TRACING A TRAJECTORY

by James M. Gustafson

Abstract. Theology and ethics intersect with sciences at different points depending upon whether the scholars involved are interested in, for example, general epistemological issues or practical moral judgments. The intersection affects theology and ethics in different ways, depending upon various commitments or resistances on the part of theologians. The author surveys his own writings to show how openness to the sciences has had an impact on various phases of his work and what issues remain somewhat unresolved.

Keywords: empiricism; ethics; experience; theology.

Both science and theology, and science and ethics, are huge topics that can be addressed at different levels of generalization. The level chosen is relative to the interest of the theologian or ethicist. If the interest is primarily in epistemological issues, attention is given to the methods and the truth claims of theology in comparison with those of science. The subject matter is more the philosophy of science than any particular science, and the correlative matter is what I have called philosophy of theology, i.e., the justification of truth or meaningfulness claims in religious discourse. Extensive debate, with a variety of proposed resolutions of issues, has led to a vast literature focused on this level.

If the interest is primarily in a particular doctrine, some sciences are more relevant to theology than others. For example, in *Treasure in Earthen Vessels: The Church as a Human Community* (Gustafson 1961), my interest was primarily in the doctrine, or the "nature," of the church. The Christ and the Church Commission of the World Council of Churches was producing literature that attended to biblical doctrines of the church, i.e., to the relations of Christ, the Spirit, and eschatology to the Church, much of which ignored the human and social characteristics of churches as communities and institutions.

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My first judgment (like that of my mentor, H. R. Niebuhr) was that, whatever "Church" refers to has to include its very human, social, historical aspects. While I did not engage in any fresh empirical sociological studies of churches, I used sociological concepts and theories to interpret the continuity, identity, and processes of change in the Christian Church. What was interpreted in traditional theological terms could also be interpreted and explained in terms of sociology and social theory. The phenomenon "church" was subject to different kinds of analysis; because it is a very human phenomenon some sciences of the human illumined its life in ways that traditional theological concepts did not. I pointed out, in the conclusion, the dangers of both theological and sociological reductionisms and designated the more thorough integration of theological and sociological explanations as an unfinished task.

If the interest is primarily theological or moral anthropology, a general discussion of science and theology is too broad; the theologian or ethicist has to attend not only to philosophical accounts of the nature and action of humans, but also to various scientific accounts. The focus of attention is more complex than the church since the nature and activity of humans—individuals, communities, species—are more diverse and multifaceted; various nontheological disciplines issue in diverse partial interpretations of the phenomenon, or in claims for universal comprehensiveness and truth. Polarities abound in literature about anthropology: spirit, body, and mind; brain and consciousness; biology and history; nature and nurture; the human and the nonhuman, to name but a few. The old and long-debated issues of freedom and determinism continue in theology and ethics, but their context is now denser because of the contributions of biology and sociobiology, various psychological theories, and various interpretations in modern anthropology—economic, biosocial, symbolic interaction, etc. A subject discussed since the dawn of culture, i.e., who and what we are as humans, is more complex because of the specialized inquiries of various sciences, and their relative successes in predicting and sometimes controlling the activities of persons and groups. Because theology and ethics as well as many scientific inquiries include premises about the human, information, concepts, interpretations, and explanations from the sciences have to be taken into account, in some way, by the theologian and ethicist.

If the interest is in the doctrine of God, some of the same and some different sciences abut the theological and ethical notions. Both theologians, e.g., Jürgen Moltmann in *God in Creation* (1985, 197–214), and scientists who engage in speculative cosmology with religious

undertones, e.g., Freeman Dyson in *Infinite in All Directions* (1988, 288–99), adduce from physics inferences about an infinitely expanding universe to warrant theological (in fact or in spirit) proposals about the future. Philip Hefner, in *The Human Factor* (1993, 33–51), is equally interested in interpreting God and nature as God's great project; he turns to biological theories more than to physics.

These illustrations only suggest how the interest of the theologian or ethicist affects her or his focus of attention in science or in particular sciences. A more systematic question is how information, explanations, and theories from the sciences affect the *content* of theology and ethics, no matter what the specific interest is.

A brief account of the range of practices in this regard will further set the context for this article. At one extreme on a continuum we have theologies and ethical theories which are defended so as to be immune from any infection by information and explanation from the sciences. Theology has its independent authority, given in revealed texts or in a historic tradition, and its approach to what the sciences explain is a rejection of their relevance, or a sharp bifurcation in which there are double or multiple truths, the religious and the scientific, about the same phenomenon or event. Another position, which maintains the radical independence of theology, engages in a redescription and reinterpretation of the meaning of scientific knowledge in the light of religious convictions or theological doctrines. The Puritans, for example, had knowledge of the "secondary causes" of physical events, but they also interpreted them to be omens of divine judgment or beneficence. What sciences describe and explain is redescribed and reexplained in a different context, giving it both scientific and religious meaning, or giving the science a religious meaning.

Another position uses scientifically informed views to make religious and theological beliefs intelligible to both those within and those outside of the religious community. The truth of the theology is not dependent upon the truth of the sciences, but the sciences can be used to explicate in nontheological language the meaning of the theology. Thus, for example, one can have the doctrine of justification by grace and faith alone, with its effect of inner freedom from the terrified conscience, explained in contemporary psychological concepts. Or a belief in the divine ordering of all things might be explicated in terms of scientific concepts and theories about how the processes of the cosmos or life are ordered.

Yet another position might conceive of the boundaries between the sciences and theology as porous, with information, concepts, and principles of explanation from the sciences seeping into the content

of the theology itself. In one form, this practice cites the authority of the sciences for the validity of the theology. In another the relationship might be more tentative and dialectical; a minimum of dissonance between the theological and scientific sources, if not a harmony between them, is sought and stated. The porous boundary seldom permits flow from theology to the sciences; the independence of the sciences is honored more than is that of theology.

A similar spectrum of positions can be developed on the relations of the sciences to ethics. An ethical theory might claim to be completely independent from the sciences, built upon principles of reason or revelation alone (though it necessarily contains some descriptive premises). The sciences provide descriptive and analytical accounts of events and circumstances in which action is morally required, but the ethical theory, e.g., an imperative of Christian love, to be applied to those events and circumstances is not affected in its content or form by the sciences.

In another position contemporary sciences inform ethical theory in one or several ways. A historic example is the classic natural law theory in Roman Catholic moral theology; Thomas Aquinas incorporated contemporary sciences, basically Aristotelian, into his account of the divine ordering and ends of persons and of all things, so that the validity of the ethics in some aspects was dependent upon the validity of the science. I take it that any ethics which is "naturalistic" in its grounding and form must rely to a considerable extent upon the sciences that inform the interpretation of the "nature" of the human agent and the assessment of ends to be valued in the world of human action.

In theological ethics, as in theology, scientific information and explanations regarding natural order are sometimes construed so as to coincide with some interpretation of the "divine" ordering. The boundary with the sciences is porous and affects the basis, or grounding, of human judgments as to what ends are good and what ordering is right.

This sketch of contexts and ways in which the sciences can be related to theology and ethics does not exhaust what I have taken to be the agenda of *Zygon* and the persons closely identified with it, but certainly it has been part of the decades of discussion. One could, I believe, use an amplification of this sketch as a heuristic device to compare the works of major contributors to the *Zygon* discussion. The questions I have been asked to address in this article are, in effect, how does this sketch illumine what I have published in my more systematic or constructive writings? And what difference do I think my efforts have made, and ought to make? I have never analyzed the

development of my own writings to note changes and persistent themes, nor is this article a thorough effort to do so. Some comments, retrospectively, about why various sciences have been important might, however, be in order.

Whatever its source, and however unsophisticated it has been at times, a kind of commonsense empiricism has often caused me to respond critically to the claims of theological writings. It almost blocked my ordination by the Chicago Association of Congregational Christian Churches in 1951; my candid agnosticism and skepticism about personal immortality led to further examination by a minister who required that I make plausible arguments against two books, John Haynes Holmes, *The Affirmation of Immortality* (1947), and Pierre Lecomte du Noüy, *Human Destiny* (1947). In the end it might have been telephone calls from my theological teachers to members of the examining committee, more than my persuasiveness, that led to my approval for the ministry.

But personal immortality is only one case in point. Theological texts, including biblical writings, make claims for experiential effects or outcomes of various events and beliefs. Insofar as such claims are explicit or implied, they are subject to assessment, verification, or qualification by "empirical" evidence. Surely one reason for the impact of Reinhold Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (1941-43), one of the first three theological books I read, was his appeal to "experience" as one source for confirmation of his theological interpretation of persons and communities. There was a porous membrane between his theology and his observations of human nature and activity; they mutually enlightened and even mutually verified each other. "[Faith] illumines experiences and is in turn validated by experience" (Niebuhr 1941-43, 2:63).

But, as I noted above, claims by other theologians about the nature of the church appeared to be ideas arranged in some coherent relationship to other ideas, e.g., Christology to ecclesiology, that did not shed much light on, e.g., the Northford, Connecticut, Congregational Church I served, nor on the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches to whose meeting I was a delegate in 1954.

Theological rhetoric had to be tested and qualified by experiential or empirical evidences that theological concepts sometimes masked and seldom, if ever, explained. The inflated claims of religious and theological language and discourse has deeply disturbed me, not as an outsider who has been alienated from the historic community and tradition, but as a person who continues to participate and feel responsibility for it.

Empirical or experiential claims have to be examined by the means

and methods appropriate to them; such means and methods are sometimes scientific in a disciplined sense and sometimes more casual and observational. I have, usually at least, been terribly conscious of the importance of not claiming experiential effects for events and faith which cannot be described in nonreligious terms and explained (at least in part) by "secondary causes." And I have tended to prefer language that limits claims made to what is testable even if this requires careful selection from traditional language or jettisoning some of the language and beliefs that it carries. Using traditional religious and theological language equivocally—pouring "new wine" into the old wineskins or claiming that the old language really always meant what a modern interpretation says—can leave readers uncertain as to what meanings are being conveyed.

A matter that this "empiricism" affected can be further elaborated. I have never been startled by interpretations of religion as a "natural" or cultural and historical phenomenon. It was patently clear to me, growing up in a multiethnic town on Michigan's Upper Peninsula, that my Belgian, Italian, and Irish friends were all Catholics, and my Swedish friends, unless children of ethnically mixed marriages, were all Protestants. Whatever theological issues seriously divided Christianity, it was clear that institutionally the differences were social. In my midteens I read a book from my father's study, George M. Stephenson, *The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration* (1932), which interpreted historically the particular religious-ethnic identity we seemed to have and, in a sense, liberated me from any tendencies to absolutize it.

Although I have never addressed in detail contrasting theories of religion, its origins and functions, some general religious naturalism has persisted in my work. It is only in publications from the mid-seventies forward that I explicated anything like a theory of religion. This takes the form of various "senses" that are part of human experiences, at least generally if not universally: a sense of dependence, of gratitude, of obligation, of remorse or repentance, and of possibilities. These senses are present in many human relationships: with other persons, institutions, historical events, the forces of nature, etc. I have never attempted to demonstrate that these senses, or aspects of experience, are present in all historic religious communities and traditions, as well as in a kind of *sensus divinitatis* one finds in explicitly secular persons, though my intuition is that they are. The particular religious forms that they take are relative to different cultures, symbols, and communities. These social-cultural specifics express the senses, and interpret and evoke them.

The fact that I am a Christian and Protestant is as much a matter

of the accident of my birth as it is a matter of profound conviction, though I have come to affirm in a critical and selective way large portions of that tradition. Certainly a critical choice in my academic development was motivated by an affinity with a general kind of "religious naturalism," namely the move to the Yale graduate program in religion to study with H. Richard Niebuhr after having been nourished at the Bachelor of Divinity level by the Federated Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago, and particularly by James Luther Adams, Wilhelm Pauck, and Daniel Day Williams. Niebuhr's *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929) confirmed a sociological perspective I had developed at Northwestern University. His *The Meaning of Revelation* (1941) I read then, and now, as an intelligible account of how and why one can affirm, critically to be sure, a historic religious tradition while accepting fundamental theses of historical and cultural relativism. I read that book as more liberal than neo-orthodox; I saw (whether accurately or not) affinities between Niebuhr's work and Charles Hartshorne's *The Divine Relativity* (1948), as well as Henry Nelson Wieman's *The Source of Human Good* (1946). I recognized that the main barrier between Niebuhr and the Chicago process theologians was not a question of whether this was the proper descriptive framework for interpreting experience and reality, one of relational interdependence, but of whether this framework warranted the metaphysical inferences that are part of a rigorous process doctrine of God. (Niebuhr, I quickly discovered, had studied not only Troeltsch but Max Weber, G.H. Mead, and Charles Horton Cooley, all of whom had shaped my developing perspective.) For good or for ill, I have always been on Niebuhr's side of that philosophical barrier, which accounts for there being a basic difference between my theological and ethical writings and those of the process theologians while at the same time there is an affinity between them.

All of this provided a general warrant to continue to use scientific materials as a source of understanding religion and theology, morality, and ethics.

Quite another important focus of attention developed, namely the importance of understanding as accurately as possible the events and circumstances that were subject to ethical analysis and in regard to which moral recommendations were made. This matter came up in teaching, first of social ethics, and subsequently of other areas of moral and policy choices. The prevailing method of teaching Protestant social ethics in the forties and fifties was, in one form or another, the development of "middle axioms." The theologian or ethicist, beginning with a theological ethical conviction, often the judgment

that Christian ethics was the application of love to society, developed middle principles or axioms which stated more specific and thus more relevant ends and goals. But, there was a gap between the analyses of these events and circumstances by social scientists and others, on the one hand, and the middle axioms of the Protestant ethicist on the other. I saw this dramatically in the first series of books on ethics and economic life, sponsored by the Federal Council of Churches and funded by a Rockefeller endowment. An economist would analyze, e.g., *The Organizational Revolution* (Boulding 1953) or *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (Bowen 1953), in the main text, and a theologian or ethicist would add an ethical commentary to the social scientific study. This procedure, not limited to that series of books, left the ethicists propounding statements that sometimes sounded platitudinous.

One alternative to this procedure was to take descriptions, explanations, and evaluations of events and circumstances from social science or policy disciplines and to attempt to answer the question, What is going on? Since reading a range of news accounts, not to mention studies in journals, demonstrated that there could be alternative accounts of the same occurrences, one never could be a naive realist about them. One was aware that the particular interests of the author and more general theories of politics, economics, and social change framed alternative interpretations of the same events and circumstances. But when one examined more detailed research about very particular proposals, e.g., on taxation policy or urban planning, the issues became denser and more finely grained.

Kenneth Underwood's mid-fifties Institute for Ethics and Politics at Wesleyan University—surely one of the first to be established—brought researchers, theologians and philosophers, working politicians, and private sector administrators together for occasional weekends of rigorous intellectual confrontation over practical moral and social issues. The goal was to bridge the gap between middle axioms and social science, and between theories and practices. The gap between social research and policy was not unlike that between ethics and policy; policymakers seldom, if ever, simply executed the conclusions of either a relevant research project or an ethical argument. The policymaker, like the professional person in medicine and elsewhere, had to consider matters that the researcher and ethicist did not.

Concerning the relation of social research to social policy Max Millikan wrote, "But the payoff for [the policymaker] will usually be precisely in the argument rather than in the conclusion. The purpose of social science research should be to deepen, broaden, and extend

the policy-maker's capacity for judgment—not to provide . . . answers" (Millikan 1959, 167). I came to a similar conclusion regarding ethical arguments. Most ethical arguments are made and most social research conducted from observers' points of view; decisions must be made from agents' points of view. Agents are accountable in ways observers are not, and their capacity to make choices is to be honored. But choices must be informed choices, and being well informed by technical information is better than being informed only by general theories and perspectives.

Thus my study of the sciences was motivated in part by recognition of their necessary contributions to responsible and informed moral choices. The contribution is different for different perspectives—theological or philosophical—in ethics. If, for example, Christian ethics is the application of the norm of love, then the procedure for choice is to apply the principle of love to the events interpreted by the sciences. If, in distinction from this, one believes that the ethically desirable or normative outcomes are "grounded in," "follow from," or "supervene" the evaluative description given by sciences, there is a different import for ethics and morality. The old "is-ought" question is raised. At issue is not only which description and explanation of an event or circumstance is most adequate, a matter of concern to those taking either approach, but how one justifies moral inferences or conclusions from the descriptive and explanatory premises being used. Any ethic that has a naturalistic premise, whether a strong one in classic natural law theory or a weaker one, has to find some way of showing relations, both negative and positive, between the descriptive and the normative.

I believe that resolving the is-ought issue one way or another in the abstract does not fully resolve the relations between descriptions and morally desirable outcomes in very specific circumstances. Also, those relations will vary depending upon what sort of moral issue is under consideration.

This has gotten me into very difficult intellectual straits. I have not found my way out of them with the assistance of others, or on my own. To take an easy example, I, like many others, have been concerned to show the importance of desires and affections in the moral life, and thus to make a case for trusting to some extent the guidance of compassion, the sense of injustice, etc. But this does not warrant a generalization that affectivity is an infallible guide to action. Anger leads to violence as well as to constructive social reform; compassion can lead to palliative measures that do not address the underlying causes of the pain and suffering it responds to. In light of the double possibility, can we say that the moral outcome is based upon, emerges

from, is anchored in, is a dimension of, follows from, or supervenes the descriptive account?

Moral choices can be made more intelligible by showing how the "natural" premises, the scientifically supported descriptions and explanations, set limits on what might be judged morally right and good, parameters within which a range of reasonable choices can be made; predispose agents toward one or another choice; and provide accounts of patterns and processes which direct rational moral activity and subsequent action. We can show that moral outcomes of choices based on scientific accounts are not caused directly by their "moral properties," but that the moral has "collaterally explanatory" force, to cite arguments made by philosopher Robert Audi (1992). But the explanation in retrospect of how an "ought" or valuation follows from a scientifically descriptive account of events and circumstances does not fully justify the choice.

I mentioned that this general issue of relations between the scientific accounts and the moral choices differs depending on the moral issue under consideration. There are both similarities and differences between the ways in which ecological ethics depends upon relevant sciences and business ethics depends upon economics. In both instances what courses of action the ethicist deems to be preferable, if not right, and what outcomes she or he considers good depend upon which account of the events and circumstances she or he adopts as most adequate. In neither realm is there complete consensus on the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the scientific account. In both realms critical theorists can argue that the scientific accounts are, at least in part, ideologically or politically driven. Yet some of us have more confidence in the sciences that predict probabilities of outcomes in ecology than we do in those used in the sphere of business. We have still more confidence in the biological accounts of some medical circumstances where a moral prescription or proscription follows from biological science, though without being fully justified by it.

The years during which I worked quite intensively on ethical and public policy issues emerging from developments in human genetics extended my recognition of some of these issues from the social and ethical realm to that of medicine and other scientific disciplines. My personal interests in medical ethics, which go back to my wife's experiences as a nurse in the late forties at Billings Hospital at the University of Chicago, developed more in the early sixties at Yale. This development coincided with many others, and I was an early colleague of Daniel Callahan's and Will Gaylin's in what became the Hastings Center. It was through that agency that the more formal

and demanding interdisciplinary experience of ethics and genetics occurred.

While ethics was the main gate through which I passed to learning more of the sciences, the idea of "applied ethics" (if that meant the application of some autonomous ethical theory, religious or philosophical, to events and circumstances) was restrictive. The sciences provided descriptions, explanations, and interpretations of various realities, indeed, various aspects of Reality, and thus the membrane between them and theology and ethical theory was porous. The implications of genetics for theology's understanding of how "nature" develops and is ordered had to be confronted, as did those of genetics and other disciplines with regard to questions of moral agency. These confrontations culminated in the most comprehensive and relatively systematic work I will ever publish, the two-volume *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective* (1981–84).

The general conviction of those volumes that is pertinent here is that theology deals with the meaning and significance of life, both human and nonhuman. It is a way of construing the world which provides a framework for the ordering of life in the world. Many of my contemporaries, including, for example, George Lindbeck, agree on this general point, though each works out the details differently. Lindbeck, however, differs from many of us in the sources that inform his construal. He and certain others have as their primary concern the "integrity of the faith." This refers, I believe, to the defense of their preferred biblical language and symbols against apparent dilution by theologians who wish to make the tradition intelligible in the face of powerful scientific and other movements. Against such moves, Lindbeck writes that "the integrity of faith . . . and the vitality of Western societies may well depend in the long run on the culture-forming power of the biblical outlook in its intratextual, untranslatable specificity." He rightly warns against being seduced by what is "currently fashionable and immediately intelligible," but infers from this that "continuing dechristianization will make greater Christian authenticity communally possible" (Lindbeck 1984, 134). The universe, he suggests, is to be absorbed into the biblical world; apparently that does not necessitate any change in theology or theological ethics based upon contemporary scientific interpretations of the universe.

My response, and that of others who remain identified with the Christian community, is that the universe as a whole and its countless parts are better described, explained, and interpreted by contemporary sciences than by biblical language. One might, for example, wish to address the idea of *soma*, body, in biblical terms, but the

interpretation of body in our time has to take account of information and understandings that were not present at the time Saint Paul wrote. Or, given a continuing confidence and interest in theism, and given that theism traditionally implies some account not only of the creation but also the ordering and the end (eschaton) of all things, the interpretations of creation, ordering, and possible end proposed by contemporary sciences have to be taken into account theologically. The membrane between sciences and theology and theological ethics is porous. One need not be naive and assume that current sciences have succeeded in giving the final word. Debates continue over cosmological theories; they continue also over evolutionary theories, but within narrower boundaries. Nonetheless, a contemporary explication of the divine ordering of natural life has to rely heavily upon relevant sciences. And the theologian has to reckon with differences in the certainty provided by sciences of different aspects of life. Biological reproduction, for example, can be explained with greater certainty than can violence.

This process, stated too briefly here, is significantly different from what Lindbeck and others propose. It does not assume that the experiences and expressions of life in relation to the Deity as given in the western religious traditions are negated by inferences from the sciences. But it is open to alterations in the exposition of the Divine Reality, and to inferences drawn from these for the meaning and conduct of human life.

Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective evoked, and continues to evoke, strong critical responses, most of which acknowledge respect for its argument. Indeed, one critic says the book is praised "with loud damns." (Edward Farley, in Beckley and Swezey 1988, 40). Two symposia of critical articles, with my responses, have been published ("Focus on the Ethics of James M. Gustafson" 1985; Beckley and Swezey 1988). I will not attempt to rehearse all the charges made against my work, nor the points of support that have been offered. A common criticism, relevant here, has been that the theology is informed excessively (some say naively) by the sciences, and that I have not successfully shown why "Nature" is not a sufficient ultimate reference to my work, rather than "God." Another charge is that I have left behind the core of the Christian theological tradition in not finding grounds to affirm certain classic Christological, soteriological, and eschatological views. Certainly the position developed in my book contains tensions simply because neither the Christian tradition nor modern sciences nor experience finally trumps the other two. The metaphor of a raft was used by John P. Reeder to describe the work (Beckley and Swezey 1988; 119–37); put with more

academic dignity, the position is held together by a process similar to "reflective equilibrium."

That I wrote with a Christian readership in mind is probably one reason the work has not received much attention outside of Christian academic circles, both Roman Catholic and Protestant. I fondly believe that its theses would resonate with the *sensus divinitatis* that I find in many self-consciously non- or even antireligious friends and colleagues. There is some evidence that ideas from it have received a positive response from a few secularized despisers of institutional and traditional religion. Whether it has had any impact outside of North America is difficult to judge; clearly it has received most attention in Scandinavia, especially in Sweden and, to a lesser extent, Denmark. Persons from various Christian persuasions, from evangelical Protestant to Unitarian-Universalist, have orally and in letters indicated that they take the book seriously; its argument is one that they have to take into account even when not referring to it explicitly.

Thus an effort to raise certain issues within the Christian community has been modestly effective. Whether I could write a book making the case for theocentric ethics to more secular readerships is a significant question. I have observed that when, in discussions with some scientists, I am able to move from the "senses" that I have described to the reasons I affirm a theocentric perspective, there is comprehension of my efforts and in some cases real sympathy and even agreement. It is to persons from the sciences, as well as other disciplines—the cultured despisers of religion in our time—that I would like to communicate. Their despising occurs for different reasons; their views are often prejudiced not by malice but by ignorance of religion. But I have strong convictions that many have deep religious and moral sensibilities that can be theologically articulated and nourished. Traditional religious and theological language can impede mutually open and critical interaction. (After one public presentation a now-deceased philosopher told me, "I agree with just about everything you said, but I can't stand that damned institution, the church.") As a result of my intellectual and academic career, as well as my religious views, I believe I have capacities to interact with such persons in ways that my theological colleagues who take the Church as their intended readership may not.

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