

1-1-2001

## Solidarity: A Principle, an Attitude, a Duty, or the Virtue for an Interdependent World? (book review)

Kevin P. Lee

*Campbell University School of Law*, leek@campbell.edu

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### Recommended Citation

Kevin P. Lee, *Solidarity: A Principle, an Attitude, a Duty, or the Virtue for an Interdependent World?* J. Religion, October 2001, at 676 (book review).

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## The Journal of Religion

insists is a dialogical imperative that calls on each and every one of us to “engage in dialogue with all the world” (p. 184). Given the enduring plurality of comprehensive convictions (moral, philosophical, and religious) in the modern world, Sturm is absolutely correct to insist that this discursive encounter must be understood as a form of interreligious dialogue in which our diversity is expressed in order, finally, that we might better understand one another, our common humanity, and the ways in which our deepest commitments hinder or advance our common cause.

BRETT T. WILMOT, *Chicago, Illinois.*

BILGRIEN, MARIE VIANNEY. *Solidarity: A Principle, an Attitude, a Duty? Or the Virtue for an Interdependent World?* New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999. ix+278 pp. \$48.95 (cloth).

In this volume Marie Vianney Bilgrien analyzes the idea of solidarity in recent Roman Catholic social teaching. She finds solidarity to be multidimensional in its function and meaning, but, she argues, drawing on the work of the Spanish theologian Marciano Vidal, that solidarity has its strongest moral effectiveness when it is viewed as a virtue to be practiced. For it is the virtue of solidarity that Bilgrien believes holds the power to transform human lives and societies.

In chapters 1 and 2 Bilgrien presents a brief account of the development of the idea of solidarity. She begins with the term's French origin (*solidarité*) and traces its use in Catholic social teaching through its scant mention in pre-Vatican II documents, to the philosophical works of the current pope and his most extensive treatment of it in the 1987 encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. In the next three chapters, Bilgrien interprets various dimensions of solidarity: Chapter 3 sketches the attitude of solidarity, which is described as an openness to “mutual complementariness” (p. 48) that “helps us to have and to feel the conviction of the unity and interdependence of all human beings” (p. 52). Solidarity is depicted in chapter 4 as a duty that “will force us to accept the human dignity and worth of the other in ever expanding relationships until the total unity of creation is reached” (p. 57). And, in chapter 5, solidarity is a virtuous principle that “comes first” (p. 74) in “transforming structures and objective reality” (p. 76). It is in the potential to transform, then, that “the principle can be more effective than the duty” (p. 77), which merely “tells us what to do,” but “does not have the power to make us do what is good for ourselves and for the common good” (p. 76). In order to recognize the principle of solidarity, the human potential to act responsibly as one human family must also be recognized. Because the virtue of solidarity cultivates such awareness, it can be an agent of transformation.

The idea of solidarity as a virtue is developed in the final three chapters (6–8). Bilgrien accepts Thomas Aquinas's understanding of virtue as a habit of good action “which can bring about perfection and happiness” (p. 92). The virtue of solidarity is the habit of action by individuals or groups in collaboration with others that achieves the awareness of “an interdependent world, mov[ing] us to see the other as ourselves—members of the human family” (p. 106). This conception of the virtue of solidarity is composed of an awareness of interdependence, a determined commitment to the common good, and an orientation to the good of the neighbor (p. 107). Bilgrien sees virtue functioning through repeated acts of collaboration spawning an awareness of human interdependence, which in turn gives rise to a committed desire to promote the common good and good of the

neighbor. Bilgrien believes that the virtue of solidarity is especially needed today because contemporary awareness of the bare fact of globally interconnected environmental and social systems "moves us to recognize who we really are—members of the same family, living on one planet" (p. 253). Through solidarity, interdependent relation becomes the sort of personal caring expressed nonpareil in the parable of the Good Samaritan (p. 143).

While Bilgrien gives us a worthwhile study of solidarity in recent Catholic thought, the book is hindered by its uneven research. At times Bilgrien demonstrates a dogged thoroughness, for example, noting each occurrence of solidarity in the Vatican II conciliar documents. But, when it comes to explicating the philosophy and theology of Catholic social teaching, the book falls short, as when it somewhat wistfully wonders "when [John Paul II] got his interest in solidarity and why it is so important to him" (p. 17). Perhaps this is why the book seems to miss the difficult challenges posed in attempting to base a political order on solidarity. It was the distance between such a political order and the self-perception of contemporary democracies that led John Paul II, in *Evangelium Vitae*, to caution that solidarity is incompatible with contemporary democracies, which "conspire" (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 12) to poison the "culture of rights" (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 18). Nevertheless, Bilgrien's book provides an ample introduction to solidarity in contemporary Catholic thought, and for this it might be a useful primer.

KEVIN P. LEE, *Chicago, Illinois.*

SWATOS, WILLIAM H., JR. and WELLMAN, JAMES K., JR., eds., *The Power of Religious Publics: Staking Claims in American Society. Religion in the Age of Transformation.* Westport, Conn.: Praeger, viii+237 pp. \$59.95 (cloth).

On its face, the title of this book does not fully intimate its subject. While the collected essays describe the various ways that religious publics exercise power, the book as a whole is fashioned to provide an apology for religious involvement in the public sphere. And while most of the authors for this volume have made their careers as observers of religion, the majority of the essays take a prescriptive position. Power is not—in this instance—the object of a disinterested inquiry. Instead, what William Swatos and James Wellman wish to highlight is the positive power of religion in American society; religion can—and should—play a constructive role in the public sphere. What occupies most of the authors is how that should take place.

Uncharacteristic of an edited volume, the editors do not introduce the aim or thematic construction of the book. What Swatos and Wellman offer is a brief preface that suggests the project was intended as a "deeper exploration of the 'public religion' concept" (p. vii). And Martin Marty provides a brief introduction to the project at the beginning of his own essay on the topic by proposing that *The Power of Religious Publics* has three foci: (1) "How do the concepts of 'public' and 'religion' interrelate in American society today?" (2) "What kinds of power do 'religious publics' assert, and what are the limits to such power?" and (3) "Is there or should there be such a thing as the public, or is society made up of numberless 'subpublics' and how do the answers to this bear on the question of asserting power?" Marty adds: "Each contributing author addresses these questions from perspectives shaped by his or her own experiences, curiosities, and areas of expertise" (p. 1). While diversity of perspective can enrich discussion, the lack of a particular focus can blur the issues in the debate. The latter seems