

bishops. In the appendix, David DeCosse attributes the bishops' emphasis on obedience, law, and hierarchical authority to fear about losing ground in the war against secularism, creeping moral relativism, and the erosion of confidence in the concept of intrinsic evil. The volume does an excellent job of showing how the Catholic tradition yields a more nimble, epistemologically humble, and historically conscious understanding of conscience. Still, the arguments for alternative models would be strengthened by addressing those concerns on their own terms.

Maura A. Ryan
University of Notre Dame

What Do You Seek? The Questions of Jesus as Challenge and Promise. By Michael J. Buckley, S.J. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016. Pp. xii + 146. \$17.98.

The well-known philosopher-theologian Michael J. Buckley is also an ardent student and teacher of the spiritual life. His learned but also ultimately pastoral studies of atheism are complemented by, or perhaps better said contextualized by, serious study of spiritual masters such as Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and Ignatius Loyola. A distinctive style has emerged from these two sides of his intellectual life, in which “architectonic” is almost as prized a word as “love.”

For years my friend gave retreats, especially to religious men and women, that were structured by questions that Jesus posed in the Gospel of John. The philosopher in him emphasized the revelatory, original place of questions in our experience. The pastor knew that they were unique openings to personal encounter with Jesus. And now we have a late, relatively slender distillation of all those years of “caring for souls”—a smiling, joyous man introducing you to his master.

Although the book does begin with the first words of Jesus in John's Gospel, “What do you seek?” and characterizes them as interpersonal challenge and promise, the thirteen questions that follow are not presented chronologically or synthetically, “not [as] a single developing narrative, but more [as] a field of force.” Each question echoes the others (as well as the twenty-one others still that John presents but to which the author will not attend). Their unity is concrete, practical, and personal—in Christ. To christological titles such as eschatological prophet, suffering servant, Spirit-giving Lord, or liberator, B. adds that of the Beloved whose questions open us to the Spirit present in our lives in ways so manifold that only “Mystery” can allude to them adequately.

Beyond the rich reflections in his book, B. offers flashes of insight that will stop many readers in their tracks: God's desire for us as awakening our desire for God; the gaze of Christ as “the first event of discipleship;” “gift” as the universal and foundational Christian transcendental; the primary ministerial love of Christ as the foundation of all Christian ministry; the forgiveness of sins through the gift of God's presence; compassion as the intelligibility of God; and being “weak enough” for service (based on a famous essay of 1975).

So, go on retreat with Fr. Buckley, again if you already had the privilege once, or for the first time, if you long to have heart and mind united. He will ask you what Jesus asks of you.

Leo J. O'Donovan, SJ
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation. By Rod Dreher. New York: Sentinel, 2017. Pp. viii + 262. \$25.

As a Benedictine monk, I could not help but be intrigued simply by the title of this popular new book hailed by David Brooks as “the most discussed and most important religious book of the decade” (*The New York Times*, March 14, 2017). Dreher begins with the alarming claim that we are entering a new Dark Age, the result of increasing individualism and the loss of shared belief. Nonetheless, though D. is a senior editor of *The American Conservative*, he candidly admits that no brand of politics, liberal, or conservative, can remedy this corrosive social fragmentation. Instead, contemporary society is so lost, according to D., that what the world needs, citing the conclusion of MacIntyre’s *After Virtue*, is “another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict” (18). If Benedictine monastic communities were able to survive the collapse of the Roman Empire, or so his argument goes, then maybe there is still wisdom in the Rule of Benedict that is worth learning from today. Consequently, D. proposes that faithful Christians will survive the present crisis only by forming alternative communities to live, work, learn, and worship—the Benedict Option.

He imagines such Benedict Option communities to be small, intentional communities guided by practices that D. culls from the Rule of Benedict—a sixth-century monastic text consisting of a prologue and seventy-three fairly brief chapters. D. rightly notes that Benedictine spirituality is practical and the Rule “is not a collection of theological maxims but a manual of practices” (53), practices including order, prayer, work, asceticism, stability, community, hospitality, and balance. As D. argues in chapter 3, these practices have sustained monastic communities for centuries and have the potential to again shape Benedict Option communities today. This very well may be true, but in his appropriation of Benedictine spirituality, the astute reader will notice that D. never quotes a scholarly commentary of the Rule. Nor does D. consider the limitations of the genre of hagiography as he holds St. Benedict’s flight from Rome as a model for contemporary *fuga mundi*. Surely greater research would have improved this work, but one can get the impression that making a contribution to the field of monastic studies is not D.’s primary objective. For indeed, D. is convinced that something greater is at stake—namely, the survival of Christianity and, indeed, Western civilization. The very question that motivates D. was the same motivator for St. Benedict: how to form and sustain vibrant Christian community in service to God’s reign in the world.

To begin an answer, D. observes that the Rule uses “school” analogically in reference to the monastery itself. But the learning and teaching that occurs in the monastery