

John T. McGreevy's Catholicism: A Global History from the French Revolution to Pope Francis

Thomas J. Farrell

Volume 3, Number 1, Spring 2023

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1097603ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1097603ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

New Explorations Association

ISSN

2563-3198 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Farrell, T. (2023). Review of [John T. McGreevy's Catholicism: A Global History from the French Revolution to Pope Francis]. *New Explorations*, 3(1).
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1097603ar>

© Thomas J. Farrell, 2023



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>



Review: John T. McGreevy's *Catholicism: A Global History from the French Revolution to Pope Francis* (W. W. Norton, 2022).

Thomas J. Farrell

University of Minnesota Duluth

tfarrell@d.umn.edu

The American Catholic historian John T. McGreevy (born in 1963; Ph.D. in history, Stanford University, 1992) is now the provost of the University of Notre Dame. He is also the author of the following three books:

- (1) *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth Century Urban North* (1996);
- (2) *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (2003);
- (3) *American Jesuits and the World: How an Embattled Religious Order Made Catholicism Global* (2016).

Because I was in the Jesuits (1979-1987), I was fascinated with McGreevy's 2016 book *American Jesuits and the World*. When I was in the Jesuits, I did my theological studies at the Jesuit theologate at the University of Toronto. When Pope John-Paul II visited Canada in 1984, I as a Jesuit seminarian, participated as a Eucharistic minister at the impressive outdoor Mass that he celebrated at the shrine of the North American Martyrs in Midland, Ontario.

Subsequently, I also attended the impressive funeral in 1984 in Toronto of the Canadian Jesuit philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984). For many years, he taught theology at the Jesuit-sponsored Gregorian University in Rome. The University of Toronto Press subsequently published the 25-volume *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*. After I retired at the end of May 2009 from the University of Minnesota Duluth, I donated those 25 volumes to the UMD library.

Later, when the first Jesuit pope was elected in 2013, I renewed my interest in the Jesuits. Consequently, I was fascinated by McGreevy's 2016 book about the Jesuits. I have profiled the doctrinally conservative Pope Francis in my online article "Pope Francis on Evil and Satan" (dated March 24, 2019).

Now, in McGreevy's new 2022 500-page book *Catholicism: A Global History from the French Revolution to Pope Francis*, he devotes more than 400 pages to the main text (pp. 1-422), followed by "Notes" (pp. 427-493) and the "Index" (pp. 495-513). In blurbs printed on the dust jacket, Harvard's James T. Kloppenberg describes McGreevy's new book as "A Landmark book." Princeton's Jeremy Adelman says, "This is truly a majestic book." I dare say that probably almost everybody could learn something new from this book.

In the Table of "Contents" (pp. vii-viii), we see at a glance that McGreevy has divided his 422-page text into three main parts, each of which is sub-divided into chapters and then the "Conclusion: Pope Francis and Beyond" (pp. 411-422):

(1) Part I: "Revolution and Revival, 1789-1870" (pp. 1-108, with chapters 1-4);

(2) Part II: "The Milieu and Its Discontents, 1870-1962" (pp. 109-271, with chapters 5-10);

(3) Part III: "Vatican II and Its Aftermath, 1962-2021" (pp. 273-409, with chapters 11-15).

In any event, McGreevy's fifteen chapter titles indicate the scope of the themes he develops:

Chapter One: "Revolution: In France and around the World" (pp. 3-28);

Chapter Two: "Revival: Devotions, Miracles, and the Papacy" (pp. 29-57);

Chapter Three: "Democracy: How Catholicism Fostered and Inhibited Democratic Revolutions" (pp. 58-80);

Chapter Four: "Triumph: 1848, Vatican I and the Consolidation of the Catholic Revival" (pp. 81-108);

Chapter Five: "Milieu: Why Nationalists Attacked Catholics and How Catholics Responded" (pp. 111-134);

Chapter Six: "Empire: Missionaries, Converts, and Imperialism" (pp. 135-155);

Chapter Seven: "Nation: A Catholic Nationalism" (pp. 156-186);

Chapter Eight: "Crisis: The Politics of the 1930s" (pp. 187-215);

Chapter Nine: "Ressourcement: Opening the Milieu" (pp. 216-244);

Chapter Ten: "Decolonization: A Catholic Global South" (pp. 245-271);

Chapter Eleven: "Vatican II: A Church Transformed" (pp. 275-306);

Chapter Twelve: "Liberation: Freedom and Human Rights in the 1970s" (pp. 307-326);

Chapter Thirteen: "Exodus: Sex, Gender, and Turmoil" (pp. 327-351);

Chapter Fourteen: “Charisma: John-Paul II and the End of the Cold War” (pp. 352-379);

Chapter Fifteen: “Sexual Abuse (and Its Cover-Up)” (pp. 380-409).

In McGreevy’s Chapter One: “Revolution: In France and around the World,” he says, “Until the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, no single event in the history of modern Catholicism was as momentous, none as disruptive, as the French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars” (pp. 5-6). However, in the “Index,” the entry on the United States has far more sub-entries than does any other main entry. So don’t be fooled by the explicit reference to “from the French Revolution” of 1789 to think that somehow the earlier American Revolution of 1776 and the United States Constitution are overlooked, because they are not.

Now, the years in which the Second Vatican Council met (1962-1965) somewhat overlap my years of undergraduate studies (1962-1966) in Jesuit institutions of higher education, and, to one degree or another, I also experienced what McGreevy here refers to as its aftermath. In any event, in the fall semester of 1964, I transferred as a junior English major to Saint Louis University. Over the years, I took five courses there from the American Jesuit Renaissance specialist and media ecology theorist Walter J. Ong (1912-2003; Ph.D. in English, Harvard University, 1955). Like all Jesuits of his generation, his lengthy Jesuit training had included studying neo-Thomism (in Latin) in his years of philosophical studies and in his years of theological studies – in Ong’s case, he studied what was then known as an existentialist St. Louis Thomism. (For specific page references to McGreevy discussion of neo-Thomism, see neo-Thomism in the “Index” [pp. 505-506].)

Neo-Thomism was launched by Roman Catholics worldwide in response to Pope Leo XII’s encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879). McGreevy says, “Leo XIII turned to Italian Jesuits affiliated with *Civiltà Cattolica* and the German Jesuit Joseph Kleutgen and commanded them to draft an encyclical, *Aeterni Patris*, requesting Catholic bishops and priests to study ‘the Angelic Doctor [Thomas Aquinas].’ . . . This neo-Thomist movement would become the world’s most global philosophical enterprise” (p. 117; McGreevy’s bracketed material). McGreevy also says, “As a practical matter, though, despite a core of prominent non-Catholic admirers, neo-Thomism had only slight influence on the mainstream philosophical world even as it gained enormous influence within the church” (p. 118). In any event, Vatican II downgraded neo-Thomism a wee bit from its previous most favored status.¹

In any event, Ong discusses Joseph Kleutgen in his book *Hopkins, the Self, and God* (University of Toronto Press, 1986, pp. 94-97, 124, 131-132), the published version of Ong's 1981 Alexander Lectures at the University of Toronto.

Ong discussed the existentialist St. Louis Thomism in two of his publications that are reprinted in *An Ong Reader: Challenges for Further Inquiry*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (2002): (1) Ong's 1970 review of the 1969 book *The Interior Landscape: The Literary Criticism of Marshall McLuhan, 1943-1962* (pp. 69-77; see esp. p. 75); and (2) Ong's published interview in George Riemer's 1971 book *The New Jesuits* (pp. 79-109; see esp. p. 98).

Because McGreevy discusses Mother Mary Catherine McAuley (pp. 29-32 and 50), perhaps I should mention here that Ong delivered a lecture honoring Mother Mary Catherine McAuley at Saint Joseph College, West Hartford, Connecticut, in 1954. Subsequently, he published it in slightly different form as "The Renaissance Myth and the American Catholic Mind" in his book *Frontiers in American Catholicism: Essays on Ideology and Culture* (1957, pp. 52-85). It is reprinted as "Renaissance Ideas and the American Catholic Mind" in volume one of Ong's *Faith and Contexts*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (1992a, pp. 47-74).

Because McGreevy also discusses the English convert John Henry Newman (for specific page references, see the "Index" [p. 506]), perhaps I should also mention that Ong published "Newman's *Essay on Development [of Christian Doctrine]* in Its Intellectual Milieu" in the Jesuit-sponsored journal *Theological Studies* (March 1946). It is reprinted in volume two of Ong's *Faith and Contexts*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (1992b, pp. 1-37). Later, Ong also discussed Newman at length in his book *Hopkins, the Self, and God* (1986; for specific page references to Newman, see the "Index" [p. 178]).

Finally, in the spirit of giving credit where credit is due, McGreevy discusses the French convert neo-Thomist Jacques Maritain extensively (for specific page references, see the "Index" [p. 504]). Also in the spirit of giving credit where credit is due, Ong critiques the 1959 English translation of Maritain's book *Distinguish to Unite or The Degrees of Knowledge*, translated by Gerald B. Phelan (orig. French ed., 1932) in his review titled "The Eternal Spring

of Thought” in the *Saturday Review* (August 22, 1959).

Now, McGreevy says, “The phase of Catholic history beginning with the ultramontane revival of the early nineteenth century had concluded [with the new documents issued by the bishops in the Second Vatican Council]. Working under the glare of the world’s media, the bishops and their theologians had managed to compose, debate, and approve four constitutions (on the liturgy, the church, divine revelation, and the church’s relationship with the modern world), three declarations (including on religious freedom and the church’s relationship with other religions), and nine decrees. (The constitutions and the declarations were understood to be the council’s core texts; the nine decrees were less consequential.) The respectful tone adopted by the council toward the world, the absence of condemnation, remained consistent throughout the texts, and this rhetorical posture proved almost as important as the document themselves” (p. 303).²

Now, in all honesty, I find McGreevy’s most puzzling omission in his otherwise admirable global survey of judiciously culled and splendidly orchestrated highlights (pp. 1-409) to be his nearly complete omission of highlights about the Argentine Jesuit Jorge Mario Bergoglio (born in 1936), who was elected the first Jesuit pope in 2013. McGreevy first mentions him briefly on pages 97 and 401.

Now, given the global sweep that McGreevy undertakes to establish in his chapters, he works to the best of his ability to establish a fast-paced narrative structure of highlights that we can follow, even if we are not accustomed to using his preferred terminology about the ultramontane tendencies (if you are in a certain place in Europe, then Rome may be over the mountains, eh?). Over against what he variously refers to as ultramontanists (for specific page references to them, see the “Index” [p. 511]), he highlights a debate they engaged in with what he refers to as Reform Catholics.

For the purposes of operationally defining and explaining his terminology, McGreevy says, “To answer these questions [that he just posed about two priests who both lived much of their lives in Paris and were active during the revolution] is to enter a debate about the relationship of Catholicism to the modern world that began in the early eighteenth century. The debate arrayed Catholics on two sides: on the one side, those who focused on the papacy as the primary source of Catholic authority, termed ‘ultramontanists,’ or ‘over the mountains’ to Rome.

On the other side were advocates of Reform Catholicism, a catchall term lumping together overlapping traditions variously identified as Enlightenment Catholicism, Richerism, Gallicanism, Conciliarism, and Jansenism” (p. 7).

To justify the catchall term of Reform Catholicism lumping together these disparate traditions, McGreevy provides the following endnote (p. 429): “Dale K. Van Kley, the subject’s leading scholar, coined the term [Reform Catholicism]” in the title of his book *Reform Catholicism and the International Suppression of the Jesuits in Enlightenment Europe [in 1773]* (2018).

In any event, McGreevy’s historical survey of highlights is fast-paced and informative. He has written an excellent narrative of highlights. But his discussion of Pope Francis (pp. 415-422) is too short as a conclusion of what all McGreevy has highlighted in pages 1-409. For example, McGreevy says, “Francis repeatedly picked up threads left dangling at the death of Paul VI [in 1978] and urged Catholics to recommit themselves to the texts of the Second Vatican Council” (p. 417). But what exactly were the threads left dangling at the death of Pope Paul VI? McGreevy has not previously listed the dangling threads. Nevertheless, he promptly mentions a couple of things that the doctrinally conservative Pope Francis, elected pope in 2013, has done.

However, the doctrinally conservative Pope Francis is on record as being impressed with Pope Paul VI’s 1975 post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (In Proclaiming the Gospel), a document that McGreevy does not happen to mention. It strikes me that Pope Francis’ 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), which McGreevy also does not happen to mention, carries forward Pope Paul VI’s 1975 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. In fairness to McGreevy, he does mention Pope Francis’ 2015 eco-encyclical *Laudato Si’* and his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*.

Now, for the sake of discussion, let’s imagine that American Catholic undergraduates at the University of Notre Dame today have the time and leisure to read Provost McGreevy’s new 2022 book *Catholicism: A Global History from the French Revolution to Pope Francis*.

No doubt Pope Francis is doctrinally conservative. He is not likely to abrogate the church's official teachings against contraception, legalized abortion, the ordination of women to the priesthood, the ordination of married men to the priesthood, homosexuality, or same-sex marriage. If being doctrinally conservative on all of these positions make him an ultramontanist (in Provost McGreevy's preferred terminology), then how should the American Catholic undergraduates at Notre Dame see the first Jesuit pope in his 2015 eco-encyclical *Laudato Si'* – as a Reform Catholic, albeit a selectively Reform Catholic?

Oddly enough, Pope Francis' biographer Austen Ivereigh presents the doctrinally conservative pope as a Reform Catholic in his book *The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope* (2014).³

If Notre Dame undergraduates today try to think of Pope Francis' 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* as somehow representing his Reform Catholicism, they might not be mistaken about that – but it is practicing Catholics that he wants to see reform themselves and their spiritual lives.⁴

McGreevy says, “The ultramontane milieu constructed in the wake of the French Revolution is sliding into history, beyond living memory. A Catholic baptized today is as distant from the Second Vatican Council as [the young German priest and Vatican II consultant] Joseph Ratzinger [later Pope Benedict XVI] and [the German Jesuit priest and Vatican II consultant] Karl Rahner were in 1961. Let's hope that these young Catholics will be better positioned, in the words of Francis [in his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*], to be ‘citizens of our respective nations and of the entire world, builders of a new social bond’” (p. 422).

McGreevy also quotes Pope Francis: “‘We are not living,’ Francis tells us, ‘in an era of change but a change of era’” (p. 422; quoted from Pope Francis' address on November 10, 2015). This clever play on words may represent the pope's understanding of the Catholic theologian Romano Guardini's classic book *The End of the Modern World* (orig. German ed., 1950), which Pope Francis quotes eight times in his 2015 eco-encyclical *Laudato Si'*. If, as Guardini claims, the modern world has come to an end, including the period that McGreevy highlights in his new 2022 book *Catholicism*, then this end marks the end of an era, so that we are now living through the emergence of a new era.

Now, I should note here that Pope Francis' biographer Austen Ivereigh in his article “The

Power to Serve: Curial authority is rooted in humility” in *Commonweal* magazine (dated Sept. 7, 2022) has suggested another possible source of the pope’s comment about a new era: the Dominican theologian Yves Congar’s 1964 book *Power and Poverty in the Church: The Renewal and Understanding of Service*, translated by Jennifer Nicholson. According to Ivreigh, Pope Francis refers to “the change of era, which Congar foresaw in his little book as a return to a ‘pre-Constantinian situation in the pagan world.’”⁵

Now, in McGreevy’s “Introduction” (pp. x-xiv), he says that he wrote this book for two reasons: (1) “to make an argument: a better understanding of Catholicism enhances our grasp of the modern world” (p. x); (2) “Almost daily I get asked (and wonder): how did we [Catholics] get here?” (p. xi). But I would suggest that wondering how Catholics today got here requires a far deeper analysis than the one that McGreevy undertakes in his new 2022 book.

In McGreevy’s “Introduction,” he points out that pre-Vatican II Catholics had been “conditioned to understand theirs as an unchanging church” (p. xiii) – a conditioned belief that was thoroughly shattered when Vatican II changed the official language of the Mass from Latin to the local vernacular language. Then McGreevy says, “The Canadian Jesuit Bernard Lonergan, writing just after the council concluded, described Catholicism as moving from a classicist worldview to one possessed by ‘historical consciousness.’ The classicist worldview understood human nature as ‘always the same’ and applied universal principles to ‘concrete singularity.’ By contrast, Lonergan encouraged Catholics to begin with the human subject, not an abstract human nature, and use history to scrutinize ‘how the patterns of living, the institutions, the common meaning of one place and time differ from those of another’” (p. xiii).

Lonergan delivered his paper “The Transition from a Classicist Worldview to Historical-Mindedness” at a meeting of the Canon Law Society of America in 1966, and it was first published in 1967. It is reprinted in *A Second Collection* by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, edited by William F. J. Ryan, S.J., and Bernard J. Tyrrell, S.J. (1974, pp. 1-11).

But also see the Canadian Jesuit theologian and Lonergan specialist Frederick E. Crowe’s 1965 essay “Neither Jew nor Greek, but One Human Nature and Operation in All” that is reprinted, slightly revised, in the anthology *Communication and Lonergan: Common Ground*

for *Forging the New Age*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (1993, pp. 89-107).

For an article of related interest, see Martha C. Nussbaum's "Human Functioning and Social Justice: In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism" in *Political Theory* (May 1992): pp. 202-246. Even though Aristotle was far closer to what Ong refers to as the world-as-event sense of life than we Americans today in our contemporary secondary oral culture are, Aristotelian essentialism is a byproduct of the world-as-view sense of life in Western philosophy.

Now at the very least, we should examine what Lonergan refers to as the classicist worldview. I would suggest that the classicist worldview comes from Plato and certain trends in Western philosophy and Catholic theology that embody and express what Ong (1969) refers to as the world-as-view sense of life – over against what he refers to as the world-as-event sense of life. Concerning Plato and the decisive emergence in Western philosophy of what Ong refers to as the world-as-view sense of life, see the classicist Eric A. Havelock's classic study *Preface to Plato* (1963) – a work that Ong never tired of touting. Ong's 1964 review of Havelock's 1963 book is reprinted in *An Ong Reader: Challenges for Further Study*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (2002, pp. 309-312).⁶

In Lonergan's 1957 philosophical masterpiece *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (5th ed., edited by Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., and Robert M. Doran, S.J.; University of Toronto Press, 1992), Lonergan styles the philosophy that he works out as critical realism – over against which he critiques certain other forms of philosophical realism as naïve realism involving what he mocks as "taking a good look."

For all practical purposes, what Lonergan refers to in his essay "The Transition from a Classicist Worldview to Historical-Mindedness" involves the classicist worldview advanced by Plato and by certain forms of philosophical realism that Lonergan mocks as "taking a good look."

Next, I want to discuss a certain affinity between what Lonergan mocks as "taking a good look" in his 1957 philosophical masterpiece, on the one hand, and, on the other, what the American Jesuit Renaissance specialist and cultural historian Walter J. Ong refers to as the aural-to-visual shift in Western cultural history in his massively researched 1958 book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (for specific page

references to the aural-to-visual shift, see the “Index” [p. 396].)

In it, Ong carefully contextualizes the French Renaissance logician and educational reformer and Protestant martyr Peter Ramus (1515-1572). Ong clearly acknowledges (on p. 338, note 54) that he is borrowing his account of the aural-to-visual shift from the French Christian existentialist philosopher Louis Lavelle. According to Ong, the aural-to-visual shift was involved in Aristotle’s discovery of the formal study of logic. I have discussed Ong’s philosophical thought in his 1958 book *RMDD* in my lengthy online article “Walter J. Ong’s Philosophical Thought” (dated September 20, 2020).

The historical shift to the visual in cognitive processing in Western philosophy includes what Lonergan mocks as “taking a good look” in other forms of philosophical realism.

Subsequently, Ong published his seminal 1967 book *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History*, the expanded version of his 1964 Terry Lectures at Yale University.⁷

Later, Ong published the article “World as View and World as Event” in the *American Anthropologist* (August 1969). It is reprinted in volume three of Ong’s *Faith and Contexts*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (1995, pp. 69-90).

What Lonergan refers to mockingly as “taking a good look” involves what Ong refers to as the world as view sense of life. Similarly, what Lonergan refers to as the classicist worldview in Catholic theology involves what Ong refers to as the world as view sense of life.

However, what Lonergan refers to as the transition to historical-mindedness in Catholic theology does not involve what Ong describes as the world-as-event sense of life, but, rather, a still emerging adaptation of the world-as-view sense of life. In addition, what Lonergan refers to as his position of critical realism in philosophy involves a still emerging adaptation of what Ong refers to as the world-as-view sense of life – as does Ong’s own philosophical thought, which he characterized as phenomenological and personalist in cast.

I have discussed Ong’s account of the world-as-event sense of life and the world-as-view

sense of life in my article “Walter Ong and Harold Bloom can help us understand the Hebrew Bible” in *Explorations in Media Ecology*, volume 11, numbers 3&4 (2011): pp. 255-272.

For further relevant discussion of the Hebrew Bible, and what Ong in his 1958 book *RMDD* refers to as the aural-to-visual shift in ancient Hebrew culture, see James L. Kugel’s book *The Great Shift: Encountering God in Biblical Times* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017). Like Kugel, Jacob Neusner, in effect, discusses the somewhat aural-to-visual sift in ancient Jewish culture in his book *The Transformation of Judaism: From Philosophy to Religion* (University of Illinois Press, 1992).

Regarding the historical Jesus and what Ong (1969) refers to as the world-as-event sense of life, see John Dominic Crossan’s short book *The Essential Jesus: Original Sayings and Earliest Images* (1994). But also see my 2022 9,000-word review essay “John Dominic Crossan on the Historical Jesus’s 93 Original Sayings, and Walter J. Ong’s Thought” that is available online through the University of Minnesota’s digital conservancy.

Now, regarding what Ong (1969) refers to as the world-as-event sense of life and the world-as-view sense of life in ancient canonical Christian texts in the New Testament, see Werner H. Kelber’s 1983 book *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q*.

Regarding Pope Francis and what Ong refers to as the world-as-event sense of life, see the pope’s 2020 post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia* (Beloved Amazon) and his 2022 apostolic letter *Desiderio Desideravi* (I longed for the desire; from the Latin version of Luke 22:15). But also see my 2022 review essay “Pope Francis’ 2022 Apostolic Letter, and Walter J. Ong’s Thought” that is available online through the University of Minnesota’s digital conservancy.

I discuss the aural-to-visual shift (Ong 1958) in ancient Christianity in my article “Early Christian Creeds and Controversies in the Light of the Orality-Literacy Hypothesis [as Advanced Primarily by Ong]” in *Oral Tradition* (January 1987).

In effect, the residual world-as-event sense of life as the world-as-view sense of life emerged in ancient Catholics is explored by Hans Urs von Balthasar in his work titled *Presence and*

Thought: An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa, translated by Mark Sebanc (1995; orig. French ed., 1988); and by A. N. Williams in her book *The Divine Sense: The Intellect in Patristic Theology* (2007) – and on a broader scale by the French Jesuit theologian Henri de Lubac in his multivolume work *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture* (only three volumes of which have been translated into English thus far). (In McGreevy’s Chapter Nine: “Ressourcement: Opening the Millieu” (pp. 216-244), he repeatedly mentions Henri de Lubac [pp. 226, 227, 228, 229, 258, 278, and 347].)

For Ong, the personalist cast of his thought included never tiring of touting the Jewish philosopher and theologian Martin Buber’s classic book in German that is translated into English *I and Thou*. For Ong, the phenomenological cast of his thought included his account of the aural-to-visual shift in cognitive processing that he discussed in his 1958 book *RMDD* and his entire subsequent work involving oral-aural versus visual contrasts.

I have honored both the phenomenological and the personalist cast of Ong’s work in the subtitle of my book *Walter Ong’s Contributions to Cultural Studies: The Phenomenology of the Word and I-Thou Communication*, 2nd ed. (2015; 1st ed., 2000).

(McGreevy mentions the philosophical movement known as personalism in connection with certain Catholic philosophers [for specific page references, see the “Index” (p. 507); also see the “Index” entries on Jacques Maritain, Emmanuel Mounier, and Pope John-Paul II]. In McGreevy’s extended discussion of the “murdered at Auschwitz in 1942” [p. 387] and subsequently canonized [by Pope John-Paul II] philosopher Edith Stein [pp. 187-190], he discusses Edmund Husserl and phenomenology [pp. 188 and 189].)

Now, the historical-mindedness in Catholic theology that Lonergan refers to emerged significantly in Vatican II’s official documents thanks to what McGreevy refers to in French as theological *ressourcement* (p. 223). McGreevy says, “Theologian Yves Congar defined the term as literally meaning ‘return to the sources’” (p. 223). In simpler terms, it involves the Catholic sense of tradition in theology.

Now, in McGreevy’s terminology, modern Reform Catholics after the French Revolution probably tended to be oriented more strongly to what Ong (1969) refers to as the world-as-

view sense of life than they were to the world-as-event sense of life. Conversely, McGreevy's modern ultramontanist Catholics after the French Revolution probably tended to represent a strong residual (and medieval) orientation to the world-as-event sense of life, but with some tendency toward the world-as-view sense of life.

However, the ancient pre-Constantinian Catholics that Yves Congar referred to in his 1964 book *Power and Poverty in the Church*, mentioned above, most like tended to be more strongly oriented to the world-as-event sense of life than subsequent medieval Catholics such as St. Thomas Aquinas were. Concerning ancient pre-Constantinian Catholics, see my 1987 article "Early Christian Creeds and Controversies in the Light of the Orality-Literacy Hypothesis," mentioned above.

What Ong eventually came to refer to as our contemporary secondary orality that accentuates sound, which he differentiated from primary orality (and its world-as-event sense of life), I have discussed in my essay "Secondary Orality and Consciousness Today" in the book *Media, Consciousness, and Culture: Explorations of Walter Ong's Thought*, edited by Bruce E. Gronbeck, Thomas J. Farrell, and Paul A. Soukup (1991).

Notes

¹ But I would draw your attention to the subsequent explorations of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas in the following four books: (1) Matthew Fox's creative book *Sheer Joy: Conversations with Thomas Aquinas on Creation Spirituality* (2nd ed.; 2020; 1st ed., 1992; see esp. pp. 214-215); (2) A. N. Williams' scholarly study *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (1999); (3) Bernhard Blankenhorn's scholarly study *The Mystery of Union with God: Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas* (2015); (4) Daria Spezzano's scholarly study *The Glory of God's Grace: Deification According to St. Thomas Aquinas* (2015).

² For fresh English translations of Vatican II's key documents, see the book *Vatican II: The Essential Texts*, edited by Norman Tanner, S.J. (2012).

³ But for further information about Pope Francis' life and times, see Massimo Borghesi's fine 2018 book *The Mind of Pope Francis: Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Intellectual Journey*, translated by Barry Hudock.

⁴ For a critique of the vociferous opposition to Pope Francis among American Catholic conservative culture warriors, see Massimo Borghesi's 2021 book *Catholic Discordance: Neoconservatism vs. the Field Hospital Church of Pope Francis*, translated by Barry Hudock.

⁵ For further discussion of Constantine and the history of the church, see James Carroll's book *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews: A History* (Houghton Mifflin, 2001).

⁶ But also see Havelock's 1978 book *The Greek Concept of Justice: From Its Shadow in Homer to Its Substance in Plato* and his 1982 book *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences*.

⁷ For a work of related interest, see Robert A. Orsi's 2016 book *History and Presence*. In it, among other things, Orsi says, "The literary critic Roberto Calasso [1941-2021] observes that the Greek word for 'god,' *theos*, has no vocative case. 'Theos has a predicate function,' Calasso writes. 'It designates *something that happens*'" (p. 37). Calasso's description here resembles what Ong refers to as the world-as-event sense of life. According to Ong's account of our Western cultural history, the world-as-event sense of life was still readily accessible to ancient and medieval Jews and Christians; however, after the Gutenberg printing press emerged in Europe in the mid-1450s, the emerging print culture (see Ong [1958]) fostered a new cultural mix in which the world-as-view sense of life tended to over-balance the world-as-event sense of life in Western people. Orsi says, "Before that advent of modern epistemology, before the arrival of 'religion' within the boundaries of Enlightenment reason [see Ong's 1958 subtitle *the Art of Reason*], ethics, and linguistics, and before the codification of 'religion' in national constitutions and diplomatic treaties, the woods, homes, and forests in Europe, its churches, statues, relics, holy oils and waters, and shrines were filled with the presence of spirits, pre-Catholic, Catholic, or hybrid of the two. These beings were really there. Max Weber famously referred to all this as 'enchantment,' which he contrasted with modernity's disenchantment. Humans lived alongside and in the company of supernatural presences. They called on these extra-human presences to witness and to intervene in the affairs of life, domestic and social. From these presences, humans sought protection of their bodies and

souls, property, kin, animals, towns, and families. Jesus was there in flesh and blood on the altar, in the Host, in the priest's hands, and supernatural beings were everywhere, experienced in all modalities of the senses. 'There was a time,' says Calasso, 'when the gods were not just a literary cliché, but an event, a sudden apparition' [Ong's 1969 world-as-event sense of life]. Things happened between humans and their gods. But that was then [i.e., in pre-modern times – before the Gutenberg printing press emerged in Europe in the mid-1450s]" (p. 37).

Regarding what Orsi here refers to as "the advent of modern [print] epistemology" see Ong's 1958 discussion of what he variously refers to as the corpuscular view of reality, corpuscular epistemology, and corpuscular psychology (pp. 65-66, 72, 146, 171, 196, 203, 210, and 286). Orsi is here quoting from the 2001 English translation of Calasso's book *Literature and the Gods*, translated by Tim Parks.

References

- Blankenhorn, B. (2015). *The mystery of union with God: Dionysian mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas*. Catholic University of America Press.
- Borghesi, M. (2018). *The mind of Pope Francis: Jorge Mario Bergoglio's intellectual journey* (B. Hudock, Trans.). Liturgical Press Academic. (Original work published 2017)
- Borghesi, M. (2021). *Catholic discordance: Neoconservatism vs. the field hospital church of Pope Francis* (B. Hudock, Trans.). Liturgical Press Academic. (Original work published 2021)
- Buber, M. (1958). *I and thou* (2nd ed. [with a postscript by Buber]; R. G. Smith, Trans.). Charles Scribner's Sons. (Original work published 1923)
- Calasso, R. (2001). *Literature and the gods* (T. Parks, Trans.). Knopf/ Random House. (Original work published 2001)
- Carroll, J. (2001). *Constantine's sword: The church and the Jews: A History*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Congar, Y. (1964). *Power and poverty in the church: The renewal and understanding of service* (J. Nicholson, Trans.). Helicon Press.
- Crossan, J. D. (1994). *The essential Jesus: Original sayings and earliest images*. HarperSanFrancisco/ HarperCollins.
- Crowe, F. E. (1993). Neither Jew nor Greek, but one human nature and operation in all. *Communication and Lonergan: Common ground for forging the new age* (pp. 89-107; T. J. Farrell and P. A. Soukup, Eds.). Sheed & Ward. (Original work published 1965).
- De Lubac, H. (1998, 2000, 2009). *Medieval exegesis: The four senses of scripture* (3 vols.; M. Seban [vol. 1]; E. M. Macierowski [vols. 2 and 3]; Trans.). William B. Eerdmans Publishing; T&T Clark. (Original works published 1959, 1959, 1961)
- Farrell, T. J. (1987, January). Early Christian creeds and controversies in the light of the orality-literacy hypothesis. *Oral Tradition*, 2(1), pp. 132-149.
- Farrell, T. J. (1991). Secondary orality and consciousness today. *Media, consciousness, and culture: Explorations of Walter Ong's thought* (pp. 194-209; B. E. Gronbeck, T. J. Farrell, and P. A. Soukup, Eds.). Sage Publications.
- Farrell, T. J. (2011). Walter Ong and Harold Bloom can help us understand the Hebrew Bible. *Explorations in Media Ecology*, 11(3&4), pp. 255-272.

- Farrell, T. J. (2015). *Walter Ong's contributions to cultural studies: The phenomenology of the word and I-thou communication* (2nd ed.). Hampton Press. (Original work published 2000)
- Farrell, T. J. (2019, March 24). Pope Francis on evil and Satan. opednews.com URL: <https://www.opednews.com/articles/Pope-Francis-on-Evil-and-S-by-Thomas-Farrell-Abortion-Catholic-God-Homosexuality-190324-51.html>
- Farrell, T. J. (2020, September 20). Walter J. Ong's philosophical thought. opednews.com URL: <https://www.opednews.com/articles/Walter-J-Ong-s-Philosophi-by-Thomas-Farrell-Communication-Communications-Communications-Consciousness-200920-664.html>
- Farrell, T. J. (2022a). John Dominic Crossan on the historical Jesus's 93 original sayings [1994], and Walter J. Ong's thought. University of Minnesota's digital conservancy URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/226607>
- Farrell, T. J. (2022b). Pope Francis' 2022 apostolic letter, and Walter J. Ong's thought. University of Minnesota's digital conservancy URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/228208>
- Fox, M. (2020). *Sheer joy: Conversations with Thomas Aquinas on creation spirituality* (2nd ed.). Ixia Press/ Dover Publications. (Original work published 1992)
- Francis, Pope. (2013). *Evangelii Gaudium*. Available at the Vatican's website.
- Francis, Pope. (2015). *Laudato si'*. Available at the Vatican's website.
- Francis, Pope. (2020a). *Fratelli tutti*. Available at the Vatican's website.
- Francis, Pope. (2020b). *Querida Amazonia*. Available at the Vatican's website.
- Francis, Pope. (2022). *Desiderio desideravi*. Available at the Vatican's website.
- Guardini, R. (1998). *The end of the modern world* (J. Theman and H. Burke; E. C. Briefs, Trans.). ISI Books/ Intercollegiate Studies Institute. (Original work published 1950)
- Havelock, E. A. (1963). *Preface to Plato*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Havelock, E. A. (1978). *The Greek concept of justice: From its shadow in Homer to its substance in Plato*. Harvard University Press.
- Havelock, E. A. (1982). *The literate revolution in Greece and its cultural consequences*. Princeton University Press.
- Ivereigh, A. (2014). *The great reformer: Francis and the making of a radical pope*. Henry Holt.
- Ivereigh, A. (2022, September 7). The power to serve: Curial authority is rooted in humility. *Commonweal* URL: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/power-serve>
- Kelber, W. H. (1983). *The oral and the written gospel: The hermeneutics of speaking and writing in the synoptic tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q*. Fortress Press.

Kugel, J. L. *The great shift: Encountering God in biblical times*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Leo XIII, Pope. (1879). *Aeterna patris*. Available at the Vatican's website.

Lonergan, B. (1974). The transition from a classicist worldview to historical-mindedness. *A second collection by Bernard J. F. Lonergan* (pp. 1-11; W. F. J. Ryan and B. J. Tyrrell, Eds.) Westminster Press.

Lonergan, B. (1992). *Insight: A study of human understanding* (5th ed.; F. E. Crowe and R. M. Doran, Eds.). University of Toronto Press. (Original work published 1957)

Maritain, J. (1959). *Distinguish to unite or the degrees of knowledge* (G. B. Phelan, Trans.). Geoffrey Bles. (Original work published 1932)

McGreevy, J. T. (1996). *Parish boundaries: The Catholic encounter with race in the twentieth century urban north*. University of Chicago Press.

McGreevy, J. T. (2003). *Catholicism and American freedom: A history*. W. W. Norton.

McGreevy, J. T. (2016). *American Jesuits and the world: How an embattled religious order made Catholicism global*. Princeton University Press.

McGreevy, J. T. (2022). *Catholicism: A global history from the French revolution to Pope Francis*. W. W. Norton.

McLuhan, M. (1969). *The interior landscape: The literary criticism of Marshall McLuhan, 1943-1962* (E. McNamara, Ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Neusner, J. (1992). *The transformation of Judaism: From philosophy to religion*. University of Illinois Press.

Nussbaum, M. C. (1992, May). Human functioning and social justice: In defense of Aristotelian essentialism. *Political Theory*, 20(4), pp. 202-246.

Ong, W. J. (1946, March). Newman's *Essay on development* in its intellectual milieu. *Theological Studies*, 7(1), pp. 3-45.

Ong, W. J. (1957). *Frontiers in American Catholicism: Essays on ideology and culture*. Macmillan.

Ong, W. J. (1958). *Ramus, method, and the decay of dialogue: From the art of discourse to the art of reason*. Harvard University Press.

Ong, W. J. (1959, August 22). The eternal spring of thought. *Saturday Review*, 42(34), p. 26.

Ong, W. J. (1967). *The presence of the word: Some prolegomena for cultural and*

religious history. Yale University Press.

Ong, W. J. (1969, August). World as view and world as event. *American Anthropologist*, 71(4), pp. 634-647.

Ong, W. J. (1986). *Hopkins, the self, and God*. University of Toronto Press.

Ong, W. J. (1992a, 1992b, 1995, 1999). *Faith and contexts* (4 vols.; T. J. Farrell and P. A. Soukup, Eds.). Scholars Press.

Ong, W. J. (2002). *An Ong reader: Challenges for further inquiry* (T. J. Farrell and P. A. Soukup, Eds.). Hampton Press.

Orsi, R. A. (2016). *History and presence*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Paul VI, Pope. (1975). *Evangelii nuntiandi*. Available at the Vatican's website.

Riemer, G. (1971). *The new Jesuits*. Little, Brown.

Spezzano, D. (2015). *The glory of God's grace: Deification according to St. Thomas Aquinas*. Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University/ Catholic University of America.

Tanner, N., Ed. (2012). *Vatican II: The essential texts*. Image Book/ Random House.

Van Kley, D. K. (2018). *Reform Catholicism and the international suppression of the Jesuits in Enlightenment Europe*. Yale University Press.

Von Balthasar, H. U. (1995). *Presence and thought: An essay on the religious philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa* (M. Sebanc, Trans.). Communio Books/ Ignatius Press.

Williams, A. N. (1999). *The ground of union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas*. Oxford University Press.

Williams, A. N. (2007). *The divine sense: The intellect in patristic theology*. Cambridge University Press.