

# John Cardinal O'Connor

Gerard V. Bradley

**Y**esterday they laid the body of John Cardinal O'Connor to rest. Fortunate thousands, including Presidents, past and present, and today's two main wannabes, jammed St. Patrick's for the Mass of Christian Burial. Millions more were there in spirit. In a sure sign of special favor and of friendship, the Holy Father sent the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Sodano, to be the main celebrant.

The last few months had been a springtime for John Cardinal O'Connor. His lingering but unmistakably terminal illness called forth, and allowed the time for, more than the usual displays of regard. Moving, worthy tributes there were aplenty, from friends and admirers across a long career and around the globe. There was also polite commendation from others, a standard story told by those not enamored, shall we say, of the Cardinal's orthodoxy on moral issues. The story was this: His Eminence was a decent man, with a charming human side to him. Where it really counted, though, he toed the Vatican line. He preached to the choir, they said, and never reached those alienated from the Church by Vatican teaching. He rallied and steeled the conservative troops. But to those not satisfied by the answers of the past, he offered little. John Cardinal O'Connor was a shepherd, for the ninety-nine.

This is not even faint praise. And it is false. For there is abundant evidence that John Cardinal O'Connor did everything humanly possible to reach out to people alienated from the Church, especially those mired in the spiritual swamps of homosexuality and abortion. He set up an AIDS hospice. He changed bedpans there. He prayed with dying men for their eternal salvation. He was a regular prayerful, peaceful witness at abortion mills.

It comes down to this: John Cardinal O'Connor did not do ONE thing, and it is the ONE thing that self-styled progressive Catholics demand of all prelates. Nothing else really matters, and the hollow standard encomium proves it. John Cardinal O'Connor did not sacrifice the truth about life, about marriage, about sexual morality, on the altar of "compassion." In so remaining faithful, he offered the alienated all they really needed. Anyone can change a bedpan. But to hear preached the Gospel by a successor of the apostles, that is the pearl of great price.

John Cardinal O'Connor was, finally but not least, long a faithful and generous friend of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars. ✠

*O Timothee, depositum custodi, devitans profanas vocum novitates et oppositiones falsi nominis scientiae, quam quidam profitentes circa fidem aberraverunt. Gratia vobiscum. 1 ad Timotheum 6*

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## CUA Honors Jude P. Dougherty

Jude P. Dougherty, Dean Emeritus of the School of Philosophy at The Catholic University of America, received honors from CUA and The Catholic University of Lublin, Poland, in a recent tribute to his scholarship and devotion to CUA.

For thirty-one years, Dougherty, of Potomac, Md., helped bring international renown to the School of Philosophy and to CUA. He stepped down from the post of Dean last spring.

Friends of the university including Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia joined the Very Rev. David M. O'Connell, C.M., CUA President, colleagues, former and current students, family members and long-time friends of Dougherty in a warm tribute to the scholar in Chevy Chase, Md., on Feb. 29.

Three of the university's former presidents joined in the

tribute: Edmund D. Pellegrino, M.D., the Rev. William J. Byron, S.J., and Brother Patrick Ellis, F.S.C.

Dougherty received two honors at the dinner. The CUA Alumni Association presented Dougherty with the association's highest honor, the Cardinal Gibbons Medal. The Most Rev. Jozef M. Zycinski, Archbishop of Lublin, Poland, and grand chancellor of The Catholic University of Lublin, announced that the Polish university will honor Dougherty with an honorary degree. In accepting the honors, Dougherty said that serving CUA was his greatest reward.

In leading a toast to Dougherty, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia praised him for serving as a "moral and intellectual leader" who has positively influenced American culture.

The dinner was made possible through the support of Jacques Moore and Paul Chiapparone,

members of CUA's Board of Regents and personal friends of Dougherty.

Dougherty is the former executive secretary and treasurer of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, and the 1994 recipient of the Cardinal Wright Award. He earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy in 1954 and his doctorate in philosophy in 1961.

One of his most memorable achievements was bringing the Most Rev. Karol Wojtyla, then Archbishop of Krakow, to the university as a guest lecturer shortly before Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II. After his election, the Pope returned to campus in 1979, making a special stop on his tour of America.

Founded in 1895, CUA's School of Philosophy offers one of the nation's most extensive academic programs in the field of philosophy. ☩

## Theological Conference Honors CUA's Monsignor Robert Sokolowski

Monsignor Robert S. Sokolowski, professor of philosophy at The Catholic University of America and expert in phenomenology, was honored on his 65th birthday by former pupils in a conference entitled, "Christian Distinctions and Theological Disclosures: Robert Sokolowski and the God of Faith." Sokolowski is "probably

the most prominent representative of the phenomenological movement in North America," according to Jude P. Dougherty, Dean Emeritus of Catholic University's School of Philosophy. "His work is universally utilized and respected both in Latin America and Europe," he said.

Admired by students for his recasting of the philosopher

Edmund Husserl's ideas on human knowledge, Sokolowski spoke on the "Revelation of the Trinity" at the conference. The conference was held April 9-11 at St. Meinrad School of Theology in St. Meinrad, Ind.

Sokolowski is a member of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars. ☩

## Tom Monaghan Receives Catholic Social Action Award

The Society of Catholic Social Scientists (SCSS) awarded Catholic businessman and philanthropist Thomas S. Monaghan its annual Blessed Frederic Ozanam Award for Catholic Social Action. SCSS Board of Directors member D. Brian Scarnecchia, Esq., in granting the award, noted Monaghan's accomplishments in pro-life activities, Catholic education, and evangelization within the American business community, Latin America, and the local Ann Arbor region. Monaghan, a self-made billionaire, is the former president and founder of Domino's Pizza.

Previous award recipients were Dr. Charles E. Rice of the University of Notre Dame,

Candace de Russy of the State University of New York Board of Trustees, and William Donohue of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights.

The organization presented the award at a recent Ann Arbor, Michigan, conference on "Catholic Approaches to the Social Sciences." Dr. Ron Muller, provost of Ave Maria College, opened the conference, noting the importance of furthering authentic Catholic scholarship. Papers were presented on Catholic approaches to sociology by Joseph A. Varacelli of Nassau Community College-SUNY, political science by Kenneth Grasso of Southwest Texas State University and John A. Guegen

of Illinois State University, economics by Gary J. Scott of St. Mary's University, history by Donald J. D'Elia of SUNY-New Plattsburgh and Christopher Beiting of Ave Maria College, psychology by Dr. Richard W. Cross of Franciscan University, and law by Prof. Richard S. Myers and Dean Bernard Dobranski of Ave Maria School of Law. Dr. Stephen M. Krason, SCSS president, ended the conference with an address on what the Catholic scholar finds wrong with secular social science.

For more information about the SCSS, contact Dr. Joseph A. Varacelli, Dept. of Sociology, Nassau Community College-SUNY, Garden City, NY, 11530, (516) 572-7454 (phone) or (516) 572-7257 (fax).

## TiberRiver.com Offers Catholic Books and Advice

On March 25th, 2000, the Ave Maria Foundation, which is the parent organization of Tom Monaghan's new Ave Maria Law School, unveiled TiberRiver.com, a comprehensive interactive online resource for Catholic books and real-time advice. Visitors are not only able to purchase the widest range of Catholic books ever made available on the Internet (including scholarly works), but they are also able to benefit from a cutting-edge, real-time "advice" service featuring live expert representatives. Using a state-of-the-art database and the input of numerous expert

Catholic scholars and advisers, books are clearly rated according to their fidelity to Magisterial teaching, readability, and excellence. Shipment of orders will be virtually instantaneous. Over 5000 works have already been scanned into the growing TiberRiver.com database.

TiberRiver.com serves Catholics in two crucial ways. First, reverting and converting Catholics will now have a completely trustworthy source for Catholic books as well as individual consultation tailored to their unique personal needs. Second, devout Catholics will have instantaneous access to Catholic

books, and more importantly, a spectacular "tool for evangelization" to which to refer their confused, searching, reverting, or curious friends and relatives. TiberRiver.com is asking the members of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars to browse the site, bookmark it for future reference, "beta test" the services, and to volunteer for the ongoing and heroic job of recommending lesser known Catholic publishers and titles pertaining to their academic specialty, and even to help rate and evaluate books, according to their zeal and expertise. The web address is [www.tiberriver.com](http://www.tiberriver.com). ☩



## *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*: The Next Phase

by Gerard V. Bradley

The conversation since the Holy Father promulgated *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* has been a difficult and often contentious one. Who would have thought, back in 1990, that we would cross the threshold of the new millennium without implementing *ECE*? And the conversation is not done. The Vatican has not yet accepted the document passed overwhelmingly by the bishops in November. That document, moreover, says that it is not effective until a year after Vatican approval. During that time, if not for longer, there will be continued spirited discussion about “implementing the implementation”; that is, over the precise procedures and standards governing the *mandatum* required by Canon 812.

The bishops’ decision last November nevertheless is a real turning point. By voting to implement (in an as yet unspecified way) Canon 812, they committed themselves to an understanding of academic freedom and of colleges’ institutional autonomy which is irreconcilable with the Land O’ Lakes declaration of 1967. That declaration has guided the vast majority of America’s Catholic colleges since. What will happen henceforth no one can say for sure. But it does seem that a new trajectory for our colleges was settled a few months ago.

The many years of often tense dialogue between the bishops and the colleges have born much fruit, quite apart from the document recently passed. The conversation over *ECE* has improved many schools’ Catholic character. That, almost no one denies. Many ill-founded arguments against juridical implementation of *ECE* have been laid to rest, precisely because all parties took the time to talk (and, yes, argue) them through. Chief among these is the civil law argument. It was said that full implementation of *ECE* was a civil law impossibility: student aid would be cut off, as would all direct financial assistance to the colleges themselves; preferential hiring of Catholic faculty was not legally permitted; contractual obligations to faculty, especially tenured professors, ruled out the mandate and probity of life require-

ments of the Canon Law. This line of opposition to implementing *ECE* is dead.

Some of these concerns had roots in the civil law as was in the early 1980s, when the first drafts of *ECE* began circulating. Our constitutional law of church and state was then pretty inhospitable to religious institutions. It was, then, not fanciful to say that there might be serious financial consequences to juridically implementing *ECE*. The law has changed. The student aid so important to most colleges’ survival is absolutely secure. The critical Supreme Court case, *Washington v. Witters*, was decided in 1986. There is now only a remote chance that “direct” aid to colleges will be cut off. That chance is diminishing: the pertinent legal category — “pervasively sectarian” — will probably be abandoned by the Supreme Court, perhaps as early as this term. (This is one scenario for the pending Supreme Court decision in *Mitchell v. Helms*, a parochial school aid case from Louisiana.) Several Justices have denounced the category. Justice Clarence Thomas last summer said that its use was tantamount to an invidious discrimination against religion. When “pervasively sectarian” is consigned to the judicial dustbin, public aid to all but the strictly religious functions of Catholic colleges and universities will be beyond constitutional question. Preferential hiring is expressly protected by federal anti-discrimination laws, and by most similar state statutes. Where state laws do not expressly protect preferential hiring, colleges should defend the practice as a matter of constitutional right, as an aspect of the free exercise of religion.

There is no serious civil law impediment to juridical implementation of *ECE*. This fact is now widely accepted. The concern currently voiced is about the potential cost of litigation necessary to establish a college’s legal rights. Of course, anyone can be sued; no implementation strategy can eliminate that possibility. And any institution which makes avoidance of lawsuits its paramount concern is — at least in our litigious society — sacrificing its effectiveness. Good lawyers will be able to protect the colleges against crippling litigation. To ease that



burden further, a consortium of experienced church-state lawyers has agreed to handle, free of charge to the colleges, all litigation over direct public funding lost due to implementing *ECE*.

Government assistance to students — guaranteed loans, Pell grants, work study and the like — all require that the college attended be accredited. Accreditation of our Catholic colleges is important for many other reasons, too. Early in the conversation about *ECE*, some academics said juridical implementation might endanger accreditation by one or more of the six regional associations. This concern is rarely voiced now; it too is, practically speaking, dead. We have known all along that some very religious institutions, like Brigham Young University, get and remain accredited without event, and without compromising the role of faith on campus. The accrediting bodies are fast becoming less ideologically driven. They seem to have taken more than the manager's, or the systems analyst's, point of view, gauging a college not on *what* its mission is, but on its success or failure to implement that mission — whatever it is. As a last resort, Catholic colleges could create an accrediting association of their own. There is no legal or political reason why this could not be done.

The years of discussion and debate over *ECE* have laid to rest some sincere but misguided objections. These years have also allowed us to distill two other sincere concerns about juridical implementation which are *not* so misguided. There are genuine issues here. I wish to discuss them now. They both have to do with the *mandatum* required by Canon 812. The first concern is that the mandate may emasculate theology at Catholic colleges, to the detriment of students and scholars there, as well as to the Church which the theologians serve. Will the *mandatum* requirement have a “chilling effect” upon classroom instruction? Upon faculty publications? The second worry is that juridically applying *ECE*, especially but not only the *mandatum*, will cause Catholic colleges to lose valuable prestige among peer institutions.

There is a lot of opposition to the *concept* of the *mandatum*, to the very notion of (any) episcopal approval or declaration of eligibility to teach Catholic theology. Some say that the *mandatum* is a wrongful

“external,” non-academic intervention in the college, an abridgement of the college's rightful “institutional autonomy.”

I think this view is deeply mistaken.

Why is this view mistaken, especially since the *mandatum* is, in truth, *not* constitutive of the activity of teaching Catholic theology? Let us stipulate that, right now, no theologian in the United States has a *mandatum*. (Actually, I think a *few* do.) If the *mandatum* were constitutive of Catholic theology, it would follow that no one now teaches it. But many people do teach Catholic theology at the college level.

The *mandatum* is, in reality, a *sign*, an *indication*. It is, more exactly, an authoritative attestation that something essential to teaching Catholic theology is present: the Catholic faith. Leave the episcopacy out of the question, and thereby put aside any question of “outside,” “non-academic” interference with the college. Here is a free standing proposition, to be affirmed or denied: Is it, as the Holy Father says in *ECE*, “intrinsic to the principles and methods of their research and teaching in their academic discipline that theologians respect the authority of the Bishops, and assent to Catholic doctrine according to the degree of authority with which it is taught.” The basic data of Catholic theology — the faith seeking understanding — is supplied by the faith. Those who deny this will surely oppose the *mandatum*.

But if it is agreed that *holding* the faith is a proper criterion of eligibility to teach Catholic theology, then a reliable way of establishing that fact seems to be essential. The alternative makes little sense: granting that one must hold the faith to teach it, the college would either have to guess about it, or infer it from some circumstantial evidence. Why should such an important matter be left to chance or surmise? No college, Catholic or otherwise, would *speculate* about whether an applicant held a Ph.D., or any other qualification the college agreed was pertinent. Hard evidence of every such qualification is demanded. Why not evidence of a theology candidate's acceptance of what Catholic theology, in truth, *is*?

The question now arises: On what basis does ecclesiastical authority enter the picture? That the living law of the Church requires it is one answer, complete in itself. This legal norm makes a lot of

sense. The *mandatum* is not a decision to hire; it constitutes no evaluation of purely academic competence. This is obvious from the criterion suggested in the pending Application for granting the *mandatum*, the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity. The faith is, by itself, no evidence at all of academic competence. The *mandatum*, furthermore, does not join the theologian to the bishop's teaching office. The Application clearly states that the theologian teaches in his or her own name. The *mandatum* is, then, a declaration that a candidate holds the faith, accepts the faith as the datum of theology, and so is *eligible* to teach theology.

Why should the *bishop* (and not, perhaps, the hiring dean) make this declaration? For one thing, the declaration is not in itself an *academic* judgment. And it is intended for an audience at least partially outside the academy. The *mandatum* is meant to be a public statement by one responsible for teaching the faith in a particular place. The statement is that the *faithful* may treat theology at a Catholic college as *Catholic* theology. This sign or assurance can only be given by the bishop. That is why, given what the faith is and what the *mandatum* aims to do, the local bishop, or one acting for him, should be the grantor.

"Great minds," Newman wrote in his *Idea of a University*, "need elbow room, not indeed in the domain of faith, but of thought." Here is good ground for reasonable concern, even anxiety, over implementing Canon 812. Knowing that the bishop, who often is not a theologian, possesses a kind of veto over one's employment may chill the most faithful theologian's writings, but more his classroom expression. Classroom teachers utter innumerable sentences each semester, many of which would be heterodox by any standard. But when does a teacher actually *assert* something—as opposed to uttering a sentence—contrary to the faith? Teachers speak in many voices during a class. Some devotees of the Socratic method pride themselves on *never* asserting a thing. Very often, perhaps in imitation of the lawyer's cross examination, a teacher might "question" a student by making flat statements to him or her, to provoke a response. These declarative "questions" may appear to subsequent observers to be assertions when, in fact, they were not.

What of different classroom settings? What is appropriate to a graduate seminar may not be suit-

able to a required freshman introduction to Catholicism. Faithful Catholic teachers might legitimately fear that something they said but did not assert might trigger scrutiny by the bishop or his designees.

Not everything contained in assigned readings, even in theology, must be consistent with the faith. How could the Reformation be studied under such constraints? Some unorthodox authors may, even must, be assigned. What exactly is the teacher's responsibility for these readings? When, if ever, does the teacher *assert* a heterodox proposition by assigning readings which could never earn an *imprimatur*? Surely, in discussing these readings the teacher will guard against a blanket endorsement of the author. But no author is entirely wrong. Karl Marx's diagnoses of industrial society were often apt, even though Marxism is contrary to the faith. Any author whose work is worth assigning to students will have tackled a genuine question or problem, and will have given a worthwhile (even if finally mistaken) answer. The pool of such authors is wide, and extends well beyond the fold of the Catholic Church. A professor might fear giving the appearance of approval by assigning such works, or worry over the interpretations of his classroom comments on them. If the professor chooses not to assign a work for these reasons, students would be the worse off.

All of these matters call for mature judgment. It is unimaginable that any bishop could, or would wish to, monitor all the teaching and publishing on campus. The whole matter is too large. The fine calls to be made are not made well *post hoc*, and they are not clearly within the bishop's competence anyway. Besides, if the bishop or his designees (or well meaning campus informants) most play "Gotcha" with professors, the university will not be Catholic. Obviously, only the teacher is positioned to decide, and then to do, the right thing. The professor will, inescapably, be the guarantor of classroom fidelity. Generally speaking, without the proper faculty, there is little the bishop, or anyone else, can do to make a college Catholic. With the proper faculty, there is little the bishop or anyone would have to do.

There is no possibility of a truly Catholic university without a faculty which makes it Catholic. That faculty will fit this profile, provided by Cardinal Newman:

I am supposing all along good faith, honest intentions, a loyal Catholic spirit, and a deep sense of responsibility. I am supposing, in the scientific inquirer, a due fear of giving scandal, of seeming to countenance views which he does not really countenance, and of siding with parties from whom he heartily differs. I am supposing that he is fully alive to the existence and the power of the infidelity of the age; that he keeps in mind the moral weakness and the intellectual confusions of the majority of men; and that he has no wish at all that any one soul should get harm from certain speculations to-day, though he may have the satisfaction of being sure that those speculations will, as far as they are erroneous or misunderstood, be corrected in the course of the next half-century.

These duties, including the duty to avoid giving scandal, do not constitute a legalistic template, pressed over the university by the heavy hand of Church authority. These duties are the moral obligations of every Catholic. Nothing in *ECE* or in the Code of Canon Law creates them. The only realistic way to have them observed is to have faculty who recognize them precisely as *moral obligations*.

The *only* way to achieve Catholicity *without* chilling intellectual life on campus is to hire the proper faculty and then, basically, let them do their thing. With theologians, "proper" includes the *mandatum*. It seems to me that any final guidelines should heavily "front-load" the test for this credential. A Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity should probably suffice. An amendment to the Application could establish a national body, probably a committee of theologians and bishops under the auspices of the NCCB. This could even be a binding appeal, without compromising the local Ordinary's authority. For the bishops would individually agree to adopt the recommendations of the contemplated body. Then, no theologian could be held hostage by a maverick bishop.

I turn to the second concern. Many faculty and administrators, and some bishops, have said that juridically implementing *ECE* will cause Catholic colleges a serious loss of prestige, especially among colleagues at the better secular schools. Some of this is academic vanity, or professors' concern over their own social acceptability. But there is much more than that to it. A serious loss of prestige *will* have consequences no one wants, effects to be accepted only for very good

reason. If Catholic colleges come to be seen as backwards or anti-intellectual due to implementing *ECE* (or for any other reason), good scholarly work by faculty at Catholic colleges may be slighted, or neglected, in important circles; access to widely read journals may be blocked; and, to some unpredictable, but non-negligible extent, graduates of Catholic colleges may experience difficulty getting into elite graduate and professional schools. These consequences must not be welcomed, even in a culture such as ours, in which being a disciple of Christ should be expected to be costly. One should be willing to be a martyr, but one should not relish martyrdom.

There is some naivete in the expectation that standing will be lost. My educated guess is that if you asked the best professors at the best secular schools if they believe, right now, that Catholic colleges prefer Catholics in faculty hiring, and if Catholics teaching Catholic theology at Catholic colleges have to publicly evidence their faith commitments, they would say, of course they do, right now. What would it mean to say that the colleges are Catholic, if not for such practices?

The forecasts of disrespect also fail to fully consider the remarkable achievements of Catholic scholars like Princeton's Robert George, Harvard's Mary Ann Glendon, and Oxford's as well as Notre Dame's John Finnis. These great intellectuals enjoy the profound respect of the *secular* academy, where they have been deemed eminently worthy conversation partners. One reason *why* these scholars are so highly regarded is this: they are tireless and courageous defenders of the distinctive truths of the Catholic faith. Rather than prophesy doom, why not pay secular academics the compliment of believing that they relish a good, honest argument with someone who is unafraid to stand up to them? If the compliment is not warranted, then loss of prestige may be inevitable, but not very lamentable.

We need not be pessimistic. There are many signs that an era of genuine *institutional* pluralism in American higher education is dawning. In the coming time, colleges and universities will not be expected to be as internally "diverse" as they have been expected to be. They will not be expected, one by one, to conform to a model plan of representative viewpoints (a plan, by the way, which never



included Catholics or evangelical Christians in a truly representative way). The new diversity will be a diversity among institutions, one by one different in mission and focus, coherent and integrated in all its policies, including student life, faculty hiring, and in their conception of academic freedom. Why not anticipate evaluation of Catholic colleges by these coming standards, rather than the graying norms of a discredited cultural liberalism?

What, finally, is the most cogent evidence for the view that implementing *ECE* will cause a significant loss of prestige? The worries themselves. That is, is it not reasonable to believe that the image which secular academics have of Catholic schools is largely dependent on what their colleagues at the Catholic schools say about the Catholic colleges? The professor imagined by Newman would tell a different story about Catholic colleges than is told by all too many opponents of the *mandatum*. They have been saying that juridically implementing *ECE* spells disaster for

the Catholic colleges; they have been saying that bishops will “control” the campuses; they have been saying that academic freedom will be extinguished by the *mandatum*; they have been saying that juridical implementation is incompatible with the existence of a genuine academic enterprise; they have been raising the dread specter of indoctrination and censorship. I hope that these are not self-fulfilling prophecies, not about the reality of Catholic colleges, but about how they are perceived by the rest of the academy.

The decade long conversation about *ECE* has brought the bishops and the colleges closer together than they were for some time. The proposed Application deftly structures the continuing conversation; indeed, it founds a real partnership on firm juridical footing. ✠

*Gerard V. Bradley is professor of law at the University of Notre Dame and President of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars.*

## Faith, Reason and Science

by Stanley L. Jaki

What is true of any important document is also true of the encyclical *Fides et ratio*. The encyclical is driven by a very powerful consideration. John Paul II makes this very clear and he also specifies this consideration very clearly. In fact, he does this twice. First in par. 12, then in par. 60. In both paragraphs he quotes from his first encyclical *Redemptor hominis* a passage which states that “only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light.” One cannot help hearing here an echo of the voice of Pope Paul VI who at the opening of Vatican II referred to the gigantic figure Christ.

A gigantic reality Christ truly is. The past 2000 years saw His figure cast an ever stronger light over mankind, indeed over the entire intellectual globe. The enlightenment which philosophy drew from that light, which is the Word, has been enormous. Or to hear the encyclical state it in its par. 76: “A

good part of modern and contemporary philosophy would not exist without this stimulus of the Word of God.” That Word is in substance God himself, who was the Light of the World, and who came to illuminate all men. This we must take literally and in an unrestricted sense as long as we take Christ for what He said He was, is, and ever shall be. For, to quote the Letter to the Hebrews: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Let here attention be focused on one ray of that illumination or enlightenment, the ray that runs from Christ to science and back to Him.

That ray of light did from the start appear not as an idea but a fact, or rather the factual assertion made by a real man, Jesus of Nazareth. He asserted nothing less than that the Father, that is, God, and He, a man, were one, insofar as He was the Father’s Son. He also asserted that whatever the Father, or God, possessed, was also the possession of the Son. The mere idea of this identity between God and a Man is so outlandish as to have never occurred to any man to claim it for himself as long as he protected his

reputation as a wise man, a sort of a philosopher. But one man, Jesus, made that claim and he did so most emphatically.

His claim presented mankind with a challenge, never before posed to man: The one who made that assertion was either the victim of self-delusion, or was indeed what He said He was, the Son of the living God. This alternative had been perceived by many and in a great variety of forms, before C. S. Lewis gave it a very quotable formulation: "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said wouldn't be a great moral teacher. He'd either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him, and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call Him Lord and God. But don't let us come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He hasn't left that open to us. He didn't intend to."

Jesus was not satisfied on hearing that according to some He was merely a new John the Baptist, a new Elijah, a new Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Any of these would have meant an awful lot, especially if he had been Elijah. In that case He would have been one who had come back from the dead, 700 years after he had died. Yet, that would not make him the Son of the Living God.

Honest psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychoanalysts still can only say what was stated early in this century by an American psychologist. He was G. Stanley Hall, who first invited Sigmund Freud and other psychoanalysts to lecture in the United States in 1909. A dozen years later Hall summed up his long book, *Jesus the Christ in the Light of Psychology*, in the phrase that "Jesus incorporates all good tendencies of man." This will not sound trite, if one takes the phrase literally, that is, does not tamper with any of the words in that phrase, and certainly not with the words "all" and "good." Unfortunately, even such well meaning psychologists like Hall failed to see that the image of Jesus in question will not activate all of man's subliminal urges to do better, unless his sense of repentance is also reactivated.

The simultaneous presence of all good qualities

in a man speaks of a supreme balance. This is indeed the finest feature of the image of Christ as it transpires from the Gospels. Faith in Jesus is therefore a surrender to that factually supreme balance, which is infinitely beyond a mere man's ability. But, as you know, psychology and psychiatry do not know of sin and do not want to know of what we call sin.

To surrender to that supreme balance which is Christ is particularly difficult for man who especially reveals his imbalance and weakness as he tries to get around facts. This game with facts has become a chief sign of the imbalance of modern society. We now have a vast set of verbal means to talk ourselves out of most tangible facts and predicaments.

This dubious art reached its summit, or rather hit its most abysmal depth almost two years ago, in August 1998. Then our society by and large failed to be outraged on being presented by an apparently trivial but actually most abysmal flippancy. I mean the moment when the President of the United States asked his prosecutor: What do you mean by the verb *is*?

This happened only a year or so before the onset of the third millennium as counted from the birth of Jesus as a man. For among all His divine words none were more divine than those words of His whereby He applied to Himself God's proper name, I am who am, or I am who is. For this is what Jesus did when he said: Before Abraham was I am.

Please note, Jesus did not say, I appear to myself as someone who exists. He did not say, I have the idea of my existing. He did not say, in order to assert his consciousness, what quite recently Dr. Damico, a prominent American neuroscientist said, who takes consciousness for the "feeling of knowing that I have feeling." He was very illogical in overlooking that he must know this before he can have the kind of feeling which is conscious knowing. And because Christ presumably was fully logical, he could not have said, for instance, that my existence is my phenomenon. Only a solipsist could have said this and only to himself, if he were to remain consistent with his solipsism. But Jesus not only said, "Before Abraham was I am," but he said this so that others may hear it, and that his words be heard down through centuries and millennia to come.

It is not to cross swords with politicians and with political parties that I recalled that sad moment in

American history. About politics John Henry Newman touched the bottom line, when he wrote in ripe old age to a prominent intellectual of the day: "To touch politics is to touch pitch." We are, I am afraid, up to our ears in that terrible, smelly, dark, gluey substance. So much in way of a brief comment about the concluding page of a recent vast history of the United States. I mean the book of Paul Johnson who writes there that America "is the cynosure of the world," that is, the world's guiding star. Please, note that astronomy knows about entities called black holes.

Strange as this may sound, I recalled that sad moment in the history of America, which I consider, with the Pope, the hope of the world, in order to make more concrete some of the background of the encyclical or, rather, the driving force behind it. For if that driving force is truly the gigantic fact of Christ, one is indeed confronted with a question: On hearing that miserable effort to parse the verb *is*, this most fundamental verb of all human discourse, did the Catholic philosophical and theological establishment burst out in outrage and in unison?

Where was the voice of the Catholic Philosophical Society, of the Catholic Theological Society, of the Society of Catholic Exegetes? Where was the voice of the Society of Catholic Scholars? Have they not felt to a man stung to the quick on hearing that miserable parsing of the verb *is*? Have they not felt that it hit them literally on their intellectual solar plexus? Have they not perceived that no blow below the belt (not even that terrible painting of Mary in the Brooklyn Museum of Art, whose chief decor is an elephant's dung, with a wreath of cutouts from pornographic magazines) was indeed conceivably so low a blow against Catholics as that strange parsing of *is*, this very foundation of Christian outlook? Did the deafening silence of all those societies indicate something very ominous, something that really called for this encyclical?

Was that silence motivated because Catholic philosophers and theologians have recently come to think that in this age of science it is not proper to show concern about the verb *is*, that is, about objective, real existence? Have they come to think that according to science it is enough to be busy with the phenomena as they appear in our personal sensory

world and consciousness? Well, if respect for science is the reason for that neglect of the real as it exists independently of our thinking about it, it is a most misplaced respect, and also most unscientific. That respect has no basis in science, which has always been very different from its fashionable interpretations, whether dished out by Galileo, or by Newton, or by Einstein, or by a recent chorus of Nobel laureate physicists, who at times gain more profit from their popularization of science than from the Prize itself, which is no mean sum at all.

A dubious and misplaced respect for science would not have arisen if there had been alive an intellectually real grasp of Christ, insofar as He is the only begotten Son of God. For his status as such a Son is just another form of the meaning of his words: "Before Abraham was I am." Had that grasp been firm, even if one had no information about science, one would have had enough mental strength and guidance to resist a lure which though it had all the trappings of science was not science at all. I mean the difference between excellent science, such as done by Nobel laureates, and the dismal philosophical interpretations which for the last two or three generations Nobel laureate scientists have spun in great quantities around good science.

I leave aside that awful spin which theologians and philosophers, who know science only from hearsay, have added to that terrible web. I leave it aside because early in the day it would not be proper to explore the fallacies of the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics, or of evolutionary philosophy that celebrates the marriage of chance and necessity. To be sure, no philosophy is needed to see the strength of a dictum, now sixty years old: "Those who devote their whole life to the purpose of proving that there is no purpose, constitute an interesting subject for study."

It takes no philosophy to see the illogicality of Darwin, who first adopted the very scientific motto: "Never say the words 'higher' and 'lower,'" and then kept writing about the evolution of ever higher forms of life from lower forms. Clearly, he meant much more than that a giraffe was much taller than a mouse. A scientist as a scientist can never use those words in a valuational sense, but only along the strictly relative parameter of quantitative magnitudes.



If the scientist makes valuational statements, he makes them as a philosopher and then he is obligated to justify his philosophy, a task which most scientists shy away from, or if they face up to it, almost invariably come up with a mess.

Philosophy has, however, another branch, which is digestible even in the morning hours. Almost two thousand years old is that definition of philosophy, according to which, "history is philosophy, teaching by examples." At any rate, story telling, even when serious, is always more entertaining than abstract speculation. So allow me to take you back to around A.D. 120, or so, or rather to Plutarch, who flourished at that time. Plutarch was the finest specimen of his pagan Greco-Roman society. A chief priest of the sanctuary of Delphi, he was also the author of a once famous book, *The Lives of Great Men*. That this book is no longer read in our colleges is a reflection on the status of education there and not on the book, which is still a classic from classical times.

Now let us suppose that one of Plutarch's trusted friends was a Christian and equally educated, who somehow got the impression that Plutarch was ready to hear about Christ. Nothing would have been more natural for that Christian than to let Plutarch read the most intellectual among the four Gospels, the Gospel of Saint John.

I wonder whether Plutarch would have ever gotten beyond chapter 1 in that Gospel. Plutarch could have taken in stride John's words about the Word who was in the beginning and even John's statement that the Word was God. As one raised on Plato, Plutarch could have lived with eternal ideas and with the Word, writ large, if the Word was a mere idea. But I wonder whether Plutarch would have taken kindly to reading in that chapter the declaration that the Word become flesh showed "the glory of the only son coming from the Father." It was not the word "glory" that would have troubled Plutarch, nor the word "Father" but the expression "only son" or *monogenes* in Greek, and *unigenitus* in Latin.

On the face of it the word *monogenes* or only son, or only begotten meant that a father had only one child. The word *monogenes* also meant that the world, the cosmos, the universe was an only son, an only begotten child, a *monogenes*. It was in that sense that the word "only begotten" was for Plutarch and

for any cultured pagan of those times the centerpiece of the pagan Hellenistic world view, philosophy, and theology.

Of whose son, of whose child was the universe? one may ask. Plutarch, a Platonist, might have answered that the universe was the son, the begetting of the supreme Good, or Plato's chief deity. Had Plutarch taken kindly to the Aristotelians, he might have answered that the cosmos was the only son of the Prime Mover. Both answers, however different, had one and the same contradiction in common.

But either in the Platonist, or in the Aristotelian perspective, the cosmos could not really be a son or something distinct from a father. In both those perspectives the Father, whether the Good or the Prime Mover, was not really different from the cosmos, or at least from its divine parts, the heavens. Both Plato and Aristotle, to say nothing of many lesser minds of Antiquity, firmly held that the universe, the universum, the mundus, the cosmos, the *to pan*, was the final, the supreme deity, not really different from the Good, or from the Prime Mover. Not different at all, because, neither the Good nor the Prime Mover were creators. They at most inspired the shaping of the universe by a lower agency, such as a demiourgos, or public contractor, or people's architect.

All this was very clear to Plutarch and to all other similarly educated pagans. Therefore, if I may go on with my imaginary story, Plutarch had to make the most decisive choice of his life. If he accepted Christ as the only son, the *monogenes* of a truly transcendental Father and worship that son, he had to give up worshipping the universe as the *monogenes*. But since Plutarch obviously remained a pagan, he gave up his chance to bend his knees before Christ, and to save his soul. Plutarch kept to his own ways, classic pagan ways, which are very modern ways indeed, ways also energized by some bad philosophies grafted on good science.

Plutarch went on worshipping the stars, the blue skies and the silvery leaves of the olive trees that undulate all over the valley leading up to the sanctuaries of Delphi. There all the gods were so many personifications of the forces of nature. Plutarch was and remained a nature worshiper in an exalted form but in a form still not more exalted than nature could be. And much the same is done by many,

indeed most moderns. Pantheism, or the worship of nature, is lurking everywhere between the lines in the various ecological manifestos. Pantheism reverberates everywhere in perorations about a cosmic upward sweep toward an omega point. John Henry Newman was a great prophet when in 1834 he said that pantheism would be the great heresy of the century to come.

But back to Plutarch. Had Plutarch become a Christian, he would have then read the letters of Saint Paul. There in the Letter to the Colossians he would have found the declaration that the Father created everything in the Son. This, of course, amounted to the declaration that the Son had truly divine powers. When Thomas Aquinas said well over a thousand years later that even God cannot delegate to a mere creature, however exalted, His power to create, he merely gave a more concise formulation to what Saint Paul had already stated. And Athanasius in his great letters against the Arians, merely elaborated on the same dictum of Saint Paul, when he said that the universe had to be fully logical because it was created by a fully divine Son, Word, or Logos.

Athanasius, who leaned so much on the support he received from the Bishop of Rome, was widely read in the West. A proof of this is the remark of a medieval monk: When you have a writing of Athanasius and you have no paper to copy it, copy it on your shirt. Athanasius could not, of course, guess what his anti-Arian writings meant for the eventual rise of science in the West. He most likely was not even conscious of the fact that in emphasizing the full rationality of the cosmos, he opposed the Platonist and Aristotelian view that only the divine or heavenly parts of the universe were fully ordered and that a partial disorder ruled things and processes below the orbit of the moon.

By insisting that as the creature of the divine Logos, the universe had to be fully ordered, Athanasius prepared a climate of thought, a climate most crucial for the eventual rise of Newtonian science. Newton himself was a Unitarian, or a latter-day Arian, although he was rather secretive about this. Newton knew that if he had let the cat out of the bag, he would have been dismissed from his chair in Cambridge. Speak of the Roman Inquisition! But the England of Newton's time still cared

for some basics of orthodoxy. At any rate, Newton did not see the irony that orthodox Christology created the perspective in which the fall of an apple on the earth and the fall of the moon in its orbit could be seen as obeying the same law.

Nor did those, who at that time insisted on the empirical or experimental method in science, realize that it also had its historical support in orthodox Christology. The support was the dogma of creation out of nothing, which, of course, was a free act. This meant that God did not necessarily have to create this universe. This also meant that man could not fathom a priori the laws of physics, or rather the laws of matter that constitutes the physical universe. Those laws had to be ascertained through a laborious interplay of theory and experiment.

One need not be a philosopher of science to glimpse the enormous significance of these two points. One is the need for experimental investigation. It takes, however, some philosophical acumen to see that the same need bespeaks the contingency of things or the universe. A universe which is contingent, or could have been something else, clearly bespeaks its being contingent on a free creative act of God, which is the act of creating something out of nothing.

What does all this have to do with Christ, that gigantic figure or the driving force behind the encyclical *Fides et ratio*?

By itself the dogma of creation out of nothing is not Christological. The human intellect does not need a revelation, let alone a revelation about a human being as the son of God, to glimpse the idea of creation out of nothing. The Chinese of old made that glimpse and rejected it as an absurdity. Aristotle perceived it at least three times and on each occasion dismissed it as something illogical.

Still very Christological is the special strength with which this dogma was asserted within only one of the three monotheistic religions: Jewish, Muslim and Christian. Jewish and Muslim thinkers have always shown a strong inclination toward pantheism in which there is no creation out of nothing. Think of the Muslim Averroists or of the Jewish Spinozas and Einsteins. But Christians had in their belief in the only begotten Son a firm shield against the ever present lure of pantheism. Incidentally, this lure always brings along an aprioristic and therefore

antiscientific approach to the universe.

Since the only begotten Son of God came in time, Christians, unlike Muslim and Jewish scholars, also had a strong inclination to the view that the universe began in time, which is, of course, a dogma for Christians. With all this in mind, it will be easy to understand why a medieval Christian succeeded where Jewish and Muslim students of Aristotle had by then conspicuously failed. The Christian was Johannes Buridanus, who taught natural philosophy in the Sorbonne between 1330 and 1350. As such he used Aristotle's *On the Heavens* as his textbook. In that book Aristotle repeatedly states that the universe is eternal and that the sphere of the fixed stars had been moving around since eternity and would do so forever. In coming to one such passage, Buridan not only voiced his disagreement but also offered some speculation as how physical motions could start. He wrote: "In the beginning when God made the heaven and the earth he gave a certain quantity of impetus to all celestial bodies which quantity they keep because they move in a realm in which there is no friction."

In saying this, Buridan enunciated, in substance, Newton's first law, the law of inertial motion and gave thereby science, exact science its long delayed beginning, or birth. For the fact is that by 1330 or so, science had been deprived of its beginning on several major occasions or contexts, or the context of all major ancient cultures.

For the past thirty years I have been referring to that strange pattern as the stillbirths of science. The pattern is all the more strange, because nothing may appear simpler or more obvious or conceptually more transparent than Buridan's statement or Newton's first law. It certainly appeared very plain to all medievals who read Buridan and their number was legion. Nobody contradicted him, and certainly not a Copernicus, who used Buridan's idea to explain the physical problems created when he put the earth in a twofold motion.

The rest was almost inevitable. Science was born at long last. This is not to slight the genius of Kepler, of Galileo, of Descartes. They all tried to appear very original, but they were original only to some extent. And Newton failed to see to what extent he spoke the truth when with false modesty he described himself as sitting on the shoulder of giants and therefore

able to see much farther.

Surely anyone who sits on the shoulder of giants will see much farther. But the question is how to get to the shoulder, how to be brought, to be lifted to a pedestal from where one can see much farther. Newton who did not believe in Jesus as the *monogenes* would not have believed, even if told, that the pedestal was erected by Buridan and that Buridan was enabled to do so only because his monotheism was Christian or rather Christ-centered monotheism.

Of course, nobody would have told Newton about Buridan. By then, the end of the 17th century, the terms Middle Ages and Dark Ages were already very popular. The result was a total ignorance about many important medieval achievements of which there was still some awareness early in that century, when Descartes studied in the Jesuits' college at La Flèche. Those Jesuits knew of the work of 16th-century Dominicans in Salamanca, who kept alive the tradition initiated by Buridan and Oresme.

But as I said before, Buridan could not have originated that tradition had his thinking not been anchored in belief in Christ, the only son of God, the *monogenes* of the Father. What Buridan originated was an unfolding of the total meaning of Christ being the Savior. As a Savior, Christ rescued man from his fallen status, and of some of the consequences of that status. The first of those consequences is the darkening of man's intellect.

Belief in Christ had therefore to issue in insights which fallen man could not easily perceive, let alone hang onto. Such insights were the dogma of creation out of nothing and in time. As was shown before, that dogma played a crucial part in the rise of science. Christ therefore can rightly be spoken of as the Savior of Science.

The faith generated by Jesus' birth as the Son of God who took on human nature, is the light that gave science its birth, after science had suffered several monumental stillbirths in all great ancient cultures, including Greece.

As we read in that first chapter of John's Gospel, the light generated by Christ shines in darkness, or rather the powers of darkness keep resisting it. Those powers reign in secular academia which is most reluctant to consider some facts of documented evidence, although it prides itself on respecting all and



only such evidence. I mean the enormously vast documentation which Pierre Duhem produced almost a hundred years ago about Buridan and Oresme. No wonder. In facing up to those findings spokesmen of that academia would have to face the theological roots of the thinking of Buridan and Oresme as scientists or rather philosophers of science. But then they would have to part with their own fondest dogma, namely that science is the savior of mankind. Part of that dogma is the proposition that science, this new savior, could not appear on the scene, until belief in the old Savior had been fully discredited in the minds of men. To bring about this discrediting was the chief driving force behind the French Enlightenment.

With a secular academia, which originated in that Enlightenment, Catholics would hope in vain to achieve a meeting of minds. That academia is firmly convinced that there is an irrevocable opposition between faith and science. That academia fully perceives that if one grants the broader context of Duhem's findings and work, the ground would be pulled from under the claim that science and faith are irreconcilable. For, clearly, if science owes its very birth to Christian faith, indeed to faith in Christ, science cannot really be foreign to the matrix that gave it birth in the first place.

But the issue on hand is not so much about the attitude of the secular academia to all this. The issue is whether there will be enough Catholic intellectuals ready to instruct themselves in some crucial points about science. It is, of course, most important to see the dangers of scientism, about which the encyclical speaks in its paragraph 88. About those dangers one cannot speak long enough and strongly enough. But in order to see those dangers one has to see the error that generates those dangers. The error is a mistaken interpretation of the scientific method.

About this the encyclical does not instruct us. Nor does it instruct us about the historical truth about the origin of science. An encyclical is never an encyclopedia. Even with respect to the relation of faith and reason the encyclical *Fides et ratio* could give in its 30,000 words only a sample of the vast amount of doctrine gathered on that topic during the last 2000 years. But the encyclical urged that those who read it should be ready to explore courageously

its principal pointers. This should be especially true of its principal driving force, which is the gigantic fact of the Incarnate Son of God.

Courage may mean a number of things. One is boldness. The encyclical (par. 48) explicitly refers to boldness as a requisite of really good intellectual work. But boldness, I believe, also means the kind of courage which is not afraid to voice something, however ordinary, just because the secular academia and the secular media do not want to speak of it. Courage also means the strength to resist the fashion of the day. Courage also means the firm belief that truth does not lose its value, just because it has been formulated the day before yesterday, let alone a century ago. For now almost a hundred years have gone by since Duhem glimpsed a truth, that calls for making further steps in its terms and unfolding its enormous bearing and significance.

Such truth is the light that runs from Christ to science and from science to Christ. The first part of that dynamics, that one that runs from Christ to science, was the topic of this presentation, and could touch only the bare essentials. Much could, of course, be said about the second phase of the dynamics, or the light that runs from science to Christ. Instead of light one could speak in that respect of a dark streak.

The streak is the inability of science, of the scientific method to produce moral strength for the proper use of science. This inability is the inability of fallen man to do the good perceived by his mind and moral conscience. Indeed, the fallenness of man comes starkly in view when one hears a Nobel laureate geneticist say that the science of genes is the only thing man ought to know. Against such hapless remarks there is no arguing. One can only resist such remarks. But in order to resist one needs strength, both intellectual and moral, as well as courage to use that strength.

The relation of faith, reason, and science is ultimately a moral issue. As such it takes us to the realm of wisdom, which the encyclical portrays right in its opening pages. But wisdom as such does not give us information, it gives us merely a proper appreciation of information already acquired or still to be acquired. One such piece of information in which Catholics should instruct themselves is the light, historical and speculative, that leads from Christ to science. When

that information has been truly acquired, one can, but only then, begin talking of the wisdom which science cannot deliver, but for which science clamors more loudly than ever, in this age which becomes more and more the age of scientific giants and ethical dwarfs. Let us therefore be true to our calling and stand tall when it comes time to be counted. ✠

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## Starting Points for Philosophy, History and Metaphysics in *Fides et Ratio*

by William A. Frank

*"Truth and freedom either go together hand in hand, or together they perish in misery" [90].*

*"Homo ... definiri potest ille qui veritatem quaerit"* [28].

*"Homo ... est ... ille qui vivit alteri fidens ..."* [32].

### 1.

It is common enough to think of faith and reason as opposites. By following the way of faith to truth it would appear that one must eschew reason, or alternatively, in order to follow reason, one must hold faith in abeyance. On the first page of *Fides et Ratio*, however, John Paul II pictures faith and reason as "two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth." If there is a tension between the two, it is not to be conceived as the need to forsake one because one has chosen the other, for there is a synthesizing perspective in which the two cooperate without either compromising the respective dignity and autonomy of the other. The vantage point is truth, and more especially first truths, which solicit equally the human heart's capacity for faith and reason.

By my count, the word "*veritas*" occurs 297 times in the Vatican's Latin edition of the 119 page *Fides et Ratio*. Truth is the chief object of this document. At issue is the availability of truth to reason. Philosophers have long taken stands on this question, ranging in their opinions between rationalism and skepticism. But we do not have here at hand yet another philosophical argument, and the Pope does not here speak,

as it were, as yet another participant in the great dialectic of the history of philosophy. The issues of reason and truth are considered against the background of the increasingly pervasive cultural framework of nihilism. In giving light to this document John Paul II takes on the duty of affirming the integrity of reason. "Faith ... becomes the ... advocate of reason" [56]. For the most part, reason belongs to the order of nature. But since grace builds on nature, the well-being of reason and especially its philosophy bears implications for the personal and common life in which Revelation is received and lived out.

### 2.

In ways interconnected with the dispute over the validity of faith and reason, Western thinkers have contested the relative merits of history and metaphysics as valid ways to the truth. Indeed, history and metaphysics are also often thought to be opposites. Concrete individuals and particular actions situated precisely in time and place provide the stuff of history. Metaphysical reason, however, ranges over universals. In doing so it abstracts itself from time and place. The particularities of cultures and of the historical events which are begotten in its bed are what the metaphysical impulse strives to transcend. In the 4th century B.C., Aristotle claimed that even "poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars" (1451b6-7). The classical philosophical tradition favored the philosophy of being as mankind's most

complete and adequate access to universals, first principles and causes.

Certain modern thinkers, however, as part of their critical turn to the subjective springs of consciousness and freedom, opened up the possibility for receiving history into scientific and philosophic explanation. As a decisive expression of this new beginning we could point to Giambattista Vico's (1668-1744) establishment of the formula "*Verum est factum*" in place of the scholastic "*Verum est ens*."<sup>1</sup> It signifies that philosophy will find the privileged access to first truths in the reality of human action and production.

At the end of the last century, however, Friedrich Nietzsche took issue with the broad effort among certain modern thinkers to make history into a science. Unlike the objection of the ancient Greeks, Nietzsche's quarrel with contemporary history did not turn on the partiality or particularity of its subject matter, that is to say, the culture-making contingent deeds of concrete men and women. With its elevation to the status of first philosophy, history necessarily tethers itself to a standard of truth that is absolute and universal, and this is the problem. When the scientific mentality, which carries with it the last traces of metaphysical commitment, sets the conditions for historical understanding, it effectively devalues the history's poetic and rhetorical potential for inspiring deeds of nobility, reverence or social justice. In the interests of inspiring cultural forms true to the "world-making" dignity of men and women, Nietzsche set out to raze the metaphysical structures of thought, which had taken what he thought of as their last refuge in historical understanding.<sup>2</sup> His nihilism braves a world without absolute and universal truth for the sake of the restoration of a vibrant human culture.

An interesting pattern in the relationship between philosophy and history shows itself in this brief sketch. The original establishment of a contradictory opposition between historical knowledge and philosophical understanding, with the corresponding prizing of philosophy over history, is undone for a brief period when history becomes philosophical. This negation of the original opposition is subsequently reversed, but this time, it is history that is prized over philosophy. Now, almost 100 years after

Nietzsche's death, John Paul II raises the voice of the Roman Catholic Magisterium to insist that authentic human life is threatened by the absence of metaphysics. An implication of the Pope's analysis is that healthy culture -- the making of history that accords with the dignity of the human person -- requires the active pursuit of philosophical truth. Moreover, the philosophy he enjoins is both concordant with the classical metaphysical tradition and essential to the authentic achievements of a culture's creative agents.

### 3.

Insofar as *Fides et Ratio* summons thinkers and especially philosophers to the tasks of metaphysics, it cannot be to a system of thought or a mode of inquiry that minimizes the meaning of history. If a dominant theme of the encyclical is that metaphysics matters, it is a theme that accompanies the equally strong insistence that culture and history matter. The central reality in Christian understanding is inextricably and essentially bound to history: Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, enters into history at the Incarnation. The details of Jesus's life and their meaning stretch across all of time, from its beginning to its end. It is important not to lose sight of this basic datum of faith as we investigate the nature of John Paul II's call for a return of philosophic inquiry into the classical interests of metaphysics. At the outset of these reflections I want to anticipate that our desideratum must be a metaphysics that makes room for the fundamental fact of human subjectivity, with its consciousness and freedom, which lie at the source of history and culture.

### 4.

A rather conventional narrative of the history of philosophy provides a framework for John Paul II's concern for philosophy. The main lines of the development run as follows. An original age of myth is displaced by the discovery of philosophy by the ancient Greeks. The later appropriation of Greek philosophy within the structures of Christian thought began in the patristic age. Regarding the speculations of the early fathers and doctors: "... theirs was the task of showing how reason, freed from external constraints, could find its way out of



the blind alley of myth and open itself to the transcendent in a more appropriate way. Purified and rightly tuned, therefore, reason could rise to the higher planes of thought, providing a solid foundation for the perception of being, of the transcendent and of the absolute.” [41] The process culminated in the 13th century with the fashioning of a unity of philosophy and Revelation, epitomized in the achievement of Thomas Aquinas. Regarding Aquinas’s achievement: He forged “a reconciliation between the secularity of the world and the radicality of the Gospel, thus avoiding the unnatural tendency to negate the world and its values while at the same time keeping faith with the supreme and inexorable demands of the supernatural order” [43]. This complex synthesis was subsequently weakened to the point of separation during the time of the Reformation and early modernity. The ensuing rationalism eventually led to what is the current dominant philosophical position, namely, nihilism. In sum, there are six ages: myth, ancient Greek philosophy, a synthesis of Revelation and philosophy, a separation of Revelation and philosophy, rationalism, and finally, nihilism. What is played out differently in each stage of the narrative is the configuration of the relationship between faith and reason and the evaluation of the significance of transcendent reality in the understanding of the meaning of human existence. Of special concern are the summary accounts of rationalism and nihilism.

## 5.

Contemporary nihilism has sprung from the ruins of rationalism. Rationalism played itself out in various phases of development: idealism, atheistic humanism, and positivism. Idealism tries to transform the faith into the play of dialectical forces that can be grasped by reason. Is this not the Hegelian move? Atheistic humanism regards faith as an alienation of men and women from their true selves and as a diversion from the full development of rationality. In a positive vein, Marxism presents itself as a secular “religion,” with hope in the future, even if strictly immanent, to serve as the basis for grand political, social, and cultural projects. The resulting totalitarian systems proved to

be disasters for humanity. Positivism, especially in the form of scientism, rejects every appeal to a metaphysical or moral vision. It easily aligns itself with the cult of technological power and progress. These internal developments within rationalism develop forms of reason which restrict its commitments to the necessities of historical and immanent reality. Yet there abides in rationalism a commitment to reason as an autonomous faculty sufficient for the achievement of human purposes. Progress is a real goal, and mankind will achieve it with the proper use of his reason. Despite the long run of humanistic optimism, the fact remains that rationalism no longer exercises so firm a grip on the intellectual foundation of contemporary culture. The reasons for its decline are two. On the theoretical level, rationalism failed to answer the charge of “the baselessness of [its] demand that reason be absolutely self-grounded” [91]. More importantly, on the practical and historical level, the reality of promised progress has fallen profoundly short of mankind’s persistent needs and desires. One cannot avoid the suspicion that rationalism’s calibration of the goods of human life and of the means to them is fatally flawed. Nihilistic strains of thought have been one reaction to the discrediting of the rationalist faith. It is a response that “has been justified in a sense by the terrible experience of evil which has marked our age. Such a dramatic experience has ensured the collapse of rationalist optimism, which viewed history as the triumphant progress of reason, the source of all happiness and freedom ...” [91].

## 6.

So what is nihilism? It does not seem to be philosophy in a strict sense, for it represents neither a philosophical system nor a particular mode of inquiry. It appears rather to signify a concurrence or syndrome of traits that accept a common challenge, a kind of consortium of commitments. As a first distinguishing character, let us note that it is theoretically negative. *Fides et Ratio* refers to it as “the common framework of many philosophies which have rejected the meaningfulness of the philosophy of being” [90]. As such it rejects all claims of the human intellect to receive the objective structure or form of

things. In effect, nihilism denies the reality of essences, the possibility of transcendence, and any objectivity to truth. A second defining note is its reactionary quality. The point here is that nihilism inhabits cultural space left empty with the abandonment of commitments to rationalism and to the various forms of fideism that had nipped at its heels. A third distinctive feature is the assumption on the part of the nihilist of various deep personal attitudes toward life. John Paul II identifies a pervasive despair or hopeless solitude [90], to which I would add postures of profound indifference, ironic detachment, and existential bafflement.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the core idea of nihilism can be summed up in the expression, the absolute meaninglessness of human life. This idea allows of two possible interpretations. The first is that life is simply meaningless. In a second interpretation, life might well prove meaningful, but only on a relativized scale, with no objective, cosmic or theistic support for human existence. On the Anglo-American scene, Richard Rorty has been one of the more effective voices within the last decade on behalf of the banishment of metaphysics from culture and enlightened human consciousness. In his *Contingency, irony, and solidarity*<sup>4</sup> he insists that his kind of thinker, whom he calls an "ironist," is a soul who happily trades Truth for Freedom (xiii), who takes satisfaction in accepting the radical "contingency of his or her own most central beliefs and desires," which have no foundation "beyond the reach of time and chance."<sup>5</sup> In his account, the ironic character need not be either destructive or hopelessly solitary. Indeed, it is the burden of his book to show that it is only the metaphysical nihilist who can fashion cultures of solidarity. Presumably where there is objective truth, then there is inevitably the cruelty of exploitation and alienation, for there then is the justified basis for conforming will and intellect to something other than what is freely chosen. In the absence of rational inquiry that leads to objective truth, Rorty's ironist fashions a meaningful world by virtue of the rhetoric of art. What is wanted in order to have a common world and standards of conduct is consensus.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, who would deny the practical importance of consensus achieved by rhetoric? And how much the better if the rhetorician is a poet! On the other

hand, dare we endorse a culture in which such a consensus is the final appeal? Why is it not a confusion to identify consent with truth? Moreover, does "right" really come down to the power of appeal?

## 7.

The forgoing set of questions expresses unease at nihilism's widespread "re-interpretation" of truth. It is useful to dwell a moment on the significance of the effort to establish the primacy of rhetoric. John Paul II seems acutely aware of the stakes in the displacement of metaphysics by rhetoric. The fate of truth in this nihilist revaluation of reason and its proper objects becomes evident if we take, for instance, Rorty's idea that truth is what results from a free and open encounter. He does not mean that some preceding discourse has led to a shared insight into a common reality, but rather "we simply call 'true' whatever the upshot of such encounters turns out to be."<sup>7</sup> Truth is the artifact of consensus. Suffice it to say that for Rorty human beings have no nature: "... my sort of philosopher wants to get rid of ... the idea that the world or the self has an intrinsic nature."<sup>8</sup> Humans are what they have created themselves to be. Because this self-creation is a function of language, men and women are "incarnated vocabularies."<sup>9</sup> In the larger picture, society is knit together out of shared vocabularies and shared hopes.<sup>10</sup> Hence rhetoric is of the first importance. Speech is first, not because it discloses foundational realities, for there are no foundations. It is first because by its descriptions it creates mankind and its desires, and it establishes shared sentiments.<sup>11</sup> Rhetoric is first, because it is the power to convert our desires into truth.

Richard Rorty merely adjusts the Nietzschean project. Yet whereas Nietzsche was an obscure intellectual, little read and hardly known until a couple of decades after his death, Rorty is today one of the intellectual "stars" in North America and Europe. In our historical situation we are fast becoming a world whose dominant cultures are determined by the absence of universal values. Nihilism is now conventional. It is in this context that *Fides et Ratio* insists that the eclipse of metaphysics is an important sign of

our times. Permit me to dwell a moment on the idea which concluded the last paragraph. We ended with the idea of subordinating truth to power. It is the old idea that might makes right. At critical moments in the past, philosophy has suppressed the nihilist temptation. Recall, for example, how Socrates contrives his "Republic" in answer to Thrasymachus's claim that justice, or for that matter, truth is what is advantageous to those who have power. Or consider the alternatives Augustine puts before himself in his *Confessions*: whether to make one's self love what is true, or instead make to be true what one loves.<sup>12</sup> Or finally, consider how Cartesian reason answers to the challenge of the skeptical libertinism of his day. The general point is this. It is a perennial task of our intellectual and spiritual culture to establish the legitimacy of the claim of truth upon the minds and hearts of men and women independently of the undeniable personal interests of power. Since the demise of the age of myth, reason and faith, philosophy and Revelation, in some combination, have conspired to give men and women an obedient ear to the voice of truth. Earlier I had said that nihilism could be summed up as the absolute meaninglessness of human existence. It might just as well be expressed as the denial of the legitimacy of any claims made on behalf of objective truth to check the interests of power.

In a commentary on the 1987 encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, the Italian philosopher Augusto Del Noce fixed his attention on the analysis of the governing moral or spiritual ethos that erects obstacles in the way of the humane development of peoples throughout the world. The critical obstacle, he said, was "the thirst for power, with the intention of imposing one's will upon others ... at any price."<sup>13</sup> Now the interesting thing is that only two sorts of things will check actions governed by a will to power. The first is a more powerful agent: power checks power. On a large scale this checking can be seen as the deployment of crass totalitarian power or equally well in the softer but effective utilitarian calculus of the unfettered appeal to the full range of human desires. What matters is that the will of agents is neither guided nor checked by values that transcend the material or egoist interests of pleasure, wealth, status, or power. Actions are not decisively

measured by a regard for the intrinsic worth or dignity of other persons. The second sort of check on power is the willing adherence to the truths that are not relativized by being subordinated to ulterior interests of pleasure, wealth, status, or power. If we say that the springs of the acting person are the interior powers of intellect and will, then the decisive question becomes whether they are ordered to proper objects which transcend the partiality and contingency of material reality. Are there spiritual realities that constitute an achievable common good? Is it not part of human dignity that the recognition of absolute and universal truths can move us to check our exercise of power? Imagine a global field in which the destinies of billions of human beings are being played out in a contest pitting power against power with no overarching reference point acknowledged by the various agents in this history-in-the-making. Such a vision provides the matrix for John Paul II's earlier *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. What becomes of humanity if there is no truth to check power? It was the same question in *Evangelium Vitae*. This query also informs the discussion of *Fides et Ratio*. It makes sense of our opening epigram: "Truth and freedom go together hand in hand, or together they perish in misery" [90]. The connection is simply made: The moral crisis of the contemporary world is metaphysical. *Fides et Ratio* issues a call to theologians and philosophers alike to return to metaphysics. The contemporary "epoch of secularization"<sup>14</sup> is characterized by the "denial of absolute and immaterial values."

## 8.

**A** bird with one wing clipped cannot fly. True to the encyclical's opening image, therefore, if the human spirit lifts itself to the contemplation of truth by means of its two wings, reason and faith, then a person's spiritual reach will fall short of the mark when reason is clipped, regardless of how vigorous one's faith might be. And so it is, however ironic, that in *Fides et Ratio* it is the voice of Revelation that "affirms the human capacity for metaphysical inquiry," that insists in the circumstance of our time on the possibility for "reason ... [to] reach beyond sensory data to the origin of all things ..." [22].



John Paul II outlines three requirements for a philosophy that would be consonant with the datum of Revelation. It must be sapiential; that is, it must take up "the search for the ultimate and overarching meaning of life" [81]. Secondly, it must be realist in the sense that it is committed to the "human capacity ... to come to a knowledge which can reach objective truth by means of ... *adaequatio rei et intellectus*" [82]. Finally, it must be metaphysical [83]. In speaking of metaphysics, John Paul II insists he only means "to state that reality and truth do transcend the factual and empirical, and to vindicate the human being's capacity to know this transcendent and metaphysical dimension in a way that is true and certain, albeit imperfect and analogical" [83].

What are the salient characteristics of a philosophy of being consonant with an ample understanding of reason? Within the Pope's letter there is a refrain insisting that human reason must not stop short of what is universal and absolute in its search for knowledge. The first attribute, universality, signifies that reality and intelligibility are not limited to what is material or available only perceptually or empirically. In addition, it signifies that there is a communicable quality to reality that grounds an intelligibility that is common to many particular individual entities.<sup>15</sup> The second attribute, absoluteness, signifies that rational inquiry rightly seeks a completeness and finality to its efforts. "Beyond this universality, ...people seek an absolute ... something ultimate ... the ground of all things .... [T]hey seek a final explanation, a supreme value, which refers to nothing beyond itself and which puts an end to all questioning." [27] The point can be put this way. It is the nature of reason to put questions to reality. For a variety of reasons, many answers generate further questions. Metaphysics, however, develops a level of questioning that is finally answered only by what is unquestionable, undeniable. Indeed, truth in its deepest intention is precisely this: the undeniability of reality's answer to the most basic questions. I speak now of the undeniability of being.<sup>16</sup> The finality of its answer is what transforms the provocative wonder at the beginning of philosophy into the admiration of contemplation at its end. The point here is that reason's achievement is complete in its consonance with absolute being. But, of course, this

ideal of an absolute truth is just what is rejected in nihilism. Nevertheless, undeniability there will be; it is inevitable in human affairs. The critical issue is whether it will derive from power or from truth?<sup>17</sup>

## 9.

In *Fides et Ratio* John Paul II seems to say that nihilism must be defeated on the field of philosophy. The authority of Revelation can encourage, direct and certify, but it cannot substitute for philosophy. But why does this demand for a more confident, robust, and specifically metaphysical philosophy not simply signify the return to rationalism? Was there something final in its supercession? If the defeat of nihilism does not return us to rationalism, is it then a call to come home to a golden age of an even earlier intellectual tradition? Consideration of these questions will bring us back to the question of history, or at least to its sources in the human heart. I believe it would be a mistake simply to read this encyclical in a reactionary or traditionalist manner. The exhortation to metaphysics is also meant to be an advance of it. Let me explain the terms upon which John Paul II proposes that philosophers begin the reestablishment of metaphysical reason.

If reason is to flourish in a new era for metaphysics, it must begin with two obvious and universal facts of human experience, with what John Paul II calls fundamental data of philosophy [30]. These two initial principles are not mere beginnings, which cease to endure once the start is given. Rather, they are origins at the center of human subjectivity that sustain all human endeavor. The first datum is that human beings are by definition seekers of truth [28].<sup>18</sup> "The search for truth is so rooted in the human heart that to be obliged to ignore it would cast our existence in jeopardy"[29]. Notwithstanding evident qualifications such as natural limitations of human reason, inconstancy of the heart, overflow of other pressing concerns, or avoidance, for fear of truth's demands, the definition remains valid, for life is grounded in truth [28]. Doubt, uncertainty, deceit - these will not sustain life at the level of foundations. Fear and anxiety will govern to the degree that doubt, uncertainty, and deceit condition all judgment of what is and what should be done.<sup>19</sup>

The second datum of philosophy is that human

beings are creatures who live in trusting others [31]. The idea of an absolute personal autonomy in human affairs is simply a myth. It is not a fact, nor is it an ideal.<sup>20</sup> An essentially social existence structures the way men and women have the truth as an ingredient in life. John Paul II offers a few observations to give the claim some *prima facie* plausibility. For example, the first stages of education give a range of truths believed almost instinctively. This datum is of a piece with the acquisition of a language and the early elements of cultural formation. A second stage of personal growth typically involves a calling into question and a critical evaluation of a number of these inherited beliefs. Still, at every moment of life we live in virtue of more truths than we could ever personally verify. Among these beliefs are scientific findings, news and information, paths of experience that have yielded the treasures of human wisdom and religion. This element of trust or belief, of living and knowing in communion with others, is not only substitutional. It cannot be reduced to a temporary mediation to be eventually dispensed with. Trust adds its own intrinsic good to personal existence, for "it involves an interpersonal relationship and brings into play ... the capacity to entrust oneself to others, to enter into a relationship with them which is intimate and enduring" [32]. The interesting point in all this is that we find ourselves shifting from a consideration of the objective content of truths possessed to the mode of possessing them. The move is not an exercise in withdrawing from objective reality. To the contrary, it reveals that the act of believing -- so universal to human life -- is an essential "truth of the person -- what the person is and what the person reveals from deep within." And what is this truth of the person? It shows that human perfection consists in "a dynamic relationship of self-giving and fidelity ... [in which] a person finds a fullness of certainty and security" [32].

Nearly two and a half millennia ago Aristotle launched his *Metaphysics* with the idea that the human person is essentially a seeker of truth.<sup>21</sup> A philosophy that would resist the contemporary nihilist temptation must recover and carry through on this classical starting point. Yet it will also proceed from the equally essential fact that human life is a network of trusting relationships. The remarkable point that I think John

Paul II wants to make would be missed if we think he only calls our attention to a necessary condition of our social nature. He means much more. His idea is that the meaning of truth itself lies implicitly in the reality of these relationships. A first truth of metaphysics is intrinsic to and expressive of personal relationships at the origin of human experience. Whereas Aristotle's elaboration of the first datum of philosophy led him to the solitary self-sufficiency of Self-thinking Thought, we would not be surprised to find that the implications of its second datum point to a foundational exemplar for the communion that is intrinsic to our earliest encounters with truth.

## 10.

**T**he two original data of philosophy participate analogously in a common form. Each of the principles, "Man can be defined as he who seeks the truth (*Homo ... definiri potest ille qui veritatem quaerit*)" [28] and "Man is he who lives in trusting others (*Homo ... est ... ille qui vivit alteri fidens*)," [32] has a core notion that involves an intrinsic orientation toward others -- other things and other selves. In the process of acting through on these orientations, individual persons extend themselves both horizontally and vertically. Being human through having truth entails both solidarity and transcendence.<sup>22</sup> Insofar as metaphysical understanding develops along these lines, there will be no tendency to return to the models of personal or rational autonomy and immanence in rationalism. Just as importantly, it will validate the place for what is novel and creative, for world-making, a dimension of consciousness and freedom that cheerful nihilism capitalizes upon. Finally, it will confidently allay the deepest fears of estrangement that give nihilism its bedrock credibility. The first practical step forward, however, is to take heart in reason, its capacities and conditions.

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## NOTES

1 See Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, tr. J. R. Foster (N.Y.: Crossroad, 1988), pp. 30-39; also his *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, tr. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987), pp. 153-92.

2 Nietzsche's quip, "*fiat veritas; pereat vita*," succinctly expresses what he believes to be the thanatotic ethos of the metaphysical world-view; see *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, §4.

3 This point is observed by Robert G. Olsen, s.v. "Nihilism" in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (N.Y.: Macmillan and London: Collier, 1967).

4 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

5 p. xv. Here belief and action are totally estranged from any requirement of truth or being that is absolute and universal. As Rorty put it in another passage, "the fundamental premise . . . is that a belief can still regulate action, can still be thought worth dying for, among people who are quite aware that this belief is caused by nothing deeper than contingent historical circumstance" (p. 189).

6 What is fundamental in belief and action is a function of one's "historically contingent final vocabulary" (p. 192). Such vocabularies are forged and communicated through the art forms, especially the literature, of one's culture. They are effective insofar as their public consent to the descriptions and sentiments they endorse. For instance, the identity of one's self with others that is part of solidarity is not a task "for theory but for genres such as ethnography, the journalist's report, the comic book, the docudrama, and, especially, the novel" (p. xvi). It is important to see that Rorty is saying more than that the rhetoric of art is an indispensable aid to the making of culture and the forming of an active personality. He thinks there is no valid appeal beyond such ways of speaking.

7 *Contingency*, 52. See my "Controversy in the Philosopher's Academy," *Modern Age* 34 (1992): 155-64, esp. pp. 159-60.

8 *Contingency*, 8.

9 *Contingency*, 88.

10 *Contingency*, 86.

11 *Contingency*: "Interesting philosophy is rarely an examination of the pros and cons of a thesis. Usually it is implicitly or explicitly, a contest between an entrenched vocabulary which has become a nuisance and a half-formed new vocabulary which vaguely promised great things" (p. 9). "... the sort of philosophers who are interested in dissolving inherited problems rather than solving them. In this view, substituting dialectic for demonstration as the method of philosophy, or getting rid of the correspondence theory of truth, is not a discovery about the nature of a preexistent entity called 'philosophy' or 'truth.' It is changing the way we talk, and thereby changing what we want to do and what we think we are" (p. 20).

12 Bk. 10, ch. 23.

13 *Thirty Days*, April 1, 1988, pp. 39-40.

14 Del Noce's expression. See chap. seven on the irreligion of the West, in Rocco Buttiglione's *Augusto Del Noce*. Biografia di un pensiero (Casale Nonferrato: Piemme, 1991), pp. 203-25.

15 "Every truth - if it is really truth - presents itself as universal .... true for all people and all times."

16 The principle of non-contradiction serves as an example of an absolute truth of being. Aristotle's treatment of it in *Metaphysics* Bk. 4, ch. 3-4 illustrates the sense in we speak about being's "undeniability."

17 The contemporary Italian philosopher Emanuele Severino has suggested that contemporary thought is a return to the age of myth, in the sense that the world is asked to conform to our projects. We have become the measure of truth -- of what shall be and of what is good. In effect we have become the gods whose velleties determine the world and the obligations it makes upon others. In his long view of the history of philosophy, he characterizes our contemporary age "as a return to myth, and philosophy [which began with the ancient Greeks] is a parenthesis in the long history of myth. A parenthesis which nevertheless has determined the forms of our civilization ...." *La filosofia antica* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1990), p. 32.

18 The thesis is developed in sections 24-30.

19 That life simply requires its certitudes is one reason that undeniability will inevitably assert itself in human affairs. At any given time in every culture some things will simply go unquestioned because that's the way things are. It is also the case that some questions will be answered with a finality tied to the duration of a given era in a given culture. The important question is whether questioning comes to rest in the encounter with absolute Truth or in the assertion of human will.

20 Consider the idea itself. Why is it attractive? Is it so clear that autonomy is better than mutuality. I am reminded of a moment in the very first question of Duns Scotus's *Ordinatio* where the spokesman for philosophy has objected that the theologian demeans reason by asserting that it is capable of a kind of knowledge for which nature is not the adequate cause. Almost matter-of-factly, Scotus remarks that it is not surprising "that some nature has the ability to receive a perfection greater than that which lies within the reach of its own active causality." Moreover, "nature in this regard is honored even more than if one were to claim that the highest possible perfection it could receive is that which is naturally [i.e., autonomously] attainable." (*Ordinatio* Prologue, p. 1, q. un. n. 75; Vat 1: 45-46).

21 *Metaphysics*, 980a22.

22 See John Crosby, *Selfhood of the Human Person* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996) for an exacting philosophical analysis of these lines of thought.



# On Defining “Vertical” and “Horizontal” Language

by Donald Dwight Hook

Without suggesting that God’s power to communicate can be limited by anything man proposes, I nevertheless first raise the question whether we would have any religion, any theology, be able to worship, without the power of language. After all, language and religion are inherently important segments of culture that are transferred, communicated, or passed along in and through generations. All features of a given culture are interlinked, and any feature that is largely transcendent, such as religion, has its grounding in language. Although there may be a linguistic universal at work here, applying to all religions, my remarks will be focused on Christianity and the English language and, more specifically, on the two new theolinguistic terms, “vertical” and “horizontal” language, which I first heard mentioned in 1996 by several colleagues in the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars.

The beginnings of human speech are so buried in the obscurity of the far distant past that it is unlikely we will ever be able to determine when, and exactly how, this event or these events took place. There are, of course, theories, and some have foolish-sounding names, such as the bow-wow (or echoic), the pooh-pooh (or interjectional), the ding-dong (harmonious response), and the yo-heave-ho (group work) theories, all of which can be found described in a good encyclopedia or basic linguistics textbook, but none of which constitutes any scientific explanation.

One can also read about Otto Jespersen’s hypothesis that emotional songs were the germs of speech, or Richard Paget’s gesture theory, or even divine fiat. Speculation about the presence of a single original source language is known as monogenesis, that of multiple source languages merging more or less simultaneously in several places, as polygenesis. There is also the view that language originated from a common source but that this may have been only one line

of descent, the others, as independent languages, having disappeared at a very early stage.

The fact is, there is no satisfactory explanation. Language is a social phenomenon that apparently developed out of society when there was very little society as we understand it. The best we can do is to imagine a band of pre-humans possessed of a stock of grammatically unstructured vocal signals not unlike gibbon calls. From time to time a new call would be produced, built from parts of two old, frequently used calls by the process of blending. At first these new calls would not be comprehended, but occasionally they would be effective, so that, in time, the new calls would be adopted as new items of “vocabulary.”

It has also been argued in the last several decades, particularly by anthropologists, that language could have evolved out of a system of hand gestures and been only subsequently associated with vocalization, rather than having developed directly from what we think was probably initially a limited set of mammalian vocal signals.

Let there be no doubt, however, that the gap between human language and the “communication systems” of the most “man-like” primates remains vast. Let it also be said that human beings spoke, communicated, in some rudimentary fashion, before we had religion as such, and certainly long before any of the world’s theologians propounded systematic studies.

Considering the age of our planet and the history of the existence of life on it, human language seems to be a very recent phenomenon originating scarcely more than 50,000 years ago, give or take a few millennia. But determining more precisely when human beings began to speak, and under what circumstances, is admittedly largely guesswork. What we can confidently surmise is that the origin of speech is the result of evolution and is linked primarily to the increase and differentiation of brain size and shape of head. As for writing, the most rudimentary symbols probably did not appear until around the 9th millen-

nium B.C., and they hardly constituted writing as we have known it for the last 5000 to 6000 years.

Given the problems just laid out— and they are not the only ones facing researchers— how can one possibly talk theologically nowadays about “vertical” language, that is, communication with God, as opposed to “horizontal” language, or communication with humans, when not even the origin of human language is understood, and when linguistic scholars seemingly reject divine fiat even more readily than those playful-sounding theories mentioned above?

In fact, the distinction between “vertical” and “horizontal” language is often confused and unclear. For many people the first term connotes something controversial and distinctive, whereas the second strikes them as neutral and harmless. The distinction actually turns about the use, in English, of alleged archaic, obsolete, and obsolescent vocabulary and forms, and “modern” or current, general, non-elevated speech, particularly when the latter contains politically correct grammatical appeasements to female persons.

Probably few people would argue that God cannot hear both types of speech. Furthermore, it would seem that the so-called inclusive language is another kind of horizontal language after all, even, say, when the drastic alterations in the designation of the Trinity are made in an effort to explain God to himself and to man, and to palliate the “patriarchy” of Christianity for the sake of female persons. (“Exclusive” is usually employed by feminists to denote natural language which, they claim, “excludes” female persons in generic usages.) For feminists, vertical language is merely that remnant of barely tolerated archaisms and imagined linguistic affronts to women which is used exclusively in prayer and liturgy directed at God. The one major exception is the “old-fashioned” language of the Our Father, for despite repeated attempts to change the words, the worshiping public has largely steadfastly resisted, so deeply enmeshed in the structure of society is linguistic selection. At every moment, though, horizontal language in its “inclusive” form stands ready to make substitutions for every allegedly unclear or “unfair” word, form or phrase. Of course, the Bible has undergone scrutiny as to its political correctness. Susan J. Benofy and Helen Hull Hitchcock have stated that in some news accounts of

recent Vatican meetings, the participants agreed on the need for “moderate, balanced use of horizontal inclusive language.”

Vertical, or religious, language, as understood by most non-feminist scholars, is something more than a collection of archaisms and other expressions allegedly injurious to women’s emotional welfare. Religious language is rather like literary language, with a heavy aesthetic component. It may be verbally and non-verbally communicative, performative, by effecting what it signifies, and metaphorical, by creating a tension between the literal and the poetic.

However, there may be a better way of sorting out verticality of language from horizontality of language. *Register* is a term used in applied linguistics to indicate the uses to which a language is put— informative, occupational, emotive. Under “emotive,” we can understand a religious component. Each register employs a typical range of grammatical patterns and lexical items, though not to the exclusion of all others. For example, in scientific writing there is a prevailing impersonal cast that avoids the first-person singular pronoun; in business texts one encounters a particular jargon; in the specialized languages of medicine, the law, and engineering, many unfamiliar and little-used terms appear; in recipe writing there is a heavy use of the imperative; in politics many euphemisms and loaded words; in baby talk, that is, speech addressed to human babies and sometimes also to domestic pets, we expected simple syntax and very limited vocabulary.

There are a number of varieties or registers involving not only ritual and liturgy, but also the [more or less] formal levels of language in homilies and Scripture as well as in stated doctrines. The very existence of different registers for different occasions coupled with levels of usage that are more or less familiar makes the imposition of everyday, overly familiar language in a religious context awkward and undesirable to many people.

Just as the down-home dialect some people speak among intimates has a reduced coinage in the business and professional world, “simplified, up-to-date” liturgical language often too drastically differs from the expected, “more proper” religious register. Intersperse the current feminist neologisms of political correctness into the matrix, and the English of either the vertical or horizontal variety loses its

necessarily distinctive, predictable character. In other words, to impose, for example, excessively pious speech on the general public would be unacceptable, just as insistence upon the use of jargon and swearing is unrealistic.

Religious language and inclusive language, to the extent that the latter exists at all in the minds of most native speakers of English, are two separate registers, or fields of discourse, and they are not interchangeable. More emphatically: The two registers, like province and domain— which, respectively, identify an utterance with a variable referring to some occupational activity or define a cluster of social situations constrained by a common set of behavioral rules— do not constitute merely different lexical fields of the same conceptual field but at different periods; they are separate. Inclusivists wish to convey the notion that language engineering is possible and desirable and that any resulting changes are unrelated to wider linguistic and theological problems than those that might be envisioned beyond political concerns. They intend that their ideal English, reconstructed theoretically along preconceived ideas of linguistic “equality” with males, be the only available English for use under all circumstances whatsoever, even in very specific fields such as religion, mathematics, mechanics, among many others. Instead of striving for the fullest possible “mere” register, feminists have been attempting for decades to create out of a register a new, standard English. Probably to their own amazement, even those who should know better, and should react strongly, such as theologians, frequently lend their unwitting political support.

In Finn’s and Shellman’s *Shaping English Liturgy* it is revealed in several places that the staff of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), the group that gets the credit or the blame for most English-language liturgical texts since Vatican II, and used also by many non-Catholic churches, admits promoting, in defiance of the Vatican, and with the tacit or implicit approval of the American Catholic bishops, isolated alterations to ICEL’s original translations for the purpose of rendering them “more inclusive.” Sometimes these changes were opposed at a high level, but the staff persisted in pushing its own political views without regard to, or knowledge of, the theological implications.

Religious language invites a “macro” or “top-

down” approach instead of the “bottom up” or “micro” approach so favored by those seeking to engineer language changes. It encourages a look at the whole picture of worship, not at the details, usually a job for the theologians, and, we hope, the linguists. The style of religious language is less descriptive than critical. It makes value judgments within the realm of aesthetics. It is elevated in form and content. Secular, or horizontal, language may be elevated in content, but its form will inevitably approach the banal, the main reason the new, doctored liturgies lack majesty.

Quite a few paradigms can be constructed showing a spectrum extending from secular/inclusive (“horizontal”) language through some middle territory (aesthetic/imaginative) to religious (“vertical”) language— or the reverse. For some religionists, the extremes at either end of the spectrum may seem bizarre. For example:

*Horizontal Language:* Jesus’ mother\* Mary\* the Virgin Mary\* St. Mary\* The Blessed Virgin Mary\* Mary, Mother of God\* Co-redemptrix: *Vertical Language*

*Horizontal Language:* Our (the) Parent \*Our Mother and Father \* God \* God the (Our) Father \* Lord: *Vertical Language*

*Horizontal Language:* It \*She \* She or He \* He or She \* He: *Vertical Language*

*Horizontal Language:* You \* Thou, etc.: (some) *Vertical Language*

*Horizontal Language:* (complete avoidance of the phrase)\* sisters and brothers \* brothers and sisters \* brethren: *Vertical Language*

What I am suggesting here is close to but distinct from the “ago” continuum constructed by G.N. Leech, in his *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, in which there is a gradual move from the mundane outward to the extreme edges of language, the meaning all the while becoming less obviously clear:

*Mundane Language:* several hours ago> many moons ago> ten games ago> several performances ago> a few cigarettes ago> three overcoats ago> two wives ago> a grief ago (Dylan Thomas)> a humanity ago: *Abnormal Language*

Here a progression away from the literal to a metaphorical, or even bizarre, meaning is obvious.



But where such deviancy of meaning can lead, say, the reader of poetry to despair, for the *writer* of poetry it is a personal kind of expression of great clarity. In other words, as Paul van Buren explains, such continua finally reach a point of little or no sense, causing the poet or reader to “fall off the edge,” as it were, into the abyss of non-comprehension.

Theologians, like poets, are most susceptible to this linguistic end in their constant attempt to say what cannot be said, contends linguist David Crystal. Maybe, but it is only in plunging deep beyond the mundane and obvious that we can make “vertical” linguistic connection with God. Man’s language is not God’s language. Horizontal language is mundane language; vertical language is abnormal language. The more we attempt to clarify God and His relationship to us through horizontal language, the farther we recede from His presence. Think of speech vs. meditation, contemporary music vs. chant, writing a check vs. writing a prayer, the profane vs. the sacred.

I daresay no linguistic scientist takes seriously the story of the Tower of Babel as representing a portion of the history of human language development, let alone the origin of “God language,” but maybe, just maybe, there are a few clues explaining, at least for some believers, the true relationship between horizontal and vertical language.

Let us review quickly the story in Genesis 11:1-9 about the origin of different languages, a subject that has fascinated people for ages, causing various tribes and nations to create myths that provide plausible explanations for the religious believer. The Israelites for one saw the differences in language as originating with the building of the city of Babylon, to which is connected the Hebrew word *Babel*, or “gate of God,” and in which were to be found numerous *ziggurats*, or temple-towers reaching high into the sky. Mixed with that notion was a bit of Mesopotamian theology that maintained that the true home of the gods was high up on a mountain to the north of Babylon. For this reason all the temples had tall towers that reminded people of the gods’ residences.

The construction of the Tower of Babel, as reported in Genesis, can be interpreted as a brash attempt to assail the home of Jehovah, although the reason is ostensibly that the people not be “scattered all over the earth” but rather have a rallying spot. God is supposedly alarmed at this potential invasion of His

privileges and takes severe defensive measures, confounding their speech. God recognizes immediately that he must linguistically deunify these overly prideful people if he is to thwart their approach to Him.

There are, of course, other interpretations. Maybe the basic message is that God is indeed approachable up to a point by means of human language. We can even induce Him to act, perhaps not always favorably to our point of view, through unified speech that is religious and constant. The alteration or proliferation of our linguistic means may bring about rejection and confusion. The implication is that our *participation* in salvation is dependent on language, not our salvation as such. As I have argued elsewhere, for Christians the link between the transcendent and the immanent, God and man, is the Logos, *both* God and man, and the vehicle is language.

Is perhaps the Genesis story a foundation for the need for the Logos? By choosing logocentrism to guarantee univocal identity, or presence, as contrasted with the analogical and the negative or equivocal way, I reject Derrida and the Yale deconstructionists’ condemnation of logocentrism as illusory, not closed. But it is not necessary to hang on to univocal language as the only proper cognitive language. Whereas truth-embodied “scientific language” always stands to be corrected if found wrong at a later time, “religious truth” involves a whole range of issues extending from the history of the Judeo-Christian tradition to the possibility of an event occurring beyond the space-time continuum. Theolinguistics can clarify religious beliefs and practices by appealing to grammar, historical linguistics, church history, creeds of councils, bulls and encyclicals, the magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church (and similar authorities in other communions), doctors of theology, and, of course, the sacred Scriptures, missals and sacramentaries. Nevertheless, rationalism has its limits and is helpless to deal with a mysterium, which requires the grace of faith. Christ said, “The truth shall make you free.” The creation narrative in Genesis, the working of the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the Death and Resurrection of Christ all belong to the category of the mysterium, of a realm beyond thought and expression, containing a difference, a mystery. Thus, “God-talk” involves the three main categories of theological discourse, magisterial discourse, and mystical discourse.

What does it mean to speak man's language to God, and how is God's understanding different from one's fellowman's? Does God's understanding, like that of a faithful spouse who sometimes knows what his or her mate is thinking, go well beyond simply a Tower of Babel interpretation/ translation problem?

The third question is easier to answer than the other two if we consider that God is, by many definitions, all-knowing and all-powerful: So, yes, we have to assume God's understanding goes beyond all our comprehension. The answer to the second question follows from that to the third, but implies the specific extent of understanding: the breadth, depth, and height.

The first question gets at the crux of the matter. This question implies a man-to-God direction, whereas the other two betoken a message from God in the direction of man. This presumably voluntary latter message may take commentary form, be perceived as a command, or be a call to some sort of ministerial or missionary service. Because God cannot be limited in his actions, we cannot be sure whether God's message to us is self-initiating on his part and not a response to a request of ours if we do not first explicitly make that request or comment to God. We often cannot recognize God's message or call to us, and we just as often resist it if we have not articulated a request on the subject for his reaction.

To put the problem in everyday perspective, we can make a very rough comparison with trying to *understand* a foreign language when spoken, as opposed to *expressing* verbally, however inadequately, one's needs in that foreign language. In other words, even though one may not be fluent in a particular foreign language, it is easier to express one's rudimentary needs in that language than to understand the fluent speaker who addresses one or responds to one's questions or observations. This is the well-known danger of, for example, saying "hello" or asking directions in a language one knows only imperfectly; a flood of completely unexpected, barely understood words is liable to constitute the response! Instead of learning, as the phrase book indicated, that the railroad station is "just around the corner," the inquirer may well not understand the message that "the railroad station is no longer on this street; it was blown up in the war."

When speaking, the speaker is in control; when

listening, that same speaker, if he is not a fluent speaker of language, must first determine what code, i.e. what language, is being employed and adjust himself to the speaker's speed, dialect, idiolect, control of grammar, outside noise conditions, and other distractions. The resulting frustration often leads to the abandonment of all effort to speak the foreign language and helplessly resorting to one's own language in a louder, more insistent voice. Isn't that somewhat like what we do in our prayer life when we can't understand God's message?

So, how can we transmit our thoughts and desires and, at the same time, obtain assurance of God's understanding of our needs? Is there reciprocal language we can use that differs from everyday communication among ourselves? If we formulate our questions, comments, and liturgical worship consistently in language that is religiously traditional and reasonably unambiguous, can we more readily discern God's answers and gratuitous comments? If so, true vertical language is what we should seek, that is a language of prayer and ritual and liturgy that is directed solely to God, a language that cannot easily be mistaken for horizontal language. It must be language that has stood the test of time, *particularly* if it maintains and confirms Christian doctrine, yet contains some grammatical and lexical forms no longer in common, everyday use.

In most ways, this is the approach used by, say, Orthodox Christians or Melkites or Roman Catholics when they employ some ancient and/or foreign language such as Old Church Slavonic, Greek, or Latin, yet we are not making a case for adopting such unfamiliar languages where they have not been a natural part of some branch of Catholic Christianity. Any language, including all modern vernaculars, will serve equally well as long as it has had a time of maturing, say, in prayer books, sacramentaries and the like, achieved widespread acceptance by the majority of the people, and can be shown as tried and true and efficacious for its prayer devotions.

Liturgists should not eschew hallowed, formerly "foreign" forms such as, amen, alleluia, kyrie/Christe eleison, agnus Dei, etc. (Are these coming targets?) that give tone and quiet mystery to worship and ensure against constant change. The hoopla raised in the 1960s over the "outmoded" language of the 1928 Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* was little



more than a smokescreen for the production of the 1979 BCP, with its markedly different theology; for, truth be told, there really was no difficulty then in understanding some “thees” and “thous,” just as there is no difficulty today. Admittedly, the production of Roman Catholic vernacular rites did not proceed from the same venerated earlier rites in English that formed the bases for Anglican/ Episcopal experimentation leading to the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, but the danger of accidental, even intentional, changes in theology was, and is, just as prevalent. Unfortunately, for this reason the Catholic rites suffer from an even greater dose of banality and clumsiness of expression than the Anglican uses.

Americans are a plain-Jane sort of folk, put off by any attainment of status or elitism. Particularly since the revolutionary late 1960s and early 1970s, the people have lacked an appreciation for gravitas and solemnity and have urged leveling throughout society. An unbiased observer today is forced to report a minimum of dignity, propriety, and good taste in behavior and speech.

In concluding his thoughts in a chapter of *A New Song for the Lord* dealing with the connection between liturgy and music and man’s place in both, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger paraphrases Mahatma Gandhi in the latter’s reference to the “three habitats of the cosmos” in which silent fish inhabit the seas, screaming and shouting animals the earth, and singing birds the heavens. Human beings share “the depths of the sea, the burden of the earth, and the heights of the heavens in themselves.” In other words, all three properties, metaphorically speaking—depth, burden, and aspiration to heights—apply to people. Ratzinger observes that “only the shouting is left for those humans without transcendence since they only want to be earth and also try to make the heavens and the depths of the sea into their earth.” He avers that the “right liturgy,” one with a “cosmic” [vertical?] character, can restore “totality” to such people by opening up the depths of all three habitats.

Man’s response to his environment, with Jesus the Incarnated Lord God as the object of personal prayer, is one example of man’s ability to adapt fantasy to a supernatural purpose and satisfy a deep need. Most religious language embodies fantasy, metaphor, and simile. Its occasional vagueness may make it all the

truer because of the partial obscurity of God.

We know that changes come about in language whenever there is a pressing societal need to express a new idea. In fact, it is axiomatic to say that every language expresses adequately what its culture requires. However, usually these changes do not involve the pronouns and general morphological structures of the language, in this case English.

Not only scientific words but also those within less precise realms, as found in such disciplines as sociology and religion, can be neologized. One of the main purposes of language change by way of adding words is to provide nuance to existing words and phrases, that is, to create “synonyms.”

There are, of course, no true synonyms in language, i.e. words with precisely the same meaning. Each and every new “synonym” componentially emphasizes some feature, some nuance, of the core word. If you compare a simple list such as fast, quick, fleet, nimble, brisk, swift, speedy, alacritous, expeditious, accelerated, you will immediately understand what I mean.

Some theologians claim dissatisfaction with rather standard and traditional images and have been searching for new ones, especially in the last thirty years. Not just abstract and mystical terms—for example, “supreme being,” “the unknowable,” etc.—but also metaphorical and personal terms, such as “father,” “lord,” etc., have been questioned, and often replaced, sometimes with truly heterodox notions or faux vertical language: the goddess Sophia (rather than Jesus Christ), Mother God, Earth Mother, Womb of Creation, etc. Such down-to-earth examples can lead subconsciously to the overt contention that the word “Mother” is overly human-directed and the word “Father” [for some abused persons] is so loaded that it cannot any longer be employed as a way to address God. At least, that is one explanation for tampering with the liturgy.

Is all of this a further blurring of lines in the general sociology of America? Are we witnessing nothing more than a thorough “democratization” of language, which includes the spread of so-called inclusive language? After all, most examples deal with horizontality, or secularity. However, when it is a question of verticality, or religiousness, of approach, resistance often grows more quickly in pro-



portion to the semantic violence perceived.

Is this a natural tension which exhibits itself further in the conflict between religiously precise vertical language and sociologically precise horizontal language? Yes, for no doubt there is sometimes a collision of the structural side of language with the sociolinguistic side. Structural analysis can be applied both diachronically and synchronically, but sociolinguistics, of which vertical and horizontal language are a part, is concerned with language *varieties*, including register, as aspects of all-encompassing social trends.

My contention is that a modern inclusivist "precision" or "fairness" of expression is no guarantee of correctness or clarity of religious doctrine—quite the contrary. Jesuit priest Paul Mankowski sees inclusive language as a fraud, perhaps a pious fraud, but a fraud nonetheless. He maintains that "it does [not] make our thought more precise; [neither] does God's love for us shine more clearly through Sacred Scripture and sacred worship."

We dare to assert that it is not merely a question of vertical vs. horizontal language but also a question of direction of transmission. God is heard, received, most clearly in the hallowed language of Scripture and liturgy, free of present-day neologisms, and for the sake of *all* the faithful, He must be addressed *publicly* in that way. How God is privately addressed must necessarily be left to the individual.

We must be ever mindful that the language of man is not the language of God. There is no "conversation" as such, no immediate linguistic give-and-take, between man and God. The concoction and use of inclusive language terms under the guise of "bland" horizontal language will not effect a nuanced language change but changes in doctrine, to the confusion and detriment of the Christian religion as revealed by God and promulgated by the Church.

Philosophy professor Michael Tkacz offers simple advice: "We need the authority of ritual prayers that are properly formulated so that we are oriented to the truth of our need for God... Thus, prayer should be in a proper form so that we open ourselves to what is truly good for us." In his book *The Hidden Jesus*, Donald Spoto claims that "... prayer is not so much what we say to God... as a disposition in which we listen for Him. [That is,] faith is not primarily intellectual assent to a complex set of teachings and instruc-

tions. It is, first of all, a process in which I try to listen to what God says... right here and now." St. John Damascene might describe that close attention as "raising the mind to God." St. Augustine might speak of the "affectionate directing of the mind to God." It is good that today there is a keen interest in language as communication. However, religious language as such is much more than a surface phenomenon subject to linguistic analysis; it must contain words and expressions that direct not just our tongues, but our hearts, toward God and tune our ears to God's ineffable messages.

Although there are similarities between Catholic liturgy and the use of meditation, mantras, and the like, our liturgy is not mechanistic or magical, but a form set in motion by an imaginative activity. Effective prayer, without regard to shape, can virtually always be going on in our minds; it is the liturgical structure that gives it public credence. In our private mumblings and bits of self-conversation for whatever secular purpose, we rely on unenhanced horizontal language. In faith terms, vertical language is a steep staircase. Like the Tower of Babel, it is difficult for us to climb, but because of its precipitousness all the easier for God to reach down to us with His messages. Our good-faith efforts to reach Him need expression in a register that is apart from pure human communication. The horizontal register is our human tool for interaction among ourselves. To reach God we need to set the scene for Him in the vertical register and then listen.

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# A Specific Work for the Rebirth of Chastity

by John F. Kippley

The Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Convention of 1999 was replete with references to the many problems stemming from the widespread rejection of *Humanae Vitae*. It was almost like being at a conference on Natural Family Planning, and it was greatly affirming to everyone involved in the NFP apostolate.

I think that every speaker would agree that a rebirth of chastity, including marital chastity, is a goal that must be actively pursued for the health of the Church and of society. After all the posturing is eliminated, the rejection of *Humanae Vitae* is the predominant reason behind the rejection of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Little of a practical nature was presented, however, and that is understandable. The very nature of scholarly conferences is to be scholarly, not activist—to analyze, to look for causes and effects, and to suggest general objectives and directions for achieving certain goals without getting specific.

The purpose of this paper is to be specific. It will describe one way in which some members of the Fellowship can work to bring about a rebirth of chastity, a stop to legalized abortion, and a return to a semblance of Christian civilization. I believe that all of these goals will be achieved only through the widespread promotion, teaching and acceptance of Natural Family Planning. More specifically, I believe that widespread full-range NFP instruction literally *can* change the face of the Church and the political scene in this country without lobbying either the USCC or the legislatures. Please bear with me as I explain.

## The Bishops are Right

In a little-noticed publication over a decade ago, the USCC Bishops' Committee for Pastoral Research and Practices urged bishops and priests to adopt a policy that can have widespread good effects if and when it is put

into practice. In a book on marriage preparation entitled *Faithful to Each Other Forever*, the Bishops' Committee stated:

"We urge that in each formal premarriage program, a presentation on *Natural Family Planning* and fertility appreciation be included as an integral, not an optional, part of the schedule" (p. 47, emphasis in original). That means that one-day or one-weekend pre-Cana conferences would have to include a solid NFP presentation in the main program, not just as one of many competing workshops. Then they went further:

"Indeed, given current cultural conditioning and the fact that virtually all couples begin marriage using some form of family planning, we urge that premarital programs require a full course of instruction in natural family planning as a necessary component in the couple's effective realization of what they need and have a right to know in order to live in accord with the clear teaching of the Church." In short, every priest should require every engaged couple to take a full NFP course. Couples have a need and a right to this information.

Recognizing the benefits that couples can derive from a good course on NFP even if they did not want to attend it, they added:

"NFP instructors often note a change in perception among those required to learn NFP prior to marriage: 'We never would have taken this course if it had not been required, but now we're glad we did.'"

I am not aware of any diocese or archdiocese that has as yet fully implemented these recommendations, but I do know several bishops who are committed to doing so as soon as they have enough NFP teachers to handle the volume. I believe that when almost every diocese implements this policy, the face of the Church will change and that this will significantly change the social environment of this country for the better.

## The Importance of Marital Chastity

**H**ow can such a seemingly insignificant policy as requiring every Catholic engaged couple to take an NFP course (that typically has four two-hour meetings) have such widespread beneficial effects? The answer is simple: The acceptance of marital contraception is the heart and core of the sexual revolution. Very briefly, who put together in one act what we call making love and making babies? The theist has only one answer. Then what is contraception except the studied effort to take apart what God has put together? I submit that the acceptance of the principle that modern man and woman can take apart what God has put together in the marriage act is the basic principle of the sexual revolution. Once accepted, there is no stopping point. The sexual revolution of the 1960s simply was the extension of that principle to the union—and consequent disunion—of marriage and the “marriage act.” Homosexual activists argue that homosexual sodomy does not differ morally from marital contraception by which couples seek to make their acts as sterile as sodomy and sometimes engage in the now presidential behavior of heterosexual sodomy.

Thus to overturn the sexual revolution, marital contraception must be rejected. But there will not be any widespread rejection of marital contraception today— even by Catholics— without the equally widespread teaching of natural family planning. The implementation of the bishops’ exhortations will ensure that almost every Catholic engaged couple learn some form of natural family planning, and this will lead to the widespread acceptance of NFP in faith and in practice.

Really? What leads me to think that forced attendance at an NFP course will accomplish such results? Part of it is experience. I know priests who are presently requiring the full NFP course of the Couple to Couple League, and they are hearing the same stories the bishops quoted. “Thanks for making us attend. We wouldn’t have gone otherwise. Now we understand. We will be using NFP when we need spacing.”

Second, in the early 1960s a survey showed that two-thirds of Catholic couples were still living out their marriages in accord with Catholic teaching.

Most of these couples had only Calendar Rhythm available as a form of NFP, and many of them didn’t know and couldn’t find even those simple rules. Almost none of them practiced ecological breastfeeding. I can well recall the results. When I was doing parish evangelization about 1965, a woman of 30 and the mother of seven asked me what they were supposed to do. She had married just out of college and had been averaging a baby about every 15 months or so. She was in a panic mode, knowing that she still had another 15 years of fertility; she was concerned about her health for her varicose veins were all too evident. I muttered something about the rhythm method, but basically I was as ignorant as she was. Still, despite the widespread ignorance and misunderstanding of the rhythm method of the day, some two-thirds of Catholics were keeping the faith. With all the practical advances in NFP, is it unreasonable to think that we can once again build up to that two-thirds level of faith and chaste living? In addition, the truth has its own force, and it is the very nature of being human to want to live according to the truth.

I am not so naive as to think that everyone who is obliged to attend a full NFP course, even the value-oriented CCL course, will be immediately converted, but I believe that God’s grace will build on nature and accomplish wonders over a ten year period. I think there is still enough good will among Catholics who present themselves for marriage in the Church that with the proper instruction, 25% will accept the Church’s teaching by the time of their marriage. Proper instruction includes a faithful explanation of the teaching by a priest, reaffirmation of that teaching by the teaching couple for the course, the use of a faith-based marriage preparation book such as my own *Marriage Is for Keeps*, and the full NFP course. I think that another 25% will accept the Church’s teaching and NFP within the first three to five years of their marriage. Many will not be able to use the Pill comfortably after learning about its abortifacient potential, and almost all will find out from their own experience that the pursuit of marital happiness through completely unrestrained contraceptive sexual expression is not fulfilling. Lastly, I think by their tenth anniversary another 15% will accept the Church’s teaching and practice for the same reasons.



## The Effects

**W**hat will happen to the Church once two-thirds of younger married Catholics are believing and practicing according to the truth of the faith? Catholic education will change. When fully believing parents form a majority, they will not allow religious vacuity in the Catholic schools; they will want the fullness of the faith taught at every level of Catholic education. They will insist that if they are going to pay tuition for a Catholic college education, the education must be Catholic. The implementation of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* will no longer be problematic.

What will happen to the country? People who practice marital chastity today vote pro-life. The states with heavy Catholic populations will no longer elect pro-abortion candidates to Congress. When a substantial majority of Catholics vote with pro-life Orthodox Jews and pro-life evangelical Protestants, abortion will no longer be a political issue. A pro-abortion president will become a political impossibility, the pro-abortion Supreme Court Justices will be replaced by those who understand the importance of the most basic human right of every human person, and the history of the contemporary holocaust will be written from the perspective of the survivors.

All of this can be accomplished through the simple act of the Church being true to itself and carrying through on the bishops' own exhortation quoted earlier. It will not cost huge sums of money. If it were a matter of money, we would be utterly lost. How could we possibly compete with the money of Gates, Buffet, Packard and Foundations dedicated to decreasing population by any means they can? This is simply a matter of faithful common sense.

## My Appeal

**T**he FCS membership unquestionably supports the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* in the classroom, the office, and in their own personal lives. Allow me to ask you to do more. Please pray daily for a rebirth of chastity and a stop to abortion. Reverend Fathers, if you are not already doing so, please make this the dedicated intention for your daily Mass at least once a month. Please pray in a special way for the Couple to Couple League.

Because we have always and consistently promoted the Church's teaching in our regular classes and written materials, we have been subjected to special attacks. The same holds true of our advocacy of ecological breastfeeding. Do what you can to persuade your local clergy to put into effect the NFP requirement policy urged by the Bishops' Committee.

Recent annual meetings of the Fellowship have been attended by an increasing number of younger married scholars, physicians, lawyers, and others. It is especially to you that I make this next specific appeal to do something very practical to bring about a rebirth of chastity, a stop to legalized abortion, and a return to a semblance of Christian civilization. With your spouse, join the CCL teaching apostolate. Teach NFP as a volunteer CCL Teaching Couple in your own town or city.

All those good things that can come about from the widespread acceptance of the Church's teaching and the use of NFP when needed are dependent upon the availability of trained NFP teachers, and the CCL apostolate is a wonderful way for couples to work together in doing a work of the Church. The time required is not extensive—teaching one or two nights per month. It is an enriching way for the full-time mother to develop her many talents and to be of great service to those outside her home. Within CCL, you would be teaching all the common signs of fertility and infertility, ecological breastfeeding, and faithfully transmitting Catholic teaching on marital love and sexuality. Talk it over with your spouse. Pray about it, pray for us, and get in touch as soon as you think the Lord may be calling you to this form of service. Your inquiry is an inquiry, not a commitment.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of *Casti Connubii*, the faith-filled response of Pope Pius XI to the Anglican departure from the previously unbroken Christian tradition against unnatural forms of birth control. I submit that becoming trained as a CCL Teaching Couple would be a most fitting way to honor this anniversary. ✠

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# “Woe to Me if I Do Not Preach the Gospel”

by Eduardo J. Echeverria

## I

Is the Church's missionary mandate to proclaim the Gospel still valid? Should Christians forswear notions such as witness, mission, evangelism, proclamation, and conversion out of respect for conscience and for freedom of others to believe as they choose? Is the Christian believer incapable of inter-religious dialogue because he asserts such truths as these that salvation can only come from Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, that He is the mediator and fullness of all revelation, the definitive self-revelation of God, and that His sacrificial death on the cross is the redemption of man? Isn't the holding of these and other truth claims about Jesus Christ, which imply or entail the falsehood of the central truth claims of other religions, intolerant and an attempt to impose one's own Christian convictions and choices on others? Quite simply, shouldn't evangelizing be replaced by inter-religious dialogue?

These questions came to mind recently in reading the 1997 Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: One Woman's Experience*, by Mary C. Boys, S.N.J.M. Sr. Boys' book takes seriously the Catholic Church's teaching that the religious traditions of non-Christians contain elements that are true and good, which merit the attention and respect of Christians, eliciting a genuine invitation to dialogue and mutual understanding. From this viewpoint, I found the book to be instructive.

To her credit, Sr. Boys raises the important issue of responding to the challenge of religious commitment in a religiously pluralistic world. It is her response to this challenge with which I have difficulty, however. In summary, Sr. Boys says first that religious commitments are both ambiguous and adaptable. These two traits do not preclude being clear and rooted in one's own tradition, she adds. Yet, as I understand Sr. Boys, they are the chief features of religious commitment mainly because we cannot say anything determinate and true about the object of such commitments. Religious commitment involves

neither assenting to certain propositions about God nor asserting that such propositions are objectively true. The making of such assertions, where they imply absolute affirmations, is always premature, and worse, they entail that believing something incompatible with them is false, and this conclusion is morally repugnant.

Second, faith is experientially based and the content of faith is an expression of that experience in various religious traditions that are necessarily tied to specific cultures. Inter-religious encounter, understanding and dialogue, intelligent participation in the beliefs and practices of other religious traditions—all this is imperative for helping one to understand his own faith tradition and commitment. Sr. Boys seems to think that evangelizing activity must cease and be replaced by dialogue. We must no longer make truth claims as religious believers, but only help one another be better Christians, Jews, Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists, and so forth. Third, all religions are in some sense true—equally disclosive of God. They are also equally vehicles of salvation, she says, for “pluralism is God's will.” If so, not just tolerance or respect of other religions is required, but a commitment to the religiously diverse manifestations of the Divine Presence in so many mysterious ways, according to Sr. Boys.

Fourth, if pluralism is God's will, then we must reject, she says, the supersessionist understanding of the relationship between Jesus and Israel, namely, that this relationship is one of promise and fulfillment. If the Old Testament Covenant is irrevocable (Romans 11:29), then Christians may no longer assert that Jesus Christ is the Messiah of Israel and thus the fulfillment of Old Testament promises and prophecy. This conclusion is as much a result of her interpretation of the Bible as of the religious pluralism she embraces—there are many ways to God, and hence not just one covenant between God and man, or even two, but as many as there are religions.

What are we to make of Sr. Boys' proposal? The first point is pivotal to her whole proposal and it amounts to the claim that God cannot be definitely known by anyone. The mystery that is God is too

complex and infinite. The divine reality is revealed through many names and forms, though with partial differences and commonalities. The various religions are equally valid ways of approaching the ineffability and boundlessness of God.

Sr. Boys is partly right about the mystery of God. God is infinite and beyond comprehension. As the prophet Isaiah wrote, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9). We need humility in our claims to knowledge about God, but this is vastly different from saying that God is definitely unknowable. Humility translates here to mean that we can know something determinate and true about God without claiming to know Him exhaustively. We must avoid sliding (illogically) from the biblical truth that God is inexhaustibly beyond us to the conclusion that He is totally unknowable. Furthermore, Christians claim to know definitely that God-in-Christ is exclusively God's self-revelation and the Lord and Savior of men. We should make clear that this exclusivism is not an exclusivism of truth or of morality. Truths about God's existence and nature as well as moral truths can be known quite independently of the Christian faith, for God has nowhere "left Himself without testimony" in creation and man's conscience (Acts 14:17; Romans 1:19ff, 2:12-16). Yet it is an exclusivism of salvation, for the absolute uniqueness of Christ is a foundational Christian belief. "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). And again: "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus is the only way to God.

Sr. Boys' own position is religious relativism—one religion is as good as another—and it is hard to hold consistently. She claims that God cannot be definitely known by anyone. How does she know this for sure about God? And is it true? The historic Christian faith denies her claim as false. God is self-revealing in creation, in Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and supremely in the Incarnation. Her dogmatic assurance that God is unknowable is hard to reconcile with her believing that all religions are partial insights into the Divine Mystery. How can

she know that any religion is expressive of God when He is unknowable? Besides, how can these various religions be grounded in one and the same divine reality when they make contradictory claims about God? If not all of their claims can be true, then at least some must be false. If it is true that Christ and Christ alone is the fullness of revelation and the mediator of God's saving grace, as the Church confidently holds on the basis of what God-in-Christ Himself revealed to us, then its denial must be false. I don't see how one could consistently reject this belief as absolutely true without ceasing to be a Christian.

## II

Religious pluralism is a social fact. There is nothing new under the sun. This fact is evident in Scripture with the radical monotheism of Israel proclaimed by Moses (Deuteronomy 4:35) amidst Egyptian polytheism. It is also evident when St. Peter and St. Paul proclaim amidst Greek and Roman polytheism that in Jesus' name alone is salvation found (Acts 4:12) and that there is no other God but one (1 Corinthians 8:4ff).

What is new is that in our own time many people, even some who regard themselves as Christians, interpret the social fact of religious diversity to mean that the various religions are equally valid ways of approaching God. This interpretation promotes the idea that there can be disagreements about religious beliefs without anyone being wrong. How so? Consider the argument of Sr. Mary C. Boys. She repudiates the notion that we can say something determinate and true about God. Quite simply, God cannot be definitely known by anyone. Absolute truth about God slips right through the grasp of all religions. If so, no religion may regard itself as right or true, and the others as false. She cautions us about making absolute affirmations. They are always premature, for they close off the "mystery of religious experience and confuse the poetry of religious language with the renderings of propositions."

Viewed in the most positive light, Sr. Boys wants to infuse some humility into inter-religious dialogue. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger agrees: "What is required is reverence for the other's belief, along



with the willingness to seek truth in what I find alien—a truth that concerns me and that can correct me and lead me further.” Yet Cardinal Ratzinger insists that “faith in God cannot do without truth, which must have a specifiable content.” In other words, Christian faith is a truly personal communion with God, but it involves at the same time, and inseparably, believing that something is true (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 150). To believe means, then, that I am intellectually committed to the truth of certain propositions, of what I believe. Thus, we assert the truth of propositions such as “Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Word of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity,” and “Jesus Christ is the Messiah of Israel,” and “Jesus Christ did in fact rise bodily from the dead,” and so on. Of course my believing these propositions is not what makes them true. The Christian realist holds that a proposition is true if and only if objective reality is the way the proposition says it is; otherwise, the proposition is false. Hence, the Christian faith is objectively true if what it says about God, and about man and the world, is the case. So even though divine faith is more than believing, involving trust and commitment at its core, it is not less than believing the truth of certain propositions. Christians are committed to believing that Jesus Christ is the way to God. Christ Himself says, “He who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness” (John 12:45-46). And again, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). Both these verses mean that God can be known definitely, but also that He reveals Himself supremely in Christ as the way to God the Father.

Thus, with all due respect to Sr. Boys, if her proposal were true that pluralism is God’s will, then the Christian faith is false. There is more: Christ Himself is wrong, given that the reason the Church herself proclaims “no other name” is because God-in-Christ Himself makes exclusive claims as the revealer of God and the Savior of men.

Whether or not it is her intention, Sr. Boys makes religion ominously subjective. Her withdrawal of truth-claims about God results in concentrating on religious experience. One result of this concentration is to ignore the essential difference

between the Christian faith and all the other religions by viewing them all from the perspective of man’s search for God. But it is precisely this perspective that Christianity denies: pluralism is not God’s will. As John Paul II says, “Christianity has its starting-point in the Incarnation of the Word. Here, it is not simply a case of man seeking God, but of God who comes in Person to speak to man of Himself and to show him the path by which He may be reached. This is what is proclaimed in the Prologue of John’s Gospel: ‘No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known’ (1:18). The Incarnate Word is thus the fulfillment of the yearning present in all the religions of mankind: this fulfillment is brought about by God Himself and transcends all human expectations. It is the mystery of grace.”

What should be our stance towards the other world religions if Jesus Christ is the definitive and fullest self-revelation of God? Also, are any non-Christians saved exclusively by Christ without having explicit knowledge of His vicarious and sacrificial death on the cross? These are difficult but important questions. The very heart of the Christian faith and its missionary mandate are at issue in how we answer them. I think we must say that our basic stance towards non-Christians should be to love them with the very same love that the Father had for us in sending His Son to die for our sins. We partake of divine love, as disciples of Jesus Christ, of the same eternal love that the persons of the Trinity have for each other, and hence our mission of evangelization derives from this divine love. “The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:5). Evangelizing activity must flow from the dynamism of this infused divine love for the good of the other person. St. Augustine understood this well: “You do not love your neighbor as yourself unless you try to draw him to the good towards which you tend yourself.” Thus, the evangelizing mission cannot be replaced by inter-religious dialogue. If we are Christians we must believe that Christ is the fulfillment of the yearnings of all men, in fact, that He is the sole and definitive completion of all the world’s religions. Protestant theologian and evangelist Michael Green brings out with clarity the core truth that needs to be said:

No faith would enjoy wide currency if it did not contain much that was true. Other faiths therefore constitute a preparation for the gospel, and Christ comes not so much to destroy as to fulfill. The convert will not feel that he has lost his background, but that he has discovered that to which, at its best, it pointed. That is certainly the attitude I have found among friends converted to Christ from Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. They are profoundly grateful for what they have learned in those cultures, but are thrilled beyond words to have discovered a God who has stooped to their condition in coming as the man of Nazareth, and who has rescued them from guilt and alienation by His cross and resurrection.

John Paul II makes this very same point when he stresses that the Holy Spirit is present and active in the human heart's search for God through the "seeds of the Word" present in various customs and cultures, preparing them for full maturity in Christ." The Pope urges that "This is the same Spirit who was at work in the Incarnation and in the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus, and who is at work in the Church." He cautions us not to see this universally active Spirit as "an alternative to Christ." He explains, "Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions serves as a preparation for the Gospel and can only be understood in reference to Christ, the Word who took flesh by the power of the Spirit."

We need also to distinguish between what God has divinely ordained as the ordinary means of salvation and what in His sovereignty He can bring to pass. The former is clear in Scripture—apart from an explicit act of faith in Christ there is no salvation. As to God's sovereignty, I am particularly concerned here with those who through no fault of their own are unevangelized, or who have heard the Gospel in some distorted or falsifying form. What is their fate? Because God is a righteous Lord and a loving Father, whatever He does in His sovereignty won't involve injustice. John Paul II thus says: "As we read in the [Second Vatican] Council's Decree on Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, we believe that 'in many ways known to Himself, God can lead those who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of the Gospel to the faith necessary for salvation' (#7). Certainly, the condition 'through no fault of their own' cannot be verified nor weighed by human evalua-

tion, but must be left to the divine judgment alone."

Fr. Romanus Cessario, O.P., cautions us, however. "We should observe . . . that this affirmation expresses a conclusion about the graciousness of God's generosity. It does not, as certain contemporary theologians contend, establish a premise for further theological argument. No conclusions are to be drawn from the truth that God can communicate salvation to those who, through no fault of their own, never heard the Gospel." Fr. Cessario doesn't say which conclusions he has in mind, but I think we can surmise that he is thinking of the claim that all religions must be as equally valid vehicles of salvation as the Christian faith. Furthermore, it is crucial to understand that even the salvation of those who, through no fault of their own, have been uninformed or misinformed about the Gospel does not occur apart from Christ, but only apart from the knowledge of Christ. Moreover, our missionary obligation is not lessened in any sense, says John Paul II. "Quite the contrary. In fact, whoever does not know Christ, even through no fault of his own, is in a state of darkness and spiritual hunger, often with negative repercussions at the cultural and moral level. The Church's missionary work can provide him with the resources for the full development of Christ's saving grace, by offering full and conscious adherence to the message of faith and active participation in Church life through the sacraments."

### III

One often hears nowadays the objection that there is something seriously wrong with the Church's missionary mandate to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world.

The evangelizing project of the Church is based on the proposition that Christ and Christ alone is the way to God. Those who hold this to be true must also believe that its denial is false. This is no more than simple logic. For this proposition cannot be both true and false. It cannot be true that Christ and Christ alone is the way to God and at the same time true that salvation has come to man through Confucius or Gautama or Mohammed. It is precisely this exclusivism of salvation that critics of the Church's evangelizing project find morally

objectionable. They think it arrogant, a sign of harmful pride, imperialistic, or even oppressive and violent.

One author has written about the evangelizing project, "Yet is there not already a violence in the conviction that one possesses the truth oneself, whereas this is not the case for others, and that one must furthermore impose that truth on those others?" Undeniably, Christians have not always respected others' consciences, violating their freedom through the coercive imposition of Christianity. So let's quickly agree that proclaiming Christ and bearing witness to Him as the way to God must be done in a manner that is not coercive, dishonest, manipulative, or otherwise disrespectful of the dignity of the human person. The objection here cuts deeper, however. It claims that one cannot be convinced that he knows the truth without using oppressive means to make people agree with him. But it is hard to see how believing that Jesus is the way to God is in itself oppressive. Many people fail to see that holding the beliefs of an individual to be false is perfectly compatible with treating him with dignity and respect. The converse is also true: I can disrespectfully and improperly treat people with whom I happen to agree. Let's not confuse the two separate issues of ethically relating to persons and critically evaluating their beliefs.

Sr. Mary Boys raises the above objection against traditional Christians who believe that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and promises and is thus the Messiah of Israel. In Romans 9-11, St. Paul makes clear that Jewish Israel still is the elect of God and has a future in God's history of redemption. "God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew," for "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11: 2, 29). Whatever else should be said about the relationship between Jesus and Israel, we can at least say this much here. The Church believes that Israel's Messiah has come and fashioned His new community, the Church, and hence that to this extent a Christian must be a supersessionist. The call of Israel is indeed superseded in the sense that the covenant with Israel has been reaffirmed and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Again, it is hard to see how one could consistently reject the truth claim that Jesus Christ is the genuine fulfillment that the Old Testament anticipates without ceasing to be a Christian.

Yet the Christian is a qualified supersessionist. As Fr. Aidan Nichols, O.P., writes, "Yet the vocation of Israel, to witness that the One who has come is truly her long-expected Savior and that the salvation He wrought is the genuine fulfillment of the promises of the Hebrew Bible, remains intact." For St. Paul, there is great joy in the future hope for Jewish Israel that is rooted in God's electing grace in Christ. "If their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean" (Romans 11:12).

Jews too should be included in the Christian mission of evangelizing. St. Paul declares that the Gospel "is the power of God to salvation for every one who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Romans 1:16). Hence we have Messianic Jews and Hebrew Catholics: Christians who maintain their Jewish heritage intact. Christ is the power and wisdom of God both for Jew and Gentile (1 Corinthians 1:24). And again, St. Paul teaches that the way of salvation for both Jew and Gentile is the same. "For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). Traditional Christians hold that this belief is true, deep, and important, and they regard themselves as privileged with respect to those who don't believe it.

Some critics contend that this belief is arrogant and an imposition of one's own religious conviction on another religion. Again, I don't see how this is true. In fact, this charge of arrogance is what Alvin Plantinga has called a philosophical "tar baby: get close enough to [it] to use [it] against the exclusivist, and you are likely to find [it] stuck fast to yourself." For instance, the critics who demand that Christians no longer assert that the relationship between Jesus and Israel is one of promise and fulfillment, such that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel, are stuck with the same "tar baby." How so? Well, they demand of Christians exactly what they won't allow Christians to demand of Jews, that is, imposing one's religious truth claims on another religion. As David E. Holwerda puts it, "Apparently, Christianity may not assert truth claims that either undermine or contradict Judaism or that even on the basis of the Old Testament claim to be the fulfillment of the hopes of Judaism, while Judaism may insist that the Church modify its understanding of Jesus so that He can fit more comfortably within the framework of Judaism."

This brings us back one last time to the claim



that there is violence in the conviction that one possesses the truth oneself. Suppose that after careful reflection and prayer, I believe that Jesus and Jesus alone is the way to God in the face of religious pluralism. Add to this the following: I believe that Christians ought to be demonstrating the truth of the Gospel with their lives as well as by arguing for its truth, and at the same time insisting that people have the right to disagree without fear of violence or being forced to agree. I am a finite being, a fallen sinner, redeemed by God's grace in Christ, no better than those who in my judgment are mistaken and believe what is false, and certainly both morally and intellectually inferior to many who deny what I believe to be true. Yet I still believe that the proposition *Jesus is the way to God* is true. Can there really be violence against others in knowing this to be true? I can't see how.

In fact, as the International Theological Commission says in a document on Christianity and World Religions, "The truth as truth is always 'superior'; but the truth of Jesus Christ, as made clear by our need for Him, is always service to man; it is

the truth of the one who gives His life for men in order to make them enter definitively into the love of God." We serve man by revealing to him the love of the Father made manifest in the gift of the Son and communicated through the Holy Spirit. The Word of God calls us to speak the truth in love, for all men need Jesus Christ, who has conquered sin and death and reconciled us to God. As our Holy Father John Paul II says, "[Our] task is not to win arguments but to win souls for Christ, to engage not in ideological bickering but in a spiritual struggle on behalf of Truth, to be concerned not with vindicating or promoting [our]selves but with proclaiming and spreading the Gospel. There is a great need to speak the Truth clearly and with love, and to do so confidently, since the Truth we proclaim belongs to Christ and is in fact the Truth for which all people long, no matter how uninterested or resistant they may seem." ✠

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## FELLOWSHIP OF CATHOLIC SCHOLARS 2000 CONVENTION

# The Achievements of Pope John Paul II

September 22-24, 2000

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*Keynote speaker:* George Weigel,  
biographer of the Holy Father

**Cardinal Wright Award**

**to be presented to:**

Mary Ann Glendon,

*Learned Hand Professor at Harvard*

*Law School and Vatican Representative  
to the Beijing Conference*

# Correct Dating of the Incarnation

Germain Grisez

1 April 2000 was the 2000th anniversary of the Incarnation. Here's the proof. Two thousand years before 1 April 2000 was 1 April 1 BC. Nine months after 1 April 1 BC was 1 January 1 AD. Since 1 January 1 AD was the beginning of the first year of the Lord, that was the date on which Jesus ought to have been born.

Of course, some will object that Jesus was born on 25 December. That is true. While he ought to have been born on 1 January 1 AD, he was one week premature, and thus was born 25 December 1 BC. Lest anyone suppose this explanation is mere idle speculation, I shall show how reliable data confirm it.

An ancient scroll discovered some years ago explains Jesus' prematurity. Though historical-critical scholars normally would dismiss the scroll, many leading members of that august club testify to its authenticity and credibility. (To be candid, I must admit that they do so because it happens to support their theory that Acts was written no earlier than 134 by a pagan Roman playwright. But that is beside the point at issue here.)

The scroll records locutions received in the year 134 by a nameless Christian hermit. He had been fasting in a cave forty days and forty nights. According to the hermit, the speaker of those locutions identified himself as the Archangel Gabriel.

Among other things, Gabriel told the hermit that, within five minutes after the Incarnation, diabolical agents had informed Satan about it. The Evil One at once counterattacked by putting an abortifacient substance in the Nazareth well. Abortionists usually prescribed a small daily dose of the drug during the first three months of pregnancy. It worked, not by directly affecting the embryo--which in this case was impossible, since Jesus was being guarded by the Holy Spirit himself--but by gradually changing the mother's biological clock so that delivery would occur before viability. [Note: On the biological

clock, see the definitive study by Norman M. Ford, S.D.B., *When Did I Begin?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).]

Gabriel's intelligence unit immediately detected and reported what was going on. Rather than taking the countermeasures Satan had expected, Gabriel sent him a taunting message: "Your Eminence: You obviously are acting on the report that Myriam of Nazareth is pregnant with the Messiah. Had you checked it out, you would have found that she's never had intercourse. Fool! You're trying to abort the pregnancy of a virgin. Our camp has never had such an enjoyable day at your expense!"

Knowing that Myriam was betrothed to Joseph, Satan first checked with the demon that had been assigned to spoil their relationship. Having observed them continuously, that Excellency reported that they remained sexually inexperienced. Despite hard work on the problem since the couple first met and an effort to arouse Joseph's jealousy by suggesting that his bride-to-be was seeing someone else, the strange young couple had not come together even after their betrothal.

Shocked, Satan ran a search on his comprehensive file of mortal sins. But that only verified Myriam's virginity. Neither had she sinned, nor was she the victim of any rapist. So, the Evil One told his agents not to waste their time and hell's supply of precious abortifacients on Myriam, who, in any case, was going away for a few weeks. The result was that, by the time Myriam returned from Elizabeth and Zachary's place, hardly a trace of the abortifacient remained in her home town's well. So little remained, in fact, that it did no real damage, only harmlessly accelerating delivery by one week.

Finally, Gabriel's message of 1 April, taunting Satan as a fool, explains the origin of April Fools' Day. Notice, however, that the custom is a perverse imitation. Gabriel made Satan a real fool by telling him the precise truth. Subsequent pranksters only make others seem foolish by baiting them with lies. ☩

## Around the Church

by James Hitchcock

Bishop Donald Trautman of Erie (Pa.), former chairman of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, strongly criticized the Holy See's Congregation for Divine Worship after the Congregation demanded a significant reorganization of the International Committee for English in the Liturgy (ICEL), which has had major responsibility for the English-language liturgy since the Second Vatican Council.

Writing in the Jesuit magazine *America*, Bishop Trautman asserted that criticisms of ICEL are without merit and that it should be allowed to operate autonomously in terms of the composition and translation of liturgical prayers, in order to insure the "vitality of the liturgy."

He denounced Vatican involvement with the question as "demeaning" of national episcopal conferences and said that such involvement runs counter "to the great hope of the Second Vatican Council and of Pope Paul VI."

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A liturgist in Bishop Trautman's diocese, Michael DeSanctis of Gannon University, has denounced as "Pharisees" those who favor traditional styles of church architecture. Advocates of such buildings "ingratiate themselves to [sic] today's tabernacle-obsessed bishops, biretta-topped

seminarians, and a handful of cardboard monsignori," according to DeSanctis.

\* \* \*

A "lunatic fringe" of orthodox Catholics who have gained the attention of the Holy See are thwarting the renewal of the Church, according to Father Francis G. Morrissey, a canonist on the staff of St. Paul's University, Ottawa. He denounced Vatican oversight of the decisions of national episcopal conferences.

\* \* \*

A colleague of Father Morrissey, Father Barry Glendinning, is being sued for the sexual abuse of minors, after having been criminally convicted of the same offense in 1974. Despite his earlier conviction, Glendinning became an influential liturgist, teaching in several Canadian seminaries and at St. Paul's University. He was formerly chairman of the Archdiocese of Toronto Liturgical Commission.

\* \* \*

St. Sebastian's Angels, a web site for homosexual priests, has been closed by orders of Bishop Joseph J. Gerry of Portland (Me.). One of its organizers, Father John Harris, has been relieved of his pastoral responsibilities and another, Father Antone Caron, has been suspended from the priesthood. The site was discovered by the Roman Catholic Faithful, an organization in Springfield (Ill.)

Over a period of months priests of various religious orders in various parts of the world

"chatted" about their sexual adventures and fantasies and about the difficulties of being a homosexual priest. The site also featured pornography.

Among its users was Auxiliary Bishop Reginald Cawcutt of Capetown, South Africa, who joked with other participants about sexual fantasies but later explained his participation as part of his pastoral work with homosexuals and said that he always advocated chastity. He denounced RCF as having committed a serious sin in making public its discovery and said that he received strong support from Catholics in South Africa, including Capetown Archbishop Lawrence Henry.

Participants in the site frequently attacked Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, whom they routinely referred to by such names as "Ratz" and "Der Fuhrer Oberts." One participant urged that homosexuals attempt to find the Cardinal's "Achilles' heel," in order to "bring him down," and Bishop Cawcutt revealed that he was praying that Pope John Paul II would die during his trip to Poland.

Another priest reported a rumor that CDF would issue a ruling that homosexuals are not to be ordained to the priesthood but said Cardinal Pio Laghi, former Papal Nuncio to the United States, assured the priest that other Curia officials would never allow such a ruling to be issued.

\* \* \*



At the beginning of Lent, Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles issued an official apology in the name of the Church to homosexuals, lesbians, Jews, Muslims, and victims of clerical sexual abuse. In his seven-page apology the cardinal criticized the Hollywood film industry for "stereotyping" Jews and Muslims and said many Catholics have fallen into the "sin of homophobia."

\* \* \*

Jim Curtan, a Los Angeles homosexual activist, has criticized Cardinal Mahony for the latter's support for a proposed California law to define marriage as between two heterosexual persons. Curtan asserted that Cardinal Mahony "had dined with us, employed us and on occasion honored us for our service to the Church" and presided at liturgies "where it was abundantly clear that many of us were in deeply committed unions."

\* \* \*

Mass *ad orientem* ("towards the East"), with priest and people facing in the same direction, is permitted under present Church rubrics, according to Cardinal Jorge Medina Estevez, president of the Holy See's Congregation for the Liturgy, and no disciplinary action can be imposed on priests who celebrate in that fashion. However, the claim that it is a more authentic position than Mass with the priest facing the people is erroneous, Cardinal Medina added.

Mass *ad orientem* has been forbidden by Bishop David Foley

of Birmingham (Ala.), who threatened to suspend any priest who engages in the practice. The only worshipping community known to have used the eastward position in the Birmingham Diocese was Our Lady of the Angels Monastery, whose abbess is Mother Angelica, head of the EWTN communications network. Mass in the monastery is now celebrated with the priest facing the congregation.

Bishop Foley has withdrawn his threat of disciplinary action and has praised Holy Angels Monastery for its spirit of obedience. However, he strongly criticized those who call into question the wisdom of post-conciliar liturgical practices, claiming that such people are guilty of "heresy" in that they deny that the Holy Spirit governs the actions of the Church's ordinary Magisterium. Those who criticize the way liturgy is celebrated in the United States are "Catholics in name only," according to Bishop Foley.

\* \* \*

Bishop Joseph Adamec of Altoona-Johnstown (Pa.) stated that American cardinals who have expressed concern about what they consider a diminution of Eucharistic piety, due in part to the placement of the tabernacle in churches, are being "overly emotional."

\* \* \*

The Diocese of Vancouver Island, Canada, has lost millions of dollars in bad investments of uncertain legality, according to Bishop Raymond Roussin, and now

faces financial crisis. The investments occurred during the episcopacy of Bishop Remi DeRoo, once the leading liberal in the Canadian hierarchy, and are being investigated, according to Bishop Roussin.

\* \* \*

In a letter to his priests, Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee predicted that his successor will require a good deal more "uniformity" in pastoral practice than he himself has been inclined towards. Admitting that "my generation" sometimes erred in implementing the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, he said he fears the "rigidity, rubricism, and fear of the gifts of individuals" of the present priestly generation.

\* \* \*

A retreat to be conducted by members of an admittedly lesbian and pro-abortion organization was canceled at the insistence of Bishop Paul S. Loverde of Arlington (Va.). The organization WATER (Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual) was to have conducted the retreat at the Dominican Retreat House near Washington. Bishop Loverde, alluding to the group's name, said that "If the water in the well is allowed to become polluted, no one should be surprised when the people who drink it become ill."

\* \* \*

The bishops of Quebec have issued an official statement calling on the Church to "learn from contemporary culture" and to eschew all forms of "authoritarianism." Bishop Roger Ebacher of Gatineau-Hull, one of the authors, acknowledged that the document is "different in tone" from the writings of John Paul II about modern culture but explained that "we didn't work out the theology." Dissident theologian Gregory Baum praised the bishops' statement.

★ ★ ★

After the Canadian bishops had given a general endorsement of an event called the World March for Women, a group of women participating in that event invaded Mary Queen of the World Cathedral in Montreal, spray-painted sacrilegious graffiti on the walls, scattered women's underwear, condoms, and sanitary napkins around the church, and committed other acts of vandalism. Police refused to charge the invaders with a "hate crime" but arrested three women on the charge of "unlawful assembly."

★ ★ ★

Loretto Sister Maureen Fiedler, a feminist dissenter from various official Church teachings, has begun a syndicated radio "talk show" to promote liberal religious ideas.

★ ★ ★

Two thirds of Americans view the Catholic religion favorably and one fourth are anti-Catholic,

according to the Gallup Poll. Evangelical Protestants are less likely than other groups to be anti-Catholic, while those most likely to harbor the prejudice have little or no religious affiliation of their own. Americans in general are much less favorable to Protestant Fundamentalism than they are to Catholics, according to the Gallup organization. Politically, Republicans are the least anti-Catholic and self-styled independents the most.

★ ★ ★

The Society of St. John Cantius has been officially approved by the Archdiocese of Chicago as a new religious community. The society, which has its headquarters in St. John Cantius parish, will teach its members to celebrate the liturgy according to both the Tridentine rite and the Novus Ordo. It was founded with seven members.

★ ★ ★

Dialoguing in the French newspaper *La Croix*, Cardinal Ratzinger defended the need for fidelity to Catholic tradition, while Cardinal Pierre Eyt of Bordeaux urged further doctrinal and disciplinary changes and accused Cardinal Ratzinger of nostalgia for a supposed "golden age." Cardinal Eyt endorsed the views of Cardinal Carlo Montini of Milan, leader of the liberal faction of bishops at the Synod for Europe last year, who called for "shared governance" in the Church at all levels.

★ ★ ★

Bishop Raymond A. Lucker of New Ulm (Mn.) praised Pope Pius XII as a "holy man" and said the Pope had been a vigorous defender of Jews and other persecuted groups. Bishop Lucker also praised the Pope for initiating certain "advances" in Catholic thought but faulted him for "not going far enough."

★ ★ ★

Father Richard McBrien, professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, urged Catholic scholars to ignore any attempt to require them to obtain a "mandate" under the terms of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, the newly approved official document concerning Catholic higher education.

★ ★ ★

Robert Swope, a writer for *The Hoya*, student newspaper at Jesuit Georgetown University, was dismissed from the paper after he wrote an article criticizing a campus performance of a lesbian play called "Vagina Monologues."

At Villanova University in Philadelphia, an Augustinian institution, authorities suppressed an independent student paper, the *Conservative Column*, after the paper published a parody advertisement calling attention to the fact that a bank with an automatic teller machine on campus contributes money to Planned Parenthood.

★ ★ ★

Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit strongly endorsed a proposed law which would impose fines on any employer, including churches, which refuse to hire homosexuals. The initiative, which was introduced in the Detroit suburb of Ferndale, was defeated in a popular vote. The Archdiocese of Detroit remained officially neutral on the proposal.

★ ★ ★

A meeting with Vatican officials left substantially unchanged the structure and practices of the Fraternity of St. Peter, a community of priests dedicated to celebrating the Tridentine rite. The meeting was called after Fraternity members in France complained to the Holy See about certain practices of the community.

The major change which came from the meeting was that Fraternity members are now permitted on Holy Thursday to concelebrate the Mass of the Chrism with their local bishops, a practice which was formerly forbidden by the order. ☩



## New Catholic Fortnightly Journal, *Nova Et Vetera*, Starts Its Second Publishing Cycle

John H. Cleland, an associate member of the Fellowship, announces the release of *Nova et Vetera*, a Chicago-based Catholic fortnightly paper he edits. This issue just published highlights some papers presented at the last convention of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars.

*Nova Et Vetera* is an independent lay-edited Catholic periodical that seeks a readership of Christians, Jews, and other believers who find time to read broadly for pleasure. Essays on current issues are often at the intersection of faith and culture, including politics and higher education.

We publish poetry and fiction, again for reading pleasure and to explore the moral and spiritual dimensions of modern life.

In conjunction with the release of the paper, Corporate Writing Alliance together with Chicago Net Works, Inc. has released its interactive website: NOVA ET VETERA.COM ([www.novaetvetera.com](http://www.novaetvetera.com)) The website offers the current issue, archived issues, links to other religious websites AND includes a complimentary copy of its first issue (Vol II, No.1, 5 May 2000).

The editor invites FCS members to read and subscribe to *Nova et Vetera*. The journal welcomes reader correspondence and unsolicited manuscripts. The N&V address is P.O. Box 25136, Chicago, Illinois 60625. Subscriptions are also taken by telephone 773.539.9252.

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**Daniel McInerny** has been named director of the Center for Thomistic Studies and chair of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Saint Thomas in Houston. McInerny holds the B.A. from Notre Dame and the M.A. and Ph.D. from The Catholic University of America. He has been on the faculty at St. Thomas for six years. Information on the Center and Department can be obtained from [mac@basil.stthom.edu](mailto:mac@basil.stthom.edu).

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## Membership Matters

Rev. Thomas F. Dailey, OSFS  
Executive Secretary

Recently our Board of Officers and Directors met to discuss matters of on-going importance to the Fellowship. Among their deliberations, the following can be noted:

- The Fellowship is in good stead with regard to *finances*. The 1999 convention incurred a “loss” in terms of budgets, but all agreed that the program was well worth the expense!
- New *membership* is on the rise. At this meeting, 55 new members were elected, bringing the total of currently paid members to 938 worldwide. We are currently in the midst of renewal of dues, and all members are urged to pay their dues on time. (Please note: while dues may be paid by providing credit card information, only Visa or MasterCard payments can be processed.)
- A new edition of the *Membership Directory* is being prepared. Only those members whose payment of dues is current will be listed. Members of the FCS can obtain a print or disk version of the *Directory* for the cost of producing and mailing it.
- The *1998 Proceedings* (on Science and Faith) and the new FCS Reader (entitled *The Battle for the Catholic Mind*) should now be available from St. Augustine’s Press. The *1999 Proceedings* (on Marriage, Public Policy, and the Common Good) is in preparation for publication in the Fall. All members whose

annual payment of dues are current receive a copy of the *Proceedings* from that year as part of their membership. Additional copies of the *Proceedings* may be obtained for a reasonable cost.

- The *2000 Convention* has been set for September 22-24 at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Atlanta. The theme of the convention, which is being chaired by Msgr. William Smith, is “The Achievement of Pope John Paul II.” Registration for the convention is once again being handled by the Ministry Development Group (Jack and Marlene Rook), who can be contacted by phone at 740-282-4005 or by email at [jrook@ministrydg.com](mailto:jrook@ministrydg.com). Further information will be mailed to all currently paid members in the early part of the summer.
- An *election of new Directors* will take place during the summer of 2000. Ballots will be sent to all “regular” members whose payment of dues is current by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Four new Directors will be elected to serve a three-year term of office.
- Our *website* (<http://www4.allencol.edu/~philtheo/FCS>) features a new addition — an index to recent volumes of the *FCS Quarterly*, along with the text of the “President’s Page” from each of these issues.
- Members of the Fellowship continue to be engaged in a variety of activities that promote Catholic scholarship. Some of the more recent include:  
**Msgr. John F. McCarthy**, director of the Society of the Oblates of Wisdom, has moved the headquarters for *Living Tradition* and for

the *Sedes Sapientiae Study Center* to Ponce, Puerto Rico.

In addition to presenting the internationally renowned Gifford Lectures, **Prof. Ralph McInerny** continues his prolific writing in a new venue. He is one of the featured columnists on the “belief” website sponsored by CNN. His work can be accessed at [http://www.belief.net/author/author\\_112.html](http://www.belief.net/author/author_112.html).

Another Internet connection comes from **Mr. Richard Rolwing**. You can download for free the first chapter of his new book, entitled *The US Constitution: A Natural Law Perspective* (<http://www.galaxymall.com/books/liberty>).

Finally, a new venture from Ave Maria Communications — “Tiber River” — is up and running. Its mission is “to use the Internet to make great Catholic books available and help every individual person get the books that are right for their needs.” It offers “experts in the Catholic community to evaluate and recommend Catholic books,” among whom are some of our members: **Dr. Scott Hahn, Rev. Ronald Lawler, OFM Cap, Dr. Janet Smith, and Fr. Kris Stubna**. The site can be accessed at <http://www.TiberRiver.org>

Questions about any Membership Matters, or information about activities, should be directed to the Office of the Executive Secretary (call 610-282-1100 ext. 1464 or fax to 610-282-2254 or send email to: [tfd0@email.allencol.edu](mailto:tfd0@email.allencol.edu)). ✠

# First World Meeting of University Professors “The University for a New Humanism”

SEPTEMBER 4-10, 2000

Sponsored by the CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION,  
the PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE, and the DIOCESE OF ROME

**September 4-8, 2000:** Congresses in the Holy Land and Assisi, Benevento, Bologna, Campobasso, Cassino, Chieti, Fiuggi, Florence, L'Aquila, Messian, Milan, Modena, Naples, Orvieto, Rimini, Rome, Sassari, Urbino, Viterbo

**September 9-10, 2000:** Events in Rome include meeting with the Holy Father at which a summary of results from the congresses will be presented; penitential celebrations in the Roman Basilicas, and a Holy Jubilee Mass celebrated by the Holy Father.

## List of Congresses

### **A. The Human Person: Genealogy, Biology, Biography**

Man: Image, Way, Destiny; Metaphysics Towards the 3rd Millennium; The Human Genome; The Architecture of Mind and Brain; The World of Children; Individual and Collective Rights; Human Rights in a Legal and Bioethical Perspective; The Condition of Women; Sacred and Profane Time; Secular and Christian Idea of Time Between Past and Future.

### **B. The City of Man: Society-Environment-Economy**

The University and Global Society; The Religious Phenomenon Today: Tradition, Change and Negation; Children and Family in the 3rd Millennium; Human Development in a Local and Urban Context; The World of Handicapped People; Neurological Emergencies: From the Hospital to Social Reintegration; Alcohol, the Individual and Society; Humanizing Tourism; Information, Values and Democracy; The Origin of Law; The Problem of Penalty in Law; Towards a New World Order: The Union of Peoples beyond Differences; The Environment; Food Production & Quality of Life; North-South Relations in the 21st-century World Economy; Unemployment & Poverty; Globalization & Diversity: Development, Equity and Democracy for a New Humanism.

### **C. The Vision of the Sciences: Discoveries, Technologies, Applications**

The University as a Bridge between Technology & Society; The Origin of Life; Science & Knowledge: Towards which Rationality are we Directed?; The Frontiers of Physics; Seismic & Volcanic Risks; Cities & the Use of Space; Computer Science and Information Technology for the Next Century; Care-taking in the Era of Advanced Technology; Bionics for Man in the 3rd Millennium; Ethical Problems in Clinical Experimentation; Aging; Technological Changes in Gynecology; Man & Neoplastic Diseases: Oncological Surgery.

### **D. Creativity and Memory: Fine Arts, Literature, Music and Drama**

The Monk, the Book, & the Library; The Image of Man: The Crisis of the Humanistic Tradition; Time & Eternity; Linguistics and Literary Itineraries Between the 1st and 3rd Millennium; Literature & Sports; Church & History: History and Churches— Paths in the History of Christianity; Christian Humanism in Mediterranean History; St. Peter in the Sources of the Middle Ages; Religious Architecture in the 3rd Millennium; Ecclesia Urbis: Paleo-Christian & Late Medieval Churches in Rome; Art & Architecture of the Image of God in Rome: Theology & the History of Art; Christianity: A Perennial Source of Inspiration for the Arts.

**For more information contact:** CENTRAL OFFICE FOR TECHNICAL ORGANIZATION  
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*Common Truths: New Perspectives on Natural Law*

Edited by Edward B McLean

ISI Books, 2000

ISBN 1-882926-35-8

345 pages (includes index),  
\$24.95

Reviewed by Richard S. Myers

Natural law is, if nothing else, responsible for a minor publishing boom.

In a recent review essay (in the *Weekly Standard*) of eight new books on natural law, J.

Budziszewski noted that at least twenty-six books published in the United States in the last two years have "natural law" in their titles.

There are a number of explanations for this revival of scholarship in natural law, the most persuasive of which is the recognition of the bankruptcy of modern liberalism.

In its legal manifestation, modern liberalism is best represented by the "thought" expressed in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), where the United States Supreme Court stated: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life." Some constitutional scholars have read *Casey*, with some justification I might add, as supporting the idea that moral relativism is a constitutional command. As *Casey* itself makes clear, this line of thinking leads to the institutionalization of the culture of death.

The return to natural law is an answer to the culture of death. This volume—*Common Truths: New Perspectives on Natural Law*—is part of this effort to answer our current crisis by recovering the

enduring wisdom of the natural law tradition.

The book is a collection of essays that were first delivered as part of the Goodrich Lecture Series at Wabash College, where Edward B. McLean holds the Eugene N. and Martin C. Beesley Chair in Political Science.

McLean has assembled an interesting set of essays by a distinguished group of participants. I think it is fair to say that any volume that contains papers by Ralph McInerny, J. Rufus Fears, John Jenkins, C.S.C., Timothy Fuller, Alasdair MacIntyre, Virginia Black, Robert P. George, Russell Hittinger, Janet E. Smith, the late Edward J. Murphy, William N. Riley, Ian A. T. McLean, and Charles E. Rice will be well worth reading. This volume does not disappoint.

The volume consists of three major parts. It begins with an introductory essay by Ralph McInerny ("Are There Moral Truths That Everyone Knows?") and ends with an essay by Charles E. Rice ("Natural Law in the Twenty-First Century"). The three principal parts address Natural Law and History, various Topics in Natural Law Theory, and the Praxis of Natural Law.

One of the real attractions of this book is its overall tone of "rationality." The essays are written with the expectation that the reasoning employed is understandable and that it has the power to persuade one who reads the arguments with an open mind. As Ralph McInerny states in his introductory essay, the theory of "[n]atural law maintains that there is a common fund of

knowledge, truths we can assume that everyone—anyone—already knows." (p.1.) Alasdair MacIntyre (in his contribution, "Theories of Natural Law in the Culture of Advanced Modernity") maintains that every natural law theory agrees "that our human nature is such that, as rational beings, we cannot but recognize that obedience to some particular set of precepts is required, if we are to achieve our good or goods, a recognition that is primarily expressed in our practice and only secondarily in our explicit formulation of precepts." (p. 94.) As the essays in this book demonstrate, natural law states "common truths;" it is an appeal to "common sense"—a wisdom "that all plain persons have within themselves the capacity to understand." (p. 92.)

In all of this, I was reminded of Pope John Paul II's great encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, which is an affirmation of the greatness of reason. When many have lost confidence in the ability of reason to say anything of meaning, to say something true, the Pope makes an impassioned defense of reason. The whole encyclical affirms that "the human being can come to a unified and organic vision of knowledge" based upon "the human capacity to know the truth."

The modern separation of faith and reason has, paradoxically, resulted in the loss of the dignity of reason. As Cardinal Ratzinger, in his reflections on *Fides et Ratio*, stated: "the modern attitude reveals at the same time a false humility and a false presumption: a false humility that does not recognize in the human person the capacity for the truth; a false pre-



sumption by which one places oneself above things, above truth itself, while at the same time making the extension of one's power, one's domination over things, the objective of one's thought." In the face of this modern attitude, it is the intention of *Fides et Ratio* and in its own way it is the goal of *Common Truths* to encourage us all to have fresh confidence in the capacity of reason to find the truth.

Another strength of this volume is its effectiveness in debunking certain pervasive myths about natural law. One recurrent myth about natural law is that it is a "Catholic" concept—and hence that appeals to natural law in our public life violate the separation of church and state. J. Rufus Fears's lengthy essay (37 pages—the longest in the volume) on "Natural Law: The Legacy of Greece and Rome" is particularly strong in destroying this myth. His essay is an extremely valuable "general survey of the idea of natural law in Greco-Roman antiquity" (p. 50 n.4), and should serve as a decisive refutation of the notion that natural law was something invented by a Dominican friar in the thirteenth century.

Another idea that this volume debunks is that natural law is a threat to liberty, that it is an oppressive doctrine that will be used to impose a "sectarian" conception of morality. This idea is debunked in two ways. First, certain essays—particularly those by Robert P. George and Russell Hittinger—reveal that natural law often has a very modest scope. George's essay ("Natural Law and Positive Law"), for example, is quite good in rebutting the argu-

ment that people need to worry that judges who believe in natural law will try to enforce it from the bench. As George makes clear, the question of whether judges have the power to invoke the natural law in their decision making is not a question to which natural law provides the answer. The proper judicial role in this regard is one that each legal system must decide on its own as a matter of positive law. Russell Hittinger's essay ("Natural Rights and the Limits of Constitutional Law") also is characterized by a degree of humility about the scope of natural law. As Hittinger describes, "[the] framers and ratifiers of the U. S. Constitution certainly believed in natural rights." (p. 189.) Yet, these principles were not directly written into the Constitution. Instead, the Constitution protected liberty primarily by structural mechanisms—separation of powers at the national level, with a national government of enumerated powers, and federalism. Moreover, Hittinger explains why it might make sense to avoid trying to incorporate "abstract principles of justice or of natural rights" (p. 180) directly into the Constitution. As Hittinger summarizes the point: "The framers understood that from unbounded individual liberty comes despotism and that one of the best ways to limit the despotic tendencies of government is to eschew broad and unspecified rights claims." (p. 190.)

Second, many of the essays make the point that, contrary to what modern culture fears, natural law is ultimately protective of human liberty. Charles E. Rice's

essay, echoing the writings of Pope John Paul II, is a particularly good summation of this view. Without a belief in objective moral norms, it is impossible to limit the pretensions of the modern state. Without an understanding of the link between freedom and truth, governments that purport to protect human rights often actually represent grave threats to liberty.

Other essays that are worthy of note include Timothy Fuller's contribution ("John Locke's Reflections on Natural Law and the Character of the Modern World") and Janet E. Smith's paper ("Natural Law and Sexual Ethics"). Smith's essay, which is a helpful effort to apply natural law to concrete moral issues in the realm of sexual ethics, is the best of the essays on the practice of natural law. The others—on contract law, tort law, and criminal law—are less successful.

In sum, this volume is a welcome addition to the growing literature on natural law. The book is an extremely accessible introduction to the wisdom of natural law. I doubt if the members of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars will find much "new" in this offering, but if one is looking for a readable survey of this field (perhaps in a class for undergraduates who are being introduced to natural law), this book is a great place to start. ✠

*Richard S. Myers is professor of law at Ave Maria School of Law.*

*El fundamento antropológico de la filosofía política y moral en Thomas Hobbes*, Maria L. Lukac de Stier, Buenos Aires: Universidad Católica Argentina, 1999, 336 pages.

Already during his lifetime Hobbes was the subject of much controversy. The debate about the merits of his work has continued until the present moment. Some historians charge Hobbes with destroying constitutional government, religious authority and traditional ethics, while others consider him one of the pillars of modern thought. Since Hobbes is not always very clear, uses such terms as law, will, nature, etc., in a sense differing from their generally received meaning, occasionally modifies his views or is inconsistent, interpretations of the precise meaning of his theories often differ. Several commentators study only Hobbes' political theories. Prof. Lukac has the merit of looking for their foundation in his anthropology. She not only stresses that according to Hobbes men are driven by a "perpetual and restless desire of power after power," but highlights some central theses of his philosophy of nature insofar as they influenced his political theory: Hobbes' idea of causality as mere efficient causality, his materialism (reality is nothing but bodies in movement), his applying the mechanical model to the human mind, his theory that the acts of the will are caused by something external to it. Hobbes wished to formulate a

method that with mathematical certitude allows people to live in safety. The analyses of the author do not provoke much admiration for the depth of Hobbes' thought.

Passing to his political theories Prof. Lukac shows that both man's natural condition and natural state, as Hobbes describes them, are not the result of an analysis of a historical stage of human life, but an abstraction based on the conduct of people in our societies (p. 110). However, human passions are caused by impressions by outside objects, as are the acts of the will. Free acts are always necessary; they are only free insofar as there are no obstacles. Man makes his own well-being the source of all his actions. Lukac points out that this egoism, combined with mechanism, excludes any real love other than self-love (p. 185). There is no supreme good; happiness consists in moving from one object to another. Every action is indifferent as to moral value; justice is the execution of the contract one has made. By his nature man is disposed to combat his fellow-men. What Hobbes calls laws of nature are considerations of what is conducive to the preservation of life; these laws are subject to civil law.

Taking into account the various interpretations of a vast array of students of Hobbes, Lukac deals with the difficult subject of "giving up one's rights" to a leader, representation and authorization, concepts by means of which Hobbes attempts to explain how people yield their

rights to the sovereign, whose sovereignty is characterized by irrevocability. There is no contract between the sovereign and the citizens (as is often mistakenly assumed). The latter mutually agree to submit themselves to receive protection in exchange for total obedience. The sovereign is also entirely free in conducting foreign policy, for which there are no moral rules whatsoever. Hobbes attempted to conceive a system in which the sovereign himself is free from observing the law and concentrates legislative, executive and judicial power in his own person, absorbing also religious authority. Hobbes' concern was to devise a method to avoid civil war on the basis of an undiluted materialism and the abandonment of traditional ethics. He appears not to have noticed the fact that the sovereign may also be a power hungry man who is likely to look after his own advantage more than after that of the people who entrusted themselves to him in order to find some safety and an orderly life.

The reader is grateful to Prof. Lukac for showing how Hobbes' materialism impregnates a great part of his political philosophy.

*Leo J. Elders, S.V.D.  
Kerkrade, The Netherlands*



# THE GREAT JUBILEE AND THE CULTURE OF LIFE

An International Conference at Queens' College,  
Cambridge, U.K. • July 3-6, 2000

Organized by: *The Linacre Centre for Healthcare Ethics, London, U.K.*

With sponsorship from: *The Ave Maria School of Law, Ann Arbor, Michigan, U.S.A. •*

*The Culture of Life Foundation, Washington, DC, U.S.A.*

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*The Great Jubilee, the culture of death and the culture of life.*
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*Faith in the Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of Jesus and the culture of life.*
- **Dr. Katerina Fedoryka Cuddeback**  
*The global lineaments of the culture of death.*
- **Rev. Dr. Dermott Fenlon**  
*Christianity in Britain, the development of secularism and the culture of death.*
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- **Archbishop George Pell**  
*The role of the bishop in promoting the culture of life.*
- **Rev. Dr. Richard Hogan**  
*The role of the priest in promoting the culture of life.*
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## Best-Laid Plans

**F**ather Robert Spitzer, President of Gonzaga University, recently canceled a scheduled appearance of a Planned Parenthood official on his campus. The predictable reactions ensued. Spitzer's fellow Jesuit Thomas Reese, editor of *America*, spoke of the cancellation as an assault on academic freedom. Reese saw the ban is an admission that Gonzaga has failed in its task to produce a student body mature enough to listen to anything and judge for itself.

This typical misunderstanding of academic freedom was effectively countered by Father Spitzer. Of course any issue can be discussed in the academy, but PP is an advocacy group and abortion provider. It is all too true that Catholic students are ill-equipped against the forces of the Culture of Death. How many have been taught a moral outlook at variance with the *zeitgeist*? How many have heard the Catholic view on homosexuality, pre-marital sex, contraception, etc.? The late Ruth Pakaluk regularly demolished PP representatives in debate. That is the sort of confrontation Catholic students should hear. Meanwhile, Father Spitzer deserves our support. RM

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