

Preface

Although it is common for journals to feature articles on the millennium during this season, this issue of Logos offers some of the most perspicacious reflections on the signs of the times that readers are likely to have seen anywhere. It is more than a striking novelty that we bring our readers an article on the year 2000 composed just before the twentieth century had reached its midpoint; it turns out that Etienne Gilson, immersed in the religious, intellectual, and political turmoil of this century in 1948, understood brilliantly what was at stake during the century now ending and offered a prescient account of what was in store in the years approaching the start of the third Christian millennium. Gilson's article reprinted here, "The Terrors of the Year Two Thousand," brings into focus the challenges that Christianity must face if it is to overcome the nihilism represented on many fronts in our time, and ends with a reminder of the Christian source of salvation.

The final article in this issue, if read in the light of Gilson's reflections on the twentieth century, takes on added luster. Six years before Gilson's article was composed, Edith Stein went to her death in Auschwitz. Stein and Gilson each stared into the face of evil; each encountered the complexity and power of twentieth-century thought, and each found reason to reach out philosophically into the thinking of St. Thomas Aquinas for sustenance while wrestling with important modern modes of thought. Each embodied in thought and deed the integrity of the Christian response to turmoil and evil in any age.

One final observation on this theme of the millennium: this issue also emphasizes the ample and profound source of hope for the world that Christianity brings to the new millennium. Readers will hear from Archbishop Francis Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận a thorough and uplifting account of the healing power offered to the world by contemporary Catholic social thought, including a detailed account of the issue of the forgiveness of the international debts crushing some developing countries, an element of the Jubilee that is strikingly traditional in its biblical roots while also being remarkably pertinent to current global economic conditions. William F. May also brings renewed vigor to a traditional biblical concept by explaining how thinking in terms of "covenants" instead of "contracts" can heal many of the injustices embedded in current practices of the marketplace.

We introduce the article by Etienne Gilson as the first offering of a regular new feature in Logos, a feature we call "Reconsiderations." From time to time we will seek out significant texts in the Catholic intellectual tradition that we think have been unjustly neglected. Each text in this series will be introduced by a contemporary scholar reflecting on the importance of the text and highlighting its significance for our readers.

Armand A. Mauer, C.S.B., provides an insightful introduction to the first article in our "Reconsiderations" series in his "Introduction to Etienne Gilson, 'The Terrors of the Year Two Thousand.'" Mauer places this Gilson text in the broader context of Gilson's life and writings, and aptly describes the "prophetic" tone assumed by Gilson in this essay. Mauer demonstrates that the philosophical perspective presented by Gilson in this article is expounded by him elsewhere in an essay titled, "Medieval Universalism and its Present

Value,” and helps readers understand how Gilson viewed the rich resources of the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas when confronting the claims of modern philosophical thought.

Etienne Gilson’s article, “The Terrors of the Year Two Thousand,” will impress readers as remarkably prescient. How could Gilson have recognized already in 1948 that this century would exhibit a plethora of complex and challenging philosophies, as though he had anticipated the poststructuralist and postmodernist developments of the last forty years? How could Gilson have recognized already in 1948 that while technology was unleashing terrifying new weapons of war, it was nonetheless a revolution in biology and biotechnology that would pose the most pressing ethical problems in contemporary life, problems that have been emerging into public view only within the last twenty years or so? His reflections indicate that there is probably a striking continuity of cultural development to be found in the twentieth century, and we might expect cultural historians of the future to articulate this continuity once the perspective of time has enabled thinkers to achieve greater clarity in their view of that century.

Many of our readers perhaps watched on television while Pope John Paul II rapped upon the holy doors of St. Peter’s Basilica and the doors swung open to signal the beginning of the Jubilee. Archbishop Francis Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận in “The Social Message of the Jubilee” gathers together the resources of Catholic social thought to demonstrate the significance of the Jubilee. The Archbishop provides an insightful account of the contemporary global economy especially as seen from the perspective of underdeveloped and developing nations and injects the rightful presence of religious and ethical concern for justice within the emerging global economy. The Archbishop is especially helpful in his overview of the issue of international debt as he demonstrates how the Catholic church is playing a leadership role in a growing international and ecumenical movement to bring relief to the poorest nations now exhausted under the burdens of debt and interest payments.

In “The Religious Underpinnings of the Marketplace,” William F. May acknowledges the precarious position occupied by the specialist in applied ethics, but then demonstrates that a thinker who is well-grounded in ethical and religious thought on the one hand and professional practice on the other can bring to bear much-needed illumination. May has little patience for the thin ethical content of the concept of “stakeholders” as a proposed attempt to articulate the social responsibility of business corporations, and goes on to demonstrate many of the ways in which corporations are embedded within the broader fabric of society. If we observe that this article is part of a forthcoming book by May titled *The Beleaguered Rulers: The Public Obligation of the Professional*, we will see all the more clearly that May’s purpose is to demonstrate the ways in which contemporary professionals must understand themselves as serving the common social good above all and not merely as advancing their individual careers.

We turn next to the striking theological reflections of Gary A. Anderson, who explores what we might call the theological anthropology of biblical thought. His article, “What is Man that Thou Hast Mentioned Him? Psalm 8 and the Nature of the Human Person,” confronts the conceptual difficulties of a Psalm that seems to praise human beings in a

manner not in accord with proper human humility. Anderson brings together insights from Karl Barth, from the Jewish tradition, and from early Christian interpretation to show how interpretations from these different sources coalesce in a unified reading of Psalm 8. Anderson's conclusion is that the Psalm must be read in the light of both the origins of the human person and the ultimate destination or goal of the human person within biblical thought.

Janine Langan carries us deep into the world of Dostoyevsky at his greatest in *The Karamazov Brothers* in her article, "Why Read Dostoyevsky?" Langan explores the significance of the concept of *Pravda* in Dostoyevsky's work, a term that means "reality," "truth," but also "justice." She also helps us discover the remarkable psychological insight at work in Dostoyevsky's writing, and shows that readers who are attentive to Dostoyevsky's writing will squirm uncomfortably with the power of self-recognition provoked by his novel. Her reading shows us how the novel captures the characteristic features of the modern personality and how it seeks to restore us finally to a renewed understanding of the presence of God's image within us as our core.

The contemporary novelist Louise Erdrich has achieved notable success with her writing, and H. Wendell Howard serves as a guide to help us discern the remarkable intermingling of Catholic and Chippewa religious elements in her novels and poetry. "Chippewa and Catholic Beliefs in the Work of Louise Erdrich" builds upon a careful reading of Erdrich's texts and interviews concerning her religious upbringing and views and enables us to observe that the mutual encounter of different religious traditions can often be a source of renewed spiritual insight.

Does anger have a positive role to play in the actions of a social reformer? The urgency of this topic becomes evident if we reflect for just a moment on the many contemporary scenes of confrontation concerning abortion, or political independence, or other ethical, religious, and social issues. Judith Barad draws upon the work of Aquinas in "Aquinas and the Role of Anger in Social Reform" to demonstrate with great care and insight the particular ways in which anger might bolster one's dedication to justice or might threaten one's rational grasp of a hotly contested social issue. Her work shows us yet again that the comprehensiveness of thought in Aquinas enables us to understand better the connections between human thought and action.

Readers who have spent time with Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* will perhaps recall the importance accorded to mathematics in Spengler's vast historical account. Pierre Ullman comes forward in an article titled, "A Hypothesis Regarding the Religious and Mathematical Bases of Western Civilization," to suggest with many powerful arguments that the complexity of Christian trinitarian thought, where such thought was taken most seriously, contributed to the development of modern forms of mathematical thinking that broke with the limiting assumption that Euclidean geometry was the sole possible form for geometry. Ullman's thesis proposes to overcome a deficiency in Spengler's account of the relationship between mathematics and religion. The scientific and technological development of Western civilization made possible by the modern transformation of mathematics according to this hypothesis was facilitated by the intellectual need in Christian circles to contemplate the arithmetic-defying mysteries

of the three-in-one God described most fully in the so-called Athanasian Creed, known more properly as the Quicumque Vult. (We have included the text of this creed for the convenience of our readers).

Finally, the life, thought, and action of Edith Stein are brought into focus by Freda Mary Oben in her article, "Good and Evil in the Life and Work of Edith Stein." Oben observes helpfully that we must pay attention both to Stein's writings about good and evil and to her courageous actions in which she confronted the evil of the Nazi ideology and of Hitler. Drawing widely upon Stein's philosophical writings, including some texts not yet available in English translation, Oben shows us how Stein comprehended the depths of Husserlian phenomenology while also recovering crucial insights from the work of St. Thomas Aquinas. The account of good and evil from Stein's work is striking in its philosophical profundity, and becomes all the more moving when read with an awareness of the martyrdom and canonization awaiting the author of such work, and we owe a debt of gratitude to Freda Mary Oben for bringing us this intellectual portrait of a modern saint.