

HORIZONS

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Plus Reviews of 35 Books

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COLLEGE THEOLOGY SOCIETY

The College Theology Society is a professional organization of college and university professors of religion in the United States and Canada.

The purpose of the College Theology Society is to improve the quality of the teaching of religion: by stimulating and sharing scholarly research; by developing programs of theology and religious studies which meet student needs and interests; and by exploring, evaluating, and encouraging effective ways of teaching which are interdisciplinary and ecumenical.

Annual membership dues in the Society are \$50.00 (Full Professional or Associate), \$50.00 (Joint Professional for husband and wife), and \$25.00 (Graduate Student). Membership in the Society includes a subscription to Horizons. Contact Daniel T. Michaels, KEYPOPPY Christian Resources, 1726 West Cape Rock Drive, Cape Girardeau, MO 63701. Telephone: (573) 651-4199. E-mail: dmichaels@keypoppy.com

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From the Editor

Since our Fall 2009 issue appeared, the Roman Catholic Church has been rocked by two episodes that have created a crisis of conscience for many. The first was an event specific to the United States, the vociferous debates over the health care reform bill in Congress that eventually pitted the American bishops over against the Catholic health care community. The comments from partisans on both sides ranged from thoughtful argument and commentary to wild accusations and high-schoolish name-calling. (I'm probably not alone in detecting, in the aftermath of these controversies, a whiff of Donatism in the air.) The second episode, still unfolding, is the scandal affecting the universal Church: the explosion of reports of physical and sexual abuse of children—in Germany, then throughout Europe, eventually including South America—and the subsequent revelations of cover-ups and the shuffling of priest-personnel on the part of various dioceses. These horrific reports and the outrage provoked by them have had consequences reaching all the way into the Vatican and have led to the resignations of bishops for either covering up crimes (as in Ireland) or being abusers themselves (a German bishop and a Belgian bishop). In what has become a revolting sidebar, the revelations concerning Fr. Marcial Maciel and his Legionaries of Christ (recently reported by Jason Berry in the *National Catholic Reporter*) have served only to reinforce the fear that the rot has reached into the very heart of the institution.

To say that these events have left an already fragile Church even more wounded, even fractured, would be an understatement. To pose two questions out of a host of important ones raised by these events: how do the current perceptions of Catholicism affect our students and our teaching? How should professors of theology and religious studies at Catholic institutions cope with this, both personally and professionally? I raise these questions in the wake of one posed on the *America Magazine* blog by Tom Beaudoin, professor of religion and religious education at Fordham University: "In the face of what is being revealed about the Catholicism that has been so much my atmosphere, how can I justify my intellectual work?" ("The Expiration Date of This Catholicism: Being a Theologian in an Abusive Church," http://www.americamagazine.org/blog/entry.cfm?blog_id=2&entry_id=2685 [accessed 29 April 2010]). In a future issue, we hope to explore further the connection between our "professing" in the classroom and the current fractured and contentious ecclesial context in which we perform it. But at the very least we cannot ignore that context, nor the perceptions that act as a screen through which our religious claims are viewed by students and colleagues alike.

The articles in this issue address (serendipitously, not by plan!) the current context from diverse angles. Augustine's doctrine of the Church as *totus Christus* (Kimberly Baker), twentieth-century Catholic theology's struggle with modernity (Jürgen Mettepenningen), the challenge of young adults' changing views of intimate relationships and a theological anthropology that can speak to these views (Kari-Shane Davis Zimmerman), and the problem of the "pan-metaphoricism" and reference in religious language (Francis Caponi), our book review symposium on Bryan Massingale's important new book *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*—these are all ways at getting at the issue of the plausibility of Christian thinking and speaking about God in a context where Catholicism is now more likely to be judged life-denying than life-affirming. And our editorial essay (Bradford Hinze) directly addresses one difficult aspect of the role of theologians today, the sometimes contentious relationship they have with the Roman magisterium.