Preface

It must be that the exercise of imagination expresses the indomitability of the human spirit. How else could we explain the emergence of satirical poems and songs from concentration camps such as Sachsenhausen, brought to our attention most recently in a powerful work for baritone and mezzo-soprano titled *Camp Songs* by composer Paul Schoenfield? The title *Camp Songs* encapsulates the satirical wit of lyrics written by Aleksander Kulisiewicz, a Polish journalist imprisoned in Sachsenhausen from 1939 to 1945 for his political activities. Schoenfield highlights the sardonic lyrics of Kulisiewicz by immersing them in music for clarinet, piano, violin, cello, and double bass that expresses the vitality—indeed, the indomitability—of those whom the Nazis regarded as subhuman and thus as obstacles to the totalitarian political-cultural regime they sought to impose. Kulisiewicz’s *Heil, Sachsenhausen* (1941) mockingly assumes the perspective of the oppressor in a manner that nonetheless negates that perspective, his mock celebration ending with the declaration (switching from the Polish language to German) “Heil, Heil, es lebe Kulturkampf!” (“Heil, and long live Kulturkampf!”).¹

Kulisiewicz’s reference to “Kulturkampf” (conflict of cultures) is especially powerful in this context because it incorporates an allusion to the original context of that term in Germany designating the unsuccessful effort by German nationalists under the leadership of Otto von Bismarck between 1872 and 1879 to overcome what Bismarck’s government regarded as the danger posed to the German
state by the power of the Catholic Church and the Catholic minority in Germany. Such cultural struggles live on in an expanded sense, the song asserts, and other songs express the Nazi determination to eradicate the Jews; in the sardonic mode of Kulisiewicz, the song Black Boehm (1942) gives voice to the crematorium that laments (again switching suddenly from Polish to German), “Aber Judem sind nich da!” (“Still, there aren’t really quite enough Jews here!”). The reference to “Kulturkampf” in the song also indicates in an expanded sense the power of spiritual resistance to oppression expressed through art. Kulisiewicz survived his imprisonment and subsequently collected songs and poetry composed by concentration-camp prisoners, materials now held in the Aleksander Kulisiewicz collection in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Such a spirit of resistance to oppression through cultural activity brings to mind the efforts of another Pole, Roman Ingarden, to carry forward the work of philosophy even in the midst of warfare and the horror of a radical form of “Kulturkampf.” Ingarden, a student of German philosopher Edmund Husserl, writes movingly of his philosophical conversations long into the night at the Freiburg home of his great teacher during World War I, and recalls hearing the explosive sounds of war in the distance during their intense discussions: “The contrast between philosophy and the reality of war was shocking.” Ingarden elsewhere describes his extensive inquiry into ontology carried out in Poland during World War II, and observes that while war made his philosophic inquiries difficult, it also brought a powerful sense of urgency to the task, since in the midst of war “one must clarify the deepest foundations of one’s understanding of the world.”

Bearing witness to all such acts of cultural resistance to even the most terrifying forms of oppression evokes a response of wonder and offers deep affirmation of the spiritual roots of human culture. The concept of “Kulturkampf” has been invoked over the years since the original use of the term to describe various political and cultural
struggles usually pitting civil and religious elements of culture against one another in an effort to form the cultural environment. One prominent and recent use of the term can be found in the first sentence of Justice Anton Scalia’s dissent to the Supreme Court decision in *Romer v. Evans* in 1996 (No. 94-1039) to overturn a Colorado referendum that barred localities and the state legislature from treating homosexual orientation as a prohibited basis for discrimination: “The Court has mistaken a Kulturkampf for a fit of spite.” We can usefully grasp the deep cultural turmoil at the heart of such discussions even if we need not decide whether it is helpful to evoke the sense of “culture wars” as is sometimes done in reference to such contemporary controversies. The necessary interpenetration of the religious, political, philosophical, and artistic components of such controversies makes evident what we mean when we speak of seeking a religious and cultural “vision” of life in the midst of such struggles.

This issue of *Logos* explores a number of cultural conflicts in which a view of culture grounded in a religious perspective clashes with other cultural elements. Among the controversies illuminated here, only one such clash approaches the degree of horror evoked by the words expressed in Sachsenhausen by Kulisiewicz: the mass suicide of an estimated 338 members of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God in Uganda on 17 March 2000. What does such a seemingly incomprehensible act indicate about religious conditions and even the deficiencies of Christian imagination in the culture in which such an act has occurred? How must Christian imagination be reshaped to provide for the peaceful flourishing of life lived in accord with true Christian faith in the midst of a culture that will respect and sustain such a life of faith?

A related struggle, but without the violence of the situation in Uganda, is explored in an article examining the work of David Jones and Christopher Dawson in England. Jones and Dawson collaborated
with a number of like-minded intellectuals to develop what they saw as the loss of a sense of the sacred in daily living following what they called the “break” in Western culture that accompanied the development of the modern world, a “break” in which the ability of the culture to reach into Christianity for nourishment had been seriously attenuated. Certainly, a key component in the development of modern Western culture has been the rise of modern science, and this issue offers two articles that explore the controversy between religion and science that forms part of the story of the development of modern culture: the controversies surrounding the work of Galileo and Darwin.

The discipline of sociology was developed, we might suppose, to provide the intellectual modes of inquiry needed to explore the complexity of modern social situations in which the various components of society and culture come into conflict, and we offer in this issue a sociological analysis of the “era of secularization,” an era indicated by David Jones and his circle through their concept of the “break.” What, then, is the contour of such an “era of secularization” in the various parts of North America today? We offer a kind of spiritual travelogue exploring such a question in a manner that illuminates the cultural and religious struggles going on around us today.

The first two articles in this issue were offered at the Lumen Christi Institute’s conference on “Church Authority and Scientific Inquiry: The Cases of Galileo and Darwin” in April 2002: Peter E. Hodgson, “Galileo the Scientist,” and Kenneth J. Howell, “Did the Bulldog Bite the Bishop? An Anglican Bishop, an Agnostic Scientist, and a Roman Pontiff.” (A third lecture given at the conference by William E. Carroll on “Galileo and the Inquisition” was published in the Journal of Religion and Society, vol. 1 (1999), and can be found at http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/1999/1999-3.html.) Science is rooted in Christian beliefs about the material world that form its essential presuppositions, namely, that matter is good, rational, orderly, contingent, and open to the human mind. Furthermore, the
expectation within the world of science that those who seek knowledge of the world should freely share their findings and be ready to use them for the benefit of mankind is highly compatible with a Christian outlook. Science first developed in the High Middle Ages, when for the first time in human history there was a civilization holding these beliefs. It reached maturity in the Renaissance through the work of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Newton. Since then it has continually expanded until the present time. In spite of its Christian beginnings, the relation between science and the church has not always been an easy one. Many scientists, including lifelong Catholics like Galileo and agnostics like Huxley, have come into conflict with ecclesiastical authority. A close study of such encounters is revealing, for these conflicts throw a strong light on the issues at stake. Furthermore, it soon becomes apparent that most of what is generally believed about these encounters consists of legends that give a most misleading view of what actually happened. These two papers examine the Galileo case and the Huxley-Wilberforce debate to see more clearly the relation between science and the Christian faith. The articles offer clear illumination of that aspect of the modern cultural conflict involving religion and intellect that emerges from the powerful rise of modern science and from the misapplication of scientific views to broader cultural issues.

Poets and historians in their own ways have confronted the cultural transformations that accompanied the rise of modern culture with its technological base grounded in modern science. Paul Robichaud explores the intellectual relationship between an important modern poet and a significant historian in “David Jones, Christopher Dawson, and the Meaning of History.” Tracing the intellectual work of Jones and Dawson to confront the cultural impoverishment and distortion caused by the secularization of modern Western culture, Robichaud demonstrates that these two thinkers provide

an exemplary model of the possibilities for interaction between history and literature. Jones’s poetic vision of the
development of western culture is rooted in solid intellectual foundations, and Dawson’s interpretation of the past expresses a holistic sense of pattern and significance that deeply appealed to the artistic sensibility of David Jones.

Jones and Dawson found in the Catholic intellectual tradition and in their Catholic faith deep resources for the renewal of the Church through the illumination of the truths of culture, and their work was devoted to this perennial effort of renewal.

Guido Dierickx in the early paragraphs of his article “Religion in a Deliberative Society: What Really Happened to Us in the ‘Era of Secularization’” offers some mildly self-deprecating comments about the problems inherent in “the language of ‘sociologese,’” but the article demonstrates through rigorous sociological analysis and concepts the important contribution to our understanding of the contemporary situation of the Catholic Church that the discipline of sociology can offer. Referring in his own way to the kinds of cultural conflicts highlighted in more general terms within this preface, Dierickx presents this argument:

From a sociological point of view, the Christian religion has a strong stake in realizing a broad program of sacralization and desacralization in society. As a consequence, it must anticipate a backlash from other cultural and religious forces. Conflicts, moderate and severe, are always to be expected and cannot, nor should be, avoided. However, they can be managed with the help of protective strategies.

The most significant contemporary “protective strategy” identified by Dierickx is the strategy of “exchange” and “dialogue,” recognized by Dierickx as coming to the foreground in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. The article clearly indicates the kind of disruption and turmoil that will inevitably accompany such a mode of interaction between the Catholic Church and the cultures in which it lives, while also indicating the distinct advantages and strengths
that accrue from the possibility today of availing ourselves of such a mode of interaction.

We are all familiar with the sad phenomenon of mass suicides within modern religious cults, and with the problems of determining what constitutes a “cult” and of fending off the tendency of some cultural critics to regard all religious communities as “cults” in exactly the same sense applied to the groups involved in mass suicide. Emmanuel Katongole in “Kannungu and the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God in Uganda: A Challenge for Christian Social Imagination” examines this phenomenon and these issues in great depth. Katongole explores the deficiencies of Christian vision within the movement he studies while showing that the Catholic Church must successfully address some of these same deficiencies so that it can flourish in contemporary African cultures:

I have argued that Kannungu needs to be taken seriously precisely because it displays the hopelessness and violence embodied within the mainstream community. In this respect, Kannungu and the MRTCG serves as a critical challenge to the state and church alike, particularly for Africa, where nation-state politics has succeeded only in changing the life of many into an endless cycle of violence and the hopelessness of mere “survival.”

The situation studied by Katongole has significant implications for the Catholic Church in all parts of the world because it poses the challenge faced by “the Christian imagination” to rethink and re-envision the relationship between religion and politics.

Raymond T. Gawronski, S. J., guides us on a search for God that will reinvigorate theological and intellectual endeavor today in “Desert in the Wasteland: Seeking God at the Edges of North America.” Traveling from Hong Kong to Milwaukee, from northern California to Ontario, Gawronski explores a variety of spiritual, intellectual, and artistic efforts to develop a life lived within an
awareness of the sacred. Poets Robinson Jeffers and Czeslaw Milosz and spiritual leader Catherine de Hueck Doherty are called on in this journey to provide guidance and illumination. The article suggests the inevitability of conflict to at least some degree between any human culture and the divine: “God remains a stranger to our merely human cultures, and the heart who would seek him must somehow gaze long at the fog bank off Big Sur, watch the breakers majestically, casually, turn back from California, soar with the hawks.” Yet the many efforts of the human spirit to seek contact with the divine through our cultural accomplishments keep culture anchored.

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Notes

1. A recording of Paul Schoenfield's Camp Songs is available on the CD Art from Ashes, vol. I., Music of Remembrance, Mina Miller, director, innova 578. The texts by Aleksander Kulisiewicz are provided in the CD booklet, and I am drawing on the translation provided by Barbara Milewski.
