopeful discernment. Doyle promotes Boyle's approach over Taylor's, criticizing Taylor for an individualistic analysis of the place of religion today, an analysis that, in Doyle's view, fails to acknowledge the social and institutional basis of faith.⁶ In his third section, Doyle draws a "loose analogy" between the particularizing dynamic of hope and contemporary ecclesiology's focus on the local church. Hope is particularizing because in hope the believer bases herself in the absolute, uncontrollable reality of God, a reality that faith knows only universally.⁷ From this perspective, Doyle asks: if hope particularizes faith for the individual, cannot the universal structures of the Church be particularized in the local church, in an appropriately devolved fashion?

What do I take from these rich yet diverse essays? My response is twofold. The following section explores the connection, made by both Lennan and Doyle, between the unique nature of hope and its contemporary significance. As already noted, Doyle takes Aquinas's approach, while Lennan adopts Rahner's. In this context I will propose that FitzGerald's insight into the relationship between hope and memory develops Rahner's approach and is particularly pertinent in the light of Taylor's analysis of modernity. Having articulated a view of hope influenced by the works of Rahner, FitzGerald, and Taylor, the final section addresses one of Doyle's fundamental questions: How can hope inform the Church's relationship to modernity?

THE UNIQUENESS AND CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE OF HOPE

Lennan and Doyle both believe that, in our time, hope should have a certain priority among the theological virtues. In Lennan's judgment, the

⁶ My reading of Taylor's work differs significantly from Doyle's. I discuss these differences in my concluding pages.

⁷ This is Rahner's argument in "Theology of Hope" 253–55.

clergy sexual abuse crisis overshadows the life of the Roman Catholic Church: the gravity of the issue and scale of the crisis mean that it dominates the Church's contemporary context. In response he develops an ecclesiology of hope. The Church must navigate the devastation of the crisis by allowing Christian hope to pervade the Church's common life, since hope orients the believing community to the mystery of God and makes the community cognizant of its own limits. Doyle addresses the issue of hope's contemporary significance in a broader context, identifying two primary dimensions: the clergy sexual abuse crisis and the trauma of modernity. First, like Lennan, Doyle argues that in the light of the clergy sexual abuse crisis, the virtue of hope is essential for the restoration of the Church's credibility. He claims that the fundamental causes of the crisis can be found in the inner life of the Church, particularly in the inner tensions and contradictions of the experience of faith, such as faith's tendency to be restricted to codes and social boundaries. Hope overcomes these tensions and contradictions, enabling the believing community to refashion its common life without neglecting the theological content of faith. Second, Doyle argues that the practice of Christian hope can greatly assist the Church as it negotiates the trauma of modernity, since hope enables the Church to discriminate between modernity's shortcomings and its achievements. This second point I examine more fully below.

Such discussion of hope's contemporary significance implies that it is a unique virtue, distinct from faith and love. Claiming particular significance for the theological virtue of hope must mean that it is more than simply faith voiced in an eschatological key, for example; if the claim of particularity has any meaning, hope must have a distinct nature. But how is this uniqueness to be understood, particularly hope's relationship to, yet distinction from, faith? Doyle addresses this issue directly. Following Aquinas's conception of the theological virtues as divine gifts that direct the person toward union with God, Doyle sees faith primarily in cognitive terms: "it prompts the mind's assent to a divine reality that exceeds the capacity of the human intellect" (279). The gap between faith's goal (the divine mystery) and faith's limited reach is bridged by hope, which is primarily an activity of the will. From Aquinas's perspective of the operation of the virtues, then, hope is an activity proper to the will that reaches out to God as the absolute good.⁸

Lennan emphasizes the interrelationship of the three theological virtues, but he does not explicitly discuss hope's distinction from faith and love. However, his article foregrounds the approach taken by Rahner in "On the

⁸ For a succinct study of Aquinas's view of the distinctiveness of hope see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 2, *Spiritual Master*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington: Catholic University of America, 2003) 322–30.

Theology of Hope.”⁹ I will outline the distinction between faith and hope expounded in that essay both to highlight its relevance and to show how it is extended by FitzGerald’s notion of hope and memory. Rahner addresses questions raised by Scholastic theology about hope’s uniqueness, in particular: whether Christian hope is a transient virtue that is dissolved once believers are in “possession” of their eternal future; whether hope merely stands between faith and love as a modality of each of them; and whether hope, as an activity of the will, is engaged only after faith apprehends the promises of God. While regarding the insights of Scholastic theology as axiomatic, Rahner moves beyond its language and framework to express “certain essential aspects and dimensions in the nature of hope” in more contemporary terms.¹⁰

Rahner develops what might be called a phenomenological approach to Christian hope, emphasizing the intentionality of the subject: in hope, the believer cleaves to her absolute future and attempts to envisage her present experience from that perspective.¹¹ Rahner writes of hope as an “attitude,” yet here attitude does not have the common meaning of a state of mind temporarily adopted by an individual; rather, it means an individual’s entire stance or orientation to her historical existence before the utterly transcendent God. In Rahner’s words, then, Christian hope “is a process of constantly eliminating the provisional in order to make room for the radical and pure uncontrollability of God. . . . It is the name of an attitude in which we dare to commit ourselves to that which is radically beyond all human control.”¹²

Setting aside the Scholastic contrast between the intellectual and the volitional faculties, Rahner distinguishes faith from hope with a contrast between the universal and the particular. Faith expresses a universal promise—the promise of God’s salvific will for all people.¹³ When this universal promise is welcomed as the encompassing meaning of a person’s life, “faith is transformed into hope. . . . Hope, therefore, appears as *that* act in which the uncontrollable is made present as that which sanctifies, blesses, and constitutes our salvation without losing its character as radically beyond our powers to control.”¹⁴ So hope should not be confused with emotional

⁹ Lennan (253) cites Rahner’s view of hope as “the courage to commit oneself in thought and deed to the incomprehensible and the uncontrollable which permeates our existence, and, as the future to which it is open, sustains it” (Rahner, “Theology of Hope” 259).

¹⁰ Ibid. 243.

¹¹ For a brief account of phenomenology, particularly the notion of intentionality and the phenomenologist’s basic concern to answer the questions of meaning and Being, see Joseph J. Kockelmans, “Phenomenology,” in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Robert Audi (New York: Cambridge University, 1995) 578–79.

¹² Rahner, “Theology of Hope” 250.

¹³ Ibid. 253.

¹⁴ Ibid. 253–54.

buoyancy in the navigation of life's course; rather, it is "the basic modality of the very *attitude to the eternal* which precisely as such sets the true advance toward eternity 'in train.'"¹⁵

Rahner identifies two further elements of hope. First, we often come to hope through confrontation with life's limits, through the experience of suffering and death. Paul Crowley summarizes this line of thought found in several of Rahner's essays: hope is

not merely a matter of deciding to turn ourselves over, through some hubristic spiritual act, to the infinite context of our lives. . . . We gain a deeper sense of hope as we see earthly realities more and more as provisional, passing, and incomprehensible. Hope . . . becomes a reality in direct proportion to our acceptance of the ultimate incomprehensibility of existence.¹⁶

Second, Christian hope reorients the believer's engagement in social and political life. In committing themselves to the incomprehensible God, believers must subject every structure of secular life to constant reappraisal and criticism, in order to "decide anew between whether they are to defend the present which they already possess, or to embark upon the exodus into the unforeseeable future."¹⁷ For those who hope, the transcendence of God provides the framework of social and political life.

I see this phenomenological approach to hope, which focuses on the intentionality of the believer, developed in FitzGerald's essay "From Impasse to Prophetic Hope." FitzGerald examines the role of memory and imagination in Christian hope; she traces the way hope enables believers to establish a new relationship with the present. I argue that the shifting place of memory described by FitzGerald is an integral element in believers' reorientation to the utterly transcendent God. I sketch the main lines of her argument below in order to make connections between the conditions of modernity and the significance of hope. Her insight into the relationship between memory and hope can elucidate the reasons for hope's being such a crucial virtue today.

FitzGerald claims that the struggles both of the contemporary Church and of Western culture more broadly are primarily a crisis of memory and imagination, of our relationship to the past and the future: "We are encumbered by old assumptions, burdened by memories that limit our horizons, and, therefore, unfree to see God coming to us from the future."¹⁸ Yet, while conceiving the crisis in those terms, FitzGerald does not neglect the memory of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; nor does she

¹⁵ Ibid. 251, emphasis original.

¹⁶ Paul G. Crowley, "Rahner's Christian Pessimism: A Response to the Sorrow of AIDS," *Theological Studies* 58 (1997) 286–307, at 296.

¹⁷ Rahner, "Theology of Hope" 259.

¹⁸ FitzGerald, "From Impasse to Prophetic Hope" 22.

neglect the sacred tradition of the Church: these are central to Christian identity. The current crisis, she believes, is an invitation to theological hope: a faithful Christian response would mirror the dynamics of the process that John of the Cross calls the purification of memory and the birth of hope.

The “purification of memory,” known to mature contemplatives, is a daunting process through which a person’s memory—the way in which she imagines her relationship with God and the world—no longer holds together:

A person’s past becomes inaccessible as a basis for finding meaning. The experience seems to be not so much an *emptying* of memory, as John describes it, as an unraveling or de-linking of it. A person continues to have memories of the past . . . but they are somehow uncoupled from the self. Their significance is altered. . . . This is keenly felt as a loss of authenticity, truthfulness and even identity.¹⁹

Yet, for John of the Cross, despite its disorienting, painful nature, this process need not end in dissolution but can reveal the true nature of humanity. As FitzGerald puts it, “only when the great cavern of memory is enfeebled by its obsession with the past . . . can the great void of yearning for God really be admitted.”²⁰

FitzGerald’s fundamental point is that for John of the Cross, the purification of memory is linked to the birth of theological hope. In her words, “the limited self constituted by the past . . . [can] yield to the transforming power of God’s call into the future.”²¹ When a person’s relationship to the past is disturbed in this fashion, it may be not only the occasion for but also the beckoning of the Infinite. Old ways of conceiving reality, having been hollowed out, are left behind so that we can be newly defined by divine love coming toward us from the future. There is a strongly apophatic aspect to FitzGerald’s view of the birth of hope: she sees previously compelling images of self, others, and God fading as a person opens herself to a future beyond imagining.

Yet FitzGerald recognizes that even as their hold on the world fades, believers establish a new relationship with the present through the purification of memory and the birth of hope. Although not expressed in any detail or perhaps even immediately capable of clear expression, this relationship is

¹⁹ Ibid. 23, emphasis original.

²⁰ Ibid. 24. FitzGerald shows that purification of this sort is necessary because of the ambiguity of memory. She examines the broad nature of this ambiguity and then reflects on it both in contemporary women’s spiritual experience and in the life of Miroslav Volf, who was tortured under the Yugoslavian Communist regime (25–30). See Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006).

²¹ FitzGerald, “From Impasse to Prophetic Hope” 34.

a new undefinable sense of relatedness or intimacy, an experience of ultimate assurance, and this conversion releases creativity and most importantly freedom for the limitless possibilities of God, for hope. This freedom, this posture of hope, is really prophecy, for it enables a person to reveal the vision of a different kind of future than the one we want to construct from our limited capacities.²²

She sees a new relationship with the present brought about by the dawning of the dark night, experienced not as a “wondrous consolation” but as a “profound peace in the silent unknowing and in the dark empty space of encounter with God, the truly Other.”²³

Those FitzGerald has in mind, who live in such radical openness to God, and who at one level may “not quite know who they are anymore,” nonetheless live lives that are “remarkably self-possessed and loving, ministerially effective and at the height of their scholarly achievements.”²⁴ The purification of memory has robbed them of frameworks that once informed their relationship to the world and to God; nonetheless, their transformed lives witness to the loving kindness of God in the new world in which they find themselves. Such witness has a hesitant and exploratory character, since those who hope must find expression for what is beyond imagining in a situation no longer defined by old frameworks of meaning. The wisdom of those who live in radical openness to God allows them to find expression for their hope in a difficult time.

Although Charles Taylor does not refer to modernity as a “crisis of memory and imagination,” his recent detailed study of the contemporary conditions of belief, *A Secular Age*, elucidates FitzGerald’s view of the changing configuration of social, cultural, political, and ecclesial life. My argument here is that Taylor’s account of modernity not only fleshes out FitzGerald’s claim about the crisis of memory and imagination but also points up the significance of hope for our time.

Taylor traces the shifting understandings that have come to make up our contemporary sense of self and society. One of his fundamental arguments is that the shift to modernity is far broader and deeper than simply a shift in theoretical views of personhood, society, and the natural world.²⁵ Nor does a history of the changes in material culture (e.g., the process of

²² Ibid. 35.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid. 36.

²⁵ Unlike many scholars, Taylor does not use the language of postmodernity for our age. He supports this stance on several fronts. First, he sees the institutions and practices that arose in the 18th century and characterize modernity still characterizing our age. Second, he argues strongly against the stances of Nietzsche, Foucault, and Derrida. On this second issue see Taylor’s *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1989), chaps. 4 and 25; and “Foucault on Freedom and Truth,” in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, Philosophical Papers 2 (New York: Cambridge University, 1985) 152–84.

industrialization in the 19th century) in itself adequately account for the shift. The shift to modernity has occurred at a far deeper level, influencing people's background *sense* of things out of which they live: ordinary people's background sense of their social surroundings, and the way that nature and the universe figures in their self-understanding.²⁶ Taylor names these senses a "social imaginary" and a "cosmic imaginary."²⁷ His argument is that modern imaginaries shape the practices and institutions of the West today. The modern social imaginary, for example, finds institutional expression in the modern economy, in the public sphere (a sphere of discussion, open to all citizens, not circumscribed by locality, and outside the operation of government), and in the practice of popular sovereignty.

Taylor shows that contemporary spiritual life is lived out within these new social, cosmic, and moral orders. It is no longer possible to live in the enchanted world of the 16th century, pervaded by the action of spirits and demons; the modern imaginaries exclude them. He shows that, at critical turning points in the journey to the present, religious understandings were reframed in the light of the modern social imaginary. For example, in his discussion of the rise of Deism and the anthropocentric shift that it initiated in the late-17th and early-18th centuries, Taylor canvases the major explanations offered by scholars for that shift, and argues that the narrower, anthropocentric focus of religion and apologetics was strongly influenced by the modern social imaginary.²⁸

²⁶ In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor traces the understandings of personhood that come together in the contemporary Western sense of self.

²⁷ "By social imaginary," Taylor writes, "I mean something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking, rather, of the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (*A Secular Age* 171). See also Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University, 2004); "Afterword: Apologia pro Libro suo," in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 2010) 300–21, at 307–14; and "On Social Imaginaries," in *Traversing the Imaginary: Richard Kearney and the Postmodern Challenge*, ed. Peter Graton and John Panteleimon Manoussakis (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University, 2007) 29–47. In a similar way, Taylor's term "cosmic imaginary" attempts to make sense of "the ways in which the surrounding world figures in our lives: the ways, for instance, that it figures in our religious images and practices, including explicit cosmological doctrines; in the stories we tell about other lands and other ages" (*A Secular Age* 323). Taylor depicts a shift in the cosmic imaginary, culminating in the late-19th century, in which we have moved from a static, ordered, bounded world, commonly referred to as a *cosmos*, to one that is vast, infinite, and evolving, and known as a *universe*.

²⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, chap. 6, esp. 225, 228–33.

In evaluating the influence of the modern social imaginary on contemporary spiritual life, however, it must be held in mind that this imaginary cannot be considered an enemy of orthodox Christian faith. One of the fundamental forces identified by Taylor as bringing about the modern moral order is what he names the “drive to Reform.”²⁹ From the late medieval period onward, a drive to Reform “aimed to remake European society to meet the demands of the Gospel.”³⁰ This drive inspired a shift from a popular faith in which external practices were emphasized far more than doctrinal content (e.g., at the initial conversion of a people) to a more intense, personalized devotional life that included inner prayer. Taylor’s argument is that the Church’s effort to proclaim the gospel at a broad social level, thus bringing about a personalized approach to faith, has been a major (but not the sole) force in establishing the modern social imaginary.³¹

²⁹ Ibid., chap. 1.

³⁰ Ibid. 61.

³¹ My reading of Taylor here differs markedly from Doyle’s. His major point is that Taylor “fails to register the importance of the social, institutional base for the nurturing and expression of faith, [and] he correspondingly underestimates the loss associated with the erosion of that base” (286). Taylor characterizes the post-1960s era in the West as the “Age of Authenticity” and sees religious commitment in this age as having undergone a marked turn to the personal. However, in his account of the journey to this era, he narrates significant social, political, and economic shifts that fostered this personal turn, some of which I have referred to above. Shifts in social and institutional structures feature prominently in the narrative of *A Secular Age*, and in the post-1960s era, collective expressions of faith retain importance. Taylor discusses at length the point of Doyle’s criticism, revealing a different stance than the one Doyle attributes to him: “This shows once more the error of confusing the post-Durkheimian [post-1960s] dispensation with a trivialized and utterly privatized spirituality. Of course, there will exist lots of both. These are dangers which attend our present predicament. A post-Durkheimian world means, as I said above, that our relation to the spiritual is being more and more unhooked from our relation to our political societies. But that by itself doesn’t say anything about whether or how our relation to the sacred will be mediated by collective connections. A thoroughly post-Durkheimian society would be one in which our religious belonging would be unconnected to our national identity. It will almost certainly be one in which the gamut of such religious allegiances will be wide and varied. It will also almost certainly have lots of people who are following a religious life centred on personal experience in the sense that William James made famous. But it doesn’t follow that everyone, or even that most people, will be doing this. Many people will find their spiritual home in churches, for instance, including the Catholic Church. In a post-Durkheimian world, this allegiance will be unhooked from that to a sacralized society (paleo-style), or some national identity (neo-style); or from the (now arrogant-sounding) claim to provide the indispensable matrix for the common civilizational order; and if I am right above, the mode of access will be different; but it will still be a collective connection” (*A Secular Age* 516). (Doyle’s consideration of this issue would benefit from a substantive discussion of *A Secular Age*, the work in which Taylor examines the issue in detail.) Perhaps one of the confusions

The convergence of Taylor's view of modernity in terms of shifting social and cosmic imaginaries and FitzGerald's insight into theological hope being born out of the crisis of memory and imagination underscores the significance of hope for our time.

HOPE, MODERNITY, AND THE CHURCH

Taken together, the arguments of Rahner, FitzGerald, and Taylor recommend a pivotal role for hope in the life of the Church today. When old frameworks of thought fray, and believers' relationships to the past are disturbed, Christian hope enables church members to find new expression for "the uncontrollability of God" in the emerging social imaginary. In this final section, I want to sketch a response to an issue raised by Doyle: how, in the light of this approach to hope, can the Church best conceive its relationship to modernity?

At the outset, hope compels the Church to put aside the stance of outright rejection of modernity—a stance it adopted from the early 19th century until the eve of Vatican II.³² Although the modern social imaginary has clear limitations, it is motivated by a moral ideal: of individuals coming together and, through the pursuit of their own legitimate individual goals, serving to benefit the good of the whole.³³ In the development of *Gaudium et spes*, the bishops recognized as valuable the forms of social self-understanding at work in modernity, particularly democracy, the modern economy, and the public sphere, and they set aside the hierarchical worldview of Christendom. Therefore, as Doyle has elegantly articulated, hope requires the Church to adopt a discriminating approach to modernity, to discern between modernity's achievements and its shortcomings. He advances Aquinas's distinction between hope's primary and secondary goals as the framework within which this discernment should be made, with eternal life being its primary goal and its secondary goals including economic security, justice, and peace. With the aid of this distinction the Church can distinguish modernity's achievements from its shortcomings.

here is that Doyle reads Taylor as advocating a particular ecclesiology, but *A Secular Age* is an account of the place of religion in the contemporary West, not a work of theology. Regarding Doyle's supporting arguments about Taylor's reading of Heidegger and his view of Taylor's interpretative history: I also find these unconvincing, but for brevity's sake I leave them aside, since Doyle's major criticism is the most relevant in this context.

³² See my "Proclamation as Dialogue: Transition in the Church-World Relationship," *Theological Studies* 70 (2009) 875–903, at 878–87, where I argued in a fuller fashion that with the promulgation of Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes*, the Church finally came to grips with the modern social imaginary.

³³ See Taylor, *A Secular Age* 165.

What is being discerned here is the coherence between various aspects of emerging contemporary culture and hope's primary goal: eternal life.

While such discernment will be an indispensable element of the Church's life, theological hope has a broader task, depicted by FitzGerald in terms of believers establishing a new relationship with the present through the purification of memory and the birth of theological hope. In a situation no longer adequately defined by old frameworks of meaning, hope enables believers to find expression for a new kind of future. She indicates that this witness to Christian hope will never be fully fleshed out; it will always have a hesitant and exploratory character. Nonetheless, the transformed lives of those purified by theological hope can give witness to the action of God in a new time.

Here FitzGerald's view of the role of hope supplements Doyle's. Doyle sees hope enabling the Church to discern modernity's achievements, and FitzGerald sees it engendering new expressions of Christian life in radically different circumstances. While FitzGerald's approach includes discernment about the contemporary context, her emphasis on new expressions of Christian life identifies an important dimension of hope. In turn, such new expressions not only give hope to fellow believers, but they also provide hopeful embodiments of human existence to those outside the Christian community who are also grappling with modernity's limits and strengths.

It is precisely these new articulations of Christian life that Taylor examines in the final chapter of *A Secular Age*, "Conversions," following the itineraries of those who, while acutely aware of modernity's stifling limits, simultaneously embraced its strengths and struggled to express their orthodox faith in a fashion that would illumine both the misery and the grandeur of their times. He follows the journeys of Charles Péguy and Gerard Manley Hopkins,³⁴ who both rejected modernity's disengaged, instrumental approach to reason and faithfully yet creatively appropriated the Christian tradition—Péguy through engagement with the philosophy of Bergson, and Hopkins through his prodigious gift of poetry in a post-Romantic vein. Their engagement with the thought and worldview of their times enabled them to articulate the Christian vision in a way that could not have been articulated previously. Reflecting on their itineraries, Taylor draws out the general point that the believer's vocation is to invite others into a conversation that reaches beyond any particular order:

The goal . . . is not to return to an earlier formula, inspiring as many of these will undoubtedly be; there will always be an element of imitation of earlier models, but inevitably and rightly Christian life today will look for and discover new ways of moving beyond the present orders to God. One could say that we look for new and unprecedented itineraries. Understanding our time in Christian terms is partly to

³⁴ Ibid. 744–51 (Péguy) and 755–65 (Hopkins).

discern these new paths, opened by pioneers who have discovered a way through the particular labyrinthine landscape we live in, its thickets and trackless wastes, to God.³⁵

My argument is that Christian hope enables believers to navigate paths through thus-far-uncharted landscapes to the God whom the risen Jesus reveals. In turn, the identification and articulation of the life of God in shifting cultural circumstances gives hope both to other believers confused by the present and also to citizens grappling with the ambiguities of our age.

My consideration of the specific issue in this final section assumes a comprehensive ecclesiology that includes both the Church's mission and its inner life. In this regard, I find Lennan's vision of the Church as a sacrament of hope very convincing but have not devoted adequate space to its discussion; my response is the poorer for the omission. I am grateful to Richard Lennan and Dominic Doyle for their rich essays, and to the editor in chief of *Theological Studies* for the opportunity to respond.

³⁵ Ibid. 755.