



# THE BEACON

NEWSLETTER OF THE LUMEN CHRISTI INSTITUTE FOR CATHOLIC THOUGHT SUMMER 2016



## René Girard: The Darwin of the Human Sciences

LCI invites renowned scholars to discuss his legacy

René Girard—eminent French theorist and Stanford professor who passed away in 2015—was a bold, wide-ranging thinker whose unconventional

ideas on violence, religion, and the human condition were inspired by his interest in diverse disciplinary perspectives.

Because of his aversion to specialization, his work has sometimes been neglected and has failed to achieve the prominence it perhaps deserves.

Nonetheless, those who have come into contact with Girard's work find it challenging and revolutionary.

In a symposium organized by the Lumen Christi Institute and cosponsored by the John U. Nef Committee on Social Thought and the Theology & Religious Ethics Workshop, renowned scholars Jean-Luc Marion (University of Chicago/ University

of Paris, Sorbonne), William T. Cavanaugh (DePaul University), and James B. Murphy (Dartmouth College) discussed Girard's unique contribution to scholarly inquiry in a symposium titled "Sacred Violence: The Legacy of René Girard" (April 7).

Girard had an especially raw and primal analysis of the human psyche. Where does societal violence come from?

**"If we give up studying great literature, we shall starve to death."**

— Jean-Luc Marion

Basically, in a theory he developed, it originates from "mimetic (or imitative) rivalry."

Everyone desires the same thing. This then leads to jealousy and envy, which eventually escalates, into violence. The only relief to dispel the tension that comes from a community wanting the same thing (land, jobs, material possessions, the affection of another person) is finding and killing a scapegoat.

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## Sin as Self-Sabotage

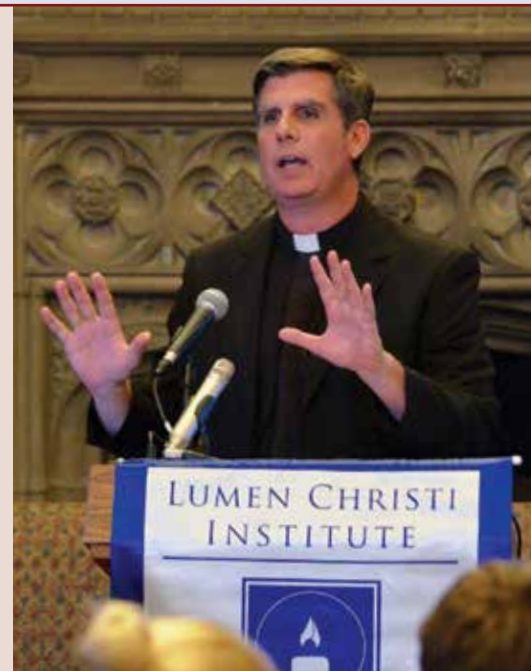
Fr. David Meconi, S.J., on how sinning keeps us away from the intimacy we both crave and fear

"Deep within every love-sick heart lies the embrace of one's own ruin," said Fr. David Meconi, S.J. (St. Louis University) at the start of his lecture titled, "Sin as Self-Sabotage: Saint Augustine on Ravishing One's Own Ruin" (April 14).

He went on to describe the ways in which we paradoxically find comfort in our own destruction. A child finds security in a father's demeaning words rather than in the smile of a stranger. Addicts are convinced that their happiness is but one piece of chocolate cake, one fix, one joint, one pornographic image away.

Such human behavior has proven baffling to psychologists and psychiatrists. Why would we do that which brings us harm?

Interestingly, the fourth-century theologian Augustine of Hippo



Continued on page 3. Fr. David Meconi, S.J.

YouTube



LUMENCHRISTI.ORG

# FROM THE DIRECTOR



Thomas Levergood,  
Executive Director

## TWO CARDINALS, AN ARCHBISHOP, AND THE FOUNDING OF THE INSTITUTE

The coming year marks the twentieth anniversary of three events important to the Lumen Christi Institute: the Institute's incorporation in September 1997, the appointment of Francis George as archbishop, and the death of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin. When Cardinal George was appointed, his name had not been mentioned on lists of likely appointees. We were encouraged by two facts in his biography that he would bless a project that we developed during the last years of the life of Cardinal Bernardin: first, Francis George had written a doctoral dissertation on George Herbert Mead, who helped found the Department of Philosophy of the University of Chicago; second, he had served on the board of the English edition of the journal *Communio*, to which we had ties. While we anticipated his favor, we could not anticipate the important role he would play as episcopal founder of the Institute and the partnership we would develop, which included countless conversations, his participation in many events, two overseas trips, and our assistance to him in preparing three books for publication.

The place of Cardinal Bernardin in the Institute's founding is also of note. The reason is twofold: first, the chaplain to the University of Chicago appointed by Cardinal Bernardin launched us on the work of presenting the Catholic intellectual tradition in all its integrity at the university; second, the spirit of Bernardin's Catholic Common Ground Initiative was close to the heart of the Lumen Christi Institute and was alluded to in its initial prospectus. Fittingly, the first event at which Archbishop George spoke for us was a conference co-sponsored with the Common Ground Initiative on "Catholics and the Secular Academy." We focused on drawing all those interested in Catholic thought, regardless of their perspective, to join us in nurturing themselves at the wellsprings of the Catholic intellectual and spiritual traditions. Our context at the University of Chicago gave a character to our work, since here scholars are interested in ideas, in what the Catholic tradition offers, rather than the politicized debates that too often characterize Catholic discourse in America today.

When Fr. Willard Jabusch, the Chaplain of the Calvert House Catholic Center at the University of Chicago, asked us to help him consult faculty about the idea of developing Catholic studies at the University, Professor Bernard McGinn suggested, as I recall, that Catholicism, with its doctrinal tradition and essential nature as an ecclesial community, would be better treated by programs of lectures and conferences that complemented the work of the secular university, rather than as a program within it. McGinn and other faculty supported and participated in the early "Christian Wellsprings Lectures Series" that Prof. Paul Griffiths and I organized before founding the Institute. Also vital to our work has been the participation of philosopher Jean-Luc Marion and theologian David Tracy. When Marion first came to the University, and he and Tracy grew close, Professor Tracy declared "how is it possible that I'm on the board of *Concilium* and you're on the board of *Communio* and we're becoming friends?" This came from the greatness of spirit of both scholars, for *Concilium* and *Communio* are international theological bodies that largely represent rival interpretations of the Second Vatican Council. (We soon became friends with "Thomists of the Strict Observance" such as Prof. Ralph McInerny and Fr. Benedict Ashley, O.P. as well.)

Our efforts developed for nearly two years under the wing of Calvert House during the end of Cardinal Bernardin's life and tenure. Fr. Jabusch recognized the potential of this effort and, while still supporting it, encouraged us to consider incorporating an institute as a non-profit corporation distinct from, but recognized by, the Archdiocese. We set to work. I drafted the prospectus for the Lumen Christi Institute while living in the guest house of the Monastery of the Holy Cross, an urban contemplative community founded in a shuttered parish in the Bridgeport neighborhood with the active support of Cardinal Bernardin, who told the monks when they came to him that he had long dreamed of such a contemplative monastery in Chicago.

We always assumed that Cardinal Bernardin would have blessed the project, had he lived, but we never had the chance to meet him and share our plans with him. It was fifteen years after founding the Lumen Christi Institute that I received some insight into how Cardinal Bernardin might have reacted. At some point I was given or picked up the biography of Archbishop Paul Hallinan by Fordham University professor Fr. Thomas Shelley. Hallinan was the mentor of Cardinal Bernardin, who had served him as vicar general in Charleston and as auxiliary bishop in Atlanta. When I finally read the biography, I was startled to discover that the vision of presenting Catholic thought at a secular university we had developed in the 1990's was anticipated in the 1950's by Hallinan as a Catholic university chaplain in Cleveland and as national chaplain to the Newman Club movement. I think that, had he been able to meet with us, Cardinal Bernardin would have held the prospectus for the institute in his hand and would have looked us in the eye and said, "Why, this is the vision of Archbishop Hallinan."

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas Levergood".

LUMEN CHRISTI INSTITUTE

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## Self-Sabotage Continued from page 1.

attributed actions of this sort to our inability to believe in God's love for us in our brokenness and weakness. We prefer to become our own god rather than abandon ourselves to the love of God. "The essence of sin is a freely chosen autonomy resulting in the loathing and destruction of the self. We become our own sovereign, we become our own god," said Meconi.

Augustine drew this conclusion from reflecting about when he stole pears with a group of boys when he was around sixteen years old.

Other kinds of sins made sense to him. You seek a powerful office so you do anything and everything to obtain what you desire. But lousy, tasteless pears that he ended up feeding to pigs? What was the attraction of that transgression?



Augustine concluded that the only reason one would commit such a pointless infraction was because there was a secret desire in the soul for self-destruction. In analyzing the attraction each soul has toward his or her self-hatred, Augustine delved into the dark core of his being. In his Confessions he wrote, "The malice was loathsome, and I loved it. I was in love with my own ruin, in love with decay, not the thing for which I was falling into decay but with decay itself."

We crave our own ruin, it seems, because we cannot accept intimacy from another, namely God.

Instead, we become our own divinity. We choose our own annihilation because it gives us a sense of power, of absolute control. We don't have to listen to anyone but our own will.

**"The malice was loathsome, and I loved it. I was in love with my own ruin, in love with decay, not the thing for which I was falling into decay but with decay itself."**

– St. Augustine

Meconi described this desire for absolute autonomy with a quote from Augustine: "All those who wander far away and set themselves up against you are imitating you, but in a perverse way...trying to simulate a crippled sort of freedom, attempting a shady parody of omnipotence."

Sin then is a false deification, "the misdirected imitation and seizing of autonomy and divinity." We establish an alien

god who commands our dissolution. "The divided will is now set internally against itself," explained Meconi.

Only love can heal us, can restore wholeness to our fractured selves. "Evil is a result of the divided will," said Meconi. "We grow in holiness when we accept that there is only one kingdom, one God."

In other words, human beings—aware of their weakness and imperfection—will act destructively so as to prove to God that they are unlovable. We stop self-destructive behavior when we accept ourselves as we are, and allow ourselves to be loved by another.

We are beings made for communion and relationship with another. "Sin is a retreat into privacy...a retreat into a closed-off self," said Meconi.

For Augustine, healing begins with acknowledging one's sinfulness. We have to stop dwelling on our ugliness and instead offer our whole selves to Christ who alone can make us beautiful.

"Only by letting ourselves be known, healed, and loved can we be ravished by the One who alone can promise true rest," concluded Meconi.



Greek myths supported the idea that the scapegoat was guilty. But Christianity astonishingly reverses the mob mentality. Christ, the scapegoat, is innocent. The God of the Christians is anti-violence, a deity of peace. Girard saw Christianity as offering an antidote to mimetic rivalry—as being the only way to escape communal and even global annihilation.

Hailed as the “Darwin of the human sciences” when he was elected to the French Academy, Girard was unusual because of his distinctive approach to literature. “He believed that scientific truths could be found in literature,” said Murphy, Professor of Government at Dartmouth College. “He argued that Cervantes, Shakespeare, and Sophocles were better anthropologists than Levi Strauss.”

Marion agreed with Girard’s estimable view of literature and the way it can help us better understand reality.

“If you want to understand the origin of violence, there is more to learn in Greek tragedy than in *The Chicago Tribune* each morning. *The Tribune* gives you very poor information and little insight into what violence is,” he said.

Marion lamented the unfortunate dismissal of literature as a serious discipline in the modern university. “If we give up studying great literature, we shall starve to death,” he declared.

In terms of Girard’s insights into violence—drawn from rich literary sources such as the Greek myths and the Hebrew Bible—Marion found it both compelling and revolutionary. Unlike political thinkers like Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau who attributed violence to nature and believed the city to be our protection from it, Marion explained that Girard saw it in reverse.

“Mimetic violence is the act of birth of the political organization,” said Marion of Girard’s discovery. “Political organization is not innocent. Societies are not based on the abolition of violence but on the use of violence,” Marion asserted.

**“In a secular society, religion is scapegoated.”**

History therefore is written by the victor, by the one who has used violence to establish itself.

Because of his analysis of Judeo-Christianity’s contribution to the human saga, Murphy explained that “Girard’s primary cultural legacy was to make pacifism intellectually respectable.”

The Bible is fascinating in that it is the story of the underdog, a group of people often conquered by the stronger and mightier around them.

Cavanaugh, Professor of Catholic Studies at DePaul University, argued that because Christianity is a religion of peace it has removed the necessary focal point upon which society can thrust its frustration.

“Christianity has made the situation worse because society no longer has a scapegoat,” Cavanaugh remarked. Bringing Girard’s insight that there must always be a scapegoat into contemporary relevance, he made this disturbing yet timely observation: “in a secular society, religion is scapegoated.”

# A Plea for Mercy

Yale Law Professor James Q. Whitman examines the origins of a harsh American criminal justice system and calls for its reform



James Q. Whitman, Ford Foundation Professor of Comparative and Foreign Law at Yale Law School, considers it his obligation as a concerned citizen and scholar of the law to speak about the harshness of the American criminal justice system.

Having done a doctorate in history at the University of Chicago, Whitman is deeply invested in historical and

comparative legal research and learning, but also in finding answers to problems that plague modern society.

The criminal justice system is in crisis. “People are looking for solutions, looking for a route to reform,” says Whitman. “I’m very pessimistic about reform,” he admits. “The problems are much more far-reaching than the solutions I’m proposing. I’m offering prayers more than advice.”

Despite his doubts, he remains hopeful. “Things may change. We may return to the criminal justice system we had in the 1950s and 1960s.”

It may be harder to learn from the past than from the present, which is why Whitman looks for inspiration for reform from abroad.

He has found it interesting that other countries – with the same Western legal foundation as America – treat their offenders with more dignity, with more of an emphasis on mercy.

Despite the United States and continental Europe being closely “kindred societies,” the differences in the interpretation of the law and approaches to justice are striking.

Two such countries are Germany and France.

Whitman understands the difficulties and complexities of transposing one legal system onto another. It doesn’t exactly work that way. But nonetheless, he wants Americans to be open to other modes of running a criminal justice system, especially if they treat people more humanely.





Because he is so passionate about sharing the results of his research and hopefully inspiring reform, Whitman was delighted to be invited by the Lumen Christi Institute this past spring.

On May 3, he presented a downtown talk titled “Harsh Justice: The Widening Divide Between America and Europe.” In addition to Whitman, panelists included the Hon. Tom Dart (Cook County Sheriff), the Hon. Colleen Sheehan (Cook County Circuit Court Judge), Kim Foxx (Former Assistant State’s Attorney, Juvenile Justice Division, and Former Chief of Staff to President of Cook County Board, Toni Preckwinkle), and the event’s moderator, the Hon. Anne M. Burke (Illinois Supreme Court Justice).

Whitman was particularly pleased to be back at his alma mater for it holds a very special place in his heart. As a student, he enjoyed his experience at the U of C to such an extent that he admits, “I cried when I left.”

On May 4, Whitman gave a luncheon talk for students at the University of Chicago Law School. The lecture “Mercy and the Criminal Law,” cosponsored with the St. Thomas More Society and the American Constitution Society, was based on his book *The Origins of Reasonable Doubt* and presented a conception of mercy found in Augustinian theology that could be used to shift American attitudes toward justice.

“Those of you who are Catholics may know that Pope Francis declared this the Jubilee Year of Mercy. Those of you who are Americans may know that we don’t have a lot of mercy in the United States. I’m going to do my best to navigate between those two poles,” Whitman said in the introduction to his lecture.

**“I’m offering prayers more than advice.”**

Whitman proceeded to present a controversial argument of his that attacks the American “presumption of innocence.” Ironically this tradition, which originated around 1850, has led to a legal culture in which the criminal justice system’s primary purpose is to protect innocent people from unjust conviction. However, statistics show that very few innocent people are accused.

“I think it’s fundamentally important to protect the guilty,” Whitman then argued. “The best way of protecting the guilty is through having legal mechanisms that are best described... as having a presumption of mercy.”



## Catholic Student Group Forms at U of C School of Business

Over the last several years, the Lumen Christi Institute has worked with students at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business to organize events and a circle of Catholic Booth students to catalyze the formation of a student group. The initial student leadership came from Alex Rothmeier (Booth, 2014), who was the nephew of the late Steven G. Rothmeier, Booth alumnus, University of Chicago trustee, and long-time board chair of the Lumen Christi Institute.

Later leadership came from other Booth students, among them Thomas Hodgdon (Booth, 2017). When Hodgdon started his MBA at Booth, he was surprised to discover there wasn’t a Catholic organization at the business school. He was also stunned to learn that every other major religion had a student group except for Catholics.

Hodgdon says a Catholic student group is necessary for several reasons. First and foremost, business school students need to be able to discuss ethical dilemmas and understand how to make good and ethical moral decisions. “Looking around at the world today, the major influence on our culture comes from big companies like Google not from politicians or from religious leaders,” says Hodgdon. Since graduates of Booth are most likely going to make an impact on the culture, it is important that they are formed in the faith.



Co-Chairs: from left, Achondo, Hodgdon, and Pacold

Lumen Christi has been instrumental in helping form the group and in getting things off the ground. “Lumen Christi helped get us organized and provided financial resources for us to put on a few events. They even connected us to Booth alums who are Catholic.”

Since the group wouldn’t be officially recognized until the 2016-2017 academic year, in May of 2016, Lumen Christi cosponsored an event for Booth students with Christians in Business and the Adam Smith Society. Maureen O’Hara, a professor of finance at Cornell University, gave the talk titled “Ethics, Arbitrage, and the Nature of Finance.” In it, O’Hara provocatively asked if the free market obscures one’s ability to choose right from wrong.

With the fall quarter just around the corner, Hodgdon, along with student co-chairs Alfredo Achondo and Luke Pacold, are ready to welcome the challenge of spreading the word about “Catholics at Booth.”

Their vision for the group is that they build community by speaking with one another on a regular basis, eating together, and participating in activities that bond them as peers.

For intellectual formation, they hope to bring in two to three alumni speakers to lead a “lunch n’ learn” session at Booth. They also plan on holding a larger event in the spring, probably a one-day event with a panel of speakers.

The guidance of the Lumen Christi Institute will be crucial for the fledgling group—especially at the beginning. “You guys are a more stable institution and can provide the emotional and financial support we need in order to succeed,” says Hodgdon.



Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski  
(Archdiocese of Miami)

## A key to understanding *Laudato si'*

Conference encourages Catholics to  
cultivate and care for the created world

It may come as a surprise—especially given Pope Francis’ current reputation for concern about the environment—that Pope Benedict XVI was considered in both religious and secular circles to be the original “Green Pope.” In boosting efforts to make Vatican City more environmentally efficient, he even purchased a forest to offset the Vatican’s carbon imprint.

Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski (Archdiocese of Miami) reminded the audience of Benedict in order to put Pope Francis’ contribution in perspective in his keynote address in the symposium, “Caring for our Common Home: Economics, Environment, & Catholic Social Thought” (May 19).

Pope Francis’ concerns belong to a tradition of Catholic Social Thought that reaches back to the Church’s response to the social challenges of the Industrial Age with Pope Leo XIII’s groundbreaking encyclical *Rerum novarum* (1891). Since then, the Church has repeatedly called for a society in which people can live with dignity in a community ordered according to justice.

In terms of ecology, a concern for the earth and man’s stewardship of it has roots as far back as the Book of Genesis. There man was placed in a garden that he was supposed to tend and cultivate. He was “charged with this duty of cultivation for all time,” said Wenski.

How does Pope Francis’ message in his second encyclical *Laudato si'* fit into the larger dialogue the Church has on this topic?

The key to understanding *Laudato si'* is the term “integral ecology,” explained Wenski. Francis expressed what this means most vividly in the following passage from his encyclical: “If the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships...Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God. Otherwise, it would be nothing more than romantic individualism dressed up in ecological garb.”

**“Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God. Otherwise, it would be nothing more than romantic individualism dressed up in ecological garb.”**

– Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*







V. Ramanathan (The University of California, San Diego)

That, argued Wenski, is where we have to start in our discussions on the environment. In a guest appearance he had on the “Late Show with Stephen Colbert,” he told the comedian, “we gotta get our relationship with God right, our relationship with our fellow man right, if we’re gonna hope to get our relationship with Mother Earth right.”

The disharmony in our souls seeps into everything we do and touch. Because we don’t care about God or one another, neither do we care for the world in which we live. The damage resulting from this rupture resounds through nature. Our negligent souls contribute to pollution, toxic waste, and climate change.

Furthermore, Wenski said that Francis brings to our attention a more serious form of pollution. “Our throwaway culture is not just about McDonald’s wrappers along the side of the highway. It is extended to human beings as well. In *Laudato si’*—as part of this integral ecology—he zeroes in on how we throw away life in the womb, how we neglect the disabled and show little respect for the lives and the contributions of the elderly. This is a moral pollution as bad as the pollution of rivers and lakes.”



Christopher Barrett (Cornell University)

Given all these challenges that ultimately originate from a crisis in relationship, Pope Francis believes the most important place to start is with dialogue. “Pope Francis uses the word dialogue very frequently,” observed Wenski. It is not a trite word. He takes it very seriously. He wants us to engage with one another, “to be led to an encounter at the heart where significant concepts can be discussed and where real change can occur.”

Wenski praised the Institute for its initiative in organizing the conference. “I think [Pope Francis] would be proud of the dialogue we are having today and the spirit the Lumen Christi Institute brings to these forums on Economics and Catholic Social Thought.” He noted that the Institute provides a rare forum for the discussion of ideas that otherwise get hijacked by right or left. “In our highly politicized reality, our space for these conversations is harder to come by.”



Mary Evelyn Tucker (Yale University)



Michael Greenstone (The University of Chicago)



# The Inquisition

## WHAT REALLY

One of the many myths surrounding “The Inquisition” is that the Catholic Church was brutally executing scores of innocent people by drowning them or burning them at the stake.

In the symposium titled “The Inquisition: What Really Happened?” (April 20) cosponsored by the Lumen Christi Institute and the Medieval Studies Workshop, scholars Hannah Marcus (Stanford University), Daniele Macuglia (University of Chicago), and Ada Palmer (University of Chicago) sought to clarify the numerous misconceptions surrounding the infamous period.

For one, “the Church itself is never executing,” remarked Palmer, Assistant Professor of History, Associate Faculty of Classics, and Member of the Stevanovich Institute on the Formation of Knowledge at the University of Chicago. “There is no Inquisitor tying people’s feet and then dropping them in the canal.”

On the contrary, the most common sentences meted out by the Inquisition were that heretics recite Hail Marys or sit through really boring lectures. “There were very few burnings and drownings,” said Palmer. Furthermore, the Church didn’t have the authority to execute anyone. That was the prerogative of the state. They would recommend that a heretic be executed and then local government authorities would carry out the sentence.

Local governments, for their part, were concerned with political dissenters, primarily those who committed treason against the state. The reason that executions were rare is because they were so costly. Unless a heretic was also a political threat, local officials wouldn’t ordinarily get entangled in the Church’s problems.

Nonetheless, even a mild sentence seems outlandish for modern democratic societies accustomed to freedom of thought.

But in Medieval Europe, ideas mattered. One’s eternal soul could be imperiled by adherence to heretical doctrine. It was rare that heretics were executed. For the most part, they were given every chance to renounce their ill-informed or dangerous beliefs, as in the case of a young man who allegedly sold his soul to the devil in order to sleep with his boss’s wife. He was merely chastised and told to recite prayers, which he did with apparent remorse.

To give even greater context to the topic, Marcus, a PhD student in History at Stanford University, drew upon the work of historian Edward Peters who distinguishes between three types of inquisition. There is the “inquisition,” which was a legal practice that originated in Ancient Rome. Then there is the “Inquisition,” which usually comes with a modifier before it. That’s because there were Inquisitions in many parts of the Catholic world, including Spain, Italy, Portugal, France, Mexico, and even in Goa, a state located in western India. Each of these Inquisitions had different concerns. Even Naples had a different inquisition from the one in Rome. Finally, there is “The Inquisition,” a stubborn myth whose origins can be traced to the “Black Legend” and the Protestant polemicists from the Netherlands in the 16th century who spread it. What was their sinister tale? “That Catholic Spain (which controlled the Netherlands at the time) is the worst and destroys everything,” said Marcus, mimicking the legend’s exaggerated tone.

**The Church itself is never executing... There is no Inquisitor tying people’s feet and then dropping them in the canal.**





# HAPPENED?

The propaganda started against Spain, but then spread to Italy and other parts of Europe. “It’s an enduring legend,” she added, explaining that it makes historical scholarship difficult.

There are numerous myths to rebuff.

One is that the Church was opposed to science and reason, and that the victims suffering at the hands of bloodthirsty clerics were intellectuals or saintly visionaries like Joan of Arc.

Macuglia, a PhD student at The University of Chicago’s Fishbein Center for the History of Science and Medicine, confessed to being surprised that the Church actually helped

disseminate new discoveries and ideas. “Some of the major contributions to the spread of Newtonianism came from within the Church,” he said, adding that many mathematicians and natural philosophers were able to advance their scholarship through the Church’s inquisitorial networks.

In fact, quite a few academies and centers of learning were established and funded by the Church—especially in Rome. While they helped promote knowledge, their primary purpose was to assist the Inquisition in determining whether the latest scientific theories were true or not.

With the invention of the printing press in 1450, the Church was overwhelmed with the scope of their project. Ideas—both good and bad— could circulate with astonishing speed. For example, news of Martin Luther’s 95 Theses was able to reach London within 17 days. If Luther had lived several hundred years earlier, only the inhabitants of Nuremberg would probably have known about his complaints.

“Heresies were being imagined in the contagion sense,” said Palmer, to give an idea of the Church’s perspective on the threat. Prior to the printing press, a heresy could have been confined to a single area, to one city even. If someone came up with a crazy idea, e.g., projecting your soul out of your body to spy on your enemies, it would stay within a group of interconnected individuals. This was no longer the case.

So when did this painstaking process of sifting through information to determine whether it is heresy or not come to an end?

One thing that probably surprises some people is that the “Inquisition” still is around



today. However, just as in the past, it is incredibly rare for cases to go to trial. However, if they do, the body responsible for promulgating and defending Catholic doctrine is the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Although it doesn’t have the universal jurisdiction it had in the past, “there still needs to be an authority that regulates what is and isn’t theologically sound within the Catholic Church,” said Marcus.



# When Catholics swam with the current

Former *Newsweek* Religion Editor Kenneth L. Woodward on Catholicism in the Fifties and the Catholic Intellectual Life Today



In his writing—as well as in person—long-time religion writer Kenneth L. Woodward is notable for his irreverence, his gruff boldness, his refusal to be pigeon-holed as one thing or another. “For a long time,” he says, “I wrote conservative op-

ed pieces for *The New York Times*, liberal ones for the *Wall Street Journal*. But given the poisonous polarization in our politics these days and—lets face it—also in the Catholic Church, it’s very hard now for a writer to work both sides of the ideological street.”

Most readers know Woodward from the more than 1000 articles, essays and reviews he wrote for *Newsweek*, where he was Religion Editor for 38 years, as well as from pieces he has published in journals as diverse in outlook as *Commonweal* and *First Things*, *The Nation* and *The Weekly Standard*. His more scholarly essays can be found in reference works like *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*

and the *Encyclopedia of the History of Ideas*. His new book, *Getting Religion: Faith, Culture and Politics from the Age of Eisenhower to the Era of Obama*, joins three previous ones: *The Book of Miracles: The Meaning of the Miracle Stories in Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam*; *Making Saints: How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes a Saint, Who Doesn’t, and Why*, and *Grandparents, Grandchildren: The Vital Connection*, written with child psychiatrist Arthur Kornhaber.

Woodward is from the “Middle West”—which, as he writes in his new book, “is what movie mythmakers have imagined the entire nation to be like when Americans are on their best behavior.” Before moving to New York he had lived in six of the eleven “heartland” states and studied at universities in three of them. At one point he planned to be an academic, but all he really wanted to do is write.

A 1957 graduate of Notre Dame, Woodward never intended to be a journalist. Like a lot of English majors in the Fifties, he says, “I aspired to be a poet, a novelist, or a critic—in that descending order.” As an undergraduate, he was heavily influenced by Frank O’Malley, a much beloved professor of English, and by a number of poets who brought a practitioner’s keen sensibility to bear on the study of literature. “We English majors were fortunate in the timing of our intellectual coming of age as Catholics,” he realizes now. “The Forties and Fifties witnessed a renaissance in Catholic letters: there were Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh in England, Francois Mauriac and Georges Bernanos in France, to name a few,

## Are we really free to do what we want?

McGill University Professor Explains How We Arrived at the Modern Myth of Autonomy

Autonomy is a trendy concept, especially among decision makers in the public sphere.

Douglas Farrow gave two examples of how influential a term it has become—one from Canada where he currently is Professor of Christian Thought and holder of the Kennedy Smith Chair in Catholic Studies at McGill University in Montreal, and the other from the United States.

In February of 2015, the Canadian Parliament recognized that it is no longer a criminal offense to assist another person in ending his or her own life. “The Court reasons that we have a right to life but not a duty to live. Suicide is no longer a crime,” said Farrow of *Carter v. Canada*.

Autonomy was used to argue a different kind of case in the United States. In the June 2015 landmark Supreme Court decision *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the Court held that a fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples. However, “not once in 100 pages does the document attempt to define what marriage is,” he pointed out.

Both these instances “appeal to the myth of autonomy that now governs Western culture,” Farrow explained. “The myth of autonomy is a story we tell ourselves about who we think we are, or who we fancy ourselves to be, rather than who we actually are.”

Autonomy is vague and can mean any number of things. Furthermore, commitments to autonomy lack specification. “They do not apply to the unborn or to those with dementia. They do not mention good or evil acts.”

Farrow is especially concerned that these recent decisions have neglected to consider wrong or right, good or evil. The language of autonomy, dignity and self-determination—since it lacks a rooting beyond itself—cloaks something degrading and sinister. Possibly without even intending to, decision makers have changed positive law and abandoned the moral law. Human beings are free, yet unaccountable.

The appeal to autonomy deludes one into thinking, as in the case of euthanasia, that the abandonment of the duty not to kill another is a laudable act exemplifying human progress.



and at home the early work of Flannery O'Connor, Walker Percy, J.F. Powers and others."

Under the rubric of "Modern Catholic Writers," O'Malley had his students read a wide range of authors from James Joyce and Franz Kafka to Dostoevsky, Rimbaud and Rilke—all of whom, he argued, were Catholic in the sense that they addressed the deepest mysteries of human existence in an authentically religious way. This was a richer, more embedded way of coming to understand what Catholicism means than by studying theology, Woodward argues. "In any case, we had no real theology courses at Notre Dame in the Fifties. What passed for theology were basically study of the moral virtues and advanced high school apologetics." Today, he observes, the situation is the opposite: "students can take sophisticated courses in Scripture and theology at many Catholics universities but few of them offer sustained immersion in the tradition of Catholic art, thought and literature."

As Woodward tells it, there was in his undergraduate days an identifiable and quite compelling Catholic intellectual tradition that was recognized outside strictly Catholic precincts. "Modern Thomism was a strong and recognized philosophical tradition, thanks in large part to Jacques Maritain and Étienne Gilson," he says. "Not only at Notre Dame, but also at the University of Chicago, Yale, and Princeton, you found a reception for Catholic aesthetics." In 1956, for example, 15,000 students turned out to hear a lecture by Anglo-Catholic poet T.S. Eliot held in the University of Minnesota's basketball gymnasium. In short, Catholic university students felt they were swimming with, not against, many of the era's swiftest intellectual currents.

**"We English majors were fortunate in the timing of our intellectual coming of age as Catholics."**

– Kenneth L. Woodward

So how exactly did it happen that Woodward became a journalist? Well, right after their wedding, he and his wife did what all aspiring writers do and set sail for Europe. "We spent my wife's savings bumming around Western Europe," he says. "We left a twosome and returned a threesome." Having started a family, Woodward realized he had to make a living. He knew he could write. One of the first pieces he wrote was published in *Commonweal*. "If you can write for *Commonweal*, I figured, you could write for anyone." In 1964 he was hired off a liberal weekly newspaper in Omaha to be *Newsweek's* Religion Editor. Oddly enough, the Religion Editor at *TIME*, his competitor, was also a Notre Dame graduate (five years earlier) who had studied under Frank O'Malley.

Well before he and his wife moved to Chicago in 2012, Woodward had been tipped by former Chicagoans in New York to check out Lumen Christi. He was especially impressed by the fact that it had been created by Catholic faculty at the University of Chicago like David Tracy and Bernard McGinn whose work he knew and long admired.

Woodward thinks it is still possible to have small Catholic colleges imbued with an Incarnational perspective in the liberal arts and sciences—indeed, Notre Dame in his day had only about 5,000 students. But most Catholic universities, he believes, "now are virtually indistinguishable from their secular counterparts. When a Catholic university houses a center or offers a major in Catholic studies, you can conclude that most of the faculty are not Catholic—nor most of the students either—and that the university culture is not particularly interested in the church's intellectual tradition. "Hence the need and particular salience of places like Lumen Christi," says Woodward. "May its tribe increase."

How did we arrive at this state? "The answer is rather complicated," said Farrow.

He explained that William of Ockham, a fourteenth-century Franciscan friar and scholar, is often blamed for an error in thought that led to modernity's renouncing of the primacy of the moral law and our dependence upon a Divine Creator.

"Ockham has many admirers and not without reason," said Farrow. Philosophers David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and John Stuart Mill all found inspiration in his arguments. "Larry Siedentop (a twentieth century American-born British political philosopher) praises Ockham for defending the freedoms necessary to defend the sphere of conscience."

But what is conscience?

"If Ockham is an early champion of freedom of conscience, the tradition he helped shape already contained within itself the seeds of that freedom's destruction," explained Farrow.

That's because Ockham considered the Divine Will inscrutable.

And if indeed a person has no access to the mind or purpose of God, then religion—and along with it the freedom of conscience—recedes to the realm of the non-rational.

**"The myth of autonomy is a story we tell ourselves about who we think we are, or who we fancy ourselves to be, rather than who we actually are."**

It shouldn't be surprising then that today people are starting to question one's freedom of conscience. Recent legal judgments have severed the link between the supremacy of God and the rule of law. "And when there is no supremacy of God, there really is no conscience," argued Farrow.

With what can the myth of autonomy be replaced?

Farrow argued that the answer lies in the thought of the eleventh-century Benedictine monk Anselm of Canterbury. During the Trinitarian

disputes that took place then, Anselm focused on the Word made Flesh, on the body, offering a challenge to a discourse in which the body is emptied of significance and meaning.

The right response to the myth of autonomy is the man who gives thanks for what is given. For only then does he discover what it means to be like God. Only then is he truly free.

## Bryan Kerns

M.A. STUDENT IN THE DIVINITY SCHOOL



### What is your area of study and what is the focus of your current research?

As an M.A. student in the Divinity School I have the luxury of not specializing too much and being able to explore the broad offerings that the University of Chicago makes available. And as a professed Augustinian friar studying for the priesthood, I am privileged to be able to move along at a more deliberate pace.

So, I can't be too easily pinned down on what I'm researching or what future studies might look like for me, but my interests are in patristics, particularly the work of Saint Augustine; systematic theology, particularly Joseph Ratzinger; religious ethics, particularly Alasdair MacIntyre; and the intersection of law and religion, particularly John Finnis. It's quite a wide spread, but at a place like Chicago the intersections develop quite easily.

### How did you first hear about Lumen Christi? Which event did you first attend, and why?

The first few times I heard about Lumen Christi were before I came to Chicago, specifically through Mark Shiffman, a professor of mine at Villanova who worked for Lumen Christi as a doctoral student in Social Thought, and Michael Moreland, another professor of mine at Villanova and occasional speaker at Lumen Christi events. The first major event I attended, if memory serves, was the panel on Pope Francis back in the fall of 2013 with Anna Moreland, Fr. Brian Daley, and Rusty Reno. The first master class I attended stands out as my first real taste of Lumen Christi's ethos and community because of the seminar leader, Fr.

Lawrence Dewan, O.P. I don't remember the topic, but I remember Fr. Dewan's wonderful spirit and genuine interest in the students who were present, even beyond what they thought about the portions of the Summa we were discussing.

### How has your participation in Institute lectures, conferences, and seminars contributed to your intellectual growth?

The scholars whom the Institute brings to campus are the best available and come from such a wide array of disciplines that it would be nearly inconceivable for one not to grow as a scholar through participation in the life of Lumen Christi. Personally and very basically I have been exposed to a range of folks whom I might have read but would never have had the opportunity to hear in person.

I may be an outlier here among aspiring scholars, but I much more enjoy things like lectures, conferences, and master classes than I enjoy reading papers. That won't get me very far down the road to tenure, but when one has the opportunity to engage in person with other scholars one really gets a sense of how seriously these luminaries take their vocations. It has certainly helped me clarify mine.

### What do you plan to do after you have completed your degree from the University of Chicago?

After I complete my degree I hope to be ordained to the priesthood and have a conversation with my provincial superior about where he sees me heading after my academic and religious initial formation is complete. I hope to be able to pursue further graduate study, but a lot remains to be seen with respect to area of study, institution, etc. Please pray for me and be assured of my prayers for the Lumen Christi community. Those prayers will help me discern God's plan for my life.

### Please comment on the role you think the Institute plays on the University of Chicago campus.

At a place like the University of Chicago, an internationally prestigious private and secular institution, the possibilities for the Lumen Christi Institute are nearly endless. Serious thinkers in all disciplines, serious Catholics across campus, really smart and excited students, and outside scholars drawn in by both Lumen Christi's mission and what's on offer at the university—what we have is fertile ground that bears all sorts of fruits. Lumen Christi provides another place for serious engagement with religion, particularly with the Catholic tradition, so important in the development of the West. And though it has Catholic origins and focus, the Institute is open to all comers, equally important at an institution like Chicago, where a culture of free inquiry is essential to its success. Lumen Christi benefits from that culture and is an exemplary instance of the university's animating commitment to a robust discourse.

**"The scholars whom the Institute brings to campus are the best available and come from such a wide array of disciplines that it would be nearly inconceivable for one not to grow as a scholar through participation in the life of Lumen Christi."**





## Donor Profile

CBIS Executive Vice President David Skelding on how Lumen Christi is sowing the seeds for a transformation of culture

DAVID SKELDING

### Awaiting Harvest

In his college days in the late 70s, David Skelding thought he was too intellectually advanced to take religion seriously. Though he was raised in a Catholic home and both his parents practiced the faith, he went off to the University of Chicago and became indifferent to what appeared to him as unsophisticated piety. He stopped attending Mass; he didn't go to Confession. "I fell away," he explains. "I fancied myself an intellectual and when it came to religion I thought you couldn't believe that stuff."

It was at the U of C however that he would first come into contact with one of the great modern thinkers of the Catholic intellectual tradition. He had taken a class in the Common Core and one of the required texts was the *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*—John Henry Newman's confessional defense of his religious opinions. The book made a profound impact. He was astonished at the unbelievable depth of Newman's thought. Here was an intellectual who was using the powers of his mind not for specialized knowledge in the arts, sciences, or humanities but to explain his conversion and adherence to the faith.

His encounter with Newman planted seeds that, Skelding confesses, took awhile to germinate. Faith was still foreign to his way of thinking, of being. Despite the initial impression he made, Newman somehow receded into the periphery, outshined by more secular thinkers. Had Lumen Christi existed at the time, Skelding is convinced the seeds of faith would have germinated faster. "If there was something like the Institute when I was at the U of C, it would have rebutted my prideful presumption that religion wasn't reasonable, wasn't intellectual enough."

After graduating with an A.B. from the University of Chicago, Skelding continued his love of learning at Cornell University where he received a J.D. from the Law School. In his professional career, Skelding has been incredibly successful. For many years, he was Equity Partner at Lord Bissell & Brook where he practiced in the securities, finance, and general corporate areas with an emphasis on the investment management industry. Most recently, he has risen to Executive Vice President and Head of Distribution at Christian Brothers Investment Services in downtown Chicago.

**"The Institute is still young. I've heard it said that there's something like 200 academics who have benefited from its programs. That's a stunning number. The seeds are being planted for a profound change in our culture. Lumen Christi will have made a significant impact in 50 to 100 years."**

How did faith suddenly become such an integral part of his life—to the extent that he works at a company that helps Catholic institutions develop socially responsible investing solutions?

"Faith didn't become a part of my life until I met Karen," says Skelding, sharing that God often reaches us through human relationships. While dating Karen who was to become his wife, he saw someone who never fell away, who consistently attended Mass, who gave a good example. He started attending Mass too. "Graces are there at Mass even if you're not open to them," he says. They married and started a family. Four boys later, Skelding learned that "life wasn't all about me," he laughs. He became less self-absorbed and

self-important. Christian values started to make sense to him.

It would be through relationship again that Skelding would find himself deepening his faith even further. He moved his family to River Forest where he met and developed a friendship with Noel Moore who invited him to an event organized by a Catholic institute at his alma mater. The event was a symposium with Leon Wieseltier and Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I. on Wieseltier's *Kaddish*—a memoir about his spiritual journey and observance of Jewish ritual after the death of his father. Skelding was impressed: "I was blown away by the thoughtfulness of the discussion."

Intrigued, he attended a few other events and soon struck up a friendship with Thomas Levergood, the Institute's Executive Director. Given his legal background, he was asked to chair the Law & Culture planning committee in 2009. He served in that capacity for a few years, and was responsible for organizing a major event at the Union League Club featuring Cardinal George as a keynote speaker.

Skelding continued attending events but dropped his leadership role at the Institute until this year when he became chair of Lumen Christi's Development Committee.

Given his role in Lumen Christi's growth and development, Skelding wants to ensure that the Institute has firm footing and can live past the current generation. "I want the Institute doing its work when my grandchildren are in college." He is extremely hopeful for the organization's future: "The Institute is still young. I've heard it said that there's something like 200 academics who have benefited from

Continued on page 14.

its programs. That's a stunning number. The seeds are being planted for a profound change in our culture. Lumen Christi will have made a significant impact in 50 to 100 years."

Skelding's spiritual life, his involvement at Lumen Christi, and his professional work are all interconnected. "I view my role as a baptized Catholic, the work of CBIS, and the work of LCI as remarkably consistent. In *Gaudium et Spes* (the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World [no 43], from Vatican II) it says: 'one of the gravest errors of our time is the dichotomy between the faith which many profess and the practice of their daily lives.'" Skelding is adamant about that. "You are a baptized Catholic all the time. Romano Guardini (a 20th century Italian-born German Catholic priest) said that even if you are climbing a tree, there is a way to do that as a faithful Catholic."

For those who spend their life in pursuit of knowledge, Lumen Christi is helping them integrate their faith with what they discover by reason. It is making them aware of the harmony between the two. It is healing the rift that often severs thoughtful discourse between believers and non-believers. Skelding is proud to be a part of this important work: "The mission of the Institute is spot on. It is exactly what the Church needs."

## SPRING 2016 EVENTS



**April 19**

Moderator, Anna Moreland (Villanova University) at reception for *A Godly Humanism: Clarifying the Hope That Lies Within*

Attendees socialize prior to listening to remarks on Cardinal George's legacy given by Gary A. Anderson (University of Notre Dame) and Jean-Luc Marion (University of Chicago). The event was sponsored by the Lumen Christi Institute for Catholic Thought and by the Archdiocese of Chicago, Mundelein Seminary, Catholic Theological Union, & Relevant Radio

**April 19**





May 7



Spouses Anna Moreland (Associate Professor of Humanities at Villanova University) and Michael Moreland (Professor of Law at Villanova University) discuss marriage and family in the church today at the University of Chicago

May 23-25



Fifteen graduate students and junior faculty in Economics and Finance attended an inaugural seminar on Economics and Catholic Social Thought at the University of Notre Dame. The event was cosponsored by the Catholic Research Economists Discussion Organization and the Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture



## Upcoming Events

All events are at the University of Chicago unless otherwise noted.

### September

- 27 **Tuesday, 5:30p.m.**  
**"Getting Religion: Faith, Culture & Politics from the Age of Eisenhower to the Era of Obama"**  
**University Club of Chicago**  
 Kenneth Woodward (author, former religion editor at Newsweek)  
 Martin Marty (University of Chicago)

### October

- 6 **Thursday, 4:30p.m.**  
**Lecture by**  
**Francis Oakley (Williams College)**
- 13 **Thursday, 4:30p.m.**  
**"The Whole Harmonium: The Life of Wallace Stevens"**  
 Paul Mariani (Boston College)
- 21 **Friday, 7:30 a.m.**  
**Religious Faith and Modern War**  
**University Club of Chicago**  
 Phil Klay (author and Iraq War veteran)
- 21 **Friday**  
**A Conversation with Phil Klay**  
 Phil Klay (author and Iraq War veteran)





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"The Institute is still young. I've heard it said that there's something like 200 academics who have benefited from its summer seminars. That's a stunning number. The seeds are being planted for a profound change in our culture. Lumen Christi will have made a significant impact in 50 to 100 years."

- David Skelding, CBIS Executive Vice President and U of C alum



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A capacity-crowd at downtown Chicago event organized to celebrate the legacy of the late Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I. and his last book, *A Godly Humanism* (April 19)