

FELLOWSHIP OF CATHOLIC SCHOLARS QUARTERLY

30

NUMBER 3
FALL 2007

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ISSN 1084-3035

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

by Bernard Dobranski
*Dean and Professor of Law,
Ave Maria School of Law*

The recent document from the Vatican's *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* (CDF) stating that the one Church established by Christ "subsists" in the Roman Catholic Church is a reiteration of traditional belief. It holds that the Church is the perfect vehicle for salvation since it alone maintains the fullness of doctrine, the seven sacraments and a valid ministry transmitted by the apostles. This teaching is inclusive, honest and, above all, charitable: honest—since it is candid regarding what the Church believes; inclusive—since it states that other "ecclesial communions" though deficient in these, to a greater or lesser extent, offer sanctification insofar as they share in some of what Christ has revealed; and, charitable—since the Church offers what it has received to all humanity.

In the first instance this clarification is meant primarily for Catholics. Over the past forty years, since Vatican II, ecclesiology has become rather nebulous, often falling into indifferentism or relativism. How many times have you heard "One church is as good as another," or "As long as you are a good person, religion doesn't matter"? Too many times, I'm sure. These attitudes mock the truth of the Gospel which proclaims the *unicity* of Christ as savior and the oneness of the Church He instituted.

These issues are of primary importance, and need to be taught clearly in order to fulfill the Gospel's mandate to "Go out to all the world and tell the Good News." Pope Benedict has long recognized the importance of clarity on these matters, first as Prefect of the CDF in "Dominus Iesus" (2000) and later in his pre conclave address to the Cardinals in which he spoke of the "dictatorship of relativism" now gripping western society.

Secondly, far from the offense perceived

by many Protestants regarding the term “defective” used to describe their communities, or the Orthodox ire at Rome’s describing their Church as “wounded,” the teaching of the oneness of the Church is, in fact, cognizant of: the nuptial union with all who claim Christ as their savior; that other faith traditions do indeed possess some elements of Christian truth; and that only God determines who can be saved. Emphasizing these facts should be foremost in ecumenical dialogue. Triumphalism is certainly not the purpose for the clarification and reading it outside of the context of the spirit of ecumenism advanced by Vatican II can do irreparable damage to evangelization and even more so to good human relations.

Lastly, this document is loving and charitable. Though the Congregation’s explanation of the word “subsists” found in Vatican II’s ecclesiological document “Lumen Gentium” is, as I stated above, primarily for Catholics, it has always been recognized as a broadening view of ecclesiology and, in fact, represents a loving outreach on the part of the Father’s

of the Council, inviting others to share more fully in the Lord’s gifts to His Church. To be sure, Pope John Paul II’s now famous aphorism that the Church “proposes and does not impose” her teachings should be foremost in our minds and must guide all dialogue with non-Catholics. The clarification provides vital areas for ecumenical discussion. It further opens to our separated brothers and sisters the treasury of grace that Christ makes available to His people for their salvation. This candid approach not only allows truth to be shared, but also to be refined for the hearing and benefit of all. The fruitfulness of the “Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue” on *Justification by Faith* (1992), for example, has aided in a deeper appreciation by both groups of how salvation is procured.

With proper context, theological precision, and a sensitivity to the language and hearing of Catholics and non-Catholics, I believe that this clarification holds great promise in fulfilling Christ’s wish “That all maybe one.” ✠

Commencement Address at Assumption College *May 12, 2007*

by *Ralph McInerny*
Professor of Philosophy, University of Notre Dame

Fellow degree recipients, I congratulate you! Your parents congratulate you. The faculty congratulates you. Your student loan officer congratulates you. Now you know what it means to become poorer by degrees. This is a day when you look forward, beyond the campus, to your life ahead. That is why this ceremony is called Commencement rather than, say, Achievement, or Accomplishment or maybe At Last.

Just for a moment, however, I ask you to think back four years and a little more when you were deciding where you would go to college. Memory is a generous faculty. Mark Twain said that while many complained that their memories weakened as they got older, his became better and better. Once he had

only remembered things that actually had happened. You are likely to recall a cool, rational decision that landed you here at Assumption. But you know it was murkier. Not just throwing a dart, maybe, but to some large degree a shot in the dark. It was one of the wisest choices you ever made, so take credit for it. It was no doubt providential.

Over the last decades books devoted to the muddled condition of higher education in this country have multiplied. Shelves groan under their burden. Their general argument is that our colleges and universities have become ideological battlefields; a generalized skepticism runs through the faculty, students are pulled this way and that. Speakers are denied access to campuses or when they get there, are pelted with verbal and other garbage. A campus not far from my own was enraged that a justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Alito, had been named commencement

speaker. It doesn't matter which one it was. It is as if students have been taught not to listen. Odd. I am assuming there were no riots here when you learned that I was to speak today.

From Alan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* to the recent book co-authored by former presidents of two prestigious universities, we have been told that higher education is a mess. The first casualty is the very concept of truth, that there are things that are so independently of our making them so.

There is another shelf of books, these about Catholic institutions, which tell of what is called secularization. By this is meant the "pell-mell" effort to erase the difference between what we should be doing according to our mission statements and those universities, which are regarded as the pace-setters of higher education.

There is deep irony in this. At the very time that we are being told of the confusion, even chaos, in those prestigious universities, many have argued that Catholic colleges must become more like them. When you chose to come to Assumption, you may have been completely unaware of this controversy. That is why your coming here can be regarded as providential. Now of course you know something of that controversy, but you have acquired an intellectual and spiritual context in which to consider it.

Let me tell you a story. For many years, I served as director of the Jacques Maritain Center at the University of Notre Dame. Who was Jacques Maritain? For Catholic intellectuals of my generation, Maritain and his wife Raissa were models of what we wanted to be. Maritain was a Catholic philosopher, he was one of the great interpreters of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas in the twentieth century. The story I wish to tell is of how he and his wife became, first, Catholics, and then Thomists.

Raissa recounts it in the memoir she wrote in New York where the couple spent World War II. Many years before, when they were young, students at the Sorbonne in Paris, they fell in love and planned to marry. The prospect of marriage concentrates the mind. They began to reflect on the deep implications of the courses they were taking.

The assumption of those courses, they came to feel, was that human beings are collections of matter, however intricate, pretty much like everything else in the cosmos, randomly formed, destined to have a brief career and then, poof, cease to be altogether. Whatever materials entered into their composition, were dispersed, and that was that. Death was the definitive end of the story.

A question formed itself in their minds, but it wasn't simply an abstract question. If life was only what they were told it was, what difference did it make what they did? What difference did it make if their duration was long or short? They came to think that if life is absurd, there was little point in going on with it. They made what amounted to a suicide pact. If within the course of a year they could not find an answer to the meaning of life, they would check out.

This realization came to them as they were walking in the *Jardin des plantes* in Paris, a pleasant enough setting. They were eminently successful as students. But what did success mean if they were just random collections of electrons or whatever which would disintegrate?

The way out of the woods for them was a novel by a man they had never heard of hitherto. Leon Bloy. The novel was called *La femme pauvre*, *The Woman who was Poor*. They read it with fascination and the summarizing sentence of the story burned itself into their minds. There is only one tragedy, not to be a saint.

A saint? What did that mean? Whatever it meant, it was clear that it provided an answer to their question. They visited the author, they became friends, and eventually he acted as their godfather when they became Catholics.

In contrast to a godless, reductively materialist world stood the great truth that there is a God, that we are His creatures, that the ultimate point of life is to love and serve Him and be happy with him forever after death.

Did Maritain turn away from learning as something incompatible with the faith he had been given? Not at all. That is where Thomas Aquinas entered the picture. In Thomas, Maritain found one of the most effective blends of faith and reason, of philosophy and

theology, of the life of the mind and the spiritual life.

In recent years, John Paul II in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio* and Benedict XVI, notably in his lecture at Regensburg, have drawn our attention to this rock bottom teaching. To know something and to believe something are different acts, but they are complementary. Faith is not the repudiation of reason. Nor is reason, properly used, at odds with religious belief.

It is of course easy just to say that. Showing that it is the case is the most fundamental aim of Catholic higher education. We stand in a long tradition of efforts to show the compatibility of faith and reason. Each generation must take up that question anew, find inspiration in previous efforts, and establish it in new circumstances.

The greatest scientists believed in God. They would have been startled to hear that physics entails that God does not exist. It may not be the task of science to prove that he exists, which is why they do not disprove it either.

Whatever has been your major field—business, economics, political science, history, physics, chemistry or biology, philosophy or theology, literature—you have had the enormous advantage of pursuing it in the ambience of the faith, in the awareness that there is a God and we are His creatures. The life of learning folds into and becomes an integral part of the life you were living before you came here, have been living here and, with the grace of God, will continue to lead when you go out from here.

The assumption of learning at Assumption is, in many ways, counter-cultural, against some heavy currents of our time. We live in a time when there is confusion about the very point of there being men and women. When human life is thought to be something we fashion, can manipulate, can destroy at will. Abortion and euthanasia, for many of our contemporaries, are fundamental human rights. There are efforts to expunge all talk of God from public life. In the minds of some, religious belief is a menace to freedom. Moral truths, which made up the very fiber and sinew of our society are questioned by many.

This is the atmosphere in which you must live your lives. Recognition of the secularizing tendency

of the times should not call for nostalgia for the past. It should not bring on apocalyptic scenarios, as if we should huddle on hillsides and await the end. It is no accident that God has created you to live in these times. The challenges before you are serious but they are exciting. It sometimes seems that the only voice insisting on the power of human reason is that of the Holy Father.

Our minds were made in order to know the truth, about the world, about ourselves, about our destination. Recognition that there is a God to whom we are answerable is not confined to those with religious faith. Sometimes people are surprised at the attention that such thinkers as Thomas Aquinas paid to the thought of pagan philosophers, particularly to Aristotle. But it was Aristotle who, in the fourth century B.C., fashioned a proof for the existence of God that retains its persuasiveness today.

St. Paul, speaking to the pagan Romans, having mentioned their many moral faults, said that they were inexcusable. Why? Because men can from the things that are made come to knowledge of the invisible things of God. To know that there is a God is to know that we are his creatures and answerable to him.

That natural or philosophical knowledge of God becomes, for the believer, part of the far more comprehensive vision. By faith we know ever so much more of God than was dreamt of by the philosophers. These are things you have come to know here. They represent a precious capital on which you can draw throughout your lives and to which many of you will make contributions.

William Wordsworth, speaking of the tumult and confusion raised by the French Revolution, wrote: Bliss was it in that day to be alive, and very heaven to be young.

And so it is with you today, Thank God that you are living in these times, that you are young and equipped to live and to live well in cultural circumstances unlike those faced by previous generations. And I commend to you what the Maritains found in Leon Bloy and which became the motto of their lives. There is only one tragedy, not to be a saint. ✠

The Enemy at Home: The Cultural Left and Its Responsibility for 9/11

By Dinesh D'Souza. New York: Doubleday, 2007. HB. 333 pages. \$26.95.

Reviewed by Kenneth D. Whitehead
Member of the Board and retired US Government
Assistant Secretary of Education

This book argues that the principal reason that Islamist extremists have declared war on America as “the enemy” and “the great Satan,” and have perpetrated such outrages as the murder of some 3000 American civilians on 9/11 simply because they were Americans, goes back to the fact that today’s secularized and morally decadent America is perceived by the Islamists as already aggressively at war with the traditional religion and morality in which Muslims believe. When they look at America, many Muslims do not see anything they think resembles “one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all.” Nor do they see much value in the “democracy” which America claims to be practicing and promoting. Rather, they see an America of apparently unlimited abortions, crime, divorce, permissiveness, pornography, promiscuity, radical feminism, and sexual deviancy—all relentlessly promoted around the world, not merely by Hollywood and popular American culture, but even by the U.S. Government itself through such things as its international population control and contraceptive promotion programs. They see, in short, a culture which seems to them both degraded and degrading, but which America nevertheless seems bent upon trying to impose upon the world, in particular the Muslim world.

Americans engaged in what we have come to call the culture wars are well aware of the undoubted evils in American life, of course, and many Americans are attempting to combat them. In no way, however, do most Americans imagine that these evils could possibly *define* America. Unfortunately, though, many Muslims around the world apparently have come to

believe that these evils precisely *do* define an America which otherwise, as a great power, and heir to the colonial past of the West, is in any case seen by them as engaged in seeking to divide and subdue the Muslim world for the sake of its resources, especially oil. But many Muslims also now see America as systematically undermining morality and traditional Muslim ways of life around the world as well, and the radical Islamists among them believe they have to fight actively against these evils by attacking America itself. However, Americans themselves, by and large, have not linked together the threat to America coming from a ruthless and determined enemy prepared to employ terrorist methods in a war against her, and the threat to America coming over the past forty years or so from within, that is, from the progressive undermining, if not the actual abandonment, of many of the once almost universally accepted standards of morality, including especially the morality pertaining to sexual behavior and family integrity.

One of the most interesting features of this controversial and provocative book is the way in which its author, Hoover Institution research scholar Dinesh D'Souza, does link these phenomena together. He identifies a segment of American society, which he calls “the cultural left,” which favors and champions and promotes as a new kind of “freedom” the moral decadence that undeniably has come upon America, and he sees this American cultural left as a principal cause thereby of turning America into a target for terrorist attacks. He provides copious examples and citations showing how what the American cultural left celebrates as untrammelled new freedoms, the Islamists loathe and abhor as gross and offensive instances of the immorality which they see America systematically trying to spread around the world, including in predominantly Muslim lands.

The correspondences which he shows between what the American cultural left undeniably believes and promotes, and what the extremist Islamists think they are obliged to fight against, may not quite add

up to the conclusion that the American cultural left is actually “responsible” for 9/11, as the author claims. That, after all, still represents quite a considerable stretch. Certainly, the basic belief itself of at least some Muslims that they are obliged to fight actively and aggressively against certain things they oppose plays a hugely significant part in the current jihad going on against America. Certainly too, the conviction of at least a fringe element among the Muslims that violent and immoral suicide attacks against non-combatants, are perfectly legitimate means in any war, has again surely been an indispensable element in creating the current situation that we face in the “war on terror.”

Nevertheless, American readers may be surprised at how much what the author shows here to be the opinions taken for granted by the American left are precisely the things which the radical Islamists regularly and expressly *say* they object to about America—and which they claim they need to fight against by attacking America itself as “the enemy.”

Another phenomenon which the author succeeds in making a strong case for is his contention that the American cultural left more or less favors, or at the very least is not outraged by, many of the blows that have been inflicted upon America by the jihadists. The author explains this by pointing out that these blows are not so much seen as being inflicted upon America as they are seen as being inflicted upon the Religious Right or the Bush Administration—themselves seen as “the enemy” by the American cultural left. Similarly, defeat in Iraq is not seen in these same quarters as a defeat for America, but rather as a defeat for the Bush Administration—for which Bush can be, and is being, blamed. (The Iraq failure is actually regarded as a huge boon for the American cultural left: if they did not have this club to beat Bush with, it is not clear what other club they might use that would be nearly as effective.)

While it might at first seem strange and counter-intuitive to imagine that American leftists and even many American liberals are now somehow “allied,” even in a *de facto* sense, with the extremist Muslims and terrorists fighting America, the key here, for author Dinesh D’Souza, is that both are, in a broad sense, engaged against the same enemy. The American

cultural left is fighting against the traditional morality once taken for granted in American society and hence still part of a discarded brand of “Americanism.” But the jihadists too are fighting against what they currently see as “Americanism.” And at the moment, of course, both are fighting against the Bush Administration, currently seen as embodying so much of what both camps hate and fear. So the resulting *de facto* “alliance” is not really as strange as may have appeared at first sight.

Yet American leftists and liberals, of all people, surely cannot really favor or even tolerate jihadists whose declared ultimate aim is to impose *sharia* law everywhere they can. D’Souza does not dodge this issue: the key for him is that the jihadists want to impose *sharia* law in distant lands, while the American cultural left thinks the Bush Administration wants to impose *sharia*—or what the American cultural left considers its equivalent—*here!*

Yes: the American cultural left is actually fearful—the author cites many examples—that what objectively are the few and mostly half-hearted efforts by the current Republican Administration to advance causes considered “moral” or “religious”—e.g., to bar partial-birth abortion, oppose so-called “same-sex marriage,” or appoint strict constructionists judges—represent imminent threats portending that all the liberal and radical social gains of the past generation are now in danger of being rolled back. The author assembles and quotes numerous cries of alarm from the left in this mode. Most of us are already familiar with some of these attitudes. Books and articles are currently being written, for example, warning of the dangers to “democracy” coming from the Religious Right and the “theocrats”; liberal media people regularly decry these same trends. Most readers of D’Souza’s book, however, will probably be bemused and even astounded by the sheer radical wrong-headedness and near hysteria of some of the examples collected by the author and quoted here. Do these radicals even live in the same country as the rest of us?

Most knowledgeable Christians, for example, have long been aware of how really minimalist the Bush Administration and other levels of government have been in seriously upholding or defending the traditional (Christian) morality, which for some years

now has been quite effectively shredded before our eyes in America today. Most of the president's occasional lapses into religious talk, for example, as when he declared that Jesus was his favorite "philosopher," have been little more than that—just talk. He has mostly and quite consistently avoided taking sides in the current culture wars. He has quite pointedly never actually appeared at the annual January 22 March for Life on the Washington Mall, for example, but has been content with sending a recorded message. He has been extremely reticent and circumspect in actually defending traditional marriage (which he says he favors) in any concrete way. His Administration has approved the abortifacient "morning-after" pill for over-the-counter sales without prescriptions as if no moral principle at all were involved.

Many other instances could be cited of how this Administration fails to recognize that traditional morality is being undermined or abandoned in not a few of its policy decisions. Considering the alternatives, George W. Bush may be just about the best leader believers in traditional morality can hope for today, but that doesn't really amount to very much in practice. It is true that, as this is being written, the Bush White House has aroused itself from its customary deafening silence on the "social issues" to warn the new Democratic majority in Congress that the president will veto any attempt to reinstate such policies as federal funding for Meidcaid abortions or support for family-planning groups that also counsel or provide for abortions. This is gratifying and much appreciated; but it is no more than what Bush has consistently promised in order to gain and maintain pro-life support; and hence it is not wrong or unfair to continue to describe it as "minimalist."

American cultural leftists, however, see things quite differently. For them the relatively rare religious or moral opinions voiced by the president or anyone in his Administration mean that the sky is falling and that theocracy may be just around the corner—imminent. A woman's right to choose or a man's right to unlimited, untrammled pornography are surely now in possible immediate jeopardy. The mere advocacy of moral positions that virtually all of society took for granted forty or so years ago is today taken as evidence that the theocrats not only want to destroy "democracy," but are in fact well on the way to doing so.

Dinesh D'Souza, again, provides abundant examples of this kind of alarmist leftist thinking. For people in the leftist or liberal frame of mind, therefore, it cannot be all bad if the would-be theocrat in the White House suffers a deserved defeat in far-away Iraq; it would be even better, perhaps, if his long overdue political come-uppance could be administered to him here.

It is in this sense, then, that the American cultural left is indeed "allied" in more than a figurative sense with, among others, terrorists who are actively making war on the United States. Dinesh D'Souza may exaggerate his case, but he has a case. This is a serious book containing serious facts and arguments which deserve serious consideration, but which, for the most part, are not being brought out at all in most of the current reporting and discussion of the "war on terror" and related topics. Is it true or not that America's current moral decadence, always and inescapably on such vivid public display before the whole world, is one of the reasons for the abundantly verified Muslim "anger" against us? This question is generally simply not even asked. Although we are currently losing more Americans to legalized abortion *every day* than were lost to terrorist fury on 9/11, the issues related to the culture wars continue to be kept in separate compartments, wholly apart from those related to the "war on terror." Perhaps it is past time, though, to begin to consider these issues together. The Islamists do not hate us for our freedom, as the president so regularly declares; they hate us for what we have done in some cases with our freedom.

D'Souza argues, significantly, that both conservatives and liberals are basically wrong about the causes and the remedies for the war on terror. Conservatives, he thinks, are wrong to rush to judge Islam itself as the fundamental source of the violence. This, he thinks, is to help push the world's billion-plus Muslims, the great majority of whom are not violent, into the camp of the Islamists and jihadists, or at least into a position where it is harder for them openly to disavow and condemn the terror being carried out in the name of Islam, without appearing to repudiate Islam itself. D'Souza believes we should rather be seeking common ground with the great majority of Muslims. One of the ways he thinks we should do this is by doing a better job of presenting the real

America of true democracy and the rule of law—which most Muslims can identify with—rather than continuing to allow the radical, permissive America promoted by the American cultural left to dominate the picture.

“As conservatives,” D’Souza writes, “we should export our America. That means introducing in places in Iraq the principles of self-government, majority rule, minority rights, free enterprise, and religious toleration. But we must stop exporting the cultural left’s America. That means we should stop insisting on radical secularism, stop promoting the feminist conception of the family, stop trying to promote abortion and ‘sex education,’ and we should try and halt the export of the vulgar and corrupting elements of our popular culture.” (In calling for attempts to seek accommodation with non-violent Muslims, by the way, D’Souza is in no way buying in to the thesis of those who blandly inform us that Islam is a “peaceful religion”; he does not seem to be under any illusions that our terrorist enemies are anything but Muslims, while his main point is precisely that a segment of American society, the cultural left, is not only unwilling to defend America against these enemies but actually seeks accommodation with them.)

On the other hand, D’Souza thinks the liberals fall woefully short in imagining that such things as American troops in Iraq or American support for Israel are the true “causes” of the Muslim anger and the jihad against America. His treatment of foreign policy questions in this book is quite well done, in fact. He correctly identifies as the catastrophe it has proved to be the policy of the liberal Carter Administration of not only allowing, but even helping, Muslim extremists to take over a state, Iran. And he actually articulates the case for the American war in Iraq, for instance, much better than the no doubt by now demoralized Bush Administration has seemed capable of doing for a good while now.

Generally speaking, D’Souza cites cases and presents reasoned facts and arguments—and not without appropriate qualifications and nuances—which deserve to be considered on their merits. His case is not just another variant of McCarthyism lashing out wildly. Although he quite freely names names, he is not engaged in cheap rhetoric, but accurately quotes his sources. Nor is it necessary to agree with every-

thing he says in order to appreciate that he has raised some important questions that perhaps others should have long since raised but have not raised.

Unfortunately, however, his arguments do not seem to have been seriously engaged on either the left or the right. Predictably, perhaps, reviewers on the left have mostly just gone ballistic in their reactions to this book. Its author has been labeled with such sputtering epithets as “surrender monkey” and the “Ayatollah D’Souza.” One reviewer described the book as a “sleazy, shameless, ignorant, tendentious, meretricious lie.” Nor are these kinds of characterizations so much directed towards the author’s positions as they are aimed at him personally. Liberal and leftist reviewers have shown themselves to be drearily consistent in adopting the tactic described by Arthur Schopenhauer in his classic *Art of Controversy* long ago, namely, that if you cannot assail an opponent’s facts or arguments, then attack *him!* This is what nearly all of the reviews of *The Enemy at Home* that I have seen mostly consist of; the reviewers generally do not even attempt to argue against what the author is actually asserting.

One would like to think that perhaps D’Souza has thus perhaps succeeded in drawing a little blood from the American cultural left here, but instead one gets no sense whatever that his critics see any merit or validity at all in D’Souza’s nevertheless quite well argued and documented case. The critics on the left simply find intolerable the idea that the undeniable decline of traditional morality in America today might have any bearing whatsoever on America’s current situation; the reigning assumption in these quarters seems to be that traditional morality and decency do not have, and ought not to have, any relation to the life, aims, health, or stability of a society. Instead of considering whether or not in fact the moral decline in today’s America might be one of the reasons for America’s vulnerability, the liberal critics simply fall back upon the for them unarguable necessity that whatever dangers might threaten America from the wider world, the sexual revolution at home, certainly, still has to stand.

Nor is it only on the far left that this attitude is encountered. Supposedly “mainstream” reviewers have reacted to D’Souza’s book in the same near-hysterical way. The reviewer in the *Washington Post’s*

Book World, for example, labeled the book “the worst non-fiction book about terrorism published by a major house since 9/11” Then, there was the following judgment handed down by the reviewer, Alan Wolfe, in the *New York Times Book Review*:

At one point in *The Enemy at Home*, D’Souza appeals to “decent liberals and Democrats” to join him in rejecting the American left. Although he does not name me as one of them, I sense he is appealing to people like me because I write for the *New Republic*, a liberal magazine that distances itself from leftism. So let this “decent” liberal make perfectly clear how thoroughly indecent Dinesh D’Souza is. Like his hero Joe McCarthy, he has no sense of shame. He is a childish thinker and writer tackling subjects about which he knows little to make arguments that reek of political extremism. His book is a national disgrace, a sorry example of a publishing culture more concerned with the sensational than the sensible...

Thus do we see which way even the “decent liberals” are likely to go if any questions at all are ever raised about the current moral state of America. And while this is the typical reception accorded to D’Souza by such liberals, his book meanwhile seems not to have attracted much attention, much less support, on the conservative side. I have not attempted a thorough search, but most of the conservative publications I checked do not seem to have reviewed the book at all. Meanwhile, the redoubtable Father Richard John Neuhaus, in *First Things*, simply dismisses the book with no more than a brief notice to the effect that “to suggest that those associated with the cultural left are ‘the enemy’ in a way comparable to Al-Qaeda and allies are the enemy is over the top... The idea that they or the millions of Muslims sympathetic to them will have a change of heart about American and the West if only we put our house in moral order is not persuasive...”

D’Souza, of course, does not suggest that Al-Qaeda and other extremists would ever have any change of heart. His idea is that great majority of Muslims around the world might possibly be weaned away from being so “tolerant” of Al-Qaeda and extremism to the extent that they could be persuaded that “America” is *not* necessarily in favor of the gross immorality that the American cultural left has pretty well succeeded to date in convincing pious Muslims

that “America” *is* in favor of. In short, D’Souza’s basic thesis, though provocative and certainly debatable, nevertheless merits a much more careful and respectful reading than it has been given to date. Meanwhile, there cannot be any doubt that D’Souza has at least established one thing, namely, that there definitely *is* an “enemy at home,” though its actual or possible relationship with the Islamist terrorist enemy may be something else again.

One of the other unexpected and rather curious things for me about this book, by the way, was the virtually total absence of any specific Catholic perspective in it, especially in connection with the many moral issues that the author discusses. I had thought that Dinesh D’Souza was a Catholic, since he was once editor of the Catholic magazine, *Crisis*. I have not read his other books, however, and hence I am not familiar with his positions generally, except through reading reviews and the like, where he is certainly identified as a conservative.

Still I was rather surprised not to find in this book, considering its announced subject matter, any reference at all either to Catholic social teaching or to the many actions of the Church in some of the areas the author is most concerned with. Indeed, the author seems on the evidence of his text not only to have no knowledge of Catholic social teaching but to be largely incurious about it.

One might have thought that, especially since his Regensburg Address last September, Pope Benedict XVI, a long-time well-established and world-class commentator on some of the major issues D’Souza is concerned with, would have figured somewhere in this narrative, if only on the subject of how Islam should be approached by the West. One might have thought as well that there was no more dramatic an instance of the policy of D’Souza advocates of trying to find common cause with mainstream Islam than the alliance forged in the 1990s with Muslim countries by Pope John Paul II from the Cairo conference on against the population control initiatives of the United Nations and International Planned Parenthood; yet this is referred to only once fleetingly and in passing without any mention of the pope’s name. But what organization or entity, in America or around the world, teaches as firmly and consistently against the evils D’Souza deplores (e.g., contracep-

tion!), or is doing more to oppose the kind of immorality and permissiveness favored by the American cultural left, than the Catholic Church? What organization or entity, in America or around the world, is more hated, or more often targeted, by those who share the assumptions and opinions of the American cultural left than, again, the Catholic Church? The votaries of the American cultural left may talk about a possible “theocracy,” but they bitterly oppose the Catholic Church here and now.

Yet neither “Benedict XVI,” nor “John Paul II,” nor even the “Catholic Church” figures anywhere

in the index of this book. “Catholics” are mentioned three or four times in mostly unimportant contexts. Otherwise, there might as well not be for this author any such an entity as the Catholic Church anywhere or any such citizens as Catholics involved in all of the issues which he otherwise discusses at such length and in such detail. This is a very curious omission in a book otherwise worthy of attention. ✠

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ARTICLES

Today’s Disciples: The Essential Role of the Laity in the Church

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I take it the topic assigned to me, “Today’s Disciples: The Essential Role of the Laity in the Church,” is essentially about vocation. So let me begin by telling a story about a vocation.

One Sunday morning in late February two years ago, I found myself standing in St. Peter’s Square along with several thousand other people. It was shortly before noon, and we were waiting for Pope John Paul II to appear and lead the Angelus and give his weekly Angelus talk.

More precisely, we were waiting to see whether there would *be* an Angelus and Angelus talk that day. In late January it had been announced that the Pope had the flu. Overnight February 2 he was hospitalized, and only on February 10 did he return to the Vatican. Clearly, the Holy Father was in a weakened condition and declining health after suffering with Parkinsonism for years. Anything could happen next.

Against that background, it was reasonable to ask whether Pope John Paul would be up to leading the Angelus this particular Sunday. It was a cold, damp, raw day—the kind of day when no one has to

apologize for staying in and keeping warm, least of all an elderly man in shaky health who had lately spent over a week in the hospital.

But a few minutes before noon the window of the Pope’s apartment was thrown open and the familiar tapestry bearing the papal coat of arms was unfurled. Promptly on the hour the Holy Father himself appeared, a tiny figure in white at the open window far above the Square.

After pausing a moment, he began to speak.

It was painful just to hear him. He was gasping for breath, struggling to get out each word, each syllable. As I listened, appalled, a thought flashed through my mind: “This is like hearing a voice from the tomb.” And a second thought followed very quickly after that one: “I wonder if it’s a good idea for him to be doing what he’s doing on a day like *this*.”

Pretty clearly, it was not. That was Sunday. The following Thursday, Pope John Paul was rushed back to the hospital, and a tracheotomy was performed to allow him to breathe. From then on, of course, it was only a matter of time. He returned to the Vatican on March 13, and at 9:37 on the evening of April 2 he left us.

During those final weeks—and, indeed, for the several years that preceded them—the world was witnessing a brave struggle by an extraordinary man of very great courage. It’s worth reflecting on what was going on during that time. In particular, I think, it’s worth reflecting on what was happening that Sunday when I stood in St. Peter’s Square, watching and listening while the Pope, weakened as he was, braved a raw, cold day in order to lead the Angelus and say a few words.

Pope John Paul didn’t *have* to be there, after all. Nobody would have blamed him if he’d skipped the ceremony and stayed in. So, why did he do what he did?

Was it Polish stubbornness? A touch of *machismo*, perhaps? Not wanting to disappoint the crowd? I don’t exclude those things. But I believe that something else was at work in a special way. I believe that what I saw on that occasion was the behavior of a brave man determined to do God’s will by living out his personal vocation—which in his case included being pope and doing what a pope does—just as long as he could.

Now, it may seem strange to begin a talk about the laity and *their* vocations with a story about a pope. But I think it fits. In modern times, no one has said more about the idea of personal vocation than Pope John Paul II. In fact, it constitutes one of the central themes of his teaching, although one that frequently gets overlooked.

Obviously, though, it isn’t just popes who have vocations—or the clergy and religious either. All of us who are members of the Church have vocations, whether we choose to recognize them or not. John Paul II knew that very well. “Every life is a vocation,” he said. There is a world of meaning in that simple statement.



One thing it means is that there is no shortage of vocations in the Catholic Church—either in the Church as a whole or the Church in the United States or any place else.

As a matter of fact, a shortage of vocations is an absolute impossibility. I’ll show why in a couple of minutes.

What we have instead is a shortage of vocational discernment. And although that also is a problem, a

serious one, it’s a problem of a different sort.

In a way, too, it’s also good news.

You see, if there were a shortage of vocations—which isn’t possible, but let’s suppose for a minute that it was—then the shortage of vocations would be from God. And in that case, there would be nothing we could do about it except pray that God would send the vocations he’d been withholding.

But because what we have is a shortage of vocational discernment, we can be sure that the shortage comes from *us*. Prayer is still needed, of course, but there also are a lot of other things that we can and should be doing in addition to praying.

The first of them, perhaps, is to acquire a clear understanding of the word “vocation.”

Obviously the word means different things in different contexts. People speak of all sorts of interests and enthusiasms and activities—some of them serious and some of them not so serious—as vocations. And that’s perfectly legitimate.

Also, I think, it is legitimate to speak of what might be called the *natural* human vocation. This is the calling one shares with all other men and women without exception to achieve a degree of self-fulfillment, in community with others, in respect to the natural goods of human persons—purposes of human action like life, truth, friendship, play, aesthetic experience, marriage, and religion. Natural vocation, you might say, is the universal calling to respect the design built into human beings by their creator by living their lives according to the natural law.



I take these other meanings of vocation for granted, but I am not speaking about them here. My focus at the moment is on our vocations precisely as *Christians*. And when I try to explain that idea, I sometimes say that the reality of vocation is something like a set of concentric circles.

1. At the center is the common Christian vocation, which comes to us in baptism and is shared by all members of the Church.

In general terms, the common vocation consists in the commitment of faith and what follows from it—to love and serve God above all things, to love and serve one’s neighbor as oneself, and in doing these things to collaborate in continuing the

redemptive work of Christ, which is the mission of the Church.

Note that, to use the terms of my topic, “the essential role of the laity in the Church” isn’t something assigned to them by somebody else, nor is it something optional that they are at liberty to say either yes or no to: Although the specifics must be worked out in each particular case, the right and duty of lay people to participate in the mission of the Church come to each one of them in baptism.

2. The next vocational circle, spreading out from this central point, is vocation in the sense of a state in life.

The several states in life are generally identified as being these four: the clerical state that comes from holy orders, the consecrated life of religious and some lay people as well, the state of marriage, and the single lay state in the world.

A state in life is a specification of the common Christian vocation, the baptismal vocation—it makes it more definite and concrete. It is a broad, overarching commitment to a particular, defined lifestyle. In selecting a state in life, a person sets himself or herself on a certain path that will fundamentally shape his or her entire life through the countless choices and actions that will be required in order to travel along it to the end.

3. The outer circle—and the third meaning of Christian vocation—is personal vocation. The raw material of our personal vocations is the unique combination of commitments, relationships, opportunities, disadvantages, weaknesses, and strengths that God asks each one of us to put to work in serving and living out the special role in the mission of the Church to which he calls us, whether as a cleric, a religious, or a lay person. As for that “special role,” it is the fundamentally unrepeatable part in the fulfillment of his redemptive plan that God intends each of us to have.



Some people find this notion of unique personal vocation a new idea and are not sure how they ought to react to it. I assure you, it is not really a new idea at all. You find it here and there, for example, in clas-

sic spiritual writers like St. Ignatius Loyola and St. Francis de Sales. Cardinal Newman was well aware of it. And, as I said earlier, Pope John Paul II developed the idea at length in things he wrote both before and after becoming pope.

Usually, of course, when Catholics say “vocation,” they mean vocation only in the second sense—state in life. And usually, in speaking of vocation in this sense, they mean a calling to the priesthood or religious life.

For instance: When we are asked to pray for vocations, ordinarily we are being asked to pray that more people will become priests or religious (and I am always glad to pray for that); a vocations program or vocations office is a program or office that recruits and screens candidates for the seminary or novitiate; a vocations director is someone who does this kind of work.

And very important work it is. In no way do I suggest otherwise.

But I do say that “vocation” has a broader sense. That personal vocation is a constitutive part of the structure of any true vocation. And that until more people grasp the idea of personal vocation and act on it, the present “vocations crisis”—the shortfall of new candidates for the priesthood and consecrated life—won’t be solved.



Not only that—we also will be inviting continued confusion about their identity and their role in the mission of the Church on the part of Catholic lay people.

That’s hardly a new problem. The novelist and short story writer Flannery O’Connor got to the heart of it years ago. Somebody asked her why she, a Catholic, wrote about Protestants instead of her fellow Catholics. This is what she said in part:

To a lot of Protestants I know, monks and nuns are fanatics, none greater. And to a lot of the monks and nuns I know, my Protestant prophets are fanatics. For my part, I think the only difference between them is that if you are a Catholic and have this intensity of belief you join the convent and are heard from no more; whereas if you are a Protestant and have it, there is no convent for you to join and you go about in the world, get-

ting into all sorts of trouble and drawing the wrath of people who don't believe anything much at all down on your head.

Now, that was one shrewd remark. Among other things, it delineates with accuracy—as well as with humor—the idea of vocation that she found among her fellow Catholics: “If you are a Catholic and have...intensity of belief you join the convent.” Not a whole lot of encouragement there for a seriously committed lay person like herself.



The key to clearing up much of this confusion lies in this thing called vocational discernment. Let me say just a little about that.

First of all, it is necessary to set aside the bad old idea that vocational discernment is something done *only* by people exploring the possibility that God is calling them to the priesthood and religious life.

Of course people in that situation need to discern. But so does everyone else. So, specifically, do Catholic lay people who are serious about finding out what God has in mind for *them*.

We also need to set aside the idea that discerning a vocation is a one-time thing. To be sure, some periods in a person's life are more sensitive than others in vocational terms, but there is no period at which discerning God's will is no longer necessary. On the contrary, this is a lifelong necessity. In a remarkable homily on this theme, Cardinal Newman says:

[W]e are not called once only but many times; all through our life Christ is calling us. He called us first in Baptism; but afterwards also; whether we obey His voice or not, He graciously calls us still....Christ is, as it were, walking among us, and...bidding us follow Him. We do not understand that His call is a thing which takes place now (*Divine Calls*).

And Pope John Paul states it very clearly when he says: “The fundamental objective of the formation of the lay faithful is an ever-clearer discovery of one's vocation and the ever-greater willingness to live it so as to fulfill one's mission” (*Christifideles Laici*, n. 58).

This is not the place for me to say a lot—which I'm not competent to say anyway—about the process

of vocational discernment. Here are just a couple of thoughts.

In very general terms, discernment is the process of prayerfully reflecting on our strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, existing commitments and obligations and opportunities that are realistically open—indeed, all the circumstances of our lives—and comparing these with the needs and possibilities for service in the Church and the world around us, in order to determine the best fit for oneself.

The question discernment seeks to answer is not, “What do *I* want from life?” It is, “What does *God* want from me?”

It isn't something subjective. The process is guided, and the result is measured, by the teaching and law of the Church and the decisions of legitimate authority.

Needless to say, it also is guided by Christian morality. When I spoke about discernment not long ago, a priest objected that many bad things had been done in the name of “discernment” in recent decades and it might be better to speak of formation of conscience instead.

My answer was that the two things are complementary. Conscience formation comes first. A person with a well formed conscience is equipped to engage in fruitful discernment. But when someone whose conscience is *not* well formed tries it, the result is likely to be self-serving and *not* God's will. That is not an argument against discernment. It is an argument for discerning from a basis of solid formation, and proceeding with the assistance of a truly trustworthy spiritual guide.

Another important thing to understand about vocational discernment is that it is not a feel-good exercise, and it may not turn out as we would expect and like.

I recall a young man saying to me a while ago, “But suppose someone discerns a call to something or other, and he finds all the doors closed in his face—what then?” To which my answer was, “Of course he needs to practice perseverance, but he also needs to be open to the possibility that this experience of disappointment and frustration and even injustice is part of the personal vocation to which God is calling him.” Discerning and living a vocation mean discerning and living what God wants, not

what we think we want.

Given that it's *personal* vocation we are talking about, I am not able to tell you precisely what participation in the mission of the Church means for you. But it's fair to say that, in one way or another, the vocation of every lay person somehow involves participating in the evangelizing work of the Church—spreading the Good News, at least by the example of a good Christian life well lived and very often by the testimony of the spoken or written word as well. It's also a fact that the Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul both stressed the fact that the apostolate of the laity is directed primarily to the secular world. As Vatican II put it: "The laity...are given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 33).

Lay ministries, as they are called—service roles and functions performed by lay people in church settings, especially parishes—undoubtedly do have their place, but it's a place subordinate to the priority of apostolate carried on in and to the secular order. It is good for lay people to serve as needed as ministers of communion or lectors or cantors or in other roles in their parishes and other church settings. But the primary *locus* for the laity to participate in the mission of the Church is, or at least should be, in the workplace, the school, the neighborhood, and all the other structures and institutions of the world. I'm sorry to say that in recent years we seem to have gotten it just the other way around, assigning *de facto* primacy to lay ministries and downgrading lay apostolate. And although the intentions have been good, that is a bad mistake which has contributed a lot to the current problems of the Church.



Many important things of a practical nature follow from this vision of personal vocation. I am not going to try to cover the waterfront. I merely wish to underline the obvious point that we need to make our homes, our parishes, our church institutions and

organizations and programs of all kinds into true schools of vocational discernment.

This is something parents definitely need to do, but with all the help they can get from other sources. Central to the formation they give their children should be formation in and for discerning what God has in mind for them.

Note that the objective of any effort in this line, whether organized or not, should be discernment, not recruitment, and certainly not coercion or pressure of any kind. Frankly, I cringe every time I hear someone speak of "vocational recruitment" for the priesthood and religious life, as if the challenge lay in rounding up more warm bodies to keep the seminaries filled. Remember—vocational discernment means finding out what God has in mind, not trying to impose our ideas and preferences on somebody else.

Along with practicing ongoing vocational discernment ourselves, we need to encourage much more of it, in many new settings, than is now the case. And that will require much more than the occasional "vocations program" or praying for new priestly and religious vocations in the prayers of the faithful—as good and important as these things are.

But that could be the subject of a whole other talk. In concluding this one, I want to reply to an objection sometimes raised against this way of speaking—that in talking about the personal vocations that *all* members of the Church without exception have, we risk discouraging *some* members of the Church from recognizing and accepting their vocations to be priests and religious, and so making our current shortfall of new candidates worse.

My answer is that it will work just the other way around. The more Catholics pray and reflect upon what God is calling them to, the greater will be the number who discover God is calling them to priests and religious—while the rest discern God's call to them as lay people to do their share in carrying on the mission of the Church. From whatever point of view you look at it, personal vocation and its discernment are the solution to the vocations crisis in the Church. ✠

Pope Benedict XVI, Latin America, and the *New York Times*

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One are the days of Innocent III, when the pope was respected and his writ ran robust round Christendom. Nowadays popes are routinely targeted. The assassination attempt on John Paul II was backed by bullets; other attacks are more subtle, woven in a web of words that intends to destroy or at least mightily maim papal authority. Poor Benedict has been subject to such attacks. Secularists had long been sharpening their pens against the man dubbed John Paul's Rottweiler and the Panzer Cardinal. He outraged their sensibilities by daring not only to stand up for truth's existence but also to declare certain opinions erroneous. He informed some Catholic theologians that the message they were proclaiming did not correspond to the truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.

The average person might normally expect clerics, nourished, educated, and entrusted with a mission by the Church, to be obligated to the same Church's message. Why else did they make a promise of obedience? Even more telling, why would people otherwise listen to them? Of course, if dissenters consider their truth to contradict the Church's truth, they are free to leave the Church and hawk their own gospel to whoever will listen. That might entail forfeiting not only the respect generally offered to priests by the Catholic faithful but also the publicity accruing to them from the secular media which hones in on religious controversy. But witnesses to truth should not let such minor matters deter their duty. When was truth not persecuted? Some dissidents with the best intentions might hesitate to leave an organization which, if "properly organized," might bring about desired social change. But they would probably admit that the Church officials have a right as well as a duty not to let her be instrumentalized, especially if they consider her the Bride and Body of Christ. Secular liberals, however, reject such expectations.

The Church, after all, opposes liberal dreams of creating the new values to be imposed on the new humanity.

BENEDICT UNDER ATTACK

A brief moratorium followed Cardinal Ratzinger's election to the papacy. Initial hostility might have revealed prejudice too quickly. The media even acknowledge his broad erudition. But his Regensburg speech brought the hostility into the open. Western media, especially the BBC, Manchester's *Guardian*, and *The New York Times*, snatched his citation of a Byzantine Emperor from context to occasion a major disruption in Moslem-Catholic relations.¹ In overlooking Benedict's central thesis that Western secularized reason fails to take cognizance of the vast majority of mankind's religious sensibilities and thereby renders itself incapable of dealing with the terrorism that rebels against imposed secularism, they actually proved their insensitivity to religious viewpoints. More recently the bellwether of American secularism, *The New York Times*, has been disruptively muddying the waters with an article entitled "Pope Concedes Unjustifiable Crimes in Converting South Americans."² The pope never admitted any such thing. In the course of an audience reflecting on his recent Brazilian trip he uttered a brief sentence, "While we do not overlook the various injustices and sufferings which accompanied colonization, the Gospel has expressed and continues to express the identity of the peoples of this region and provides inspiration to address the challenges of our globalized era." He then recalled various happy memories of his trip.

Not content to report the pope's words, the *Times* interpreted them by referring to "many South American leaders and indigenous groups" who "cited the standard historical view that Spanish and Portuguese colonizers forced conversion by giving natives a choice between 'the Cross and the sword.'"

Among the experts cited in support of that thesis was Hugo Chavez, who claimed that the Church's representatives, "with honorable exceptions, were accomplices, deceivers and beneficiaries of one of the most horrific genocides of all humanity." Mr. Chavez, of course, is waging his own battle against the Venezuelan Church which is protesting his disregard of human rights. Other "experts" cited in the *Times* article protested Benedict's alleged denigration of indigenous culture as inferior, claimed that colonization destroyed Amerindian culture, and charged that "the missionaries were at the service of a religion that had incorporated the authoritarian and despotic elements of European monarchy." Regrettably the *Times*, usually so prompt to find representatives of opinions contradicting religious authorities, could not find any expert worth citing who suggested that the Christianization of Latin America was perhaps a good thing. Yet even apart from the fulfillment of her primary mission of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments in seeking the eternal salvation of all men, the Church's contributions to Latin America's development actually resisted the wholesale exploitation of the natives.

THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN LATIN AMERICA

While no one should defend the abuses perpetrated by many conquistadores, it should be remembered that in the time of colonization the Church was strongly protesting those abuses and the Spanish crown often listened. Lewis Hanke, the dean of American scholars about that period, in a classic study concluded that the Catholic Church and the Spanish crown made "one of the greatest attempts the world has seen to make Christian precepts prevail in the relations between peoples." Detailing the struggle for justice in Spanish America and the Philippines, he wrote: Once the friars had questioned the right by which Spaniards held Indians, thus precipitating the struggle for justice, their champions never resigned themselves to what they considered the injustice of the world about them any more than Don Quixote did. . . . No Christian nation, however, with the possible exception of Portugal, took her Christian duty toward native peoples so seriously as did Spain. . . . It is

to Spain's everlasting credit that she allowed men to insist that all her actions in America be just, and that at times she listened to these voices.³

Even the last Inca with some independent power, Titu Cusi, who rebelled against greedy Spanish imperialism, was moved by the missionaries' sincerity and evangelical poverty to admit that the Spaniards' principal motive was the propagation of the Christian faith. The missionaries were extraordinary men, who succeeded rapidly in the conversion of the natives. John Hemming, Director and Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, listed at length the crimes of Pizarro and his men but he summarized the behavior of Churchmen thus: "Church leaders were generally exemplary men, deeply concerned with the welfare of the Indians."⁴ The famous *Requerimiento*, the royal edict demanding that the faith first be preached to the natives, was a sincere attempt by the Spanish crown to prevent their exploitation. While some conquistadores made it a judicial mockery by reading the Creed in Spanish (!) and demanding conversion, before they attacked the natives on trumped up charges of aggression, the *Requerimiento* also motivated countless missionaries to head off into the wilderness to make conversions. Once converted, the natives could not be attacked, killed, or enslaved by soldiers of fortune. All this time the Spanish Catholic theologians and canonists were reminding the King of Spain that, unprovoked, he had no right to dispossess native peoples.⁵

As for charge that the despotic Catholic Church imposed itself upon inferior cultures, one need only recall that the Aztecs regularly practiced human sacrifice on an immense scale. Even if the *Times* was downplaying Mel Gibson's *Apocalypto*, someone should have heard of such atrocities. That was the major reason why Cortez received immense help from the natives in overthrowing the Aztec yoke. When Pizarro arrived in Peru, the Inca had just massacred countless supporters of his brother, a rival claimant to the throne. The Inca was planning to butcher Pizarro's Spaniards after an initial show of friendship, but his treachery was anticipated by Pizarro's barbarity at Cajamarca. In any case the Spaniards relied on the support of many native tribes who wished to be free of Inca tyranny. In Brazil, many of the indigenous tribes practiced cannibalism against their neighbors, even eating with relish

the flesh of little children. The Tupis practiced live burial of children, especially maimed children; as one child was so condemned to death, a missionary recounted, the mother showed “no more ‘sentiment than if a little dog had died.’”⁶ Perhaps the *Times*, which supports partial birth abortions, sees no inferiority in such a culture, but others who with the Catholic Church recognize abortion and infanticide as “abominable crimes” (*Gaudium et Spes* 51) beg to differ. We do not wish a culture, however indigenous, in which dying a dog’s death becomes the ordinary fate of the children of men. When all is said and done, the indigenous peoples of Latin America were often barbaric, and all should pray that heaven defend us from people incapable of distinguishing a lower from a higher culture. If they are not just demagogues exploiting the politics of victimization, their moral sense must be horribly twisted.

As for the alleged imposition of a despotic, authoritarian regime, how did the *Times* overlook the reductions founded and fostered by Catholic missionaries? Aside from monasteries, these provided one of the few successful implementations of democratic socialism in history. Given the *Times*’s reflex support of the political left, how could it have forgotten them? The natives ruled themselves, choosing their own council members and administering justice. The royal governor selected only the mayor on the advice of the resident pastor. The missionaries provided counsel, religious leadership, and training in Christian culture. Anyone looking today at the ruins of the reductions has to admire how the native artisans learned to adapt European artistic techniques in producing a magnificent synthesis of indigenous sensibilities and Catholic culture, and their music was superior.⁷ Due in good part to Catholic missionaries the indigenous peoples survived and still comprise the majority of the population in most Latin American countries. By comparison, the United States and Canada (after the English occupation) must confess their shame for shunting aside the Indians, breaking treaties, and slaughtering so many. The John Eliots and Daniel Gookins were rare in the English North American colonies. That North American natives survive at all is also due in good part to the work of Catholic missionaries among the Plains Indians who gave counsel, mediated with the United States government, and brokered treaties.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE TIMES

It should not be forgotten that the reductions, those great experiments in native culture, were attacked by Enlightenment rulers, politicians, and *philosophes*, the first secularists seeking to impose their will on the world. After a relentless campaign of calumny throughout the eighteenth century the Jesuits were exiled and suppressed. Deprived of spiritual leadership, the reductions gradually withered. Where the Jesuits taught everything in the native language, the Enlightenment imposed Spanish as the sole language of learning. It is the Catholic Church’s glory that she resisted such bureaucratic despots in an unequal fight against the absolute monarchies. The Enlightenment was especially brutal in Latin America. In most of Spanish America the new republics of the nineteenth century, under the pretext of abolishing paternalism and developing the economy, confiscated the Church’s large landholdings. Native Americans who lived on those lands or communal holdings were “liberated” to work under conditions set by the new bourgeoisie taking possession of the expropriated properties. In the name of freedom the Church was confined to the sacristy and the natives became work-slaves on the “free market.”⁸

Unfortunately the *Times* does not remember its own ideological progenitors from the Enlightenment. It would be embarrassed by so many of their intolerant practices. The modern secularist imagines himself or herself as independent of the past, responsible for none of it. Only “conservative” institutions like the Catholic Church bear responsibilities for the past, as secularists judge the past from the heights of their historically detached ideologies. Most liberal secularists believe in “humanity,” a convenient abstraction overlooking all the sins of past human beings. Such an abstraction actually puts secularists in opposition to the vast majority of mankind who believe in a concrete religion. In despising their “unenlightened” opponents, however, they undermine their own faith in humanity. Lacking a foundation in the past and present, secular belief is usually oriented to the future, a convenient option empowering them never to apologize for anything. But how rational is it to believe in a future which does not yet exist? It is a belief without content, an opiate illusion to narco-

tize the conscience, as finite reasons are concocted to justify moral absurdities in the name of “humanity.”

The liberal lack of corporate memory certainly afflicts the *Times*. The same newspaper which praised Pius XII during and after World War II for his strong moral stances turned against him after R. Hochmuth’s play, *The Deputy*, raised calumnious charges, without proof, in the 1960s. Already the *Times* was undertaking its crusade against the Catholic Church as the principal institutional defender of traditional morality. In the initial struggle over abortion the *Times* first cautioned Catholics against one-issue voting lest democracy’s delicate fabric of toleration be ruptured. Not many years later abortion became the Shibboleth of the *Times* and the Democratic Party: all Supreme Court Justices not previously committed to “abortion rights” were to be rejected. When Judge Alito was subjected to harsh hectoring by some Democrat Senators, no protest against the indecorous rending of civil courtesy issued from the *Times*. Nowadays the *Times* rarely miss a chance of rehashing the charges of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy. One might applaud such concern for the chastity of minors, if only the *Times* would mention the rising high number of sexual abuse cases against New York City public school teachers. But there seems to be a difference: the teachers’ union supports the Democratic Party and sexual “liberation.” The *Times* also chooses to omit the embarrassing fact that the great majority of such abuse cases concern teen-age males. That acknowledgment might weaken support for the *Times*’s campaign for homosexual “equality.”

In its overall campaign the *Times* manifests great concern that religion be separated from politics, an ideology relatively recently concocted, grumbling ever again about tax-exemptions whenever the Catholic hierarchy makes a moral statement with possible political implications. When a Catholic priest was chosen to head the New York Public Library, the *Times* opined that such responsibility could not be trusted to a clergyman. This “separation” would have religion relegated to the private domain of individual conscience, the typical Enlightenment imposition. It ignores the fact that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are public religions dependent upon an historical revelation and committed to public acknowledgment of their moral codes. They are not religions

of pure interiority. To insist that such religions keep silence in the public square would force them to denature themselves. Such tyranny destroys the religious toleration that the *Times* allegedly upholds.

Yet the wall of separation only extends so far. At times the *Times* has urged religious leaders to speak out against prejudice in favor of the poor and oppressed, at least those poor and oppressed who meet its definitions (not the unborn). Never does a complaint arise when black churches invite Democrats to speak from their pulpits or when black ministers run for political office. Nor was a word uttered when the late Robert Drinan served in Congress. He backed “abortion rights,” called for Nixon’s impeachment, and supported Israel to the hilt. Only when his religious superiors ordered the Rev. Drinan to separate himself from direct involvement in government did the *Times* protest against religious interference. But let a Protestant or Catholic clergyman remind his congregation that they have responsibilities to uphold public morality in elections, then the *Times* immediately senses that the foundations of American democracy are tottering. At the same time the *Times* vigorously supports liberation theology in Latin America, portrayed as a voice of and for the poor, but resisted by Rome. Ignoring the theological questions involved in such a debate, the paper creates a political struggle between good liberals and bad conservatives, even though Roman authorities and Benedict in particular have long spoken out in favor of ensuring social justice for the poor. Again the secular mind shows itself incapable of grasping the world in any categories transcending its own reductive analysis of reality in terms of possessions (wealth), pleasure (sex), and power (politics). Such basic motivations the Christian rightly identifies with the world, the flesh, and the devil. But liberation theology advocates a strong role for religion and the Church in directly transforming political and economic structures. What the *Times* rejects in the United States it supports in Latin America.

Is there consistency in the *Times*’s positions? Not in its explicit ideology. Yet it consistently attacks non-liberal religious institutions, especially the Catholic Church. Perhaps expecting a coherent ideology from newspaper editors and reporters exceeds the limits of the possible. Journalism schools accentuate the

technical skills of writing over mastery of a particular academic field, style over substance. Reporters rush for deadlines and rarely have time to think policies through to their premises. Forced to stay on the surface of issues, they have recourse to simplifying ideologies. Lacking the holiness of the Church and the intelligence of the academy—both somewhat compromised in this era of post-modern deconstructualism, theological confusion, and sexual abuse—they must nevertheless make judgments about matters beyond their competence. Moreover, their constant interaction with a wide variety of viewpoints and opinions inculcates a propensity toward relativism. Repeated opinion polls indicate that only a small minority of journalists seriously practice a religion. Yet they are called upon to make judgments about religious issues. One should have sympathy and pray God to forgive them their blunders. But so obvious has been the prejudice of the *Times* against religious institutions upholding traditional moral principles on the integrity of family life that one can only pray for a fundamental conversion. In the meantime articles like those so unjustly attacking Pope Benedict may remind readers how, as in the time of the *philosophes*, the truth is manipulated in headline, detail, and omission by secular liberalism's New York bellwether.

Fortunately bellwethers have no progeny, and in recent times the *Times* has ever fewer paying readers and lower profits.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Cf. the analysis of David Warren published in the *Ottawa Citizen*, Sept. 16, 2006 (available in an expanded version on <http://www.davidwarrenonline.com/index.php?artID=649>) and Hilary White, "BBC, NY Times and Guardian Appear to Have Stage-Managed Muslim Anti-Pope Hatred," Sept. 18, 2006, on LifeSiteNews.com
- 2 Ian Fisher, "Pope Concedes Unjustifiable Crimes in Converting South Americans," *The New York Times*, Thursday, May 24, p. A5.
- 3 Lewis Hanke, *The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America* (1949; rpt. Dallas: Southern Methodist U., 2002), 1, 173-179.
- 4 John Hemming, *The Conquest of the Incas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1970), pp. 309, 336.
- 5 Venancio D. Carro, O.P., *La Teología y los Teólogos-Juristas España ante la Conquista de América* (Madrid: Marsiega, 1944), I, pp. 347-442.
- 6 Helen Dominian, *Apostle of Brazil: The Biography of Padre José de Anchieta, S.J.* (New York: Exposition, 1958), pp. 197-98, 212, 243-44.
- 7 C.J. McNaspy, S.J., *Lost Cities of Paraguay* (Chicago: Loyola, 1982); Frederick J. Reiter, *They Built Utopia* (Potomac: Scripta Humanistica, 1995), esp. pp. 63-95; Philip Caraman, S.J., *The Lost Paradise: The Jesuit Republic in South America* (New York: Seabury, 1976).
- 8 Cf. Edwin Williamson, *The Penguin History of Latin America* (London: Penguin, 1992), esp. pp. 198-209, 233-47; Robert R. Miller, *Mexico: A History* (Norman: U. of Oklahoma, 1985), esp. pp. 165-67, 180-81, 233-37, 254-55, 306-07, 314-15.

“Crucified Love”; The Connection Between The Cross and Love in the Spiritual Theology of St. John of the Cross

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INTRODUCTION

St. Edith Stein posits in her book, *Science of the Cross* that “the Cross” stands at the center of the life and thought of St. John of the Cross. After quoting long sections from the *Ascent* (A II 7) and the *Canticle* (Stanza 23), Stein presents her thesis; “The deepest influences

that shaped his life and work [are] active and passive Crucifixion...[in] self-denial and surrender to God,” the perfection of which determines “the intimacy of union with Christ crucified [and] the abundance of participation in divine life.”¹ Stein maintains that, as a mystic and poet, John expressed his experiential vision of the Cross with the term “night.”²

In a different place, St. Edith Stein states, “The saint’s [John’s] whole life was a life of love.”³ Stein weaves “the Cross” and “love” together, looking through the lens of the Cross in an attempt to under-

stand St. John. Another 20th century Carmelite attempted the same task from a different vantage point. In one of his works, Father Gabriele di Santa Maria Maddalena styles the Spaniard, “The Doctor of Love,” who leads spiritual pilgrims on the narrow road of perfection—the perfection of love.⁴ For John of the Cross, the perfection of love motivates the spiritual journey that at times becomes arduous and mysterious. Yet love labors on in the work of perfection through all trials, following the guidance of the “Doctor of the Nights.”⁵ Love seeks union with the Divine Beloved, and exults in this union, once received.⁶ The author concludes, “All the works of St. John of the Cross form one hymn of love,” adding, “To love is to labor to detach oneself from everything that is not God for the sake of God.”⁷ In the same place, Fr. Gabriele recalls that even in the dark nights, it is love that refines and purifies and prepares for the consummation of union. This article will attempt to explore John of the Cross’ understanding of the relationship between the Cross and love in the spiritual life.

ACTIVE PURIFICATION; CORRECTING PRIORITIES

In the early stages of the spiritual life, John affirms that a person requires many purifications to be disposed for union with God in love. A soul must be purified of the desire for anything as her ultimate end except for God (the proper end of mankind⁸) in order to be able to seek God as her ultimate end. According to St. John, “A genuine spirit...leans more toward suffering than toward consolation, more toward going without everything for God than toward possession, and toward dryness and affliction than toward sweet consolation.”⁹ Love of God should be the principal motivation of these purifications according to the Mystical Doctor, not only initiating the effort to move toward God, but also sustaining a person throughout the purgations that must be suffered in order to be brought to the union of love.¹⁰ Furthermore, John explains that it is by imitating Christ and His love that human persons will detach themselves from all they cling to inordinately and be conformed to and united with God.¹¹ In short, love commands

the Cross and the Cross incarnates love. The two are intertwined, interpenetrating realities that cannot be separated.

PASSIVE PURIFICATION

*“He placed me in the wine cellar and put charity
in order in me” (SG. 2:4)¹²*

According to the Mystical Doctor, after a soul’s active purification, she will normally successively enter the two dark nights.¹³ The perfection of love is the end of the spiritual life, and the passive purifications (the dark nights) are the means to that end. John states that God uses “the dark night” (in this case, the passive night of sense) “to order human love according to (right) reason, [which] purifies and strengthens the love that is of God and destroys that love which is contrary to the first love.”¹⁴ In addition, through the first passive night, John states that God “desires to...lead them [“beginners”] on to a higher degree of divine love.”¹⁵ In other words, St. John holds that God perfects and purifies the love of beginners especially by means of the passive nights, changing beginners’ love from a pleasure-seeking, selfish love into a self-less, theocentric love of God.¹⁶ In one passage the Saint explains, “He [God] does this [brings “beginners” to the state of the “proficient”] by introducing them into the dark night,” concluding, “No matter how earnestly beginners in all their actions and passions practice the mortification of self, they will never be able to do so entirely...until God accomplishes it in them passively by means of the purgation of this night.”¹⁷ In summary, God perfects human love of God by means of the passive nights. He also supersedes man’s human love of God, allowing man to participate in God’s inner life of love, once again by means of the passive nights.

Not only does this purification perfect a soul’s love of God, it also perfects her love of neighbor because of the humility a person gains by experiencing the passive mortification of self that this night entails. John writes, “From this humility stems love of neighbor, for they [persons in the dark night of sense] esteem them [neighbors] and do not judge them as they did before.”¹⁸

For John, infused contemplation, although it

can be dark and painful during the passive nights, is, in itself, “a secret and peaceful and loving inflow of God, which, if not hampered, fires the soul in the spirit of love.”¹⁹ Love is the goal toward which the soul aims, love guides the soul’s response to God in enduring the night, and God uses the night to communicate love to the soul. When a person experiences this night as “the fire of love,” John of the Cross states that a soul may suffer precisely because she loves God above all else (in a more refined and supernatural way than before) and despite this love and the desire for union with God entailed in it, the individual does not receive this union.²⁰ St. John uses the term “urgent longings of love” to describe these desires for union with God and explains that these “longings” can “become so intense that it will seem to such persons that their bones are drying up in this thirst.”²¹ He writes, “Its vehemence [that of the longings] is not continual, but only experienced from time to time, although usually some thirst is felt.”²² John gives an excellent synopsis of his teaching on infused contemplation in the second dark night in Book II, Chapter 9 of the *Night* that presents one aspect of the connection between the Cross and love at this stage of the spiritual life:

There is nothing in [infused] contemplation or the divine inflow that of itself can give pain; [infused] contemplation rather bestows sweetness and delight. The cause for not experiencing these agreeable effects is the soul’s weakness and imperfection at the time, its inadequate preparation, and the qualities it possesses that are contrary to this light. Because of these the soul has to suffer when the divine light shines upon it.²³

In addition to this connection, John also maintains that in the passive night of the spirit, the spiritual privation, darkness, and aridity a person suffers “is one of the conditions required that the spiritual form, which is the union of love, may be introduced into the spirit and united with it...by means of a pure and dark contemplation.”²⁴ John states that a person at this stage of the spiritual life “would be happy not only to suffer these things [the trials of the night] but even to die many times in order to please him [God].”²⁵ As the second dark night (the passive night of spirit) proceeds, the individual who experiences it begins to understand what God is doing

in the passive purgation He gives to the individual, namely, preparing the human person for loving union with God.²⁶

As God begins to lead a person out of the second night into the Unitive Way, He gives a soul brief touches of His love that enliven and excite her.²⁷ Persons who experience this love suffer the “the spiritual darkneses in which the soul is engulfed” in the night of sense, “which afflict it with doubts and fears,” and they suffer “through the love of God that inflames and stimulates...it [the soul] with a loving wound.”²⁸ St. John extols this blessing, however, as “something immensely rich and delightful for the soul, because it is a certain touch of the divinity and already the beginning of the perfection of the union of love for which the soul hopes.”²⁹ In this gift from God, it seems that the Cross begins to recede while the longed-for union of love begins to predominate.

Loving in this degree, a soul views death as the only means to the consummation of the union with God for which she longs with suffering when she does not receive it. In John’s words, “Death will put an end to all her sorrows and afflictions and be the beginning of all her bliss.”³⁰ In addition, a soul who loves in this way pleads that God reveal Himself to her, such that the “clear vision of God’s beauty will be my [the soul’s] death,” and bestow the urgently sought union of love.³¹ John explains that this sickness of love (the suffering endured by parted lovers) with which the person suffers differs from other kinds of sickness in that the very thing that causes the suffering also gives the cure (when she receives the object for which she longs sufficiently).³² The cross of purification gradually gives way to communion in love as means to an end.³³

SPIRITUAL BETROTHAL; FINAL PREPARATIONS, FINAL OBSTACLES

After a person has left the passive nights but before the union of spiritual marriage, John posits a state of spiritual betrothal.³⁴ This state constitutes the final stage of preparation for the spiritual marriage.³⁵ John of the Cross maintains that even in the spiritual betrothal, a person suffers from “her Beloved’s with-

drawal, disturbances and afflictions in her sensory part, and from the devil.”³⁶ Occasionally, when a soul spiritually betrothed to God feels that God is absent, she will experience the longings of love, which had been customary at the end of the last night.³⁷ John writes, “The experiences of the Beloved’s absence that the soul suffers in spiritual betrothal are very painful; some are of such a kind that no suffering is comparable to them.”³⁸ Even though these longings are momentary and not habitual as before a soul’s betrothal, now that she has received the longed-for union in some way, any appearance of retreat from this union or even the failure to complete it produces unmatched afflictions.³⁹

SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE; UNION OF LOVE RECEIVED AND DEEPE- NED THROUGH THE CROSS

After spiritual betrothal, God brings a soul into spiritual marriage—the union of love that she sought from the beginning.⁴⁰ The power of this unifying love transforms the cross, ordaining it to God’s purpose: human perfection and beatitude.⁴¹ In spiritual marriage, God communicates to the soul that suffering has become an opportunity to express love, providing an example in the Incarnation and especially in the Paschal Mystery.

According to John, a person should never neglect the cross of Christ. In a pivotal passage, St. John writes, “Suffering is a means of her [a spiritual Bride] penetrating further...into...the wisdom of God.”⁴² He continues, “The gate entering into these riches of his [God’s] wisdom is the cross...and few desire to enter by it.”⁴³ Despite his exaltation of this state of spiritual marriage, John states, “In this life the union [spiritual marriage] cannot be perfect, although it is beyond words and thoughts.”⁴⁴ In the spiritual marriage any perfecting touches a soul receives from God simply open the soul to receive more of her infinite Bridegroom. These “divine touches” no longer cause the soul to suffer because, resulting from God’s purification of the soul in the nights, her will conforms to God’s will, and she rejoices when God accomplishes His will in her.⁴⁵

CONCLUSIONS

Following the course of the spiritual life as elucidated by St. John of the Cross, the relationship between the Cross and love seems to develop and change as a person progresses through the various stages and experiences from active purgation to the spiritual marriage. Throughout this earthly pilgrimage, however, God remains the same, and does what He is (according to the Beloved Disciple’s first letter) perfectly: God loves (1 Jn 4:8, 16). Desiring to allow each person a participation in His life forever in heaven, God calls each person to be transformed and perfected in His love and thereby be brought to the eternal reward He has in store for those who love Him (1 Cor. 2:9, Mt. 5:48, LG 40).

ENDNOTES

- 1 Edith Stein, *Science of the Cross*, (Trans. by Hilda Graef, Ed. by L. Gelber and Romaeus Leuven, London: Burns & Oates, 1960), p. 20-21.
- 2 Ibid, p. 25.
- 3 Ibid, p. 226.
- 4 Gabriele di Santa Maria Maddalena, *John of the Cross; Doctor of Divine Love and Contemplation*, (Trans. by a Benedictine of Stanbrook Abbey, Westminster, MD: The Newman Bookshop, 1946), p. x, xii.
- 5 Ibid, p. 18-20, 42-43.
- 6 Ibid, p. 63-64.
- 7 Ibid, p. 89-90.
- 8 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q 1, a 5; q 2, a 8
- 9 A II, 7.5, § 2, p. 170. In citations from the works of St. John of the Cross, the letter stands for the treatise cited (A for *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, N for *Dark Night of the Soul*, C for *Spiritual Canticle*, and F for *Living Flame of Love*), and the Roman numeral stands for the “Book” cited within that work (a division that belongs to the author, although the *Canticle* and the *Living Flame* do not have this organization). The Arabic numerals signify the “Chapter” or “Stanza” (following the author’s division of each treatise) and the paragraph number. All citations from the works of John of the Cross are taken from: John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross, Revised Edition*, Trans. by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. Rev. and Intro. by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1991).
- 10 Cf. A I, 4.1, p. 123; 11.5, p. 143; 13.4, p. 148; 14.2, p. 151; N I.1, p. 360; 4.7-8, p. 369-370. Cf. John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris* 14, 11 February 1984, where Pope John Paul makes a similar assertion.
- 11 A II, 7.2-11, p. 169-172.
- 12 Cf. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, V Chapters 1-2.
- 13 A I 1.3, p. 119; 13.1, p. 147-148.
- 14 N I 4.8, p. 370.
- 15 N I 8.3, p. 376.
- 16 Cf. N I 9, p. 377-380, among many texts. Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God*, X:27, where his fourth degree of loving God (i.e., loving God for who He is in Himself) coincides with the “self-less, theocentric love of God” described here.
- 17 N I 7.5, p. 375.

18 N I 12.8, p. 388. The author will use person and soul interchangeably throughout, without the intention of espousing a strictly platonic or manichean dichotomy between body and soul, or implying such an intention on the part of St. John of the Cross.

19 N I 10.6, p. 382. Cf. A III 23.1, p. 308; N I 8.3, p. 376.

20 N I, 11.1, p. 383.

21 Ibid. John makes reference to Ps 43:3 ("My soul thirsts for the living God.") as well.

22 N I 11.1, p. 383.

23 N II 9.11, p. 416. Cf. N II 14.1-2, p. 428-429.

24 N II 3.3, p. 399.

25 N II 13.5, p. 425. Cf. N II 16.14, p. 435, where John explains these persons take great care not to offend God even in the slightest way either by commission or omission, and they meticulously consider whether they have angered God in anything.

26 N II 4.2, p. 400-401. Cf. Col 3:9-10, Eph 4:22-24, Rom 12:2, cited by St. John in N II 3.3, p. 399 in the context of renewal and elevation of the human person to the divine mode of virtue/love.

27 N II 11.1-5, p. 419-421.

28 N II 11.6 § 3, p. 421. The "loving wound" becomes an important image for John in the *Canticle* and the *Flame*. Cf. C 7.4, p. 500-501; 9.2, p. 505; F 3.18 § 4, 22, 68, p. 681, 700.

29 N II 12.6, p. 423.

30 C 11.10, p. 513. He quotes 1 Jn 4:18, "Perfect charity casts out all fear."

31 C 11.10, p. 512-514. John includes the caveat that "When the soul asks that the vision of his beauty be her death she speaks conditionally, under the supposition that she cannot see him without dying" (C 11.8, p. 512).

32 C 11.11, p. 514-515. Cf. F 2.7, p. 659-660; 3.22, p. 682.

33 Cf. C 11.11, p. 514-515; 16.11, p. 542.; 29.10-11, p. 590; 31.6, p. 597; 34.6, p. 607; 35.2, 4, 5, 7, p.607-609; 37.4, p. 616. F 1.15 §3, p. 646; 3.22, p. 682.

34 St. John explains what he calls "spiritual betrothal" from C 14-15, p. 524 through C 19, p.551.

35 Cf. F 3.24-26, p. 682-683.

36 C 14-15.30, p. 537.

37 C 17.1, p. 542.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 John speaks of this spiritual marriage and of Baptism as two kinds of espousals (C 23.6, p. 564). Spiritual marriage is achieved "gradually and by stages," while the espousal made in Baptism is "accomplished immediately" with the "reception of grace...at baptism." (When St. John speaks of "the reception of grace at Baptism;" he refers to Baptismal grace, by which a soul is cleansed of sin, conformed to Christ, and enters into the state of grace.) For St. John, both espousals (of Baptism and spiritual marriage) flow from the Cross of Christ, and both unite a human person with God through love (C 23.1-6, p. 563-565. Cf. A II, 7.2-11, p. 169-172). We can understand the primary agency of "God's love for man" as the efficient cause of both of these espousals.

41 Cf. C 23.5, p. 564.

42 C 36.12, p. 613-614.

43 C 36.13, p. 614.

44 C 22.4, p. 561.

45 F 1.18, p. 648; 2.2-4, p. 658-659; 2.19, p. 664-665; 3.10, 14-16, p. 677-680. John of the Cross does not directly affirm continued "purification" in the state of spiritual marriage, although it may be implied by his words in C 36, cited above.

Meaning, Mystery and Marian Art

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I

In her *Magnificat* the Blessed Virgin Mary proclaims that her name and memory will continue to be blessed in generations to come (Luke 1: 48). The history of Marian art testifies to the enduring truth of this prophecy. Such art also provides the ardent student of Christian culture with ample resources both for faithful reflection of a philosophical nature, and for delving more deeply, by means of prayerful meditation, into the mystery of the Trinity, the central mystery of the Catholic faith. If William Cullen Bryant was correct to characterize the landscape paintings of his friend Thomas Cole as akin to religious acts in his funeral oration for the founder of the Hudson River School, then all

the more do Marian images provide a proper medium for soulful meditation. Devotion to Mary is both properly Christological and Ecclesiological, as chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium* so clearly articulates. Christ is the way to the Father, and Mary is God's chosen way to her Son. Such was the devotion to Mary practiced and preached so ardently by St. Louis De Montfort. Marian art, therefore, offers an invitation to all those who, like King Lear, would like to take upon themselves the mystery of things.

II

Mysticism derives from the Greek word *mysteria* (mystery), which was used to describe the mystical cults of antiquity whose practices were once shrouded in secrecy. Hence mystical experience is said to be connected to what is silent or ineffable. Recall that in the famous hymn by Franz Gruber we sing about

a Night which is both silent and holy. Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous concluding and quite mysterious sentence to the *Tractatus* also trades upon this very same connection between silence and a religious sensibility: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence." This quotation is itself traceable back to the Pseudo Dionysius (circa 500 AD), whose works comprise a synthesis of Christian dogma and Procline Neoplatonism, and who stands as one of the seminal figures in the development of medieval mysticism in the West. For Gabriel Marcel the realm of mystery is to be distinguished from the realm of the problematic. Problems are to be solved in a puzzle-like fashion whereas mysteries are to be revered, the most conducive atmosphere for which is contemplative silence.

Human Being, according to the metaphysical interpretation given to it by Fernando Rielo, a recently deceased Catholic philosopher, mystic, and poet, is to be properly characterized as More-Than-Human.¹ This Divine pedigree of human nature is given some biblical reinforcement from Christ himself when he refers to the *Psalm* 81 ascription of a god-like status to the judges in *John* 10:34. For Rielo the biblical principle of *imago dei* means that all humans are indwelt by a divine and wholly trinitarian constitutive presence. Rielo's view thus quite openly competes with the longstanding analogical model of being worked out by Thomas Aquinas. Be that as it may, according to Rielo's view, Marian images must therefore always be more than merely Marian, and hence must always be related to the Trinity.

Classical mystical literature often refers to the so-called stages of mystical development: 1) *Via Pur-gativa*; 2) *Via Illuminativa*; 3) *Via Unitiva*. Purgation involves a detachment from and a renunciation of all *sensibilia* in order to come to the closest possible contact with one's true self. Socrates himself once invoked the dictum of the Delphic Oracle to know oneself as being at the very heart of philosophical reflection. Mary as immaculate has of course no need of purgation, nor need of relief from any dark night of the soul, such as is delineated so beautifully by St. John of the Cross in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*. Nevertheless, Mary as the *mater dolorosa*, as she appears, for example, in Jacopone da Todi's stirring word portrait in the *Stabat Mater*, or in a painting like

Giovanni Bellini's *Pietà* at the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan, provides a role model for the paradox of how great joy can coexist with great anguish. Mary in her perpetual virginity was perhaps spared the pain of childbirth, which usually accompanies the incipient joy of new motherhood. But any insight gained into such an emotional paradox by way of pictorial persuasion can be of invaluable service for the spiritual healing of the grief stricken soul as it tries to ascend the latter of spiritual purgation and illumination in quest of ultimate union with God.

Marian art presents us with a visualization of the cycle of Christocentric mysteries presented in the Rosary. As such, contemplation of and meditation upon such mysteries, with the visual aid to the imagination that is provided by great works of religious art, can only lead us closer to a magnified intellectual appreciation of and a closer personal union with the persons of the Most Holy Trinity. To borrow from St. Teresa of Avila, contemplation of great works of Marian art, with their total absorption in Christocentric themes, can help to guide us along the way of perfection until we reach that interior castle within us in which resides the temple of the Holy Spirit. A witty antithesis attributed to Simonides has it that poetry is a speaking picture and painting a mute poem. From this perspective Marian art can be understood as embodying and preserving the silence of poetry in a portrait, which captures the momentary yet intimate, and often private, communion between Mary and almighty God.

III

In his interpretation of Christian ethics Dietrich von Hildebrand argues for a realistic Platonic interpretation of moral values. These values demand an appropriate response from human beings. One can also argue in like fashion that the intertwining of beauty and truth in Christian art in general, and in Marian art in particular, makes the same urgent demand upon its viewers. And when one contemplates the beautiful one is also in contemplation of what is both true and good. This view was held both by Plato, as is partly revealed in his reidentification of the Form of the Good in the *Republic* as the Form

of Beauty in the *Symposium*, and by scholastic thinkers in their treatment of the transcendental concepts. John Keats poetically conveys the mingling of truth and beauty in his *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. “Beauty is truth; Truth Beauty. That is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know.” Given the massive Neo-Platonic influence upon Romantic poetry it is not surprising to have Plotinus in *Ennead* 5 ask “Without beauty, what would become of Being?” and conversely, “Without Being what would become of beauty?”.

3.1) The Annunciation

The story of the Annunciation has been a recurring theme in Marian art. Interestingly, the two gospel stories dealing with the Annunciation involving both Mary and Zechariah have been used to try and illustrate a distinction between metaphysics and epistemology, or between Being and knowledge, which are obviously quite intimately linked. After all, Christ is both Truth and Life. Luke informs us that Zechariah responds to the good news of the impending birth of the Baptist with the question: “How will I know that this is so?” For such skepticism regarding the veracity of the information conveyed by the messenger of God he is struck mute for nine months. Mary responds quite differently in her encounter with Gabriel, expressing metaphysical curiosity and not epistemological doubts in her query: “How can this be?” While Mary is rewarded for her submissive curiosity about the Incarnation, Zechariah is punished. By being struck mute he himself must undergo a gestation period of penance and spiritual growth by way of his own pregnancy of silence.

Mary’s commitment to the truth of the angelic message is at once both illuminative and unitive in its effect. Jacques Maritain refers to poetic intuition as a kind of connatural knowledge, a non-rational awareness that is born and then abides in the pre-conscious part of the intellect, and which is released by the stimulus of emotion. The affinity between this description of the process by which poetic intuition takes place and the Incarnational principle is apparent. Such intuition is mirrored in the kind of Trinitarian based spiritual intuition described by Julian of Norwich in which words are silently spoken to the understanding and *showings* appear to ghostly sight.

In reflecting upon the compassion of Mary for our Lord’s passion in her *Revelations of Divine Love* Julian reinforces the earlier point that Mary embodies the paradox in which great joy and great sorrow can coincide in the same experience. She writes that Christ and Mary were so one in love that the magnitude of her love was itself the immediate cause of the extent of her pain.²

In traditional depictions of the Annunciation Mary is portrayed in a way which is consistent with the mood of ascetic devotion achieved by Fra Angelico in his pictorial representation of the Gospel story. Wings aside, there is very little physical difference between Mary and the angel. A similar physical resemblance holds true in the Annunciation of Robert Campin, which is part of the Cloisters Collection in New York. In many non-Italian or Northern European paintings Mary often loses her Italian features and assumes the ethnic look of the region under whose auspices a particular painting has been commissioned. The same applies in the case of the many Marian paintings produced by Spanish painters such as Murillo and others in what might be designated as the post-Raphaelite period. In El Greco’s highly original rendering of the Annunciation, in the painting which hangs in the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest, Mary is shown as completely composed despite the emotional turbulence evoked by the searing and luminescent licks of white flame which are meant to amplify the arrival of the dove who symbolizes the Holy Spirit. These tongues of flame also indicate the overshadowing of Mary by the Spirit in a way which does not rely upon the by then well-known technique of *chiaroscuro*, wielded with such great effect by the likes of both Leonardo and Caravaggio. In the triptych by Campin, of which the Annunciation forms the central panel, Mary looks wholly Flemish, with rounded face and all. When in the North Mary becomes a *hausfrau* who is where she should be, so to speak – in the home. When in Rome however the accessories of hearth and home are sacrificed in order to heighten the solemnity of the encounter in which her life has been entirely transfigured.

The Annunciation of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, entitled *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, which hangs in the Tate Gallery in London, tells another story. Instead of a

young girl with precocious spirituality Mary is portrayed by Rossetti as a frightened young woman who is lying crumpled upon a bleached white bed, and whose eyes are filled with child-like wonderment. Incidentally, it is Christina Rossetti, the artist's sister, who served as the model. The Virgin's reaction to the arrival of the angel in this painting might be characterized in terms of Rudolf Otto's famous phrase: *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. It is an experience which is overpowering, threatening, and wholly other.

Dated 1850, this picture was painted only two years after the founding of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, part of whose philosophy and motivation was to express the principles of Christianity in painting by means of emotional intensity. Later on, Leo Tolstoy in *What is Art?* and R.G. Collingwood in *The Principles of Art* would argue that the very purpose of art is to communicate deep-seated feelings and emotions. Interestingly, Charles Darwin's very last book would deal with the attempt to codify scientifically how emotions can be read from facial expressions. Collingwood's view that art itself involves a psychological process in which dim and chaotic feelings become lucid and coherent seems relevant for describing this critical moment in the life of the Virgin as depicted by Rossetti. Mary is about to enter into the light of a new relationship with God, but not in a way which completely escapes from the superluminous darkness, to borrow Karl Rahner's phrase, that always accompanies the leap from one stage of life into another. As Laurie Sheck writes in her poem about the Annunciation, Mary exhibits the "honest grace" of not attempting to hide her fear, a kind of prefiguration if you will of Christ's own later very human ambivalence concerning his impending passion. The Annunciation functions as a naming ceremony in which Mary is anointed with a new name, "Most favored one." By saying yes, and in so doing giving a proper response to the angel, Mary is literally accepting a new identity, one in which she is aware of being more than she was before. Rossetti, in one of his poems, refers to Mary as a *Woman-Trinity* – "Now sitting fourth besides the three, thyself a Woman-Trinity." The Coronation of the Virgin by Velasquez, which hangs in the Prado, shows Mary in her full Trinitarian splendor. Seated upon a canopy of

clouds and surrounded by the persons of the Trinity, who create a triangular frame around her, Velasquez concentrates all of Mary's expressiveness into the eyes and the mouth. By creating this centralization effect in which the viewer is focused upon the face of the Virgin, the humility of God is beautifully enhanced.

Given the chance, the average viewer will easily come to realize that the Annunciation of Rossetti lacks the immediate beauty of the Coronation of Velasquez, or even of the Immaculate Conception of Murillo in which the Virgin is born upward upon billowing clouds, or the exquisite Sistine Madonna of Raphael in which the artist creates a sense of weightlessness in which the movement of the virgin seems to defy the gravitational resistance of the earth. This lack of beauty is purposeful on the part of Rossetti. He and other like-minded artists were engaged in an artistic rebellion against the aesthetic commitments of Raphael and his artistic disciples, who preferred grace and beauty to substance and meaning. Rossetti even believed that the superficiality of Victorian culture was traceable to an acquiescence in this Raphaellesque aesthetic. He longed for a return to the artistic sensibility of Giotto, Fra Angelico, and even of Dante; hence the name pre-Raphaelite. Rossetti's artistic philosophy was that art should be based upon a scrupulous attention to fact and detail. In Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* the dandified aesthete Anthony Blanche tells the protagonist Charles Ryder that charm, personified by Sebastian, is what strangles and kills life. This is also Rossetti's view. Rossetti wanted to provide the viewer with an eyewitness point of view to an important event in salvation history. If Hegel in his philosophy can be said to have rationalized Romanticism, one might describe the artistic intentions of Rossetti as involving an attempt to romanticize the actual facts of life without over-idolizing them.

3.2) *Fides et Ratio*

Pope John Pope II concludes his final encyclical of the second millennium *Fides et Ratio* by drawing a connection between Mary and philosophy. It is not unfair to say that both the life and the papacy of John Paul II were devoted to both. In paragraph 108 he refers to the role of the handmaiden, a role played by

both Mary and philosophy in their respective ways: Mary in relation to the Word made flesh, and philosophy as providing the method and the resources for theology.³ Mary's special role as providing a spiritual support for popes is symbolized, for example, by the papal tiara that appears in front of the balustrade in Raphael's Sistine Madonna.

Karl Rahner's oxymoronic reference to a super luminous darkness is reminiscent of Dryden's even more poetic "darkness that defies the light." In the Neo-Platonic Christian mystical tradition the distinction between positive and negative theology, and between light and dark, has been an important one. The negative theological tradition asserts that the super luminescence of God, despite his reality and brightness, can not be directly known by the limited faculties of human perception and cognition. The light of God is hidden from us and can only be known in an indirect or negative manner. For the most part, however, the Marian art of the Renaissance better enabled the viewer to contemplate a direct relationship with God, but without forsaking tradition, thus allowing for the very same kind of personal relationship with God that Reformers, like Luther, also endorsed. Building upon the naturalistic style of Giotto and the naturalistic spirituality of St. Francis, Marian art in the Renaissance began to portray the supernatural relationship between Mary and her son in more natural settings. This was the great age of the Pastoral Madonna whose foremost representative was Raphael. Neo-Platonism exerted an important influence upon Marian art in the Renaissance, as we shall soon consider in the case of Michelangelo's *Pietà*.

3.3) Neo-Platonism

With the advent of Humanism in the Renaissance both Platonic and Neo-Platonic influences upon artistic, literary and intellectual activity came into vogue. Michelangelo's alleged *modus operandi* for choosing a worthy piece of marble seems to come directly from *Ennead* 1.6, the famous Plotinian tract on Beauty. Michelangelo is supposed to have chosen his marble based upon an uncanny, even unearthly, ability to see the figure of his intended sculpture already trapped within the stone. Hence his sculp-

tural efforts amounted to a liberation, or resurrection if you will, of the preexisting form from its sepulcher. Such an artistic activity is meant, from the perspective of humility, to be identified more with an act of Platonic discovery, such as in the theory of recollection enacted in Plato's *Meno*, than with any inventive act of creation *ex nihilo*. In *Ennead* 1.6 Plotinus writes the following.

How then can you see the sort of beauty a soul has? Go back into yourself and look; and if you do not see yourself beautiful, then, just as someone making a statue which has to be beautiful cuts away here and polishes there and makes one part smooth and clears another till he has given his statue a beautiful face, so you too must cut away excess and straiten the crooked and clear the dark and make it bright, and never stop 'working on your statue' till the divine glory of virtue shines out on you, till you see 'self-mastery enthroned upon its holy seat.'⁴

Both Michelangelo and Botticelli had been associated with the Medicean Platonic Academy in Florence. Marsilio Ficino, a charter member of this loose association of artists and scholars, was responsible for the translation into Latin of both the works of Plato, begun in 1463, and Plotinus, begun in 1484 as well as for influential commentaries on the thought of both Plato and Plotinus. The sonnets of Michelangelo, although not of outstanding literary merit, bear the imprint of the idealized view of love that was associated with both Platonic and Neo-Platonic sensibility.

The fusion between Platonism and Christianity was, of course, by no means novel. It stretches back to the earliest development of Christian Apologetics. In the 12th century, amidst the emergence of the austerity of Gothic architecture associated with the Abbot Suger of St. Denis-- which acted as a foil to the exuberance of the Romanesque despite initial Church resistance up until the Lateran Council of 1215, and the celebrated intellectualism of the unfortunate Abelard-- St. Bernard of Clairvaux was instrumental in helping to redirect early Christian humanism in a more spiritual direction. Already in possession of the Latin translation of Plato's *Timaeus* by Chalcidius in the fourth century AD, Christianity would absorb other Platonic ideas and influences in the centuries to come.

Michelangelo was self-consciously committed to the devotional value of great religious art. He writes the following.

Frequently images badly painted distract and cause devotion to be lost, at least in those who possess little; and, on the contrary, those that are divinely painted provoke and lead even those who are little devout and but little inclined to worship to contemplation and tears.⁵

Michelangelo's *Pietà*, completed in 1498-1499 when he was only twenty-three, depicts the Virgin mourning over the body of her dead son. The word *Pietà* itself means "pity" or "mercy." This literal meaning was connected to an earlier treatment of the same subject in Northern Europe (Scandinavia, Germany, France), where it was usually handled in a grisly and gruesome manner that would evoke pity. Ironically, this first great sculpture of a man known more for his artistic *terribilità* than for his humility will be the only one that ever bore his signature. His last sculpture, the unfinished Rondanini *Pietà*, implements another artistic approach to the theme.

Michelangelo completely reinterprets the traditional approach to the *Pietà* theme in his youthful masterpiece. In Michelangelo's version we see a life-sized Christ. It is interesting to note the differences in the sizes of Christ in both pre- and post-Michelangelo renditions of the *Pietà* theme in sculpture. Such departures from realism may reflect differing assessments of God in the Middle Ages and the Baroque respectively. Michelangelo's Christ, it has been said, assumes a posture which represents less the limpness of death and more the thorough relaxation of the anatomy that might be associated with the kind of restful sleep which anticipates the resurrection.. Thus the Christian and Platonic theme of the soul's personal immortality is conveyed in silent fashion through the medium of marble. In *Theologica Platonica de Immortalitate Animarum* Marsilio Ficino had himself presented arguments for the immortality of the soul to counteract the Averroistic Aristotelianism of the time which cast personal immortality into doubt. The personal immortality of the soul would be given doctrinal standing at the Fifth Lateran Council in 1512. Michelangelo's death in 1564 may have coincided with the birth of Shakespeare, but his *Pietà* is

no mere "sleep of death" whose dreams are subject to the strategies of doubt that Montaigne and others were soon to invoke in their incisive assault upon the foundations of knowledge.

The *Pietà* is a testimonial to Michelangelo's Platonic commitment that ideal physical beauty is an expression of the divine. St Thomas Aquinas, who would develop the fragmentary aesthetics of Aristotle within the context of the mystical Neo-Platonism of the Pseudo-Dionysius, understood earthly beauty as an imperfect manifestation of divine beauty. Michelangelo did his best to minimize such human imperfection. The age of the Virgin is technically inaccurate as she in no way appears to have aged sufficiently for a woman whose son had already passed the age of thirty at the time of his death. But Mary, to use Goethe's phrase, represents the Eternal Feminine, and her youthful appearance can be construed as theologically if not chronologically correct. Mary is no ageless Dorian Gray trading upon deceit to represent her best face to the world, but a woman who lives up to the letter of the Wildean law that by forty we all get the face that we deserve. Michelangelo's timeless Neoplatonic meditation upon the mystery of life and death is thus far removed from something like Salvador Dali's Annunciation, in which a surrealist Mary barely emerges out of splashes of beautiful color.

3.4) The Myriad Problems of Marian Art

Many of the technical problems faced by the Marian artist in representing the mystery of the Mother of God (theotokos) also confront Christian and religiously oriented art in general. In the Encyclical *Ubi Primum* Pope Pius IX writes that "God has committed to Mary the treasury of all good things, in order that everyone may know that through her are obtained every hope, every grace, and all salvation."⁶ Thus we do no disservice to philosophical universality by allowing Mary to frame any meditation upon the metaphysical and mystical aspects of divine reality.

According to the interpretation given by Miguel de Unamuno in *The Agony of Christianity* we must always distinguish between a person who has died and a personality which lives on in memory, often through the transmission of great works of art.⁷ Una-

muno claims, for example, to possess a more real and intimate knowledge of Don Quixote, whom he refers to as the Spanish Christ, than of Cervantes himself. He also says that characters such as King Lear, Hamlet, and Macbeth did more to create Shakespeare than the reverse. Whatever problems this view presents, Unamuno nevertheless makes an important point that we can stretch to fit our own purpose. Other than those private revelations--which are the privilege of the few-- and prayer itself, perhaps the closest contact between the person of Mary and her children here on earth is to be had through Marian iconography or art. Moreover, Marian art provides a magnificent stimulus and reminder to communicate continuously with Mary through prayer. The inspirational limitations of the earliest Marian art were due primarily to limitations in pictorial technique, not devotion. The third century fresco of the Virgin and Child in the catacomb of Priscilla in Rome is our earliest known piece of Marian art. The building of the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome was a direct response to the doctrinal definition of Mary as Mother of God at the Council held in Ephesus in 431 AD.

The earliest depictions of the Virgin mother did, despite their simplicity, faithfully reflect a pattern of life that was chosen by a significant number of the faithful during the first centuries of the church. Virginity itself was a form of the asceticism which flourished in the church during the first half of the first millennium and beyond. Early Marian and Christian art succeeded in capturing the monastic call to retreat from the world. It is interesting to note, as the Encyclopedia of Catholicism (1995) points out, that there exists no official dogmatic formulation of the Virgin Birth, unlike the other Marian dogmas. St. Jerome defended the concept of *Semper Virgo* in his letter against Helvidius, and the Synod held in Milan in 391 was the first in the West to clearly articulate the meaning of Mary's perpetual virginity. The sacramentalization of marriage as a procreative license issued by Christ was itself a testament to the value and virtue of virginity, which St. Paul rates even above marriage. For marriage consecrates both a beginning and an end, which is marked by a change in the type of chastity that newly espoused partners are required to practice. In the last century Thomas Merton will

generalize virginity as that "untouched center" which exists in every human heart.⁸

While the earliest works of Marian art do inspire us, it is for the most part with a sort of respect or hieratic solemnity, although early Christian art always intended to be instructive and inspirational to the extent of reassuring the faithful that death was not the end of life. To substantiate the claim that iconography is related to and can epitomize shifting opinions and ideas one only need note the shift from the Risen Christ motif so typical of Byzantine art to the Suffering Christ motif which supersedes it in the Middle Ages. This shift was probably in some way connected to the eschatological hopes for the new millennium which, as we know from hindsight, were never fulfilled.

After the conquest of the Italian peninsula by the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century AD Marian art in the West began to be dominated by the Byzantine style. This included a simple background of gold leaf for religious scenes. Clothing in such early Christian art appeared stiff. Backgrounds would not receive any elaboration for the most part until there was an increase in both the knowledge and the technique which could allow for it. The perfection of perspective in the 15th century, which allowed for an enriched simulation of reality in two dimensions, is one case in point. Emotions were especially hard to render with Byzantine colored tile or mosaic technique. The flame of spirituality in art was kindled by the Cluniac reforms which occurred near the end of the first millennium. But due to limitations of technique pictorial naturalism was not yet a substantial possibility for conveying the theologically real depths of the Christian faith. Hence Romanesque art in the tenth and eleventh centuries suggested what was theologically real by relying mostly upon religious symbolism and illusion.

The passage from the Romanesque to the Gothic at the end of the 12th century was due primarily to advances in the science of engineering that made possible such architectural structures as ribbed vaults and the flying buttress. As a result the walls of Christian Churches, especially in the north of Europe, could be studded with stained glass that let in light since the walls themselves were no longer needed as the sole support for the roof. Neo-Platonic light im-

agery, which expressed the grandeur of God, did not therefore need to be limited to literary expression. Divine light could flood the interior of a Church, thus making the Gothic cathedral the first real example of virtual reality, as the Church virtually became heaven on earth. In Italian Churches, where the Gothic style was slower to take root, interior frescoes decorating the massive walls were the decoration of choice. Hence scientific constraints were instrumental in the development of the meaning and mystery of Christian and Marian art.

This brief historical sketch concerning the development of Christian and Marian art provides us with a context for the consideration of the important problem of realism in Marian art. Secular art provides many examples of the superior persuasive power of an unrealistic portrayal of physical reality. A favorite of mine is that of Thomas Moran's depiction of the mountainous territory that was destined to become Yellowstone National Park. He joined Dr. Ferdinand Hayden's geological survey expedition to Utah and the Wyoming territory in 1871. Moran's landscapes of the Yellowstone region, which gave a romanticized yet still true impression of this brave New World, in accordance with the aesthetic principle advocated by John Ruskin to preserve the essence of the subject, far exceeded the survey's more factually accurate journalistic and photographic accounts in their popularity with the public back home in the east. Moran's purposeful imprecision thus extended a more enticing invitation to go West.

What about the issue of realism when it comes to depictions of Mary? For the task of portraying Mary in painted form we may ask the following question: Is it at all possible to idealize or over-idealize Mary? Goethe, in his assessment of Raphael's Sistine Madonna, who is facially very similar to the woman that appears in his *Donna Velata*, says that Mary represents the *Mutter Urbild* – the archetype of all mothers. On the contrary, historians of art in comparing the styles of Michelangelo and Raphael have often made the claim that the former painted *man* whereas it was the latter, Raphael, who painted real men and real women. Another example of taking liberties with Mary would be Botticelli. Sandro Botticelli's model for his Lady of the *Magnificat* was a woman named Simonetta, who was known to be the

mistress of Julian de Medici. She also was a model for Botticelli's pagan goddess, Pallas Athene. Moreover, Botticelli, before he entered his final mystical phase under the influence of the religious revival spearheaded by Savonarola, employed a kind of pictorial poetry in which the themes of Madonna and pagan goddess were often interwoven. For example, in some of his purely pagan paintings, such as the Birth of Venus and the Primavera and the Three Graces, the females possess a sort of Madonna-like innocence. From the perspective of reverence, the allowance of such an affinity between the sacred and secular might be said by some to transgress the bounds of Christian or Marian decency. Such a criticism however would not be warranted in the case of the pairing of Schubert's *Ava Maria* with Scott's Lady of the Lake. The fusion of pagan and Christian meaning in art had been one of the topics tackled within the Neo-Platonic circles in Florence in which the young Botticelli had been known to participate. Historical precedent for the admixture of Marian and secular feminine themes had a precedent in the role played by Mary in undermining the cult of the goddess Diana in Ephesus.

Does our Lady of Guadalupe's perfectly preserved appearance as an Aztec girl, or the smoke blackened face of the icon of our Lady in Jasna Gora, suggest that portrayals of our Lady need not be physically accurate? If yes, then depictions of Mary can legitimately be left to sheer contingency as in the case of the Polish icon, or to what will most spiritually inspire and uplift a particular ethnic group, as in the case of Guadalupe. Recall that the appearance of the many Madonnas of Spanish painters: such as Murillo, Morales, Zurbaran, Antolinez, Velasquez, to name a few, is Iberian; whereas the appearance of the Northern European Madonna takes on different facial characteristics. In Rembrandt's *The Holy Family*, which hangs in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, we are presented with a partial and indistinct view of the Virgin, while St. Joseph in the background is barely visible at all. But Rembrandt's main emphasis in this painting was not the family per se, but its Holiness. The cradled Christ in the foreground seems to sing out the beautiful words from the Marian Lullaby of Elizabeth Barrett Browning: "This holier in sleep than a saint at prayer."

If artists in portraying the unknown face of Mary do not commit themselves to any agreed upon criteria of accuracy, then is it safe to assume that Marian artists are free to explore their artistic urges? This is certainly the case, for example, when Mary is modeled by an actual flesh and blood woman, such as Christian Rossetti or Raphael's *La Velata*, who was none other than Raphael's own mistress, Margherita. On the other hand, many depictions of Mary seem to follow apparitional traditions, such as those of Lourdes and Fatima in more recent times. But of course the source of such traditions is quite often the unreliable testimony of small children who are not themselves artists. Ecclesiastical approval of an apparition pertains to the actual appearance of Mary, not to what she looked like.

One fascinating consideration regarding the facial likeness of Mary comes to mind in light of modern genetic theory. In canto XXXII (85-86) of the *Paradiso* the pilgrim Dante is urged by St. Bernard to gaze upon the face most like that of Christ (*Riguarda omai ne la faccia che a Cristo più si somiglia*). Given the biological nature of the Incarnation, in which there was no genetic contribution by St. Joseph, one might reverently argue that, humanly speaking, Christ is a flesh and blood clone of the Blessed Virgin. The Marian artist in particular, like the Christian artist in general, has a primary responsibility to theological or doctrinal realism. There should never be any falsification in the portrayal of what Christians actually believe about Mary. Where physical or pictorial realism can reinforce or highlight the mystical content of a painting, so much the better. Mary should be maximized on canvas as she has been in the development of Marian doctrine. This principle of *maximalism* was employed by Duns Scotus, for example, to argue for Mary's Immaculate Conception about six hundred years prior to the publication of *Ineffabilis Deus* by Pope Pius IX in 1854. St. Bernard in Epistle 174 had already voiced some doubts as to the doctrine, as did Aquinas, although his final set of Lenten sermons brought him much closer to what we now all profess as Catholics upon this issue.

Naturalism in Christian art received its motivational impetus from the teachings of St. Francis who held that the study and appreciation of the natural world led to God. Giotto's realistic frescoes devoted

to the life of St. Francis, for example, incorporated this realistic injunction in terms of both architecture and landscape. Giotto's more realistic natural background settings thus do away with the beautiful but artificial golden empyrean of Byzantine art. As a result, the emotions of the persons depicted could be made to correspond to appropriately selected natural phenomena, analogous to the later pairing of music with action that would become the hallmark of the Wagnerian music drama.

Such a fusion between the personal and naturalistic elements within the religious work of art manifested the coherence and unity of the created order in a way that differed from the linear hierarchy in the Chain of Being. As result of this connection between the natural and the psychological, as it began to take shape in the work of Giotto, emotions and psychological processes, which otherwise would remain obscured, could receive a more extensive pictorial treatment. Hence one might claim that the art of physiognomy, of trying to read emotions from facial expressions, which Darwin tried to utilize upon apes in the zoo, was also part and parcel of the praxis of religious artistry during the Renaissance. The later emergence of interiority so closely identified with the Cartesian revolution had in a way already begun to be explored in early Renaissance Christian and Marian art.

But the Franciscan turn in painting could not have been achieved if unaccompanied by improvements in pictorial technique and other resources. Improvements in, and the codification of, mathematical perspective based upon geometrical optics was of course pivotal in the development of pictorial realism in the Renaissance. Names like Brunelleschi, Alberti, and Piero della Francesca, are just a few of the artists and architects associated with such advances. Leonardo's detailed and accurate anatomical researches preceded the publication of the *De Fabrica* of Vesalius in 1543 by half a century, although the content of Leonardo's *Notebooks* would not become available to the public for several centuries.

Giovanni Bellini, a Venetian painter, developed a smooth oil painting technique that made it possible for him to achieve natural lighting effects and an intensification of color in his paintings. Bellini's pastoral and other Madonnas are among the most celebrated

of the Renaissance. It is perhaps ironic that a Venetian should adorn his paintings of Madonna and Child with a landscape background, for the obvious reason that Venice is not known for its terrain. Canaletto and Guardi will eventually seize the opportunity presented by the Venetian canals to great effect. Bellini's Madonnas are lyrical and sweet in appearance. Mary is no longer simply the *mater amabilis* absorbed with concern for her son. Bellini gives us an introspective Virgin, as in the case, for example, of his Madonna and Child which hangs in the Correr Museum in Venice, in which Mary takes time out from her maternal cares to ponder upon the mysteries of her own unique station in life.

Dante writes in Canto XI (105) of the *Inferno* that art is like the grandchild of God (*si che vostr' arte a Dio quasi è nepote*). Maritain seconds this by saying that in art we humans continue the work of divine creation. But does this not imply that irreverent art should be considered bad art? In the Madonna with the Host by John Auguste Dominique Ingres, which hangs in the Musee D'Orsay in Paris, we are presented with a portrait of an Enlightenment Mary in Neo-Classical style. This painting provides a perfect example of a painter who has taken an outrageous liberty with theological realism as Catholics interpret it. As with other paintings in the Marian genre, Mary is depicted with Jesus, but this time in the form of the consecrated host. In one of his famous poems the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins compares Mary to the air we breathe. This is an appropriate simile as Mary provides us with the spiritual oxygen by which we are able to inhale the life of her divine Son. But Ingres's portrait depicts a priestly Mary at the altar in the midst of a transubstantive act, although this fact is left, to be fair, to the imagination of the viewer. Simone de Beauvoir might approve, as the Virgin is no longer cast in an inferior posture, as a supplicant at the foot of the cross. She is presiding over a sacramental act with full parental and priestly authority.

In Christian theology, as in physics, darkness is defined as the absence of light. Caravaggio's famous *chiaroscuro* technique, which was to become a staple of Baroque painting, was instrumental in creating a dark somber mood which could involve the spectator in the drama of a pictorial narrative, as for example, in his Martyrdom of St. Matthew. *Chiaroscuro* was a

technical device for staging a scene in darkness. This darkness would then be ruptured by the illumination of a well-chosen shaft of light. Caravaggio's style is often described as realistic, but it is more correct to describe it as a form of psychological realism because the force of its impact upon viewers is closely tied to its reliance upon the effects it achieves as the result of carefully chosen psychological details.

In his death of the Virgin which hangs in the Louvre in Paris Caravaggio abandons the convention of depicting sacred figures in heroic fashion. The scene depicted deals with a debatable point in Mariology, the so-called dormition of the Virgin. This topic, which deals with whether Mary actually died a bodily death or not before being assumed both body and soul into heaven had its precedents in sacred literature. It was referred to, for example, in both the second sermon of John of Damascus as well as in the *Golden Legend* of Jacopo de Voraigne. The shaft of light which illuminates the face of the Virgin in Caravaggio's painting was not meant to be symbolic of any heavenly radiance, but is a pictorial device for both fixing the eye of the viewer upon the Virgin, and for amplifying the sense of disorientation the viewer feels due to the diagonal descent of the light from the top left corner of the picture. Baroque painting would come to be known for its use of such illusionistic techniques for the heightening of dramatic energy and psychological tension.

Attending the deathbed of the Virgin are a ragamuffin group of barefoot disciples, including one young woman. If these disciples are the Apostles, then a question arises, how did they get there if according to Marian tradition the Virgin ended her earthly days at Ephesus with John? Mary is featured as having aged in normal fashion. There is no attempt by Caravaggio to idealize her looks, though her appearance in death is in no way hideous. Caravaggio's tableau of the Apostles, which was viewed as indecorous at the time, was possibly a direct pictorial jab at the Counter-Reformational teaching with stressed that ordinary persons could not become saints without the benefit of an intermediate clergy between themselves and God. While Rembrandt in his Holy Family used *chiaroscuro* to create scenes that are timeless and typically Dutch, in which facts are pregnant with spiritual significance, Caravaggio employed darkness

to unsettle the viewer. To the extent that art mirrors life, this should come as no surprise for an artist whose own life was marred by both violence and murder. Both painters, Caravaggio and Rembrandt, employed the contrast between darkness and light as space denying and space creating techniques, thus giving a finite frame or canvas limitless possibilities. A deft use of darkness can also have the effect of isolating the individual in light and thus enhancing the contact between the viewer and the interiority of the person(s) portrayed. Rembrandt's darkness-dominated peek into the secret life of the Holy Family emphasized the frugal contentment of family life in conformity with the simplicity of the Gospel message. Caravaggio, in his *Death of the Virgin* and other religious works, seems to have been very self-consciously engaged in the act of creating a sense of sinister spirituality.

The so-called Proto-Gospel of St. James is the source for various Marian legends. The Virgin's parents, St. Anne and St. Joachin, are mentioned here. Raphael's famous *Sposalizio* or *Marriage of the Virgin*, painted while still more or less under the influence of Perugino's formal style, who in turn studied under the highly perspective-sensitive Piero della Francesca, depicts a scene from the Proto-Gospel. Leonardo's famous 1510 painting of St. Anne, the Virgin and the Infant Christ with a Lamb, which hangs in the Louvre, can boast none other than Sigmund Freud among its admirers and critics.⁹ Freud somehow sees a vulture in the garment of the Virgin, which is in some way symbolically related to a youthful dream attributed to Leonardo. Such speculation aside, the painting allows for an interesting psychological interpretation. Both St. Anne and Mary seem to be about the same age. Instead of mother and grandmother, it is as if there are two mothers present, just as there are, in a sense, two lambs. Freud, no stranger to the psychological significance of jokes, quipped that perhaps the versatile Leonardo simply could not paint old age. While Mary attempts to restrain the Christ child from cavorting with the lamb, St. Anne does just the opposite, or at least she puts up no observable resistance to Christ's attempt to more closely embrace the lamb. Therefore, it is as if these two women represent the ambivalence within the heart of the real Mary. She wants to both protect her

son as well as resign herself to his redemptive fate, a fate that both mother and son must freely embrace.

An important feature in several landscape paintings by Leonardo is the complementarity they exhibit between the human person and the impersonal environment. Raphael would emulate this feature of Leonardo's technique in a number of his own pastoral Madonnas. The tableau depicted in the St. Anne painting just discussed is one which depicts a veritable cascade of sacred genealogy, starting with the seamless downward force which flows from St. Anne at the top, to Mary on her lap, whose hands extend to that of the Christ child, and finally to that of the lamb embraced by Christ who completes this living *aurea catena*. While the present and practically carefree action in the painting contemplates the future of Christ's passion, the landscape seems to evoke a sense of a more primitive and pagan past. It consists of rocky mountains and flowing rivers, and exudes an atmosphere of a remote, prehistoric age. Silence pervades a scene of falling snowflakes, an aqueous manna from the heavens which forms a part of the hydrological cycle which nourishes the earth. Thus Leonardo has given us a sacred space in which past, present, and future coincide. Leonardo invites the spectator to meditate upon temporality, for the Christian God is no Prometheus bound by the tyranny of tense.

Although not a Marian painting, the *Mona Lisa* provides the quintessential example of Leonardo's attempt to express the symmetry between man and nature. The tresses of La Gioconda's hair and the folds and creases in her clothing are mirrored in the flow of running water in the background of the picture. This pictorial harmony was the result of Leonardo's preoccupation with the Neo-Platonic view concerning the microcosm, symbolized by the human body, and the macrocosm, symbolized by nature. While this conception is much older than Neo-Platonism—both the Stoics and the Pythagoreans harbored analogous views—it nevertheless reveals that for Leonardo there exists a cosmic harmony throughout the created order.¹⁰

This principle of harmony borders upon the mystical in the two versions of Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks*. One hangs in the Louvre, the other in the National Gallery in London. A forerunner to *chiar-*

oscuro, in these paintings Leonardo employed a technique known as *sfumato* in which there is a gentle, almost imperceptible, transition from light to shadow. Such carefully modulated lighting is used to bathe the entire cavernous landscape in a mystical glow, which matches the delicate and sweet figuration of the Madonna and her entourage, which consists of an angel, the baby Jesus, and the Baptist.

Raphael will adopt this principle of pictorial harmony from Leonardo. His Madonnas will require a vastly different treatment of landscape and physical ambience than Leonardo's renditions of the Virgin of the Rocks. The smile of Leonardo's Madonna is mysterious and subtle, rare and inexplicable. The smile of Raphael's Madonna is at the same time innocent and ingenuous, typical and familiar. Leonardo's Virgin is placed in a rock grotto, or cathedral in the bosom of the earth, reminiscent of those "caverns measureless to man" referred to by Coleridge. This geological holy place is meant to remind us of the womb of Mary in which the gestation of salvation took place. In paintings like Raphael's Madonna in the Meadow (Vienna), the Canigiani Holy Family (Munich), and the unfinished Esterhazy Madonna (Budapest) the background landscape takes on the appearance of the Umbrian countryside with its open fields, a scene that conveys utter tranquility.

John Dewey held that life itself is an artistic project. With Oscar Wilde, for example, this artistic

view of life was enacted and put on display for all to see, with less than adequate results. If we view man as God's greatest creation, and Mary as the greatest product of this outpouring of Divine love, then Marian art is perhaps best understood as a tribute to the living work of art that is a sinless life. While it might seem as if the golden age of the Madonna in art is well behind us, we would do well to remember the prediction of the *Magnificat*. Let generations of artists to come reveal the splendor of God's most sublime creation.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Marie-Lise Gazarian, *Fernando Rielo: A Dialogue With Three Voices*, tr. by David G. Murray (Madrid: Fernando Rielo Foundation, 2000).
- 2 F.C. Happold, *Mysticism* (Penguin, 1970 revised edition), pp. 322-332.
- 3 Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1998), p.130.
- 4 Plotinus, Loeb Classical Library, tr. by A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).
- 5 John Martin, *Roses, Fountains, and God: The Virgin Mary in History, Art and Apparition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), p. 125.
- 6 Mark Miravalle, *Mary: CoRedemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate* (Santa Barbara: Queenship Publishing, 1993), p. 41.
- 7 Miguel de Unamuno, *The Agony of Christianity*, tr. by Kurt Rainhardt (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1960).
- 8 Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*. Quoted by Kathleen Norris, *Meditations on Mary* (New York: Viking, 1999), p. 32.
- 9 Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci*, tr. by A.A. Brill (New York: Vintage, 1974), ch. 5.
- 10 Stephen Jay Gould, *Leonardo's Mountain of Clams and the Diet of Worms* (New York: Harmony, 1998), pp. 17-44.



Roman Catholic Political Philosophy

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A COURSE DESCRIPTION

The absoluteness of the Muslim threat and of the general difficulty in not knowing how to deal with religion with the meager philosophical tools at their disposal has forced many if not most political science and even philosophy departments to take a hard second look at their systematic neglect of the reality of religion in the history and present of the world. Such departments have still never come to terms with the fact that John Paul II knew more about communism than they did. One might suggest, as I once did, that the reason why the study of “alien religions” is difficult is because the study of the religion that formed our own culture is either neglected or deliberately misunderstood.¹

E. F. Schumacher, in his *Guide for the Perplexed*, spoke of going to Oxford, the most famous university in Christendom, only to find when he got there that none of the really important issues that concern most men most of the time were addressed. A “reductionism” stemming largely from Descartes had limited, through a presumably “scientific” methodology, what was permitted to be examined or discussed. In its very premises, it could not deal with what was not at bottom mathematical or material, not that there was anything wrong with mathematics or matter. To study part of reality as if it were the whole of reality is one of the chief vices of the human mind.

Benedict XVI touched on the same issue in his “Regensburg Lecture.” The Pope called it the “self-limitation” of reason, the consideration of the part as if it were the whole. This “self-limitation” was, in fact, the problem found in those political gentlemen—the lawyer, the poet, and the craftsman—whom Socrates examined on the streets of Athens after he learned, much to his surprise, that the Oracle at Delphi called him the wisest man in Greece. The Pope meant that

this methodology was not necessitated by any objective consideration of reality. It was a chosen mind-set. Ultimately, it probably arose out of fear of what a real openness to *what is* would entail, that is, at a minimum, order, if not a source of this order in man and universe. Schumacher, for his part, resolved his student perplexity by writing a book explaining the limited methodology’s philosophic origins. Few, if any, books surpass this short treatise in explaining what is lacking in most universities and what, by contrast, is available to any mind that seriously sets itself on the path to truth. This latter was what book six of the *Republic* was about.

Presumably, Catholic sponsored universities were designed to exist, in part, to provide an academic home for a wide array of unasked questions and untreated disciplines that arose out of the reasonableness of faith. They need not in principle be “limited” by such academic closed-mindedness. One hesitates, however, to be overly sanguine here. Too often the term “university” has come to mean merely the variety of those disciplines and institutes that are found in prestige institutions. Catholic institutions often adhere to the same criteria for defining what is to be taught or presented, for determining hiring, firing, and rank and tenure issues.

The net effect of this conformity in religious-sponsored institutions is that one finds the same programs and criteria that are found in any other school, but little else. Theology becomes, as Benedict said at Regensburg, a “scientific” discipline. That is, it is studied by a method that excludes the ontological questions about Christ’s being and endeavors to study Him as a social science phenomenon. He is present in the university, if at all, as an “object” of social or historical sciences that must prescind from His actual being. He ends up as some kind of a “nice man,” not the “*Logos*.”

But I take seriously what Benedict XVI proposed at Regensburg about the very essence of any university. It should be a place where “*logos*” is the defining essence of what belongs and goes on there. Theology is there because, by its very nature, it addresses itself to *logos* and makes use of that Greek philosophical heri-

¹ See James V. Schall, “On the Teaching of Ancient and Medieval Political Theory,” *Christianity and Politics* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1981), 42–64.

tage in which it appeared in its most coherent form. Theology itself is not in the university except in so far as it addresses reason. Neither is science there for any other reason. Moreover, reason cannot be limited to “rationalism” or to a notion of reason that is only part of its scope. In the Thomist sense, reason is both *intellectus* and *ratio*. It is capable of knowing things by methods and principles other than those that bear the limitation of the modern scientific mathematical presuppositions.

Aristotle had long ago admonished us not to seek more certitude in a discipline than its subject matter could provide. If an object to be studied was any ethical or political topic, for instance, its very study had to include the awareness that the “matter” studied was itself the result of, and dependent on, free will. It could always have been otherwise. The minute its object is treated as a purely material entity, apart from its origin in freedom, it is falsified and not grasped for what it is. The past cannot change, but it need not have been as it is, unless we insist, as a dubious philosophical presupposition, on a determinist methodology. But if we do assume this latter philosophical position, we are not really studying human reality but only our own minds in their self-generated concoctions. If the world is “scientifically” determined in the rationalist sense, free human beings really do not exist. Thus, we cannot study them by any method. Nothing can be “otherwise” including the conclusions of science, whatever they maintain.

II.

What I want to propose here, however, is a syllabus or outline of a course in political philosophy. I take political philosophy to be itself a work of *logos*. Ethics and politics are “practical” sciences, in the Aristotelian sense, with metaphysical groundings. The objects of the practical sciences can, in principle, be otherwise. The knowledge or “science” involved means that prudential judgment sees and the will selects this or that means as best way for achieving the end of a given human being, his happiness. This practical science includes a critique of the possible ends that one can choose as well as discrimination about the variety of means possible to reach it. This identification and

explication of sundry ends is the burden of the first book of Aristotle’s *Ethics*.

I understand the ordinary subject matter of politics to be best comprehended, even yet, in Aristotle’s *Ethics* and *Politics*, two books which, as Yves Simon said in *A General Theory of Authority*, are really one book. Actually, if we include the economics of book one of the *Politics*, there are three books, whose subject matter is about rule, rule of self, rule of household, rule of polity. All three “rules” or authoritative locus for making decisions indicate the prudential application of reason to proper activities of a free human being or group of human beings in pursuit of a chosen end, in his pursuit of happiness which is not conceived to be something intrinsically illusory.

This schema is not proposed as a course in “Catholic Social Doctrine.” It is properly a political philosophy course that is open, as politics is in its own way, to both revelation and metaphysics as well as to economics and the physical sciences. It is an “architectonic” science, as Aristotle put it. So-called “social sciences,” themselves an intellectual problem, are not conceived as existing independently of or superior to political philosophy. One of the problems with “Catholic Social Doctrine,” moreover, is precisely its unclear relation to political philosophy. To see this problem most vividly, it suffices to read side by side, as should be done in such a course, the new *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* with Robert Kraynak’s *Christian Faith & Modern Democracy* or the third volume of Ernest Fortin’s *Collected Works*, entitled *Human Rights, Virtue, and the Common Good: Untimely Meditations on Religion and Politics*.

Though the issue is mentioned in *Fides et Ratio*, there is increasing concern about the awareness of philosophy among theologians and among those who deal with social doctrine, especially of the vast problems caused by “rights talk,” as it is called. Tracey Rowland’s *Thomism and Modern Culture*, Aidan Nichols’s *Christians Awake!* and Mary Ann Glendon’s *Rights Talk* are important contributions to the serious problem of the relation of “modern” political philosophy to political philosophy as such. To conceive “social doctrine” as adapting the Church teaching to “modern philosophy” is to assume that this latter philosophy is philosophically neutral, which it is not. At the basis of most of the actual ecclesial problems after Vatican II is an implicit assumption that adapting

to modern culture, as it is called, involves no philosophic stance that, when carried out, makes Christian revelation impossible. Political philosophy, as I understand it, foresees and accounts for those elements in modernity which prevent revelation from being related to philosophy and politics.

In proposing an undergraduate or graduate course in what I call “Roman Catholic Political Philosophy,” I want above all to take up the peculiar place political philosophy itself has in the schema of intellectual order. Following Strauss, I would first look at political philosophy to be that necessary dialogue between the philosopher and the politician the result of which is that neither the philosopher, nor the priest, nor the prophet, is simply eliminated or banished in order to keep “peace” in any polity, a peace that excluded the quest for truth, especially the truth of “*what is a human being?*” As Benedict implied in the Regensburg Lecture, if it is conceived to be God’s or the state’s “will” to use “blood” to foster religion or ideology, there can be no real rational and free public order.

What I essentially have in mind for such a course is a philosophical demonstration of why Roman Catholicism—I do not intend to discuss other Christian religious denominations or non-Christian religions here – has a legitimate place within the very discussion of *what is political philosophy?* It is the one religious position that professes to be itself directed to and open to philosophy. It is not, in other words, a closed system to be presented as an intellectual artifact whether or not it be true.

In the beginning, I wish to keep two basic principles quite clear. 1) It is not possible to argue directly from “reason,” however understood, to the truth or validity of the Christian revelation as Catholics understand it. To do so would imply that human reason, on its own power, is capable of understanding the divinity. This position does not mean that human reason is not reason. It is a finite reason open to *all that* is but still a power that is not itself “divine,” other than in the sense Aristotle meant it as a power capable of knowing *what is*. 2) Revelation, however, does address reason in its own terms—*fides quaerens intellectum*. This means that reason, including practical reason, must actively seek to know what it can know by its own powers. It needs to be actually aware of issues and questions that it can propose but not an-

swer completely or adequately by itself. Active reason can understand that an intelligible position has been addressed to it. Philosophy as such, as a quest for knowledge of the whole, cannot close itself from any proposed answer simply on the grounds that it is not a product of human reason alone.

The Catholicism to be considered is that articulated in the Creeds and more recently spelled out in more detail in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, according to the degree of certainty that the Church attributes to a revealed or reasonable position. Someone who holds as “Catholic doctrine,” say, that Christ is not God or that the basic moral aberrations are human “rights,” may be “interesting” but his view is not Catholic, nor even reasonable. In effect, if someone wants to conform Catholicism to modernity and not modern thought to Catholicism, he does not fall within the scope of what we are arguing here. With what is true in any thought, modern or classical, there is no problem. The enterprise is to show that truth is what philosophy is about. We are arguing that it is precisely the central or orthodox tradition that persuades and is of concern in this approach to political philosophy in its classical sense. To state the issue briefly, only a revelation that is intelligible could be related to a political philosophy that is based on *what is*.

Strauss remarks that the most philosophical question that political philosophy asks is “what is the best regime?” Augustine asks the same question only in terms of its proper location. It is clearly a question with roots in the trial of Socrates and Plato’s subsequent lifelong endeavor to account for the best regime in speech, in argument, in having compared its structure to that of actual existing states of whatever configuration, as those are defined in the *Republic*, *Laws*, and the *Politics*. For this course, however, I would not include, but presuppose the background courses in classical, medieval, and modern political philosophy. I would presuppose some knowledge of this background. What I have in mind is rather a course that looks at the whole. It deals with texts that are in fact aware of how the whole, including revelation, fit together. This is not a course in “natural law and political philosophy,” a class that I teach periodically and again a worthwhile course. Political philosophy is not merely natural law or the whole question of the place of law in human and divine affairs.

St. Thomas's discussions of eternal, natural, positive, and divine law, as well as the law of sin are certainly within the scope of political philosophy.

I have taught this course twice now, once in 2003 and once in 2007. Subsequently to the course in 2003, I published with Lexington Books, *Roman Catholic Political Philosophy* (now in a more student-friendly paper edition) which gives the basic philosophic text of what I have in mind. This book now serves as the basis of what this course is about. However, my earlier books, *The Politics of Heaven and Hell: Christian Themes from Classical, Medieval, and Modern Political Philosophy*; *Reason, Revelation and the Foundations of Political Society*; *Jacques Maritain: A Philosopher in the City*; *At the Limits of Political Philosophy*, and *On the Unseriousness of Human Affairs*. All are related to this course. *At the Limits of Political Philosophy*, in particular, deals directly with why political philosophy as such can and does deal with evil, hell, death, happiness, virtue and vice, science, truth, and friendship. The chapter on "The Death of Christ and the Death of Socrates" is fundamental to all my considerations on political philosophy.

Likewise, I would at least call attention to what might be called my "learning" books, as they indicate the broader literary and intellectual background of what I have in mind, particularly the love of learning and the awareness of the meaning of the intellectual life, which is, after all, the essence of the contemplative life to which political philosophy and political life point. These books are *Another Sort of Learning*, *Students' Guide to Liberal Learning*, *The Life of the Mind*, and the *Sum Total of Human Happiness*. Earlier books such as *Redeeming the Time*, *The Distinctiveness of Christianity*, *Does Catholicism Still Exist?* and *Human Dignity and Human Numbers* present related, fundamental themes.

First, I want simply to list the readings that I in fact used in these two courses. My teaching method is generally modified "Socratic," that is, I expect students to attend class, having read the assignment. The class is not a "lecture," but a going over the matter of the day's reading with attention to how it fits into the whole course. Many other books could and should be used. One limits oneself here to what is "reasonable" in one semester, in about forty classes of fifty minutes each. I think the readings are intrinsically interesting and mutually reinforcing. I like students

to realize that Cicero knew Plato, that Augustine knew Cicero, that Aquinas knew Aristotle..

For this course, I do not use what might be called the classic "Roman Catholic" political philosophers though I am certainly in admiration of them and would have no objection to using them. Nor is this course a review of the great papal social encyclicals from *Rerum Novarum* to *Deus Caritas Est*. I think a thorough knowledge of both these sources is most helpful and advisable, but the study of each would constitute a different course. I have explained in *Roman Catholic Political Philosophy* my relation to the earlier writers whom I consider great minds in the field of political philosophy but who are, since they are Roman Catholic, usually under the radar of the broader discipline.

Let me in any case mention a number of books that I would consider to be the background of what I have to say: 1) Charles N. R. McCoy, *The Structure of Political Thought* and his *On the Intelligibility of Political Philosophy*, 2) Heinrich Rommen, *The State in Catholic Thought*, 3) Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State*, 4) Yves Simon, *A General Theory of Authority and the Philosophy of Democratic Government*, 5) E. B. F. Midgley, *The Natural Law Tradition and the Theory of International Relations*, 6) Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophic Experience*, 7) Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 8) Belloc's *Europe and the Faith*, 9) John Schrems, *Principles of Politics*, 10) Charles Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity?*, 11) Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, and 12) John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths*.

The work of many others needs to be mentioned from Russell Kirk to John Hittinger, J. Budziszewski, Daniel Mahoney, Brian Benestad, Francis Slade, Charles de Koninck, and Francis Canavan, S. J. J. Again I presuppose those who have made political philosophy possible in academia, especially Strauss and Voegelin. I note, among others, as background thinkers who relate political philosophy to religion, Glenn Tinder's *The Political Meaning of Christianity*, Hadley Arkes's *First Things: An Inquiry into the First Principles of Morals and Justice*, Thomas Pangle's *Political Philosophy and the God of Abraham*, and Ellis Sandoz's *A Government of Laws*.

One can go on mentioning, as important for what I have in mind, the essays found in the *Review*

of *Politics*, the *Thomist*, *Modern Age*, *First Things*, the *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, the *Review of Metaphysics*, and, on occasion, almost any professional political science or philosophical journal. Naturally books and journals in other languages will be important. I also need to mention that the writings of both John Paul II and Benedict XVI are gold mines on the question of politics, philosophy, and revelation. Indeed, in many ways, their works may be the most profound and the least known to modern students, who, in my experience, find them astonishing when they finally get around to and are free to read them.

III.

Let me next simply list the books that I used the two times that I taught this course. The first course was in 2003. There were thirty students in the class. They had a mid-term, a final on the matter covered, and a ten to fifteen page term paper. The books we read are: 1) Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?*, 2) Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 3) Manent, *City of Man*, 4) Pieper, *In Defense of Philosophy*, 5) Russell Hittinger, *The First Grace*, 6) Lawler, *Aliens in America*, 7) Morse, *Love and Economics*, 8) Walsh, *The Third Millennium*, 9) Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, 10) John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 11) Kraynak, *Christian Faith & Modern Democracy*, 12) Schall, *At the Limits of Political Philosophy*, and 13) Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*.

Four years later, for a variety of reasons with a class of forty-one students, I selected another set of books, if only to indicate to myself how a course like this might be designed in various ways. I was most impressed with the range and insight in the first series listed above. Most of them were closer to political philosophy than the ones that I chose to read the second time through. By the time of the second course my *Roman Catholic Political Philosophy* had been published and was available in paperback. The ready availability of this book affected my choice of the other readings.

This latter book gives more clearly the specific tone and issues that I was seeking to emphasize. The titles of its chapters are: 1) “Why Is Political Philosophy Different?” 2) “On the Paradoxical Place of Political Philosophy in the Structure of Reality,” 3) “The Philosophic Study of Political Things,” 4) “The

Role of Christian Philosophy in Politics,” 5) “On How Revelation Addresses Itself to Politics,” 6) “The Relation of Political Philosophy to Metaphysics and Theology,” 7) “From Curiosity to Pride: On the Experience of One’s Own Existence,” 8) “Modernity: What Is It?” 9) “Revelation, Political Philosophy, and Modernity,” 10) “Worship and Political Philosophy,” and 11) “Roman Catholic Political Philosophy,” which relates *Fides et Ratio* to the topic. In addition, with no apology to Nietzsche, there is a list of “Thirty-Three Summary and Concluding Maxims, Principles and Aphorisms Concerning Roman Catholic Political Philosophy.”

We read, in order, for the second time the course was presented: 1) Schall, *Roman Catholic Political Philosophy*, 2) Chesterton, *Heretics* (note that *Heretics* was published in 1905 and *Orthodoxy* in 1908; 3) John Paul II, *Memory and Identity*; 4) Fortin, *Human Rights, Virtue, and the Common Good*; 5) Kraynak, *Christian Faith & Modern Democracy*; 4) *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*; 5) Sokolowski, *Christian Faith & Human Understanding*; 6) Benedict XVI, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*; 7) Benedict XVI, *Truth and Tolerance*; 8) Kreeft, *The Philosophy of Tolkien*; and 9) Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*.

In addition, we read a short essay from Josef Pieper—an *Anthology*, called “The Purpose of Politics.” I had hoped to read Benedict XVI’s “Regensburg Lecture” (my book on this lecture came out during this period) and von Balthasar’s essay “ResumJ of My Thought,” but we never got around to it. I had also scheduled a small book of Maritain, but it was never delivered to the book store. However, we had more than enough to cover.

IV.

The reaction to the students to such a course, if I might generalize, was that this was the first time they ever really had a coherent set of readings designed to put everything together. Most of these students had previously read Schumacher’s *A Guide for the Perplexed*, the book mentioned earlier and one I read every semester in another class. No book does quite as good a job in putting theology, philosophy, economics, and politics together in a short treatise, though others such as Josef Pieper – an

Anthology or McNerny's book on Maritain are very good. In general, students find rather surprising the strong case that can be made for Catholicism as an intellectual force, which it is and is intended to be. Often as they would mention, the materials that they usually encounter are specialized so that the relation to the whole never comes up or that Catholicism is presented as a kind of opponent to modern thought in such a way that modern thought is taken to be itself a quasi-revelation."

Almost without fail, Chesterton is a revelation to most students. They have never heard such wit, logic, incisiveness, and breadth of vision put together in a way that they can see what it all means. Another thing that surprises them is the intellectual depths of the popes. When given enough to read of Pope Wojtyla, himself already an attractive figure to most people their age, and of Pope Ratzinger, a formidable mind by any historic standard, they realize that a whole world of Catholic intelligence exists about which they have heard very little if anything.

And too, one needs to mention C. S. Lewis who carries much of the burden of intelligence for both Protestant and Catholic students. One of the major issues is often "what do we do with science?" Students need to know about Stanley Jaki, Leon Kass, the ongoing status of intelligent design and the hot air of the earth warmers. People as diverse as Allan Bloom and Pope Ratzinger continually say that modern students are bombarded with a steady stream of relativism. Chesterton reduces such relativism to incoherence on almost every page. Then, of course, there is Islam, whose growth and power probably will shape these students more radically than any other political system. Here too Pope Ratzinger is on target. Another book that is very useful for them is Robert Sokolowski's *The God of Faith and Reason*. Sokolowski's essays on political philosophy in the appendix to this book and in *Christian Faith & Human Understanding* are seminal and formative. Along with McCoy, Sokolowski knows the importance of Aristotle.

In conclusion, I think that a course called precisely "*Roman Catholic Political Philosophy*" is doable. As I point out in the book, the title is paradoxical. There is, strictly speaking, no such thing as a "Roman Catholic" political philosophy. Scripture is not itself a revelation of politics. In fact, it specifically left politics to human reason and enterprise. This is

why one needs to know what political philosophy is. I think starting with Strauss's two essays, "What Is Political Philosophy?" and "On Classical Political Philosophy," is most rewarding to students to set up the problem. Strauss is ever provocative and ever insightful. One might add what he says in the "Introduction" to *Persecution and the Art of Writing* where he speaks of why Catholics, unlike Jews or Muslims, stress philosophy as part of the training for their clergy, an emphasis found also in the Regensburg Lecture in a different form.

The crucial thing to see, however, is that political philosophy brings the mind to issues that the mind has historically only speculated about. All sorts of solutions have been proposed. The essential argument for having treated Roman Catholicism in the light of political philosophy, itself addressed to and crucial to metaphysics itself, is that the articulated positions found in revelation (I prefer to use this word as what is addressed to us), can be at least understood in its outlines by any honest mind. Revelation proposes answers to questions already actively found in philosophy and political philosophy. In some sense, the most important thing in all these considerations is found in the chapter of *Roman Catholic Political Philosophy*, entitled "Worship and Political Philosophy." This view is indebted to Catherine Pickstock's *After Writing*, which along with MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, and David Walsh's *After Ideology* are what I call the three "After Books."

The final point I like to make is not that it is obvious to anyone that Roman Catholicism is true. I think the whole issue is about truth, of course; otherwise it would not be worth pursuing. Besides comprehension and insight, there is still the question of grace and the free choice of truth. I would hope that any given mind, whether it be Catholic or not — this course is addressed to reason, not faith — would get out of such a course is straightforward, namely, that Roman Catholicism, in its proper articulation, does address objectively unanswered questions that arise in political philosophy and metaphysics. The mind as such can see that the Greek articulation of friendship and the Christian articulation of charity and Trinity are directly related and indicate at least that it is not madness to maintain that such things cohere.

The Eucharist: 101 Questions and Answers on the Eucharist, Rev. Giles Dimock, O.P., STD, Paulist Press, 2006, 138 pp. (Paper) \$14.95.

Reviewed by Rev. Leonard A. Kennedy, C.S.B., The Academy of Our Lady Seat of Wisdom, Barry's Bay, ON, Canada

Father Dimock is an Adjunct Professor at the Franciscan University of Steubenville. He has published numerous books and articles and is a member of the Society of Catholic Liturgy. It is amazing how much information about the Eucharist he is able to present in this book, and in a language suitable for the non-specialist. This information is presented under nine headings. Sample questions or answers under these headings will be listed.

The first heading is the Jewish Background for the Eucharist. Its beginnings are in the Passover meal instituted by God to celebrate the freeing of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. But it was more than a meal; it was also a sacrificial act, and this became clearer in the Last Supper and in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The second heading is the reason for the many other names of the Eucharist: Mass, Blessed Sacrament, Divine Liturgy, Breaking of the Bread, and Holy Communion.

The third heading is the Liturgy of the Mass: the importance of bread and wine, what if a person is allergic to wheat bread, the origin of the Readings at Mass, how the many rites are different, the necessity of having a priest, can a woman be the priest, how a priest and the faithful differ but yet cooperate in their roles, special roles for deacons and the laity, the different parts of

the Eucharistic Prayer, and why there are many different Eucharistic Prayers.

The fourth heading is The Mass. Is the Mass a memorial? Does it add to the Sacrifice of the Cross? Does the Tridentine rite bring out better the sacrificial nature of the Mass?

The fifth heading is The Presence of Jesus in the Mass. How is he present? What is meant by "Real Presence"? Was it a medieval development? What is transubstantiation? Is there not a better term for it here? What do Protestants say of the Real Presence? And the Orthodox? When exactly does the consecration take place?

The sixth heading is Communion with Christ in the Mass. What are the conditions for a worthy Communion? How does one know that he is in the state of grace? If the priest is in a state of serious sin, are his Masses valid? Am I free to receive Communion on either the hand or the tongue? Why do some congregations stand for the Eucharistic Prayer and others kneel? Why do some churches distribute Communion in the chalice and others do not? When may one receive one's First Communion? How often may one receive Communion? What is the Communion fast? What are the fruits of Communion? May someone invalidly married receive Communion? What is Spiritual Communion? Does Communion bring healing? Are "healing Masses" allowed? May Orthodox Christians receive Communion at a Catholic Mass? Protestants? Jews? Muslims? May Catholics receive at the Eucharist of the Eastern Orthodox? At the Eucharist of Eastern Christians with valid orders? At an Anglican (Episcopalian) Eucharist?

At a Protestant Eucharist? Who are the ministers of Holy Communion? Who are the extraordinary ministers? What is Viaticum and how is it administered?

The seventh heading is Eucharistic Reservation and Adoration. Why is the Eucharist reserved? What are Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament? Are these passed today? What are some guidelines for Eucharistic adoration? What is Forty Hours? What is a Eucharistic congress?

The eighth heading is The Architecture and Vessels of Eucharistic Reservation. What is a tabernacle and what are its requirements? Where should it be placed in the church? What is the history of Eucharistic reservation? What are current requirements? What is a pyx? An ostensorium? A monstrance? Do sacred vessels and vestments require a blessing? How are the sacred vessels purified?

The ninth heading is Eucharistic Spirituality. Is this spirituality a devotion? Is it biblical? Is it Trinitarian? Charismatic? The work of the Holy Spirit? Are service to the poor and social justice opposed to it? Are some religious communities devoted to it? What is a Holy Hour? How does one pray before the Blessed Sacrament?

The tenth heading is The Saints of the Eucharist. Here ten saints' lives are given.

The eleventh heading is The Eschatological Dimension of the Eucharist. What is the heavenly liturgy? Do angels and saints participate in it? How is the Eucharist a foretaste of heaven? What is purgatory? Does the Eucharist help those there?

This book would be of great interest to converts, to RCIA classes,

to any Catholic who wants to hear the answers to his many questions, and, in particular, to seminarians and priests. And all of it is in accord with the teaching of the Church.

Good News, Bad News: Evangelization, Conversion, and the Crisis of Faith, Father C. John McCloskey, III, and Russell Shaw. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007. 134 pages. Paper. \$12.95.

Reviewed by Kenneth D. Whitehead

This short but very readable and interesting book covers the always current question of conversion to the Catholic Faith—a subject of particular interest today, perhaps, because of what the subtitle of this book calls “the crisis of faith.” In today’s world of galloping secularism, the faith is supposed to be more and more outmoded and irrelevant; and, indeed, large numbers of those who once adhered to it have now evidently abandoned it.

These large numbers include the fifty percent or so of Catholics who used to number among the seventy-five plus percent who once regularly attended Sunday Mass (now reduced to less than twenty-five percent of self-identified Catholics); the countless contracepting and divorcing Catholics who now apparently approve of and avail themselves of these practices in roughly the same percentages as their non-Catholic fellow citizens (according to various polls, more than eighty percent of them, for example, favor recourse to artificial birth control and see nothing wrong with it). Then there are the unfortunately many Catholic politicians and other public figures

who almost proudly and even ostentatiously vote to promote legalized abortion and other grave moral evils, while insisting, in effect, that *it doesn’t matter what the Church teaches about these evils*; and, finally, there are the equally elevated numbers of Catholic voters who regularly return these same pro-abortion Catholic politicians to office as if, again, what the Church actually teaches doesn’t really matter.

Not only do huge numbers of Catholics fall into one or another of these categories today; they are as likely as not to be aggrieved and draw back indignantly and self-righteously if anyone should ever attempt to call them on any of these things, or to point out the contradiction, indeed, the *lie*, that they are living. At the same time, the general reluctance and even refusal ever to call anybody on such things has probably never been greater than it is today, either.

In short, we do not seem to be living in a great age of faith. To affirm or even to profess supernatural faith today is generally thought to be ignorant, backward, and odd, if it is not actually considered dangerous. Certainly nothing based on or stemming from the faith can ever be thought to count for anything in the public forum or in society at large. On the contrary, it is almost automatically ruled out of bounds and even considered unthinkable.

Yet the Catholic faith is true. The Catholic Church is “the teacher of truth,” as Vatican Council II so plainly and definitely affirmed (*Dignitatis Humanae* 14). Not only does the Church teach truth; she commands a worldwide apparatus that (among other things) teaches truth. Headed by a sometimes distant-appearing figure dressed in white

whom the world would generally like to ignore and disregard but often finds it almost impossible to do so, the Church insists on continuing to teach truth, whether or not anybody is prepared to listen. More than that, and in spite of the massive defections from her own ranks in modern times, the Church nevertheless still counts millions of adherents who more or less do continue to believe and try to follow her teachings in spite of everything.

Moreover, one of the first priorities of the recent popes at the head of this worldwide Church turns out to be the same thing mentioned in the subtitle of this book, namely, “evangelization.” From Blessed John XXIII on, all of the incumbents of the chair of Peter in our day have stressed evangelization ahead of almost every other priority. And what is evangelization? Put most simply, it is imparting the faith to others. This is what the popes tirelessly say that all Catholics should be doing, in fact. And it surely is the case that we must continue to evangelize in every possible way precisely *because* the faith is true.

The main purpose of Vatican Council II convoked by Blessed John XXIII, for example, was supposed to be nothing else but to equip the Church to bring the truths of the Catholic faith more effectively before the world. It was even thought at the time of the Council—naïvely, as it turned out—that the Catholic Church was on the verge of gaining large numbers of new adherents through the embrace of ecumenism. What instead became a virtual new era of dissent from, and disaffection with, Catholic truth was not at all foreseen. Sober experience has taught us since then, however, that evangelization is more

likely to be brought about—even in the expanding new Churches in Africa and Asia—by the very old tried and true method of individual *conversion* than by any mass adherence to or amalgamation with the Church on the part of those outside her visible boundaries.

And conversion, of course, is mostly what this book is about. One of its authors, Father C. John McCloskey, a priest of the Prelature of Opus Dei, is well known today for having guided numerous converts into the Catholic Church. Some of “his” converts, if we may so characterize them, have included such prominent figures as ex-abortionist Dr. Bernard Nathanson, economist and pundit Lawrence Kudlow, Kansas Senator Sam Brownback, talk-radio personality Laura Ingraham, Publisher Alfred Regnery, and syndicated columnist Robert Novak. While many of Father McCloskey’s approaches, methods, techniques, and the like are distilled in these pages, he is the first to insist that conversion is something that God himself in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit primarily brings about. Human agents can only help the process along. Still, the Church needs and benefits from the wisdom and charity of such as Father McCloskey, who have been happily called to the work of assisting conversions.

The co-author of this book, Russell Shaw, author or co-author of over a dozen books on subjects of Catholic interest, has collaborated with Father McCloskey on other projects. A veteran journalist who regularly appears in a variety of Catholic publications, he always writes with knowledge, clarity, and conviction, and one gathers that he got enlisted in this enterprise to help bring some order into what

must by now be the voluminous materials on the conversion process accumulated by Father McCloskey.

However that may be, the collaboration can be considered a success. The book reads smoothly and informatively and rewardingly. Conversion stories are almost always interesting anyway, and here we have a fair number of them woven together into a coherent pattern that brings out all the various aspects of any conversion.

Those who know Father McCloskey—and in the interests of full disclosure it is time to put on the record that both these authors are friends of mine—those who know Father McCloskey, then, know that he is a very open and forthright person who often just simply comes out and asks people, as he does in this book, “Have you ever thought of becoming a Catholic?” “Yes, some people will be taken aback,” he writes in the book, “and nearly all will be surprised. But in my experience, some will be pleased, even flattered. The process has begun.” Some of those approached in this way can even reply in a way that, perhaps, they did not even know that they would reply *until* they were asked, by saying, “I was waiting for someone to say that. Glad you asked.” The book makes the point that perhaps more of us should be asking this same question more often of some of our own friends and acquaintances.

Conversion, then, is an important and pertinent topic, essential to the evangelization that regularly figures among the first priorities of the contemporary popes at the head of Christ’s Church. And what is involved in conversion on the human side is all very nicely laid out here.

Discorsi al Popolo di Dio, Karol Wojtyla, Soveria Mannelli, Italy: Rubbettino Editore, 2006, 275 pages.

Reviewed by Rev. Aquinas Guilbeau, OP

First published in 1978, *Discorsi al Popolo di Dio* contains over thirty homilies delivered by Karol Cardinal Wojtyla during his final two years as Archbishop of Krakow (1976–1978). Republished in 2006, this collection of homilies now comprises the second volume of the new *Novae Terrae* series published under the auspices of the *Novae Terrae* Foundation, an Italian think-tank dedicated to cultural, political, and economic issues. The book’s editor, Flavio Felice, is an original member of the Foundation. He teaches at the Pontifical Lateran University and also serves as vice-president of the Acton Institute of Rome.

The homilies are arranged according to their liturgical occasion and place of delivery. But they offer the reader much more than the liturgical and spiritual reflections of a beloved pastor. Felice sees in these remarks the early seeds of the later social magisterium of Pope John Paul II. His purpose, therefore, in editing this republication is to familiarize readers with the political thought of Karol Wojtyla before his election as pope. He wants to demonstrate that what the world would later recognize as the social doctrine of John Paul II was already known to the persecuted Catholic flock of Communist Poland. Felice opines that it is important for students of John Paul’s social doctrine to realize that the main lines of his teaching had already been tested on the Polish Christians who heard Wojtyla’s

preaching. Hence, he believes that these homilies can serve as a valuable introduction to Wojtyła's papal magisterium.

To aid the reader's study, this new edition includes three short essays by well-known Italian writers. First, the preface by Luca Volontè, a member of the Italian Parliament, presents a touching account of one who embraced the faith during the pontificate of Pope John Paul. He remarks that these homilies not only reveal the early thought of his spiritual and political hero, but they also serve well to introduce the secular-minded West to the true riches of Polish Solidarity. Though this political movement remains a mystery to many, Volontè suggests that Solidarity provides the hermeneutical key to understanding John Paul's social doctrine.

Next, Rocco Buttiglione, the well-known philosopher and friend of John Paul, provides an enlightening introduction to these homilies that highlights the explicitly Christian character of the late Holy Father's social and political thought, which Buttiglione is careful to distinguish from political theory and praxis properly understood. He explains that John Paul's understanding of the inherently political nature of the Gospel lies not in the Church's oversight of the State, but rather in the historical character of grace. Because it enters into history and transforms hearts, grace necessarily affects human relations, and in turn societies and nations. The Church's care for and defense of the human person, therefore, is necessarily political, and prior to processes of the State. For instance, Buttiglione reports that John Paul understood the profound truth that baptism does more to form a nation than does the

political arrangement of the State.

Finally, Felice himself provides a most helpful essay. It serves simultaneously to introduce the reader to the late Holy Father's social thought and to guide one's study of the Krakow homilies in light of Cardinal Wojtyła's then-current social and political concerns. Specifically, Felice touches on themes such as John Paul's theological anthropology, his notion of the dignity of human work, his critique of materialism, his confrontation with modern philosophy, and his thoughts on democracy, all the while exhibiting how these now famous papal themes found their first pastoral application in Cardinal Wojtyła's homilies to his Polish flock. Summarizing their significance for today, Felice remarks that in these homilies "Wojtyła spoke to Poland about Poland, but a few months later that discourse with the Polish people would become a discourse with the universal People of God. Beginning with his first declaration in St. Peter's Square, Wojtyła would claim before the world's powers the same right, this time as supreme pontiff of the Catholic Church, of putting the 'cause' of man, read in the light of the Gospel, at the top of the world's political agenda: 'Be not afraid, open wide the doors to Christ!'" (p. 270).

Available only in Italian, *I Discorsi al Popolo di Dio* deserves to be translated for a wider readership. Its political focus, however, is not its only strength. These homilies also contain other interesting themes that can enlarge our understanding of John Paul's magnanimity. See for example the four homilies on the papacy given by Cardinal Wojtyła just months before his October 1978 election. Commenting on the sudden death of John Paul I, Wojtyła

admitted: "We do not know what Christ wants to say through this to the Church and to the world" (p. 244). One wonders if he knew then that the answer would begin to emerge in just a few weeks' time.

National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History, Joep Leerssen, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006. pp.312

Reviewed by Jude P. Dougherty
The Catholic University of America

Distinguishing between nation and state, Leerssen defines a nation as a cultural and social community, one that people identify with and to which they feel a political loyalty. The "nation," he tells us, is "the most natural, organic collective aggregate of humans and the most natural organic subdivision of humanity." As such the nation's claim to loyalty overrides other allegiances. The state derives its mandate and sovereignty from its incorporation of a constituent nation. Civic loyalty to the state is thus a natural extension of cultural, linguistic, and ethnic solidarity. Ideally there may be a seamless overlap between the outlines of the state and that of the nation, but the political and national units are not always congruent. Nationalism is something else. Leerssen presents it as a political ideology that took form in Europe in the aftermath of the French Revolution. In the 19th century it developed into a specific recognizable ideology, with a specific and recognizable political and cultural agenda.

From the perspective of the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment, the nation is best regarded as a com-

mand unit, the product of a centralized government whose mission is to keep the peace among diverse cultural and political groups within the borders of the state. “We have come to think of nation-states,” Leerssen writes, “as an ideally systematic taxonomy of Europe, where the French live in France and speak the French language, and the Germans live in Germany and speak the German language, and each country has its own cuisine, fashions, national anthems and life style. But this simple ideal type of the nation-state is the inheritance of the *Encyclopedia* and of anthropological systematization or stereotypes, based on hearsay and cross-cultural caricatures.”

One of the byproducts of the Enlightenment, in its revolt against crown and mitre, was the introduction of “a theory of democracy in which the state becomes a fiscal-administrative organization claiming sovereignty and the right to coerce its citizens. Among the primary functions of the modern state is the power to collect taxes and to spend those taxes on policies approved by the tax payers and above all to provide a legal system to protect its citizens from crime and to arbitrate civil conflicts.” None of these functions involves a sense of cultural identity. Locke, Hume, and Montesquieu are credited with the substitution of “civic virtue” for ethnic or cultural allegiance. National loyalty in this model transcends religious differences, i.e., between Protestant and Catholic. The state has no call to incorporate or to represent any given specific cultural or religious tradition. The state has only the duty to maintain its laws and to protect all citizens and cultures under its aegis from persecution, repression, or discrimination. “Traditionally, the

state has also maintained or placed under its supervision important infrastructures of general use, such as an army/navy; road, water, management and vital services; health care and education; a central bank and monetary currency.” But “none of these functions need involve any sense of cultural identity.” Patriotism is simply national loyalty, the love of the fatherland, and nothing more, given that there is no other bond, cultural or religious, that can be recognized by the state.

This volume is aptly subtitled “*A Cultural History*.” It is a learned *tour de force* through 2,000 years of Western history, from the Celts to the multicultural internationalists of a post-Christian Europe. The focus remains constant, the relation between the culture of a people and their mode of governance. Opening with a treatise on Celtic and English identity, the narrative continues with the use of Tacitus’s reflections on Rome and Imperial Rome’s influence on Northern European society. Leerssen describes Tacitus’s *Germania* as the “single most influential piece of Latin literature in post-medieval Europe,” largely because Tacitus, in contrasting a decadent Rome with the virtue he finds in the tribes to the north, has in effect, produced a treatise on national characteristics, if not identity. The narrative shifts to Tudor England and the rise of the central monarchical state in England and Wales, then moves to a consideration of Renaissance developments and continues with an examination of the influence of Herder and Rousseau on subsequent political theory. There is an extended section on the politics of national identity and the rise of political romanticism in the Germany of the post-Napoleonic period, wherein national

ideology is revived as the principle of unification.

Leerssen disclaims any effort to produce a volume of contemporary relevance but he has unavoidably introduced the topic of “European identity.” He is content with the concept of a value-free national identity in which the state remains neutral between warring factions and serves only to keep the peace. By implication Islam and Christianity deserve equal standing in the territory formerly known as Christendom.

The reader is likely to find this book to be compelling and erudite, forcing the reader to revisit ancient and modern literary sources perhaps previously encountered in a cursory way without recognition of their historical and cultural import.

The Essential Russell Kirk, George A. Panichas, ed. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2007. xxv + 641 pp. Cloth, \$21; paper \$14.

Reviewed by Jude P. Dougherty
The Catholic University of America

Russell Kirk (1918-1994) is not known as a professional philosopher although it would be difficult to understand him apart from his love for Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. He is known primarily as a seminal figure in the political, post-World War II conservative movement. The essays selected and introduced for this volume by George Panichas show clearly why Kirk deserves the title, “advocate of the permanent things.” Kirk is clearly rooted in antiquity. His indebtedness to classical philosophy is apparent in nearly every one of the 40 essays selected for this

volume. The subtitle of one of his essays, "From Mount Sinai to Massachusetts Bay," indicates the historical range of his intellect. The volume opens with an essay on "The Law of the Prophets" and ends with an appreciation of Max Picard.

Edmund Burke, Alexis de Tocqueville, Eric Voegelin, T.S. Eliot, Irving Babbitt, and George Santayana are among Kirk's favorite 19th- and 20th-century authors. He is largely appreciative of the time-transcending character of their work. Even when critical, Kirk is completely free from malice. His aim, says Panichas, was unmistakably clear, "to improve the life of mind and of the spirit and to foster discriminations and judgments." In many respects, Kirk reminds one of Santayana, for whom he had a muted admiration, in Kirk's words, for the "something Hellenic" that suffuses his thought. In the essay, "George Santayana Buries Liberalism," Kirk finds that "after the theistic humanism of Babbitt and More, the materialism of Santayana may seem a weakening of the conservative fiber." Yet he approvingly quotes from *The Winds of Doctrine* (1926) wherein Santayana writes: "That comfortable liberal world was like a great tree with the trunk already sawed through but still standing with all the leaves quietly rustling, and with us dozing in its shade. We were inexpressibly surprised when it fell and half crushed us; some are talking of setting it up again safely on its severed roots." Santayana continues: "The shell of Christendom has been broken, and a new spirit, that of an emancipated, atheistic, international democracy, is dragging us to an industrial socialist future." Kirk recognized, like Santayana, that the liberalism that once professed to advocate liberty, is

now "a movement for control over property, trade, work, amusements, education, and religion; only the marriage bond is relaxed by modern liberals."

To say that this is a timely volume is to risk understatement. As Europe grapples with its historic identity, as Brussels expands its bureaucratic reach, and with electorates on both sides of the Atlantic divided along ideological lines, a call to remember "the permanent things" in the interest of judging the present is very much in order.

Panichas deserves gratitude only for reproducing these essays in a single volume but for his learned and insightful introduction to each. As the long-time editor of the quarterly journal, *Modern Age*, he has in much of his own work perpetuated the classical vision characteristic of Kirk.

Pessimism: Philosophy, Ethic, Spirit, Joshua Foa Dienstag, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006) 293 pp.

Reviewed by Tim Weldon
University of St. Francis

“Who is it, exactly, that cannot bear a story unless guaranteed a happy ending?” asks the author in the early pages of his book. Upon finishing Dienstag's work, this central question becomes more of an indictment of the non-pessimistic audience and can readily be answered by the reader, specifically the Catholic reader—who is at once familiar with the realities of a fallen world and in possession of the theological virtues—with a question: “Why does the pessimist insist on an un-

happy ending?”

Thus begins the tension of this provocative work wherein the author attempts—admirably with support from the Western canon—to “endorse” pessimism as a traditional branch or school of Western philosophy and also present pessimism as what it is not: a meaningful—if only as useful—worldview.

Typically aligned with romanticism on the one hand and political realism on the other, Dienstag writes that pessimism (which he rightly notes is from the Latin *pessimus* or “the worst”) should rather be understood as, “an ‘ethic’ and what today might be called a technique of the self or a ‘form of life.’” More modestly, pessimism is a philosophical sensibility from which political practices can be derived. It is a proposed stance from which to grapple with a world that we now recognize as disordered and disenchanting. If the “stance” of the pessimist is based upon sensibility and disenchantment, he does not share the same platform with the philosopher—even the existentialist philosopher with whom Dienstag allies the pessimist—at least by language. The philosopher, in his attempt to understand the whole of reality, natural and supernatural, must progress beyond emotive inclination and posturing to establish rational, and in the Catholic tradition, faith-informed conclusions. Drawing repeatedly from the confusion of Camus (“The future is the only transcendental value for men without God”) and bilious aphorisms from splenetic writers such as Cioran (“Hope is the normal form of delirium”) and Leopardi (“Men are wretched by necessity”), the thinkers upon which Dienstag relies do less for the discovery of existential truths

than the developed thought of Augustine or even the unsystematic but circumspect philosophy of Gabriel Marcel.

But Dienstag is less interested in traditional philosophical truths about the human person and more interested in espousing a coping strategy for a trying existence that is finalized in death: "The important thing is not to be cured but to live with one's ailments," the author quotes Camus.

It is how the pessimist is to live—or cope—that the philosopher interested in the totality of experience finds the author at his most flawed. "In the right hands, pessimism can be—and has been—an energizing and a liberating philosophy," the author writes but from what the pessimist is being freed the author is unclear, while the teleology of the pessimist is anything but energizing. "The pessimist expects nothing" states the author (who surely expects an audience) and in so doing centers his thought around the void. With pessimism we are left only with the distorted consolation that it is meaningful to embrace the meaningless.

How much more interesting the book could have been if only the author would have framed his thesis by contrast: placing the thoughts of the despairing, e.g., a resigned Schopenhauer, alongside a philosopher open to the reality of hope, e.g., a Marcel. How much more we would learn about ourselves and our end.

If you would like to receive a complimentary copy of one of the books below in order to review it for a future issue, please email your request to Alice Osberger at osberger.1@nd.edu

If there are books you know of that should be reviewed, let Dr. Brian Benestad know at benestadj1@scranton.edu

Thomas Merton: A Book of Hours, ed. Kathleen Deignan, Sorin Press: Notre Dame, IN (2007), cloth, 223 pp.

Interior Castle: Teresa of Avila, Dennis Billy, C.S.S.R., Christian Classics, Ave Maria Press: Notre Dame, IN, (2007), Paper, 314pp.

Union With God: Letters of Spiritual Direction by Blessed Columba Marmion, Dom Raymond Tibaut, Zaccheus Press: Bethesda, MD, (2006), Paper, 231 pp.

The Pope, the Council, and the Mass: Answers to Questions the "Traditionalists" Have Asked, James Likoudis and Kenneth D. Whitehead, (2006), Paper, 374 pp.

Prayer in Newman, Giovanni Velocci, C.S.S.R., Newman House Press: Mount Pocono, PA (2006), Paper, 94 pp.

Absolute Revelation and Universal Religion: European University Studies, Joseph Pandiappallil, Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main, (2005), Paper, 433pp.

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Most Reverend Donald W. Wuerl, S.T.D. Archbishop of Washington will be the principal celebrant and homilist for Mass on Saturday morning and he will deliver a plenary address on the convention theme.

Topics and Presenters include

■ ***Cardinal Newman and the Idea of the University***

John Crosby, Ph.D. , Franciscan University of Steubenville

Karl Schmude, Australia

■ ***The State of the Question: Various Models now in use***

Fr. John Piderit, S.J. Bronx, NY

Dr. Melanie Morey, Newton, MA

Fr. David O'Connell, President, Catholic University of America

■ ***Plenary address by Archbishop Wuerl on the Convention theme***

■ ***Catholic Studies Programs at Catholic Universities***

Robert F. Gotcher, Ph.D., Sacred Heart School of Theology, Hales Corner, WI

Sr. Paula Jean Miller, F.S.E. University of St. Thomas, Houston, TX

John Cavadini, Ph.D., University of Notre Dame

■ ***The Engagement of Catholic Universities with Secular Culture***

Christopher Wolfe, Marquette University

Michael Aeschliman, Boston University

■ ***Catholic Education at Non-Catholic Universities***

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TOLKIEN AND BERNANOS ON EVIL

In Part Three of *The Lord of the Rings* Gandalf explains that evil will not disappear even if the Ring of Power is destroyed and Sauron is defeated, but must be confronted over and over again in every generation. Right after their successful mission to destroy the ring Frodo, Sam et al. illustrate Gandalf's point by attending to "The Scouring of the Shire," because the ruffians have taken over during their absence (an important scene inexplicably left out of the movie)

Other evils there are that may come; for Sauron is himself but a servant or emissary. Yet it is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succor of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule.¹

Tolkien's vision both moves to action and provides an education in moderate expectations. It encourages people both to believe that they can succeed in uprooting some evils and to realize that they will not only benefit themselves, but also future generations as well (e.g. a ban on cloning and the preservation of marriage between a man and woman).

But Tolkien's story also teaches that the victory over evil is never definitive on this earth. Hatred and injustice, alas, cannot simply be banned, as some social justice advocates naively hope. Tolkien puts forth the same view in one of his letters: "Actually I am a Christian, and indeed a Roman Catholic, so that I do not expect "history" to be anything but a long defeat—though it contains (and in a legend may contain more clearly and movingly) some samples or glimpses of final victory" (15 December 1956).

Bernanos writes in the same vein. His curé de Torcy tells the younger country priest to give up his fixation about wiping out the devil. Then he adds:

What the Church needs is order, you've got to set things straight all the daylong. You've got to restore order, knowing that disorder will get the upper hand the very next day, because such is the order of things unluckily—night is bound to turn the day's work upside down—night belongs to the devil.² ✠

J. Brian Benestad

Editor, Fellowship of Catholic Scholars

1. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King, Part Three of the Lord of the Rings* (New York: Ballantine, 1994), 160.

2. George Bernanos, *The Diary of a Country Priest* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 16.

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