

## COLUMNISTS

## Church loses two more great influences

When I first began my work as a young theologian in September 1965, the giants of 20th-century theology were still alive and active: Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr, on the Protestant side, and Karl Rahner, Yves Congar, M.D. Chenu, Henri de Lubac, Bernard Lonergan, Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Courtney Murray, on the Catholic side.

In due course, others assumed leadership in theological and biblical studies: John Macquarrie, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jurgen Moltmann, and Jaroslav Pelikan, among Protestants and Anglicans, and Richard McCormick, Avery Dulles, Josef Fuchs, Edward Schillebeeckx, Joseph Fitzmyer, Roland Murphy, and Gustavo Gutiérrez, among Catholics.

Some of those eminent figures have also begun to pass into eternity. During the summer we lost two of the greatest of these: the Redemptorist moral theologian, Bernard Haring, 85, and the New Testament scholar, Raymond Brown, 70, a Sulpician priest.

Although more pastoral than scholarly in his writings, Father Bernard Haring was one of this century's leading moral theologians. He taught for many years at the Redemptorists' Alfonsianum Academy in Rome until his retirement in 1986,



## essays in theology

BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

and gave lectures, workshops, and retreats for priests, religious, and laity all over the world, including a retreat for Pope Paul VI and the Roman Curia.

Father Haring's best-known former student in the United States, Father Charles Curran, described him as "an indefatigable, globe-trotting missionary for Christian spirituality and church renewal and a staunch opponent of legalism and hypocrisy in the church."

More than anyone else, Father Haring refocused Catholic moral thought and practice on the cardinal virtue of love. Eight years before the opening of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), his multi-volume, *The Law of Christ*, began changing the way moral theology was taught in Catholic seminaries around the world. It became increasingly centered

on the person and ministry of Jesus Christ and rooted in the Bible, liturgy, and human experience.

Another great Catholic moral theologian, Father Richard McCormick, SJ, has characterized *The Law of Christ* as "ground-breaking," even "revolutionary." Pope John XXIII himself wrote to Father Haring to thank him for that work, and later noted in his diary that he had read with much joy and complete agreement Haring's subsequent book on his hopes for the council. In 1978 Bernard Haring published a new three-volume work, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, which offered a more relational and less legalistic model for the moral life.

Perhaps because he had such a significant impact on Vatican II, serving on commissions and helping to write various documents, especially the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, he was also an outspoken critic of post-conciliar developments within the church that seemed to contradict the letter or the spirit of the council.

Father Raymond Brown was surely one of the most competent and productive biblical scholars of this century. Like Father Haring, Father Brown was a prolific author, having published more than 40 books: from his magisterial commen-

tary on John's Gospel in 1966 to his *Introduction to the New Testament* in 1997. At the beginning of that career he taught at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, staffed by his fellow Sulpicians. From 1971 until his early retirement in 1990, he served as the first tenured and chaired Catholic professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

A solidly centrist scholar utterly faithful to the Catholic tradition, Father Brown was nonetheless constantly pilloried by his church's small but noisy fundamentalist faction. Many of his lectures over the years were picketed and interrupted by people who probably had never read a word he wrote, except for fragments taken out of context in ultra-conservative publications.

But he cultivated excellent personal relations with the hierarchy, and he confounded his critics on the right by never appearing in public without his Roman collar.

And no one was more responsible for generating a love for, and interest in, the Bible than Father Raymond Brown.

We are profoundly indebted to them both.

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Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

## Don't ignore 'Lazarus' at your gate

**Sunday's Readings:** (R3) Luke 16:19-31. (R1) Amos 6:1, 4-7. (R2) 1 Timothy 6:11-16.

A father knelt down to tuck his little boy into bed. The little boy used to pray this prayer: "Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take."

This night, however, he got mixed up and prayed: "If I should wake before I die ... Oh, Papa," the lad said, "I got all mixed up."

His wise father said, "No, son, you said it right. My wish for you is that you may wake up before you die."

So many of us are asleep in some of the most critical areas of our life.

Psychologists and physiologists talk about a phenomenon they call "habituation." I call it "conditioning." You've heard about the frog in the tea kettle. Drop a frog in boiling water and it will hop right out. Drop it into lukewarm water, though, it'll stay in. Then if you gradually raise the temperature of the water, the frog will swim around and be boiled before it realizes it. It has become habituated or conditioned.

I remember when I was assigned to St. Mary's Parish in downtown Rochester.



## a word for sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

My bedroom was right next to the bell tower. The first few nights the ringing of the bell every hour kept me awake. But after a few days, I never heard the bells. That's habituation or conditioning.

"Once there was a rich man who dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day," Jesus said. "At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his wounds."

Jesus was a storyteller. Note the contrast between these two characters in his parable. "Rich man ... purple ... fine linen ... luxury." And "beggar ... covered with sores ... longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table ..." Jesus wanted us

to see in a way we could not forget, the rich man living in splendor and Lazarus living in utter squalor.

Did the rich man see Lazarus at the gate? Of course he did. At first. But then he probably became habituated to Lazarus' presence. His need made less and less an impression on him. Soon it was as if Lazarus wasn't even there. Can that happen to us? You bet it can.

Most of us like the rich man live in luxury. We have VCRs, televisions, telephones, air conditioning, automobiles. And the list goes on and on. And most of us have our health. What wealth! Lazarus "lay" at the rich man's gate. He couldn't even walk. We have people who love us. Family and friends. Most of us have a good education. For the most part we are attractive. Dogs do not lick our sores. In other words, we have more in common with the rich man than with Lazarus.

Who, then, is the Lazarus at our gate? Needy people. Not necessarily in need of money, but in need of love, recognition, encouragement, friendship. The Lazarus at our gate may be your spouse, or the teenager in your family. Or maybe someone who needs to wake up before he or she dies. Someone who needs our

attention — someone in our own household or in our own neighborhood, or seated next to us at work.

The rich man asked Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers. Wake up! Pay attention! Look around you. You may be tramping on the heart of someone nearby. Who is the Lazarus at your gate?

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Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

## Daily Readings

Monday, September 28

Job 1:6-22; Luke 9:46-50

Tuesday, September 29

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 or

Revelation 12:7-12; John 1:47-51

Wednesday, September 30

Job 9:1-12, 14-16; Luke 9:57-62

Thursday, October 1

Job 19:21-27; Luke 10:1-12

Friday, October 2

Job 38:1, 12-21, 40:3-5;

Matthew 18:1-5, 10

Saturday, October 3

Job 42:1-3, 5-6, 12-17;

Luke 10:17-24

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