

# FELLOWSHIP OF CATHOLIC SCHOLARS QUARTERLY

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

**O**n 12 December 2008 we suffered the loss of a saintly priest, Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., at ninety years of age. We will sorely miss his wisdom and his wit and his witness. But we can readily hope that we have in him a new intercessor in heaven.

The motto that he chose for his coat-of-arms speaks volumes: *Scio cui credidi* —“I know in whom I have believed” (2 TIM. 1:12). From the time of his awakening to belief in God during his days at Harvard College and his subsequent conversion to Catholicism, through the decades he spent as a Jesuit priest and scholar, this Pauline phrase guided his life.

The author of more than eight hundred articles and twenty-five books, Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., has been an inspiring model for many of us in the Society of Jesus. He was a good and faithful priest, a world-class scholar, and a wonderful friend in the Lord. I count it a great blessing to have known him over the years at Fordham University, where he was the Laurence J. McGinley Professor of Religion and Society since 1988. The complete set of his semestral McGinley Lectures has recently been published by Fordham University Press in a volume entitled *Church and Society* (2008). In addition to his many public lectures, he used to give an annual set of conferences to our Jesuit novices on the theme of *sentire cum ecclesia* as an important part of a Jesuit vocation. For him, “to think with the Church” meant, first of all, to embrace what the Church teaches, but it also entailed the vigorous use of the intellect that God has given us in and for the Church. What was especially valuable about these conferences was for our novices to see before them a man who so well practiced what he preached.

In his autobiography, *A Testimonial to Grace* (1946), he recounts the story of the way in which he came to religious faith. One day, after leaving Harvard’s Widener Library where he had been reading a part of Augustine’s *City of God*, he was struck by the discrepancy between the regularity of order in the universe and the materialist explanations of the universe as the result of chance that were being promoted in his classes. “Never, since the eventful day...have I doubted the existence of an all-good and omnipotent God.” After two more years of thinking about the matter, he came to accept the divinity of Christ and the truth of the Gospels. Where many writers, he tells us, tried to present Jesus “as a mild, tolerant, and ever gentle moralist,” the Gospels show Jesus as someone “whom one could hate tremendously, as most of his contemporaries did hate Him, for what they took to be His bad manners and extravagant ideas.... The moralists never seemed to rise above the obvious. Christ never paused to state the obvious. He told of things no man had seen.”

Mindful of the ways in which these Gospels present Christ as founding a Church, the young Dulles visited various Protestant churches, out of respect for the Presbyterian heritage of his family. But, he explains, the preaching that he heard there gave the impression of not conveying the fullness of what Christ taught. By contrast, the sermons that he heard at the Catholic churches he visited seemed more solid but dry. The statues that he saw did not strike him as at the same level of artistic quality that he saw elsewhere, and the “elaborate symbolism” of the liturgy seemed daunting. The reading of various Catholic intellectuals, however, more than compensated. His autobiography mentions by name such figures as Maurice de Wulf, Etienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain, Martin D’Arcy, S.J., and Fulton J. Sheen, who seemed to him to have “expressed that boldly Christian view of man and the modern world for which I had sought in vain in Protestant churches.” His reading brought him to accept the claim that the Catholic Church made to be the Church that had been founded by Christ: “The more I examined, the more I was impressed with the consistency and sublimity of Catholic doctrine.” He was received into the Church in 1940.

After a year at Harvard Law School, service in the U.S. Navy, and the years of formation within the Society of Jesus, leading to his ordination in 1956, Avery Dulles took his doctorate in theology at the Gregorian University and began a long scholarly career that centered on ecclesiology and fundamental theology. The titles of his many books show his resolute concentration: *Apologetics and the Biblical Christ* (1963), *The Dimensions of the Church* (1967), *Revelation and the Quest for Unity* (1968), *Revelation Theology: A History* (1969), *The Survival of Dogma* (1971), *The History of Apologetics* (1971, expanded edition, 2005), *Models of the Church* (1974, expanded edition with new appendix, 2002), *Church Membership as a Catholic and Ecumenical Problem* (1974), *The Resilient Church* (1977), *A Church to Believe In: Discipleship and the Dynamics of Freedom* (1982), *Models of Revelation* (1983), *The Catholicity of the Church* (1985), *The Reshaping of the Catholicism* (1988), *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (1992, expanded edition, 1995), *The Assurance of Things Hoped For: A Theology of Christian Faith* (1994), *A Testimonial to Grace and Reflections on a Theo-*

*logical Journey* (fiftieth anniversary edition, 1996), *The Priestly Office* (1997), *The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II* (1999, revised and updated edition, 2003) *The New World of Faith* (2000), *Newman* (2002), and *Magisterium: Teacher and Guardian of the Faith* (2007).

Some theologians with less of a taste for *sentire cum ecclesia* have tried to claim the earlier period of Dulles’s writings for their ranks, but any fair reading of his corpus will show his remarkable consistency and his abiding quest to understand why the Church has made the claims that she has over the centuries. In the lengthy postscript that he added to *A Testimonial to Grace* for its fiftieth-anniversary edition (1996), Dulles begins thus: “In a sense I could say, as did John Henry Newman in his *Apologia pro vita sua* that there is no further history of my religious opinions, since in becoming a Catholic I arrived at my real home.” Philosophically, he has always proven to be a careful Thomist, supplemented by the thought of such contemporary figures as Michael Polanyi. Theologically, he regularly exhibited a deep appreciation for the *nouvelle théologie* that was championed by the likes of Yves Congar, Jean Daniélou, S.J., and Henri de Lubac, S.J.

It is, perhaps, the frequent misinterpretations of his book *Models of the Church* that have given some to suggest that there was a time when Dulles thought differently. Oblivious to the framework that he carefully outlined for using the idea of models as a way of thinking about ecclesiology, some of his less careful readers assumed that they could ignore the institutional model for understanding the Church in favor of one of the other “models” that he describes in this volume. In fact, the book defends as indispensable to our understanding the Church’s institutional dimension even while reflecting on the fact that the Church is *sui generis* and irreducible to anything else in creation. Only by pondering the entire variety of the images that the Scriptures use for the Church, he argues, can one possibly appreciate what it is that Christ established. It is a mystical communion, a sacrament, a servant, a herald, the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, and much more.

A decade later, in an academic context filled with deconstruction and dissent, his book *A Church to Believe In* (1983) made the argument for ecclesiastical

authority. His measured tones and balanced judgments were then an object of suspicion on the left and on the right, but this was almost inevitable, given the heat of the clashes in those days. On questions that the Church had not yet decided, Father Dulles generally tried to keep the possibilities open and to find as much good will as he could on all sides. He took this posture to be a requirement for the kind of thinking that *sentire cum ecclesia* requires. On questions that the Church had determined, there could be no question but to use one's intellect to understand more deeply the reasons for the determinations reached by the Church that had been founded by Christ. *Scio cui credidi*.

One of the situations that Dulles faced as President of the Catholic Theological Society of America during the 1970s is particularly telling. Dissatisfied with a report on sexual morality (commissioned by a previous CTSA president but submitted on his watch) that criticized Pope Paul VI's affirmation of the Church's traditional opposition to contraception, Dulles and other members of the organization's board decided to "receive" instead of "accept" or "approve" the document. While some wanted an open repudiation of this report and many others wanted the organization officially to embrace its clear dissent, this son of a diplomat judged prudence to require that a clear signal be sent, but in a diplomatic way, one that clearly did not adopt or laud the document but one that stopped short of shaming or embarrassing its authors by an outright repudiation. One might here remember Aquinas's courtesy to the radical Aristotelian Siger of Brabant when he composed his *De unitate intellectus contra averroistas* and never so much as named his contemporary adversary, the better to leave him room for the change of mind that Dante's placement of Siger in Paradise hints as having happened.

Dulles's profound debt to Aquinas is evident even in the style of his scholarship. After a thorough review

of the range of positions taken on a question, he articulates a calm and balanced argument of his own, replete with needed distinctions and qualifications. His reflections on the nature of his discipline in *The Craft of Theology*, for instance, set forth the criteria for serious scholarship as well as for assessing the catholicity of a theologian. Does the individual hold that faith and reason are compatible? have a belief in traditional trinitarian theology? remain in communion with Rome? show fidelity to the Church's magisterium? have a sense of continuity with the past? To operate within these parameters is to respect the liberty appropriate to a theologian and to observe the prerogative of the pope and the bishops to offer authoritative interpretations of the doctrines of the faith. On the sometimes disputed notion of the *sensus fidelium*, Cardinal Dulles labored to distinguish between the genuine sense of this term in theology and mere public opinion, let alone academic peer pressure.

Among his most recent contributions are books on faith and on the magisterium. *The New World of Faith* shows numerous ways in which the treasury of the Church's teachings can illuminate a variety of contemporary problems: "The world disclosed to faith is immense. It opens up vistas that extend beyond the world of sense and into a realm not reached by telescopes..., however powerful.... Its population includes the living and the dead, saints and angels, and even, at its summit, the divine persons.... We cannot even sketch it, still less enter it, unless we receive and accept God's loving revelation." His latest published volumes review the nature and history of the Church's teaching office and achieve the same dispassionate sophistication that has ever been his trademark, the confidence in his Lord that his motto proclaims: *Scio cui credidi*. ✠

Rev. Joseph W. Koterski, S.J.  
Philosophy Department  
Fordham University

# Remembering Msgr. Michael J. Wrenn

## ✠ Obituary in *Catholic New York*

**M**sgr. Michael J. Wrenn, the pastor emeritus of St. John the Evangelist parish in Manhattan and founder of what is now St. Joseph's Seminary Institute of Religious Studies in Dunwoodie, died Oct. 26 at the Northeast Center for Special Care in Lake Katrine. He was 72.

Auxiliary Bishop Robert A. Brucato, retired vicar general, celebrated the Funeral Mass Oct. 31 at St. John the Evangelist Church. The homilist was Msgr. Thomas J. Bergin, pastor of St. Charles parish on Staten Island and former vicar for education.

A specialist in catechetics, Msgr. Wrenn founded the Archdiocesan Catechetical Institute, now the Institute of Religious Studies, in 1977 under the guidance of Cardinal Terence Cooke and was its director for 10 years. "He has to be credited with its initial and ongoing success," Msgr. Bergin said in his homily. "He had great vision here, and the present Institute of Religious Studies owes him a great debt of gratitude."

Referring to Msgr. Wrenn's years at St. John the Evangelist, from 1987 to 2001, he said, "He was very solicitous about the sick and the lonely. He made many good friends here who relied on him as priest, pastor and friend." He added that Msgr. Wrenn had the ability to bring calm to people who were upset by grief or trouble.

Msgr. Wrenn presented lectures and seminars on catechetics, including one in St. Lucia in the 1990s. On Dec. 31, 2000, attackers invaded the cathedral in Castries, St. Lucia, killed a nun and severely burned and injured others. Msgr. Wrenn arranged for four victims to be flown to Manhattan for treatment. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops sponsored the flight, and Msgr. Wrenn launched a fund-raising campaign to help defray medical expenses. He visited the victims almost daily at New York Weill Cornell Medical Center and brought them the Eucharist.

In 2001 he returned to the Institute of Religious Studies, where he was dean until his retirement in 2005. The institute offers master's degree programs and post-master's study and enrolls predominantly lay students. Msgr. Ferdinando Berardi, pastor of Holy Family parish in New Rochelle and a concelebrant at the Funeral Mass, succeeded Msgr. Wrenn as dean of the Institute.

"He was very easy to succeed," he told *Catholic New York*. "He was very thorough. Everything was in great shape, ready to expand." He added, "Starting an enterprise like that from whole cloth was a real endeavor. It was beautifully laid out...and it was easy to build on his beginnings."

Msgr. Wrenn served as Cardinal John O'Connor's special consultant for religious education. He was the author of the book *Catechisms and Controversies: Religious Education in the Postconciliar Years*, (Ignatius Press, 1991), a critical examination of developments and shortcomings in catechesis in the years following the Second Vatican Council. He also was the author, with Kenneth D. Whitehead, of *Flawed Expectations: The Reception of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Ignatius Press, 1997). He translated 13 books on theology from the French.

Born in the Bronx, he studied at St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, and was ordained May 27, 1961. He held master's degrees in theology from Manhattan College and in education from Fordham University. He was named a monsignor in 1986 and was a Knight Commander of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

He received the first honorary doctorate from the International Theological Institute for studies on Marriage and the Family in Gaming, Austria, in 2000.

He is survived by a brother, Sean Wrenn. Burial took place at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Hawthorne.

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## ✠ Patrick G.D. Riley, former editor of the *National Catholic Register*

**T**hose of us who were privileged to know Michael Wrenn knew him as a champion of a whole gamut of good causes from sound catechetics to sound scriptural scholarship, particularly when they were under assault from within. Not only did he defend such besieged disciplines, he made it a point to master their elements. On occasion he entered the lists himself, as when he translated the book of the scriptural scholar and Jewish convert Francois Dreyfus, *Did Jesus Know He Was God?*

Over the years he was a practiced organizer of events. One such honored his mentor and intimate friend Msgr. George A. Kelly, like him a priest of the New York Archdiocese. It was a colloquy on Msgr. Kelly's battle for the restoration of Catholicity within the Catholic Church, particularly among academics and other intellectual leaders.

The colloquy was held in the spring of 1999 in the vast hall of the New York archdiocesan headquarters, which were within Msgr. Wrenn's parish boundaries. The speakers, all of them members of Msgr. Kelly's Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, were recognized experts in their own fields: Joseph Varacalli in sociology, J. Brian Benestad in Catholic social teaching, William E. May in moral theology, James Hitchcock in history — just to begin the impressive cast in the order of appearance. What they had to say remains relevant to this day, when the errors and disorders that they delineate and rebut still flourish, and the remedies that they prescribe remain valid.

One important problem that they do not touch on would soon loom over the West, namely its demographic decline, a direct effect of the contraception that several speakers dissected. Perhaps I should qualify that since I am not entirely sure that none of the speakers referred to demographic problems created by contraception. Had I provided an index to the proceedings, which I edited, I could be more certain. Msgr. Kelly complained to me about the lack of an index.

Actually Father George Rutler, from the audience, touched on demographics. It was a light touch, dealing with the demographics of the American Catholic clergy. Father Rutler observed that the ranks of priests were declining while those of bishops were rising, and calculated to the general amusement that by a certain date, which I forget, the American Catholic clergy would consist of no priests and all bishops.

The only bishop to speak from the rostrum was the ordinary of Melbourne, George Pell, who later became Cardinal Archbishop of Sydney. He spoke on the parish priesthood, a favorite theme of George Kelly.

Ralph McInerny gave full scope to contraception, linking it to his three master themes: the origins of theological dissent (a no-brainer), resistance to the urging of the Holy See that Catholic higher education be faithful to traditional teaching (not quite a no-brainer,

yet hardly hard to see when Dr. McInerny delineated the history), and finally the future. In dealing with the last, he got off an archetypical McInernyism: "To make contraception the key to moral theology is an idea worthy of P.G. Wodehouse."

Perhaps it's worth mentioning that bringing McInerny into the Fellowship was a master stroke on the part of Kelly, master of the master stroke. It at once gave the Fellowship fresh luster reflecting McInerny's international reputation as a scholar and novelist, and effectively silenced the plausible complaint that leadership of the Fellowship clustered around a core of New Yorkers like Kelly and Wrenn.

The Honorable Kenneth D. Whitehead, no New Yorker he but former Assistant Secretary for Higher Education, detailed the campaign of the Holy See to restore the Catholicity of Catholic higher education in the United States. That Catholic character had been thrown into question by a declaration of independence from "authority of whatever kind, lay or clerical, external to the academic community itself." This so-called Land O' Lakes Statement was framed by a group of Catholic university presidents gathered in the eponymous northland retreat of Notre Dame president Theodore Hesburgh. With this declaration, the Land O' Lakers adopted the Enlightenment model of higher education.

The next-to-last speaker, just before Archbishop Pell, was scriptural scholar Scott Hahn. Dr. Hahn, who had been a Protestant minister before entering the Catholic Church, called for a return to the traditional four senses of Holy Scripture. This fourfold sense, he said, "defines the very task of the exegete."

At Msgr. Wrenn's invitation, extemporaneous remarks from the stage were made by four distinguished academics: Gerard Bradley, professor of law at Notre Dame University, and president of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars; Father Anthony Mastroeni, professor of theology at Christendom College; and Robert P. George, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University.

Msgr. Wrenn arranged for publication of the proceedings by Christendom Press in a book titled *Keeping Faith: Msgr. George A. Kelly's Battle for the Church*. Typical of him were the efforts he expended to promote the work and reputation of another.

## ✠ By Kenneth D. Whitehead, author

But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith.

—1 TIM 6:11-12

The Church lost a dedicated priest and a stalwart champion of her faith on October 26, 2008, when Monsignor Michael J. Wrenn passed away after lying incapacitated for nearly nine months following an injury sustained in a fall which left him essentially paralyzed. This lengthy period during which he was called upon to suffer was an anxious time for those who had known this large-hearted and outgoing priest in his prime. His typical approach to life, seeing a problem, was: “Well, let’s get going and do something about it.” But it became his lot not to be able any longer to “do something about it”—except to pray on his hospital bed.

I first got to know him when he was head of the Archdiocesan Catechetical Institute in New York. His dedication to the catechetical apostolate and his desire to get things right would eventually lead to the first of our several collaborations, but initially I knew him only as the helpful and accommodating Institute director where my wife was studying for her Master’s in Religious Studies, taking one class one semester at a time, since she was still engaged full time in those days raising our young sons.

One thing that first struck me about Father Michael at a time when I barely knew him yet was his willingness as a priest to go out of his way to help others. Once when a friend of mine whom he had only recently met was hospitalized, he promptly made not one but several hospital visits—this for a man for whom he had no pastoral responsibilities but whom he had simply heard had been hospitalized. I thought at the time: this is a man with a real sense of his vocation as a priest of Jesus Christ.

Subsequently, we became close collaborators in trying to influence the outcome of the elaborate Church-wide “consultations” which the liberal catechetical establishment of the day organized in the 1970s for the preparation of a National Catechetical Directory (NCD). This was the heyday of such aberrations as “experiential catechesis” and “on-going revelation,” and nothing would do at that time but that, in the opinion of the liberal catechetical-establishment people and

their theological mentors, the Church should be constrained to adopt these and other questionable features and enshrine them in the official NCD. It was expected that the “consultations” organized by the catechetical establishment would result in the pre-ordained outcome that was desired.

This expectation failed to reckon with the determination of Father Michael J. Wrenn. Since he was one of Cardinal Terence J. Cooke’s staff educational and catechetical experts, he was able to prepare dozens of proposed amendments to the draft NCD text being presented by the catechetical establishment. Introduced at the bishops’ meeting by Cardinal Cooke and some of the other bishops of the New York province, where they were successfully adopted, these NCD amendments significantly modified in a more doctrinally sound direction the National Catechetical Directory text that was finally approved. I was engaged around that same time in getting of hundreds of amendments to the original NCD draft submitted by chapters of Catholics United for the Faith around the country. Becoming aware of each other’s efforts, Father Michael and I collaborated in drafting a number of key amendments. He himself drafted the essential amendment on memorization which got included in the final NCD text—much to the consternation of the catechetical establishment.

Following this collaboration in the late 1970s which helped to insure a better National Catechetical Directory, Father Michael and I became fast friends and occasional collaborators. In the 1980s, during the drafting process for what became the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, we jointly prepared about 80 *modi*—at least some of which, I believe, were accepted by Cardinal John J. O’Connor and his staff and sent to Rome along with the archdiocesan contributions. Many people still remember the joint articles which Monsignor Michael and I published from time to time through the 1990s into the 2000s, usually on catechetical or theological subjects.

The major collaboration of both of our lives, however, came when Monsignor Michael somehow got a copy of the proposed translation into English of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. As is quite well known, the *Catechism* was originally drafted by its eight bishop-authors in French. Versions in other languages therefore had to be produced. However, the American translator originally commissioned to “English” the *Catechism* adopted radical feminist “inclusive language” throughout (not to speak of some his other theological errors!).

I do not know to this day how Monsignor Michael got access to the text of this badly flawed translation—which at that point was routinely sailing through the approval process. What I do remember is how, in the enervatingly hot summer of 1992, Monsignor Michael quite literally dragooned several of his friends and associates competent in French, including, notably, Father Gerald E. Murray of the Archdiocese of New York and Father Joseph Fessio, S.J., of Ignatius Press, into joining him in going over this translation in detail and identifying its manifold errors. A detailed critique of it was eventually submitted through channels to Rome. Monsignor Michael and I co-authored articles, critical of the translation, that were published in the United States, England, Ireland, Canada, and Australia.

The upshot of all this effort was that the Holy See rejected the translation and commissioned an entirely new translation in English from scratch by the Australian Archbishop Eric D’Arcy of Hobart, Tasmania. As a result, the official translation of the *Catechism* into English did not appear until nearly a year and a half after the official promulgation of the *Catechism* by Pope John Paul II in 1992. The story of all this is recounted in detail, among other catechetical vicissitudes, in the 1996 book co-authored by Monsignor Michael and myself, *Flawed Expectations: The Reception of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Ignatius Press, 1996).

The general editor of the *Catechism*, Christoph von Schönborn, today the cardinal archbishop of Vienna, subsequently wrote to Monsignor Michael praising him for having sounded the alarm on the defective original English translation of the *Catechism*. It was a letter which Monsignor Michael quite properly framed and put on his wall.

Much, much more could be said about the work—and the vital leadership—that Monsignor Michael J. Wrenn contributed in these last few—critical—years in the life of the Church. One thinks, for example, of the conferences he organized in the late 1990s—the one on Scripture and the Jesus Seminar, for example, or the one on the important career and work of the late Monsignor George A. Kelly. Monsignor Michael rarely or never stopped thinking about ways to advance the cause of the authentic “Catholic faith that comes to us from the apostles.” His scriptural model was: “Teach what befits sound doctrine” (TIT 2:1).

He was also a good and generous man whom not a few people know gave in precisely the way that the Gospel prescribes (MT. 6:3), namely, not letting his left hand know what his right hand was doing. We shall miss him greatly, I more than most. *Requiescat in pace!*

## ✠ By Ralph McInerny, professor, University of Notre Dame

Monsignor Wrenn, along with Monsignor Kelly and Monsignor Bill Smith, gave members of the Fellowship three indelible lessons on the character and caliber of the New York clergy. Monsignor W loved to recall his time at Dunwoodie and as the catechetical advisor to the cardinal. (Only he and Kelly could make “cardinal” sound like ‘Oz.’) Who will ever forget the smiling presence of Mgr. Wrenn at Fellowship meetings, combining benignity with gravitas. Or the rather equivocal ring on the appropriate finger of his right hand. He always chuckled when one genuflected and attempted to kiss the seemingly episcopal ring. He was a man of great enthusiasms—the elevation of Cardinal Dulles rubbed him the wrong way, his work with Ken Whitehead on a variety of projects, particularly the CCC, his devotion to the works of Tresmontant, and lately supporting an effort to find in canon law a basis for a formal judgment of heresy on those who supported abortion. Once he gave me a photograph of himself on his ordination day, flanked by his proud parents. Age did not diminish his humble pride in his priesthood. My favorite anecdote. He spoke of going for an early bird meal in Florida with a prelatical friend when the hostess asked, “Seniors?” “No, my dear, monsignors.” May he rest in peace.

## ✠ By James Hitchcock, professor, St. Louis University

I first met Father Michael Wrenn in 1977 or 1978, when the Fellowship was getting organized. He was director of a catechetical institute of the Archdiocese of New York, about which I knew very little. I gathered, however, that it was a valiant effort on his part to promote authentic religious education at a time when it was being undermined. Like many pioneers of the Fellowship, he found that defending Church teaching could exact a price. A few years later, even though he was now a monsignor, he was no longer director of the institute, something that I gathered was not entirely his own wish. He became pastor of St. John the Evangelist parish in Manhattan, whose church was the ground floor of the skyscraper archdiocesan chancery office.

Msgr. Wrenn had highly entertaining stories to tell



about the celebrities who lived in his neighborhood. A lady who came into the church and asked if there was a statue of St. Jude (there was not) was recognized as Greta Garbo. Later, when Msgr. Wrenn was attending a parishioner's wake, the undertaker invited him to visit the basement: I got Greta Garbo down there. You ought to see her. (Msgr. Wrenn diplomatically suggested that they pray for her instead.) On a street corner one day he laughed at some antic of a small dog, whose owner, the comedienne Hermione Gingold, hissed at him, "And you call yourself a follower of St. Francis!"

He was delighted that officials from the nearby United Nations were among his parishioners. A friend of his who lived outside Paris relayed the story of how on one occasion, preaching in the local church (he was fluent in French), the monsignor began by announcing that he was pastor of the richest parish in New York!

All this might have made him obnoxious, a self-satisfied society priest, but it did not. One of Msgr. Wrenn's endearing qualities was the simple, unselfconscious satisfaction he took in his position, so devoid of

guile that it did not occur to him to pretend otherwise.

Some of us remember the late-night phone calls, when the monsignor, brooding over some problem in the Church, resolved that something had to be done! Once he instructed me to contact the Holy See and obtain the red hat for a certain unfairly neglected priest. (I would have done it, had I known how.)

Above all he used the resources available to him to do the maximum good. I was told that he was the benefactor of innumerable worthy causes. I know directly of the conferences he organized that brought together leading scholars from America and Europe, something quite remarkable for a parish to undertake. He was untiring in his service to the Church numerous decisive ways, perhaps the best known was his great effort to assure an accurate English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

He was, I believe, a man who used to the absolute maximum the talents that God gave him. ✠

## ARTICLES

# The Unexpected Fruit of Dissent

By William L. Saunders

Senior Fellow and Director of the Family Research Council's Center for Human Life and Bioethics

Unlike followers of John Calvin, Catholics do not believe that God foreordains everything that happens to us. Rather, we believe He gives us freedom. With freedom comes responsibility. Our freedom is to be used to find Him, who is all Truth.

However, we often use our freedom to stray from the truth, to find error, to sin. But the great Good News is that this is not the end of the story. For, rather than abandon us to the consequences of our freedom wrongly exercised, God reaches out to us, to forgive us, to heal us. All we have to do is to assent to God's unmerited, remarkable offer, that

is, to exercise our freedom toward the truth. When we do, we will be healed and restored. We can even learn from our mistakes.

Working through our freedom, God can always bring good from evil. Every repentant sinner will impact those around him, and, maybe like St. Paul, transform the world itself. As Paul said, "We know that all things work for good to them that love God". As Augustine put it, "God judged it better to bring good out of evil than to suffer no evil to exist."

One example of this principle at work is the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, which just celebrated its 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary at its annual convention, held this year in San Antonio, Texas. Let me explain.

As we know, America, and American Catholicism, in the late 1960s and early 1970s was, to put it charitably, a mess. Important reform in the Church

and in the world had been badly misinterpreted. Vatican Ecumenical Council II in 1962–65 was being interpreted by many as an embrace of the world's views. *Humanae Vitae* in 1968 sparked a wholesale rebellion of academics who took out an ad in the *New York Times* to proclaim they constituted a “second,” or alternative, magisterium. Freedom had become license...even for those licensed to teach the Catholic faith.

This was the Age of Dissent. On Catholic college campuses throughout the land, academics somehow thought it was a mark of true freedom to disagree, as publicly as possible, with the teaching magisterium of the Church. This is an astonishingly odd claim since the magisterium is simply the Holy Spirit speaking through the College of Cardinals. It is bizarre to believe that “true” or “authentic” freedom can contradict Truth itself. But that is what these Catholic academics thought. Associations of academics and intellectuals were drowning in dissent, and poisoning the water as they drowned.

Academics loyal to the magisterium decided there was no one speaking for the Church on campus. So they decided to do something about it—in 1977, they formed the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars.

As there are the four marks of the Church, there are the three marks of the Fellowship. That is, it is a fellowship, it is Catholic, and it is composed of scholars, of those committed to the intellectual enterprise. Particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, the need for simple *fellowship* was pressing. Academics faithful to the magisterium were surrounded by colleagues who berated them for their Catholic orthodoxy. They were denied promotions and marginalized. They needed fellowship, human contact with and support

from others who agreed with them, in order to stay strong. (They were not angels or supermen, after all, but ordinary men and women, and it is hard for anyone to endure alone.)

It was also a “fellowship” in the sense that it was not a corporate entity that took positions on behalf of its members. Rather, the members were, and are, free to exercise their God-given freedom to have their own opinions. But those opinions are always within the universe of orthodox Catholicism. (It is ironic that many non-Catholics think Catholic orthodoxy somehow restricts freedom. Rather, as Chesterton noted, by setting limits, it sets one free.) And the founding men and women were great scholars—Jim Hitchcock, Joe Fessio, William Smith, Bill May, Germain Grisez, Ronald Lawler, George Kelly, Ralph McInerny, among others. By striving to be loyal to the Catholic faith, by refusing to give in to the world's claim that either God does not exist or He speaks in a voice too dim to hear, they created a wonderful gift to the Church.

It is a gift that continues to inspire. At the recent convention in San Antonio, younger scholars like Joe Capizzi of Catholic University and Fr. Anthony Giampietro of the University of St. Thomas in Houston reflected upon the dilemmas posed for freedom of conscience by an increasingly hostile culture. As such, they are worthy successors to the great men and women who originally founded the Fellowship.

Some of the original founders—such as the cheerfully combative George Kelly and the gentle and resolute Ronald Lawler—have passed on from this life to the next. I have to think they received a joyous welcome from their Lord for exercising their freedom in service of the truth. ✠



# Pro-life Voters and the Pro-Choice Candidate

By Gerard V. Bradley  
Professor of Law, University of Notre Dame

The “pro-life” position consists, basically, of these two propositions. One is that people begin at conception, so that to kill anyone from conception onwards is to kill a human person. The second proposition is that it is wrong—morally wrong—to intentionally kill any innocent person. Neither proposition is about religious faith. No one needs religious faith to see and to say that both of these propositions are true. You can figure out when people begin, for example, by reflecting philosophically on scientific facts about human reproduction and development. And one can figure out that killing is wrong by reflecting upon the natural law which, at least according to Saint Paul, is inscribed upon one’s heart. Or one can consult almost any secular or religious moral code, or almost any society’s civil law—including our own.

So it won’t do to say that one is “pro-life” because one views abortion with profound misgivings, or because one regrets that so many abortions occur and that the law should work to make it more rare, or because abortion is, in some sense, wrong and evil. Abortion is all these things. But abortion is much more than all these things. In an abortion someone who has the same right not to be killed that everyone else has, is killed. *This* is the “pro-life” position I have in mind in asking: under what circumstances is the “pro-life” voter morally justified in voting for a “pro-choice” candidate?

But what about the “pro-choice” position? Is it really the case that someone who is “personally” “pro-life” could coherently be politically “pro-choice”? Or, is “pro-choice” really the same thing as “pro-abortion”? In some ways they are different. But in one decisive way they are the same. It is true that a “pro-choice” candidate for public office may never advise any particular women to have an abortion. The “pro-choice” candidate may even find abortion extremely distasteful and, perhaps, abhorrent. But the surgical procedure we call abortion is not the only subject matter of the “pro-choice” position. “Pro-

choice” is also, and it is necessarily, a position about what public policies and laws we should have about abortion—specifically, whether abortion should be something women are free to choose, or not. “Pro-choice” is one answer to that policy inquiry. It is this answer: the legal protections which protect most of us from being killed should not protect all of us from being killed. Some people—the unborn—are to be exposed to deadly violence without legal aid or redress. And, so, just as ante-bellum Americans who refused to own slaves were nonetheless correctly called “pro-slavery”—because they affirmed the legal right of others to do so—Americans who today affirm the legal right of a woman to have an abortion could correctly be called “pro-abortion,” even if they judge abortion an option unworthy of their own choice.

*This* is the “pro-choice” position I have in mind in seeking to answer the question previously posed. This “pro-choice” position amounts to a grave injustice, one which “pro-choice” candidates necessarily embrace, support, and *choose*; it is precisely what being “pro-choice,” at a minimum, actually *means*. Anyone who votes for a “pro-choice” candidate becomes morally responsible for the grave injustice of exposing innocent persons to murderous acts. The “pro-life” voter who votes for a “pro-choice” candidate *materially*—that is, in fact and as a matter of foreseeable effect—cooperates in sustaining this country’s radically defective legal structure about abortion. Voting for Barack Obama helped him to win the Presidency and thereby helping him to win the Presidency was, perforce, to help him make his declared “pro-choice” policies a reality (or, to the extent such policies were in place, to help him block efforts to repeal them). The “pro-life” Obama voter knowingly declined to do what he or she could have done to legally protect the unborn from being killed.

The question is, under what circumstances is it morally right to vote for a candidate such as Obama, who promised to *expand* the unjust structure by government funding of abortion and by removing some brakes upon abortion, such as parental notice laws?

To answer this question we have to consider the matter from the perspective of those who suffer the foreseeable harm resulting from the perpetration of

“pro-choice” policies—the unborn who are killed. Then we have to apply the great moral principle we call the Golden Rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. The Golden Rule makes us walk in the others’ shoes, makes us count the stranger and his or her well-being just as one instinctively and with ease, welcomes the benefits and avoid the harms of what one does when the beneficiary or victim is oneself, or someone near and dear. The Golden Rule pushes back especially hard against our tendency to discount the harms we visit upon those we do not know, those who cannot object, those who cannot offer effective resistance. The Golden Rule steers us to the morally right choice despite the fact that, though we may believe everyone is equal, we do not treat them that way. The Golden Rule leads us to be fair to everyone whose lives and fortunes are foreseeably affected by our actions—as justice requires.

This question about the fairness of lethal side-effects is in the news almost every day now. Not because of abortion, but because of U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Almost every day there is news of an American air attack or ground operation that results in a substantial number of non-combatants’ deaths, or there is news about a post-mortem analysis of an earlier deadly attack. (Some days there is both.) The basic scenario and the recurring moral question are always along these lines: suppose that there is a wedding feast in Northwest Pakistan. Among the 100 guests are two high level Al-Qaeda operatives. The military reality is that any attack intended to kill those two puts everyone present at grave risk of being killed. Would it be morally right to launch the airstrike, thus endangering 98 innocents to get two who are not?

I do not know for sure whether, all things considered, the strike should be ordered. I do know, however, that any right answer to the question *must* go through the Golden Rule, precisely so that we do not *unfairly* off-load fatal effects upon people who are not like us. Precisely to avoid that form of *unjust* partiality towards ourselves and those like us, we must ask: would we order the airstrike if the feast were in Zurich? Or in Dublin? Or if the feast were taking place, now, in South Bend, Indiana (or your home town)? If the answer to any of these questions is “no” then it is pretty clear that, if we nonetheless order the strike in Pakistan, we would *not* be acting

in accordance with the truth that every innocent has an equal right not be killed. We would *not* be acting in accord with the Golden Rule.

I think we need to apply the Golden Rule in a very similar way to the question: when is it morally right to vote for a “pro-choice” candidate, in this analysis, Barack Obama.

## Argument 1: “Attack the Root Cause of Abortion”

This argument proposes to leave the unjust legal structure about abortion in place until some distant future time when, it is hoped, abortions will be so rare that prohibiting them will make sense. This argument proposes to now seek a reduction in the number of abortions performed annually, from the present 1.2 million to some lower number. The argument proposes to accomplish the reduction by attacking what are said to be abortion’s “root causes,” mainly, a widespread lack of proper health care and income supports. These proposals include better pre-natal maternal care, better pediatric care, more income supplements for the poor. The moral question is whether this proposal is *fair* to the unborn? And that entails applying the Golden Rule.

To do that we must take a different example of the same basic proposal, an example which substitutes a different set of people called upon to pay the price of doing nothing to legally restrict a certain class of deadly assaults. Let us take the example of domestic violence. Let us suppose that approximately 1.2 million American women are killed each year by domestic violence. Let us suppose further that a Presidential candidate said the following: “Friends, I think we must stop wasting resources prosecuting domestic violence. Let us get the law out of the picture. Maybe some day we could arrest men who kill women at home. But that day is not today, for anyone can see that arrests and convictions have not slowed the rate of domestic violence very much at all. Besides, we are talking about private family matters where people make hard choices. Let us instead join together and attack the root causes of domestic violence, which causes have to do with ignorance and poverty. I propose therefore to give angry men jobs and money to attend anger management classes. And I think we should start teaching

all of America's children early on that every man and woman deserves to be treated well."

Anyone who refuses to vote for this candidate but who would vote for a "pro-choice" presidential candidate is, at least presumptively, guilty of failure to apply the Golden Rule.

## Argument 2: "Obama is Better on Other Issues"

Some people who describe themselves as "pro-life" supported Barack Obama without placing any faith in the reduce-the-incidence-of-abortion idea. These people instead maintained that Obama's positions on other issues, such as the environment, taxes, education, were so far superior to those of Senator McCain, that voting for Obama—*notwithstanding the harm his abortion policies would do*—was the right thing. These people often said that the virtues of Obama's other positions supplied a "proportionate" reason for voting for a "pro-choice" candidate.

The question which these people should have asked themselves is this: would they vote for a "pro-choice" candidate on the strength of his preference for more government-provided health care (than his rival's similar but less ambitious plan), if doing so exposed *their* children to mortal danger? If the candidate's commitment to a policy of "choice" referred, not to so many tiny and invisible people, but instead to hundreds of thousand of immigrants, or to the same number of dead prisoners or mentally handicapped or physically infirm people. Would they still support that candidate, even if his policies on energy, taxes, and employment *were* superior to his rival's?

A vote for a candidate who favors "pro-choice" policies on abortion by someone who does not answer the preceding questions "yes" does not, I think, satisfy the Golden Rule.

## Argument 3: Women's Equality

For two decades of economic and social developments people have organized intimate relationships and made choices that define their views of themselves and their places in society,

in reliance on the availability of abortion in the event that contraception should fail. The ability of women to participate equally in the economic and social life of the Nation has been facilitated by their control of their reproductive lives".

This cluster of assertions by three members of the Supreme Court in the 1992 *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* decision tracks quite closely a very widespread conviction cited in support of "pro-choice" candidates. The central claim is that laws guaranteeing "choice" about abortion are instrumentally indispensable to women's equality. Now, I do not for a moment think that the claim is true. But for this analysis I shall grant the claim, and then apply the Golden Rule to test the justice of the position articulated.

There is no need to imagine cognate claims, to which we must hypothetically apply the Golden Rule. History and current affairs supply countless examples of societies where some of its members have obtained equality for themselves by exploiting others of its members. Sometimes the numerator (those who gain) is larger than the denominator (those who suffer). Sometimes it is the other way around. In either event the basic moral question is the same. And there is little mystery about what just about everyone would say in response.

So, was it just for Spanish colonizers in the sixteenth century to obtain the satisfactions of life in Central America—where the price was paid in blood by immiserated Amerindians? Was it fair for English men and women three centuries later to enjoy the fruits of pastoral life—brought to them on the backs of dead Irishmen? A century-and-a-half ago the Supreme Court "facilitated"—indeed, helped to preserve—the equality of all white people. But does anyone today defend *Dred Scott* as a moral beacon?

If the answer to these questions is "no," then one who takes the Golden Rule to be a principle of justice should not have voted for Obama on the strength of what the *Casey* Court proclaimed. ❖

This paper is a slightly revised version of remarks delivered by the author at the University of Notre Dame on October, 2008 in a public exchange of views on Catholics and the presidential election.

# American Law and the Commodification of Man

By William L. Saunders

**T**he law, as we learned from Aristotle, is our great teacher. While it undoubtedly reflects our existing attitudes, the law also shapes them.

How has American law contributed to the moral problems we face today in the begetting of children? And how might the law be reformed to contribute to the building of a culture of life?

I suppose we should first identify the primary moral problem. It is, I would say, our tendency to see children as products of our own *making*. Not as we Catholics would say, of our *begetting*, but something that two—or more—people make, “produce.” Such attitudes are, in a sense, a naturally-flowing consequence of the widespread availability and use of assisted reproductive technologies. In many ways, the laboratory has invaded the bedroom. I was going to say, “the marital chamber,” but that wouldn’t be accurate since reproductive technologies are not available solely to married people. Indeed they are available to everyone, married or single. And of course, that is a huge part of the problem.

As we all know, it is possible to create embryos, and choose the “best” (or, non-defective) ones. If it is not the case today, it soon will be that we can “correct traits” in the embryos we don’t like and then we can implant them. It is almost like ordering a new car or refrigerator. As Bill May and others have said, from such a perspective, the child is no longer a “gift” to be accepted. One does not control the characteristics of the gifts one is given. Others—including God—do that. But one *does* control (through the power of the marketplace) the characteristics of the things one purchases or manufactures.

In the face of all this change, from begetting to making, American law has been largely silent. There has been no federal law, for instance, on in vitro fertilization. Unlike Italy or Germany, Congress has passed no laws strictly regulating IVF. In Italy or Germany, the number of embryos that can be created by IVF is severely limited (i.e., only those that will be implanted in a single procedure). As a result, there are few “left-

over embryos” (a chilling term if ever there was one) and few to be “preserved” (frozen). Thus, no “demand” builds up, driven by scientific entrepreneurs, to make “use” of these embryos in research so they aren’t “wasted.” I hope you notice the almost “industrial” nature of those terms—product, demand, used, waste,

It is just the opposite in America. In the absence of federal rules, most states are silent, and wealthy IVF clinics hire powerful lobbyists to keep it that way. Thus, there are no limits to how many embryos can be created. In fact, since “harvesting” oocytes is dangerous and difficult for the woman involved, the practice is to take as many in a single procedure as possible. Then, since there are no limits on how many embryos may be produced, all of those oocytes are fertilized that can be. This results in many, many more embryos than can ever be implanted in a single procedure. Though the clinic will implant as many as possible—up to 5—since it can always “reduce” (read, “abort”) them later, most are “left-over,” “spares,” and are frozen. How many are there in the US? Most estimates were of 400,000 five years ago. My own estimate, based on discussion with IVF clinics, is that an additional 50,000 are frozen per year, putting the total near three quarters of a million embryonic human beings locked in the deep-freeze.

It is remarkable just how “laissez-faire” the practice of IVF is in the US. There is no limit to the source of either the sperm or the oocytes. It would seem that, at least theoretically, there could be as many as six “parents” involved. Consider a couple who want to have and raise a child but are unable to (often referred to as the “intended parents”) who contract with a sperm donor and an oocyte donor (the genetic parents) to gestate the embryo thereby created in the womb of another woman, the “gestational parent,” who is married at the time. Since there is usually a statutory presumption that a married man is the father of a child born to his wife, he would be parent number 6! How the courts would sort all this out is anyone’s guess. And statutory law has hardly kept up with these new assisted reproductive “possibilities.”

So, my first point is that the failure of the state or

national legislatures to regulate IVF has expressed a de facto approval.

My second point is that there were a series of cases in state courts that ended up treating the embryo basically as “property.” The most famous, and influential, is *Davis v. Davis* from Tennessee in 1992, in which the great pro-life geneticist, Jerome Lejeune, testified. Generally courts have said that embryos are property to be disposed of pursuant to the terms of any written agreement between the parties (usually husband and wife locked in a divorce battle and contesting the meaning of a prenuptial agreement); in the absence of that, by statutory provisions on property disposition; in the absence of that, the court will “balance the equities.” In fact, when courts have balanced the equities, they have generally held that whichever parent wins who does not want to be the parent of a born-child. Most cases have relied, as did *Davis*, upon abortion cases in their reasoning, and have found the “right not to become a parent against their will” to be inferred from these cases. (Of course, we know they are already *parents* from the day there was a living embryo.)

That brings us to the third important legal influence on our current situation, and that is *Roe v. Wade*. *Roe*, decided in 1973, relied upon a “privacy right” inferred from the Constitutional text in two cases having to do with contraception, *Griswold v. Connecticut* (for married couples) in 1965 and *Eisenstadt v. Beard* (for single persons) in 1972. *Roe*, is in many ways a remarkable case, but is perhaps no more remarkable than for the way in which Justice Harry Blackmun, who wrote the majority opinion, reasoned. Justice Blackmun considered various religious, philosophical, and historical views on “this most sensitive and difficult question [of when human life begins].” He also discussed how the common law treated injuries to the fetus in a variety of contexts. He looked at what medical and legal associations were then recommending regarding abortion. Having found a lack of “consensus” from these sources concerning “the difficult question of when life begins,” Blackmun asserted that the Supreme Court could not and “need not” resolve the question. This enabled Justice Blackmun to set up his well-known trimester system for balancing the interests of the state and of the woman in the regulation of the Constitutional-right to abortion that he created. Significantly, how-

ever, Justice Blackmun failed to consider the answers to the “difficult question” provided by another discipline—that of embryology. If he had, he would have found it was clear—there was certainly a “consensus” – that the embryo was a developing human being from the very first day, whether conception was or wasn’t a “process” ( a point upon which he placed some reliance). Certainly by the time of implantation, there is no doubt that any “process” of conception is completed. In short, Blackmun begged the question.

If Blackmun had recognized the unborn was a human being, he would have been forced to decide why it should *not* receive the protection the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments grant to “persons” (after all, all other human beings receive such protection). By avoiding the scientific facts about the beginning of human life, Justice Blackmun was able to avoid the Constitutional dilemma presented by those facts.

Everyone in this room is well-aware of the ways *Roe* has affected and distorted American civic life. It has had, likewise, an incalculable effect on issues of bioethics. I am engaged in public debates on these issues all the time, and it is quite common to hear opponents state that the embryo simply cannot be a human being “because *Roe* said so.”

Thus, in at least 3 ways—through *federal* court jurisprudence on abortion that denies the humanity of the embryo, through *state* court litigation holding embryos are mere property, and through *legislative* silence in face of the challenges posed by assisted reproductive technologies, American law has helped to produce the quandary we are in today, where many, if not most, Americans increasingly think of unborn children as something we “make.” Is there anything American law can do to help to rectify the situation?

Some points are obvious. If *Roe* is overturned, then the abortion issue is returned to the states. From one perspective, this is not so good—after all, state legislatures, influenced by decades of *Roe*-jurisprudence that the unborn are inhuman, might legalize abortion again. But from another perspective, the very conversation—and debate—that will occur as we struggle to make laws in the states will, hopefully, help to educate, inform and influence Americans to understand that the unborn are human beings deserving of legal protection, not products to be made and thrown away.

Parenthetically, we must not forget that there

may be a discussion on the *federal* level as well. While few on the Supreme Court would seem to agree, it is at least arguable that abortion, far from being *required* under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, is actually *prohibited* by it, under either the due process or equal protection clauses. The Amendment reads in part: “nor shall any State deprive any person of life... without due process of law nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” It is, I think, clear that those who adopted the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment intended to cover a class, that is, all “persons.” With advances in biological knowledge so that all know that a human being is such from the moment of conception, is it not likely that the unborn fall within the class the adopters *intended*, that is, all human beings? Can it not be argued that there is no real distinction between “persons” and “human beings,” and that unborn human beings are persons under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, as are all other human beings? Surely, if so, it would be depriving them of life “without due process” to kill them for no reason, and it certainly denies them “the equal protection of the laws” against, for example, homicide. As I say, this is disputed and not widely held, but wouldn’t a national argument on this point help to turn a culture toward life? After all, we would then be asking the right questions.

Of course, if the unborn are recognized as human beings, they cannot be disposed of as property. We have already abolished slavery once in America! Recognizing them as “human beings” or “persons” would orient the law in the right direction. Suddenly legal obligations *in the states* to help those who are frozen might emerge. (For instance, Blackmun indicated in *Roe* that if the unborn were a human being, then a state would have a compelling interest in protecting it.) Certainly efforts at embryo adoption would significantly increase. It isn’t likely they would be thought of as “spare” or “left-over,” and that itself would be helpful.

It would also help greatly if Congress would regulate the assisted reproduction *industry*, for that is what it is. Such efforts come up against at least two massive problems. First is federalism. Our system of government was designed to leave most matters to the states, though the post-New Deal years have greatly strained, if not changed, that system. Much of the warrant for doing so was found to be in the “commerce clause” of the Constitution, which allows Congressional regulation of “interstate commerce.” Most conservative judges think the commerce clause has been stretched too far, and would snap it back in place. If they do so and they command a majority of the Supreme Court, the result will be fewer opportunities for *national* legislation. Further, most conservatives, including social conservatives, want the governing vision of the Constitution, that is, true federalism, restored, where most matters are decided by the states. Again, this will bounce the question of regulation of assisted reproductive technologies to the states.

That may not be so bad. Part of the vision of federalism was that the various states could serve as “laboratories of liberty.” They can experiment, in varying ways, with the most effective ways to reign in ART. One can learn from another.

The other problem with regulating ART is simply whether “the people” want to do so. Perhaps they have been so shaped by the current culture that they like things as they are. But no one said building a culture of life is easy. Rather it is a great and glorious task to which the life-long witness and example of men like Bill May call us—to give it all we have, all the time. ❧

**Delivered during “The Culture of Life versus the Culture of Death: From Humanae Vitae to Cloning and Assisted Suicide, a tribute to William May,” sponsored by the Culture of Life Foundation, September 20, 2008, in Washington, DC.**



# Tolerance

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By Jude P. Dougherty  
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## I

When Oswald Spengler published his multivolume study, *The Decline of the West*, few outside of professional academic circles understood his thesis or took the epitaph seriously.<sup>1</sup> Today, a century later, no attentive historian can ignore the cultural shift that took place in the West in the last half of the twentieth century, one that seriously eclipsed the spiritual resources that formerly animated it. As a philosopher of history, Spengler's study of the past and his cyclical view of history led him to the pessimistic conclusion that just as other cultures before it have decayed, Western culture has not only peaked but faces a period of irreversible decline. For more than 200 years the Western intellectual tradition has been subjected to the nihilistic criticism of forces launched by the Enlightenment. The result: we are now experiencing in the social order the eighteenth-century repudiation of the classical and Christian sources of Western culture. There is little doubt that Europe is living off a dying past, perhaps nearing the end of a great culture, not unlike that experienced before the fall of Rome when internal corruption made possible the barbarian invasion. The decline of morals apart, the birthrate of the native European population alone would attest to decline. The ruling elites of Brussels and the European capitals seem confident that the constitutive elements of what was once called "Christendom" can be maintained without reference to their source. Absent Christianity, Europe has little to defend but its material culture as it faces a tide of immigrants that threaten its very character. The newcomers, largely from Africa and the Middle East, who are attracted by the material culture of Europe, nevertheless remain attached to their old ways and in refusing to assimilate extract privileges and exceptions to the common law that further contributes to their isolation within the larger society. The question

arises, how tolerant can Europe be in the face of a largely Muslim influx whose Islamic leaders are convinced that they will one day rule the continent.

Are we driven to Spengler's pessimistic conclusion, albeit for different reasons? Perhaps not. In any event, intellectual honesty demands that we acknowledge the many formidable obstacles confronting not only the defense of Europe but of Western culture itself as it faces an alien and self-confident Islam convinced that it will one day govern. Those bold enough to predict that the future portends an "Islamic Republic of France" or the inevitability of what Bat Ye'Or has called "Eurabia" are given little credence, are largely ignored by major media, and can expect their books to be banned or removed from the shelves of major booksellers. Absent the moral and intellectual resources which prevailed, for example, in the decades preceding the founding of the American republic, Europe's ruling elites may be hard pressed to defend the republican institutions and the culture they have taken for granted.

## II

On both sides of the Atlantic, any effort to recapture the moral tradition that shaped the *Declaration of Independence* and the *U.S. Constitution* as well as the *U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights* is handicapped by the current propensity to regard all moral claims as equal. The concept of "procedural democracy," now regnant in Western intellectual circles, militates against the government's casting its weight behind any one conception of the good. The state according to this mode of thinking must remain neutral in the face of competing moral claims, favoring none. No moral system can claim superiority, it is argued, since each is merely the product of its time and of the place-bound preferences of people advancing it.

Procedural democracy itself is supported by two ancillary principles, one, the seemingly innocent call for "tolerance," and the other, the malevolent doctrine of "separation of church and state." The principle of tolerance augurs against an unabashed defense of one's own tradition, whereas the separa-

tion principle surrenders moral authority to the state or, worse still, is employed to eradicate religion from both the academy and the public square. To offer an egregious example of misplaced tolerance, one need recall only that the 57-member Muslim Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has prevailed upon the United Nations Human Rights Commission to adopt a resolution requiring the effective evisceration of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Henceforth, the guaranteed right of free expression will not extend to any criticism of Islam on the grounds that it amounts to an abusive act of religious discrimination. Western officials and governmental agencies appear increasingly disposed to go along with efforts to mute warnings about the danger that the recognition or incorporation of Sharia law poses to the West. The liberal attempt to silence criticism of Islam threatens to criminalize behavior that has long been regarded as merely “politically incorrect.” If we follow the liberal agenda vis-a-vis Islam and its demand to recognize Sharia, we will mutate Western law, traditions, values, and societies beyond recognition.

### III

Calls for tolerance abound, from papal statements to European conferences. Bumper stickers and postal imprints proclaim its value. One can understand John Paul II and Benedict XVI seeking tolerance for a Christian minority living amongst a largely Hindu population, but one is mystified by an apparent campaign for tolerance in the open societies of Western Europe, Australia, and North America. Considered abstractly, it would be easier to make the case that tolerance is a vice than to justify its putative status as a virtue. To employ a few homey examples: a parent cannot tolerate disobedience in the child; a teacher, sloppy homework or cheating on an examination; a military officer, insubordination; a CEO, deviance from company policy; or an ecclesiastical body, divergent doctrinal teaching or liturgical practice within its ranks. No state can tolerate irresponsible fiscal policy nor can any state permit disrespect for its laws. An entity must preserve its unity to preserve its very being. The promotion of the notion that tolerance is a virtue is of relatively recent origin. Tolerance is not mentioned as a virtue by Aristotle or by the Stoics. Nor does Aquinas speak of tolerance as a virtue. To

the contrary, Roget’s venerable *English Language Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms* gives as synonyms for tolerance: leniency, clemency, indulgence, laxity, sufferance, concession, and permissiveness, terms generally regarded as designating questionable behavior.

Of course, certain technical meanings of the term may be identified. “Tolerance” in biology is the ability of an organism to endure contact with a substance or its introduction into the body without ill effects. “Tolerance” in the industrial order is the range within which a dimension of a machined part may vary. “Religious tolerance,” which many have in mind when they use the term, is the intellectual and practical acknowledgment of the right of others to live in accordance with religious beliefs different from one’s own.

Religious tolerance, though not confined to Christianity, seems to have a particular appeal to the Christian conscience. Perhaps it does so for reasons intrinsic to Christianity itself. Hindus and Muslims, by contrast, show no similar tolerance toward Christians in their midst, either subjugating them or forcing them to flee. The classical and biblical sources of Western civilization, although under attack for the past 200 years, may still remain the basis of Western culture, but that said, it must be acknowledged that the Western respect for intellect and for its role in the formation of law and the practice of religion is not characteristic of all who seek shelter within the West. Social cohesion becomes impossible if the classical and biblical heritage of the West is not respected by the immigrant whose enfranchisement can be used to undermine the institutions and freedoms of the host country. The call for a tolerance that ignores a de facto conflict of cultures is inconsistent and destructive of its own warrant. We may ask, is it not incumbent upon the West to defend its intellectual and cultural patrimony while yet accommodating the other?

Goethe, when discussing tolerance in his *Maxims and Reflections*,<sup>2</sup> offers this insightful distinction. Tolerance, he thinks, is best understood as a state of mind in transition to something nobler, namely, “recognition.” The latter is a mark of true liberality, an attitude equally removed from mindless appropriation and the outright rejection of the other’s point of view or culture. The recognition of those who think and act differently is a feature of a confident mind. Upon our first encounter with another, we may derive pleasure in finding points of agreement, in a feeling of good will that follows a friendly contact. Upon closer

acquaintance, differences are likely to become apparent. The important thing, says Goethe, is not to retreat but to hold fast to points of agreement and strive for a clear understanding of points of dispute without seeking an artificial agreement on them.

Throughout history, political entities have recognized the need for unity of outlook among their peoples. At times in classical Greece and Rome, atheism could be punished by death. Modern socialist regimes, whenever they come to power, recognize the influence of ideas and work to suppress religious education, if not religion itself. Within the Western democracies practical accommodation is one thing, but a nonjudgmental, nondiscriminating acceptance is another. How tolerant can a society be and yet maintain itself in existence? Of course, where nothing is prized, everything can be tolerated.

Those who advocate tolerance must first establish the context in which it should be recognized and its limits. It is better to clearly designate a specific activity that calls for toleration than to reify an abstraction. There are times when leadership must insist on propriety, respect of the inherited, and adherence to the rule of law. In short, context determines whether tolerance is a virtue or vice.

#### IV

Procedural democracy,” as currently defended in academic circles rests upon the assumption that there is no way to determine the good. The state in formulating its policies is not to draw upon any one moral tradition, certainly not on one advanced from a purely religious perspective or by an ecclesial body. Religion is deemed a purely private or subjective affair, not a trustworthy source of principles applicable to public policy. In this context, particularly in the United States, the separation doctrine is often invoked, but that doctrine is not found in the *U.S. Constitution*. It is rather the construct of a maverick interpretation of the U.S. Supreme Court acquiescing to the secular humanists who vigorously lobbied the Court. Any student of the American founding will recognize that the Constitution in its First Amendment sought only to prevent an established church for the nation as a whole and did not intend to undo establishment in the colonies where it prevailed. It doesn't take much research to discover that at the outbreak of the American Revolution there were estab-

lished churches in nine of the thirteen colonies. At the time of the founding the positive role of religion in society was simply taken for granted. It was commonly recognized that man is by nature a spiritual and a material being and that government should not impede growth in either domain.

As a principle, religious tolerance prevails throughout the West, but the battle to shape the common mind has been shifted from the pulpit to the classroom. While John Locke, David Hume, and Adam Smith favored religious establishment, their contemporary disciples, recognizing the need for civic unity, are in the forefront of those who would achieve that unity by giving the state exclusive control over education. Whereas David Hume maintained that, “The union of civil and ecclesiastical power serves extremely, in even civilized government, to the maintenance of peace and order,” and Blackstone could hold that uniformity in religious matters is a civic good, contemporary defenders of “establishment” have shifted their focus to the control of education, effectively denying parents a choice education of their children. In the United States, in the name of separating church and state, the choice of a religiously informed education, though not denied outright, is rendered financially difficult if not impossible for most families at the crucial primary and secondary levels.

Unfortunately with the dismissal of religion often goes that other support of republican government, the classical learning which informed the political philosophy of the founding fathers of the American republic. At the time of the American founding, Cicero's discourses framed the issues that were addressed in the *Declaration of Independence* and *The U.S. Constitution*, topics such as liberty, the nature and source of law, the common good, security, patriotism, toleration, and the role of religion in society. Eighteenth-century readers understood Cicero to be a defender of rectitude, virtue and conservative customs and the indispensable role which religion plays in fostering these values. For Cicero, the highest aim of the ruler is the security and welfare of the community because the common welfare is the indispensable condition for personal advancement. Security justifies the use of force against aggressors, but the maintenance of morality in the populace is also a fundamental responsibility of the ruler. The ruler, of necessity, must be able to distinguish between what is

truly good (the *bonum honestum*) and what is merely expedient (the *bonum utile*). Cicero acknowledges that from one point of view, the pursuit of the *bonum honestum* is but a means for the realization of the common good in which it finds its purpose and limit; this makes *honestum* a form of *utile*. But Cicero also identifies *honestum* with the common good and *utile* with individual interest. To what extent, then, is the common good to be pursued against the interest of the individual?

This is the issue which confronts policy makers throughout the West. No ancient text can provide a ready answer to contemporary problems, yet the ancients can speak to us across the ages about human fulfillment and the ends of government. In his own day when he wrote of a failing Rome, Livy recommended to his contemporaries the study of its founding.

I invite the reader's attention to the much more serious consideration of the kind of lives our ancestors lived, of who were the men and what the means, both in politics and war, by which Rome's power was first acquired and subsequently expanded. I would have him trace the processes of our moral decline, to watch first the sinking of the foundations of morality as the old teaching was allowed to lapse, then the final collapse of the whole edifice, and the dark dawning of our modern day when we can neither endure our vices nor face the remedies needed to cure them.<sup>3</sup>

Respect for ancestry, heritage, or tradition determines concretely the emphasis placed on the study of history, languages, art, and on the observance of religious and civic ritual. Failure to appreciate and defend the uniqueness of the moral and spiritual traditions of what was once called "Christendom" or in the name of tolerance treat them as only one among many can only end, as Spengler predicted, in the suicide of the West.

Benedict XVI could have been taking a page from Livy when he touched on these issues in his 2008 visit to Paris and again in his October visit to the Quirinal Palace in Rome. Assembled to hear him at the Bernardines, the ancient Cistercian abbey in Paris, were the leading civic leaders of the French

republic, including the minister of culture, two former presidents, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Jacques Chirac, and the current mayor of Paris. Given the setting of his lecture, Benedict said, "We are in a place that is associated with the culture of "monasticism," reminding his listeners of the Benedictine "l'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu," and the role that monasticism played in the development of Western civilization. He went on to speak of the nature of the Church herself and of European culture. "A purely positive culture," he said, "which drives the question of God into the subjective realm, as being unscientific, would be the renunciation of reason, the renunciation of its highest possibilities, and hence a disaster for humanity with very grave consequences. That gave Europe's culture its foundations—the search for God and the readiness to listen to Him—[and] remains today the basis for any genuine culture."

Prime Minister François Fillon, in his farewell remarks to the Holy Father, told Benedict that you have reminded us that "the fundamental separation of church and state does not prevent either from dialoging or from being mutually enriched." The prime minister spoke of an "open and reflective secularism" and stated, "The republic, profoundly secular, respects the existence of the religious fact. She appreciates the role of the Christian tradition in her history and her cultural and immaterial heritage." He thanked Benedict for "placing our civilization on guard regarding its material weakness." A weak acknowledgment of the role of religion in society, to be sure, but nevertheless an expression of what President Sarkozy has called a "more positive laïcité." As a militant Islamic presence in Europe increases, even the secular elites of Brussels may be faced with the limits of tolerance and the handicap imposed by their commitment to procedural democracy. ✠

#### ENDNOTES

1. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1926–28).
2. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Maxims and Reflections* (London: Penguin Classics, 1999), p. 116.
3. Titus Livius, Preface to his *History* (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1924), p. I.5.

# Celebrating the Feminine Genius

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2008 was a year punctuated by a trinity of anniversaries symbiotically celebrating the dignity and vocation of woman. July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008 marked 40 years since Paul VI promulgated the encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*<sup>1</sup> (*HV*); April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008 feted 30 years since Dr. Thomas W. Hilgers and his colleagues inaugurated the Creighton Model Fertility Care System<sup>2</sup> (CrM FCS) and August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008 commemorated 20 years since John Paul II publicized the apostolic letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (*MD*).

At the outset of this piece, I will investigate two seminal ideas pertaining to woman's dignity and vocation: the salience of recognizing feminine genius,<sup>3</sup> a central thesis of *MD*, and the moral goodness of the natural regulation of fertility, the salubrious teaching of *HV*. To conclude, I will demonstrate how married women who access CrM FCS and field-test its family planning protocols are actively exercising and celebrating these respective themes.

## *Mulieris Dignitatem* and the feminine genius

In *MD* John Paul II offers a comprehensive explanation of feminine genius. Not satisfied with probing the concept theoretically, the pope is also keen to demonstrate how women practice or exercise their genius in day-to-day life. Characterizing the *theoretical or foundational aspect of a woman's genius* as her ability to *discover the truth of her nature*, John Paul subsequently distinguishes the *practical or structural aspect of feminine genius* as a woman's capacity to *act on that truth*.<sup>4</sup>

Stated as a principle, this is John Paul's insight on theoretical feminine genius: the grounding of feminine genius is the woman's natural capacity to know, in the sense of having the ability to discover, what it means to be someone who is created in God's image and likeness. But what does John Paul mean by the

feminine capacity "to discover"<sup>5</sup> and of what might this objective phase of a woman's self-knowledge consist?

I am convinced that the pope's idea of feminine discovery presupposes his extended reflections on the second creation story of Genesis<sup>6</sup> with its primordial male/female "discovery" and its implications for embodied personhood and marriage. Hence, I think the pope is suggesting that whenever a woman compares and contrasts her own corporeal nature with that of every other embodied entity, she concludes (i.e., ingeniously discovers) that, unlike the "objects" of the rest of the created order, she is a "*subject*;" that, unlike the "*somethings*" of every other species of the animal and plant kingdoms, she is *someone*, a unique and unrepeatable "*I*"; that, unlike all other mammalian animal organisms that are intended to be used as a mere means to others' goals, she is a person, a being who, though she has been created *for her own sake*,<sup>7</sup> is a *co-subject with the man* and cannot know her own subjectivity save by *making a gift of herself* to male persons.

The foundation of a woman's genius, then, lies in her capacity to know that she is an embodied, i.e., sexual, person whose essential nature is defined by her specific gifts of rational intelligence and freedom (self-determination or self-realization). Again and again, John Paul II underscores the point that feminine genius, fundamentally defined as every woman's capacity to know her personal truth, importantly, also reveals to the woman that she is man's "sister in humanity" and, therefore, equal in dignity to male human persons.<sup>8</sup> And to every *married* woman—the focus of this investigation—theoretical genius reveals that she possesses a parity of dignity and personhood with her husband.

As God would have it, the ends of the foundational gifts of rational intelligence and freedom—knowing the truth and embracing the true good—succinctly define the woman's vocation, her *genius delineated in terms of praxis*. Within the rational act of discovering the truth of her nature and through the free act of making a sincere gift of herself—experiencing the gospel hermeneutic of finding self by

giving self away, each woman simultaneously discovers her natural feminine vocation: to know God and other human persons and to enter into a communion of love with them. Thus, in the natural, practical act of genius whereby a married woman discovers herself by giving herself away, she also discovers her *Ur*-vocation, precisely what she is called to do by nature of being a feminine person: to freely enter into society or communion with, in the first place, the Person of God and, secondarily, with the persons of her husband, children, and those within society who are within her sphere of influence.<sup>9</sup>

What's more, the feminine vocation to interpersonal communion is fulfilled in a married woman's everyday exercise of a subset of peculiarly female capacities which *complete* the structure of her feminine genius. The *practical face of her genius*, what John Paul II defines as a woman's capacity *to act on the truth of her being*, uses natural female inclinations—being a handmaid,<sup>10</sup> mother,<sup>11</sup> liberated lover,<sup>12</sup> prophet,<sup>13</sup> moral guide<sup>14</sup> and a life companion<sup>15</sup>—to build on her foundational capacities of being a feminine person, a subject, an “I” who is created for “interpersonal communion.”<sup>16</sup>

*As handmaid:* The married woman evinces her practical genius when in a myriad of ways she serves and safeguards, in the sense of consents to and carries out, God's plan for her as a human person and a married woman. With Mary of Nazareth, every woman is ingeniously capable of uttering a “fiat” to her vocation to be genuinely human and genuinely feminine.

*As mother:* Every married woman who is blessed with children pursues her genius in being a mother. Created in the image of the Radical Giver, the married woman and her husband possess the heterosexual capacity to create a new human being, with the help of God. Exercising the fruitfulness so essential to her feminine genius, a mother mirrors the divine template of fecundity quintessential to the inner life of God. As John Paul describes it, woman-as-mother participates “in the eternal generativity of God.”<sup>17</sup> Always standing ready to receive God's gift of the life of another human being, a married woman pays loving attention to, indeed, pours out her very life for the sake of, her children, whether biological or adopted. Having understood and wrestled with the mystery of evil and sin in both its “original” and personal manifestations, a mother is prepared to educate her chil-

dren, exercising her spiritual maternity in bringing to flower their personhood in wholeness and holiness.

*As a liberated lover:* A woman discovers her true liberation in the truth of Christ's teaching, particularly that demonstrated in his attitude toward and relationship with the women of his day. Like the fallen woman in the gospel who anointed Christ's body for burial, the contemporary woman exercises her practical genius manifested in the freedom that redounds to her from her acts of repentant, extravagant—that is, “wasted”—love. Like the women who remained with Christ throughout his agonizing death on a cross, married women of today exercise their genius in actively binding up others' wounds—those of family members, fellow-parishioners, and co-workers—with their acts of unswerving, unconditional love. Like the evangelizing love of the woman at the well who had a “special sensitivity to Christ, his mystery and his mission,”<sup>18</sup> every married woman has the capacity for a disciple's love, ingeniously turning her children and those persons in her circle of influence toward Christ and his truth.

*As prophet:* Another facet of a woman's practical genius is to be a prophet: to fearlessly proclaim to her family, friends and colleagues that God knows us through and through, loves us despite our failings, and challenges us (just as the Incarnate God challenged the woman in the gospel) to “go, and sin no more.”

*As moral compass:* The practical feminine genius of receptivity to life and being “for” others mark the “ethos”<sup>19</sup> of every woman. And, when these ethical dimensions are lived out in reference to God and others, they transform the married woman into a living moral compass capable of ingeniously guiding her family and friends to the true good. In turn, those in her ken, recognizing the woman's “great energies of spirit,”<sup>20</sup> not only “lean on” this feminine person for moral strength, but also tend to adopt her “ethos” for their life's journey.

*As life companion:* The genius of a married woman's spousal love flowing from her personal “I” brings her into a “unity of the two,”<sup>21</sup> a nuptial communion, with the person of her husband. In this lifelong union in which she is a “suitable helper” or an equal partner to her husband, a woman's genius is best summarized in the term companion. With its Latin derivatives (*cum, panis*), companion defines

the woman as the person who *breaks daily bread with* her husband, the spouse with whom she is “equal in personhood and dignity.”<sup>22</sup> The nuptial meaning of their interpersonal union—to exist not just side by side but “mutually ‘one for the other’”<sup>23</sup> all the while practicing “mutual subjection”<sup>24</sup>—enables the married woman to love her husband like God loves within his Trinitarian family. In this manner, the woman ingeniously mirrors to the world “the communion of love that is in God,” a unity within diversity of persons.<sup>25</sup>

The married woman, acting on her dignity as a feminine person, becomes a *handmaid* of God’s plan; a biological and/or spiritual *mother*; a *lover liberated* from bondage to sinful inclinations; a *prophet* proclaiming to each human being that, in and through Christ, they are the object of God’s love; a *moral compass* who guides others to spiritually battle the powers of evil in the world; and a life-long *companion* to her husband. In short, in her various practical activities, the married woman fulfills her vocation to be an embodied, intelligent, free and ingeniously feminine human being.

## ***Humanae Vitae* and the moral goodness of the natural regulation of fertility**

**A**s its first priority, *Humanae Vitae* challenges the married woman and her husband to fulfill their lofty vocation to love each other as God loves.<sup>26</sup> Hence, just as the union of God’s love is at once life-giving and the generativity of his love at once unitive, so the interpersonal union of the love of a husband and wife demands, activates and defines its procreative capacity, and vice versa. In this way, just as God’s love manifests its perfection in giving life, so ought marital sexual love.

In the second place, *HV* challenges married spouses to plan their families in a way that cooperates with the natural truth of marital sexual love and its divine template, the fruitful love of God. The encyclical’s central teaching—natural methods used unselfishly help a couple plan their family in a moral way<sup>27</sup>—invites all husbands and wives of good will to experience the healthful benefits of a natural means of fertility regulation, a means that, precisely because it always honors the basic human good of their ferti-

ity, fulfills them as male and female persons/spouses. Accordingly, as the Church tries to point every married couple to a natural method of family planning, *mater ecclesia* is attempting to insure that the trajectory of the couples’ love-making emulates God’s life-giving love.

Pope Paul VI refused to frame the issue of the regulation of fertility as some of his protagonists: viz., either the Church changes its teaching on the use of contraceptives, or she is guilty of condemning women to having endless numbers of children. In *HV* Paul VI insists that the real choice before a woman and her husband in the arena of family planning is between spacing children responsibly or morally (that is, with their acts of marital intimacy open to life and the basic good of fertility through natural methods) versus planning a family irresponsibly or immorally (that is, with their acts of intercourse closed to life and fertility through contraception). In other words, Pope Paul VI and his theological co-authors do not question the validity of limiting births for valid reasons,<sup>28</sup> but choose to use the encyclical to carry out their pastoral duty (a) to turn married women and their husbands toward a good means to the good end of achieving and avoiding a pregnancy as circumstances of their marriage dictate and (b) away from a bad means.

To understand precisely why *HV* endorses the morality of a natural system, it would help to examine the basics of one model of natural fertility regulation, the CrM FCS. What we see clearly is that, when a couple use this sort of natural method to plan their family, the man and woman always respect, rather than suppress, the gift of their fertility. That is—to borrow terminology from *MD*—they act in accord with their vocation and dignity as heterosexual persons called to a “unity of the two” through their mutual “gift of self.”

A woman records on a linear chart the fertile and infertile phases of her cycle. The days of menses are marked with red stamps; followed by infertile days marked with green stamps (indicating she does not observe either bleeding or cervical mucus); followed by fertile days marked with white baby stamps (indicating she observes cervical mucus at the vulva and, therefore, is fertile and could conceive); followed by infertile days marked with green stamps (when she no longer observes cervical mucus and,

hence, is infertile). In the fertile or ovulatory phase of her cycle, the woman observes a cervical discharge at the vulva that begins as sticky/cloudy or tacky/cloudy mucus and eventually becomes clear, stretchy or lubricative mucus. The presence of mucus tells the woman and her husband that they are fertile and in the periovulatory phase of their cycle. She marks the last day of her mucus discharge that is clear, stretchy, or lubricative with a “P” to indicate the Peak Day of cervical mucus and the Peak Day of the couple’s fertility.

With this chart, the woman and her husband know their window of fertile days or the vulvar mucus cycle. They know that if their intent is to avoid a pregnancy for good reason, they need to honor the gift of their fertility by avoiding genital contact during their fertile phase (and confining their acts of intimacy to days of infertility). In other words, according to a natural system, the couple does not enter into fertile acts of sex and then directly render those acts sterile by something they do before, during or after the act. If the couple of normal fertility intends, on the other hand, to achieve a pregnancy, they honor the gift of their fertility by having intercourse during their fertile phase. This form of family planning is salubrious in its promotion of both physical and spiritual/moral health for the woman, her husband and their children.

In sum, when used either to avoid or achieve a pregnancy, a natural system of fertility appreciation like that of CrM is moral since couples who use it for either purpose (a) *never directly suppress the basic human good of their fertility* (the procreative dimension of their love) and, as a result, (b) never threaten its correlatively-linked unitive dimension and, as a further result, (c) never assault the integrity of their marital love and, ultimately, the stability of their marriage.

## CrM FCS: celebrating the genius (vocation and dignity) of woman

According to anecdotal reports, the Creighton Model Fertility Care System helps women who use it to *discover* the foundational dimension of their feminine genius: they are persons who are fearfully, wonderfully made. As one woman wrote, it takes “into account the clues that my body

seemed to be providing, and puts the pieces together [in] an effort to facilitate health [biopsychosocial well-being], not just pregnancy.”<sup>29</sup>

The Cr M System also creatively activates the practice of feminine genius in the woman using it:

*As handmaid:* The comprehensive versatility of CrM springs from the fact that it can be used by women in a variety of reproductive situations—avoiding pregnancy, achieving pregnancy, breastfeeding and infertility—and from the ingenious way that it networks procreative health with general health. In short, CrM FCS enables the woman to practice her genius of being a handmaid—a stewardess over her body’s reproductive system, so that she is better able to fulfill God’s plan for her as a sexual (feminine) person: to make a sincere gift of herself to the Person of God, her husband and her children.

*As mother:* The maternal-child affective bonds that are poignantly evident in the ingenious way a mother cradles and looks at her baby appear, to this observer, to be even stronger when the woman and her husband have achieved a pregnancy by means of a natural system of family planning. You see, the CrM FCS has provided the couple, especially the woman, sundry opportunities to intelligently and freely prepare for their child’s conception, gestation and coming-out party. Cycle after cycle husband and wife evaluate the circumstances of their marriage—health, finances, demography—seek God’s guidance in their reproductive plans, and decide, when the current circumstances of their marriage dictate, to use their fertile days to conceive a new human being. And then, with the added genius of spiritual maternity, the woman cements the maternal-child bond by spending a lifetime of educational mothering, i.e., generating, the spiritual and moral life of her child.

*As liberated lover:* Conversations with women who use the CrM FCS have taught me again and again how the system works its own graces. Ever so gently, the daily use of the Creighton System helps a woman disentangle herself from selfish attitudes and sinful inclinations; frees her from the enslavement of self-centeredness so as to be able to embrace, ever more readily, her vocation to be “for” others. In short, this natural method of family planning unleashes the woman’s genius of becoming “one flesh” with her husband and becoming a gift to her children, friends and co-workers.



*As prophet:* The most effective means of advertising the CrM FCS is by word of mouth, one woman speaking to another. Female users of the system ingeniously prophesy to others about its usability, reliability and morality—testifying how they have experienced its use as something good for them and their marriage: a method that (a) confirms their personal feminine worth and (b) really works! In short, these female-users of the CrM FCS confidently encourage others to experience its “genius-friendly” benefits.

*As moral compass:* The CrM FCS helps to bolster the moral leadership of its female-user. The woman who invests substantive time and energy in finding and using a method of family planning that is moral—that is, in accord with her own good—is the woman who speaks volumes through her choice. She witnesses, by example, that as human beings we all need to be vigilant of choosing only those things that are truly good for us, including and especially that of a family-planning method that brings us closer to God. In this way, her decision to use the CrM FCS gives the woman an ingenious way of being a moral compass capable of helping others find, through their reproductive decisions, the way to a truly good life.

*As life companion:* It is reported that women who use a natural method like the Creighton System are less apt to divorce or, stated positively, are more able to practice their genius of being a *life* companion to their husbands. Of course, a statistic like this makes perfect sense and is entirely predictable. With the practice of the CrM, the woman and her husband day-in and day-out pay intellectual and volitional respect to the gift of their fertility and therefore to the integrity of their love and marriage. The more this is the case, the more likely is it that the bond between them as the “unity of the two” will endure. The more this is case, the more sure is the prospect that, as CrM users, the husband and wife will be breaking bread together until death do they part. ✕

## ENDNOTES

1 *Humanae Vitae* subsumes the dignity and vocation of woman under the aegis of the couple’s dignity. However, in section 17, the encyclical reminds us of the negative consequences of a contraceptive mentality, some of which do threaten the dignity of married women directly: “. . . it is to be feared that husbands who become accustomed to contraceptive practices will lose respect for their wives. They may come to disregard their wife’s psychological and physical equilibrium and use their wives as instruments for serving their own desires. Consequently, they will no longer view their wives as companions who should be treated with at-

tentiveness and love.” (*HV* #17, quoted in Janet E. Smith, *Humanae Vitae: A Challenge to Love* [New Hope Publications: New Hope, KY] 199?, p. 39.) In *Mulieris Dignitatem*, John Paul II underscores the injustice of a husband’s discriminatory practices against women within, among other social circumstances, a contraceptive marital relationship: “The matrimonial union requires respect for and a perfecting of the true personal subjectivity of both [husband and wife]. The woman cannot become the ‘object’ of ‘domination’ and male ‘possession.’ . . . Burdened by hereditary sinfulness, they bear within themselves the constant ‘inclination to sin,’ the tendency to go against the moral order which corresponds to the rational nature and dignity of man and woman as persons” [10.2-3]. Even more directly, JPII counsels: “Consequently each man must look within himself to see whether she who was entrusted to him as a sister in humanity, as a spouse, has not become in his heart an object of adultery; to see whether she who, in different ways, is the co-subject of his existence in the world, has not become for him an ‘object,’ an object of pleasure, of exploitation” [*MD* 14.4].

- 2 Reviewing the thirty-year history of Creighton Model Fertility Care System, (the standardized ovulation method) from the view point of (1) teachers trained to instruct couples in its use or from the (2) women/couple users of the method, Hilgers and his faculty estimate that they have trained thousands of practitioners who, in turn, have provided instruction in CrM FCS to tens of thousands of women/couples nationally and internationally.
- 3 It is interesting to note that the Latin derivative for the English “genius” is *gigno* (*gignere, genui, genitum*) (originally *geno*) with its English translation of “to beget, bear, bring forth.” John Paul II mines the generative underpinnings of the concept of feminine genius in his favorite moral metaphors describing the “ethos” of woman: her vocation to be a spouse; to receive and give a spousal love; to make a sincere gift of self and to receive the other as gift; to enter into a *communio personarum*; and to be a person created “for” others.
- 4 John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 6.1-2; 7.1-2; 7.4,6,7,8; 9.2; 13.8; 18.1; 30.3; 31.4.
- 5 *Ibid.* 7.5; 11.8-9; 31.2.
- 6 In *Mulieris Dignitatem*, John Paul summarily explicates the Yahwist account of creation (Gen. 2) and its implication for the original couple’s discovery of the nuptial meaning of the body—a man and woman entrusted to each other—and the sacramentality of marriage, all of which he had previously explained, in systematic fashion, in his general Wednesday audiences between October 10, 1979 and April 2, 1980.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 7.6-7; 13.8; 18.1; 30.1.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 6.4-5; 12.3-4; 16.4.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 10; 21.2-3; 29.5.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 5.2.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 8.4-5; 13.1; 18.2-7; 19.1.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 10.3; 13.6; 15.1-3.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 16.2; 29.6.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 11.1-3; 30.2,4,5,6.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 6.4; 7.5.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 7.3.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 8.4-5; 18.5.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 16.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 7.3-5; 9.4; 14.2; 29.4.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 30.6.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 7.3-4; 10.2, 4; 11.5; 14.4; 23.2; 26.2; 29.2.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 16.3-4; 25.5.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 7.4.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 24.2,4,5.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 7.2; 16.4.
- 26 Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (1968): 8.1.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 16.2-4.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 10.4; 16.2.
- 29 Jean Packard, ed. *Women Healed* (Pope Paul VI Institute Press: Omaha, NE) 2004, p. 99.

# Walker Percy the Philosopher

By Joseph E. Previtali, San Francisco Archdiocese

The integration of faith and reason is a central theme in the Catholic intellectual tradition. Enlightened by knowledge both from divine revelation and natural scientific inquiry, the believer seeks to understand Being in its fullness and to communicate this truth to others.<sup>1</sup> The Catholic novelist and philosopher, Walker Percy, was keenly aware of the importance of making credible to the rational mind the revealed truths of the faith and of doing so with reference to the “signs of the times.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, in the context of the secular-humanistic materialism of the English-speaking intellectual world of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Percy embarked on a journey to articulate the Catholic understanding of the mystery of the human person.<sup>3</sup>

In Percy’s time, as in ours, there were put forth predominantly two competing and contrary views about the nature of the human person. There was the “materialist” view, which asserts that all that exists in reality is matter, and that therefore the human being is purely material.<sup>4</sup> The other was the “spiritualist”<sup>5</sup> view, most often articulated in the Judeo-Christian tradition, which claims that human beings have some spiritual (immaterial) dimension that makes them essentially different from the rest of the visible world. This essential difference, it is argued, is found principally in the human being’s ability to think rationally and to choose freely. By observing the nature of the phenomenon of human language use, Percy sought to show that, contrary to materialism, man is not merely a material organism, and that the human intellect must have some immaterial element.

Percy’s quest to understand the nature of the human person was sparked by his insightful observation that only human beings can feel bad in a good environment; that, unlike animals, which are content as long as their physical needs are satisfied, the state of man’s happiness is not dependent solely on his physical well-being. “If beasts can be understood as organisms living in environments which are good or

bad and to which the beast responds accordingly as it has evolved to respond, how is man to be understood if he feels bad in the best environment?”<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Percy’s own 20<sup>th</sup> century American culture provided him with many examples of human beings who lived with an overabundance of material wealth and comfort, but were still profoundly unhappy and dissatisfied with life. From this experience, Percy concluded that it must be inadequate to say that man is simply a material organism living in an environment. Thus did he endeavor scientifically to investigate what he already knew existentially and intuitively to be true.

Writing in the postmodern<sup>7</sup> age, Percy recognized that “all the attributes of man which were accepted in the old modern age are now called into question: his soul, mind, freedom, will, Godlikeness.”<sup>8</sup> These attributes were used in earlier times to help human beings to understand why they can, as Percy put it, “feel bad in a good environment.” Furthermore, in searching for a clear articulation of the truth about human nature, Percy sought to depart from a point that left behind any biases of the materialist and the spiritualist. In order to do this, he had to discern what characteristic of human beings neither the materialist nor the spiritualist would deny. “Instead of starting out with such large vexed subjects as soul, mind, ideas, consciousness, why not begin with language, which no one denies, and see how far it takes us toward the rest?”<sup>9</sup> Thence Percy was to proceed, studying human language in its entirety—as a single phenomenon—in order to draw conclusions about what the human being is, particularly in relation to the material world around him. Percy believed that language provides us with the gateway necessary for our age to understand the uniqueness of the human being.

Perhaps no Catholic thinker—or any thinker, for that matter—of the twentieth century was more qualified than Percy to explore the question of what the phenomenon of language can tell us about the nature of the human intellect. It is a pursuit that involves expertise in linguistics, biological and chemical science, and metaphysics. As a novelist, Percy lived in

the world of language and of the word, and he was an amateur practitioner of the science of semiotics, which studies the use of symbols and signs in human experience. He earned a Doctorate of Medicine from Columbia Medical School, and so could speak with some expertise on biology and chemistry, and he was versed in the many modern psychological theories. He was also a published philosopher and could speak authoritatively on metaphysical questions as well.<sup>10</sup>

Percy's observations about the phenomenon of human language use find their philosophical foundation in the semiotic theory of triadic language use of the nineteenth-century American pragmatist philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce. Percy describes himself not as a disciple of Peirce, but as a "thief of Peirce."<sup>11</sup> That is to say, Percy recognizes the goodness in Peirce's philosophy—namely, his insight into the triadic nature of human language—and makes use of it in expositing his own view of human nature, while at the same time leaving Peirce behind in pursuit of a broader theory of man.

Peirce's great contribution, according to Percy, was his insight that "there are not one but two kinds of natural events in the world." One he called dyadic, that is, two-part. Dyadic events are the subject matter of the physical sciences. Biologists, physicists, chemists, etc. would all be very familiar with such events. Peirce calls them "a mutual action between two things." That is to say, A interacts with B, and B interacts with C, and C interacts with D, etc. An example of a dyadic event is the stimulus-response phenomenon found in Pavlov's dogs.

Even an event as complex as Pavlov's conditioned dog salivating at the sound of a bell can be understood as a 'complexus of dyads'—the sound waves from the bell, the stimulation of the dog's auditory receptors, the electrical impulses in the efferent nerves, the firing of the altered synapses in the brain, the electrical impulses in the efferent nerves to the salivary glands, and so on—the whole understandable as a sequence of dyadic events. The entire event, complex as it is, can be represented quite adequately by a simple drawing which shows structures (dogs, neurones, axones, glandular cells) and arrows connecting them (energy exchanges, sound waves, electrical impulses). Such is the dyadic model.<sup>12</sup>

When the bell rings, the dog is given food, time and time again. Pretty soon, the dog begins to salivate each time the bell rings, in anticipation of the food. For the dog, the event of the bell ringing has become connected dyadically to the event of receiving food. The second kind of event in the natural world is the triadic, or three-part, event:

But there is another kind of event, quite as real, quite as natural a phenomenon, quite as observable, which cannot be so understood; that is, cannot be construed by the dyadic model. It is language. The simplest example I can think of—and it is anything but simple—is the child's early acquisition of language, an eighteen-month-old suddenly learning that things have names. What happens here is the same sort of thing that happens when a lecturer utters a complex sentence about the poetics of T.S. Eliot.<sup>13</sup>

Percy's example of this event is when a child learns that the small, furry, four-legged feline creature he sees is called "cat"—not in the sense in which it is to elicit some response or action from the subject himself, but rather "cat" as a simple naming of an object of the subject's experience. "And means it in a very special way: does not mean: look over there for cat, watch out for cat, want cat, go get cat—but: This is a cat."<sup>14</sup>

Peirce called words, "symbols," from the Greek *symbollein*, meaning, "to throw together," because when the child uses words, he "throws together" the word and the object in reality to which it refers. A triadic explanation is necessary for this phenomenon of "throwing together" because one entity—the child—throws together the word and the object. In the case of Percy's example, the three parts of the phenomenon are the child, C-A-T the word, and *cat* the thing in reality.<sup>15</sup>

To understand the profound difference between the two types of events Percy turns to the famous story of Helen Keller's experience of language acquisition. Percy explains that until the point of her breakthrough into triadic language use, Helen, who was deaf and blind, had operated in a purely dyadic fashion. For example, whenever she wanted cake, she would spell C-A-K-E in the hand of her caretaker, Anne Sullivan, and she would receive cake. For Helen, C-A-K-E was in the strongest possible

sense identical to the cake. C-A-K-E the word *was* cake the thing in reality.<sup>16</sup> There was no distinction between the operation of drawing the letters in the caretaker's hand and receiving the taste and nourishment of the food. It was a stimulus-response dyadic sequence of events. However, there was one day when Helen was on a walk with her caretaker and her consciousness of her existence was transformed. Her teacher and caretaker, Miss Sullivan, put her hand under a sprout of water. Percy quotes her account from her autobiography.

As the cool stream gushed over one hand, she spelled into the other the word *water*, first slowly then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motion of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

I left the well-house eager to learn. Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life. That was because I saw everything with the strange, new sight that had come to me. On entering the door I remembered the doll I had broken. [She had earlier destroyed the doll in a fit of temper.] I felt my way to the hearth and picked up the pieces. I tried vainly to put them together. Then my eyes filled with tears; for I realized what I had done, and for the first time I felt repentance and sorrow.

I learned many new words that day. I do not remember what they all were; but I do know that *mother*, *father*, *sister*, *teacher* were among them—words that were to make the world blossom for me, “like Aaron's rod with flowers.” It would have been difficult to find a happier child than I was as I lay in my crib at the close of that eventful day and lived over the joys it had brought me, and for the first time longed for a new day to come.<sup>17</sup>

Helen's experience of acquiring language transformed the way she lived. Whereas she had been

living merely as an organism interacting with an environment, she was now living as a language-using person, interacting in a world.<sup>18</sup> It was her acquisition of language that allowed her to understand her existence as taking place in a world—which included the environment, but was more than the environment. There were thoughts, feelings, and reflections upon the environment, but also other thoughts, feelings, and reflections not entirely related to the immediate environment. In short, her acquisition of language made her conscious of her personhood.<sup>19</sup>

Percy, in reflecting on this experience of Helen Keller, makes a bold claim. “If one had an inkling of what happened in the well-house in Alabama in the space of a few minutes, one would know more about the *phenomenon* of language and about man himself than is contained in all the works of behaviorists, linguists, and German philosophers.”<sup>20</sup>

Percy then goes on to discuss how this experience of Helen Keller is indeed an irreducibly triadic event. He explains that there are two independent relationships at work simultaneously in the case of Helen's naming water. The first is the relationship between the spelling of W-A-T-E-R in one of her hands and Helen's intellect. (In the case of a non-disabled child learning language, this relationship would ordinarily occur through a parent speaking the name of an object to the child.) The second relationship is the one between the object being experienced—in this case, the water pouring over the other hand—and her intellect. The great mystery of the event is that there is a final relationship between the water and the word W-A-T-E-R: language has meaning! This connection between language and reality is mysterious because there is no causal relation between the two, yet the sign and the signified are somehow connected in the mind of the person using language. W-A-T-E-R and the water were connected in Helen's brain. This third relationship gives us a three-part, or triadic, natural event. Percy explains his own experience of discovering this mysterious phenomenon:

What dawned on me was that what happened between Helen and Miss Sullivan and water and the word was “real” enough all right, no matter what Ogden and Richards said, as real as any S-R [Stimulus-Response] sequence, as real as H<sub>2</sub> SO<sub>4</sub>

reacting to NaOH, but that *what happened could not be drawn with arrows*.<sup>21</sup>

What Percy had stumbled upon was what he calls a “nonlinear nonenergetic natural phenomenon, that is to say, a natural phenomenon in which energy exchanges account for some but not all of what happens.”<sup>22</sup>

The next step in his examination of this remarkable phenomenon was to discern the nature of the “stuff” apparently located inside Helen’s brain that made the word W-A-T-E-R connect with the thing water? That is to say, what enabled Helen to say, “This is water”? According to Percy, there is one thing about this substance that is for certain: “*By whatever name one chooses to call it—interpretant, interpreter, coupler, whatever—it, the third element is not material.*”<sup>23</sup> To emphasize the immateriality of the coupler, Percy asks the reader to draw a picture of someone asserting a proposition or judging a painting or composing a piece of music. As the reader comes to learn, Percy knows that it is not possible to do so. Here we have the climactic discovery of Percy’s investigation into human nature: the human intellect must have an immaterial element in order to account for the phenomenon of human language.

Logically speaking, Percy is very careful in the steps he takes to arrive at this conclusion. He begins with the assumption that all purely material natural phenomena are exchanges of energy. This is the fundamental thesis of the materialist—that all reality can be explained with reference to energetic exchange. He then states that all exchanges of energy are dyadic relations. From this, it follows that all purely material events are dyadic. Percy believes that he has shown that the phenomenon of human language is not a dyadic event, but rather is a triadic event. Therefore, it follows that the phenomenon of human language is not a purely material event.

In giving us this dramatic insight into man from the phenomenon of human language, Percy locates the immaterial element of the triad in the human intellect. But the question remains, How can we be sure that the immateriality cannot be accounted for in the language symbol or the signified object? Why does the immateriality of the triad prove man’s immaterial element and not language’s, for example?

To answer this we must examine the phenomenon itself.<sup>24</sup>

It is clear that at least sometimes the signified object is purely material. For example, we can signify a rock, which is purely material. Similarly, it is clear that the language symbol is at least sometimes purely material; for example, a word written on a piece of paper. Therefore, it follows that the coupler—the human intellect—must be that which has an immaterial element. We know this because at least one of the three parts must have immateriality every time the human being uses language. Since we know that there are some times when the signified and the signifier are purely material, we can conclude that the intellect, at least sometimes, must be that which has immateriality.

But is the intellect always that which provides the immaterial element or can, at other times, the symbol or signified object provide the immateriality necessary for the triadic phenomenon? In Percy’s Aristotelian/Thomistic metaphysical view, nature is a permanent characteristic of a thing and therefore it would make no sense for the immaterial character of the coupler to be present one time and not at another time. It seems absurd to think that if the human mind has immateriality in one instance of language use (which we know it does as shown above), then it would not have that immateriality in any other instances. For Percy, the nature of immaterial substances is that they are always immaterial.<sup>25</sup> Anything else does not pass the common sense test.<sup>26</sup>

Engaging the objection, Percy is profoundly aware that this discovery about human nature gives rise to many important questions that the world of modern science itself must answer if it is to pursue the truth about man in an honest humanistic manner.

We now know, at least an increasing number of people are beginning to know, that a different sort of reality lies at the heart of all uniquely human activity—speaking, listening, understanding, thinking, looking at a work of art—namely, Charles Peirce’s triad. It cannot be gotten around and must sooner or later be confronted by natural science, for it is indeed a natural phenomenon.<sup>27</sup>

Having discovered the immaterial element of the human intellect (no small feat!), the follower of Percy’s argument remains challenged by Percy’s

would-be objectors to provide some account of the classical problem of the interaction between the immaterial and the material in the human person. More specifically for the linguistic argument, How is it that the immaterial part of the intellect interacts with our brain matter in the phenomenon of coupling the sign and the signified? This has long been a materialist objection to any sort of view of man as a spiritual animal. Unfortunately, Percy does not attempt to answer this question directly. However, he does clearly state that he does not mean to be a Cartesian dualist, in which the immaterial part of the coupler is a separate substance from the material and resides in the brain as a ghost in a machine. Indeed, Percy sees any separation between mind and body as an attack on human nature and the *modus operandi* of the forces of evil in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>28</sup>

Given his disdain for dualism and his commitment to Catholicism, it is reasonably likely that the Aristotelian hylomorphism of St. Thomas Aquinas would be Percy's response to the question of interaction, and it does seem to be the most cogent answer to this problem of interaction.<sup>29</sup> In this view, the human being is a single substance composed of a unity of body and soul, of materiality and immateriality. The material and the immaterial interact in the sense that the immaterial, as the form, gives life to the material, the matter, and is the principle of the unity and motion of the material. The mechanics of this interaction are not observable in the fullest sense because of the immateriality of the soul, but the soul exists in all the parts of the body, acting as its life force or form. Given Percy's desire for an anthropology that expresses an integration of body and soul, this view would seem to be most in line with his thinking.

However, for Percy, writing in the postmodern age, such metaphysical questions are finally only as important as the fundamental questions of human existence. In this light, the ultimate end of Percy's quest is to discern the implications for human existence of this newfound discovery that man is indeed more than just an organism interacting with an environment. Percy proposes that our unique nature is such that our search for fulfillment reaches beyond the here and now.

And, lastly, with this new anthropology in hand, Peirce's triadic creature with its named world,

Heidegger's *Dasein* suffering a *Verfallen*, a fall, Gabriel Marcel's Homo viator, man as pilgrim, one might even explore its openness to such traditional Judeo-Christian notions as man falling prey to the worldliness of the world, and man as pilgrim seeking his salvation. But that's a different story.<sup>30</sup>

An earlier version of this essay was published in the 2004 edition of *Catholic Studies Review*, a journal of Catholic scholarship published annually by the Catholic Studies Program at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 For an excellent example of the centrality of the faith-reason question in the tradition—as well as for a beautiful meditation on the question—see Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 1998. Obviously, “rational scientific inquiry” is not meant to exclude metaphysics and other non-empirical forms of knowledge.
- 2 Cf. for example, Percy's rather existential approach to faith and apologetics in Robert Royal, “Conversations with Walker Percy,” *National Review* (March 28, 1986).
- 3 Percy's understanding of the mystery of the human person is evidenced in his essay, “Questions They Never Asked Me,” *Signposts in a Strange Land*, Ed. Patrick Samway (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1991): “This life is much too much trouble, far too strange, to arrive at the end of it and then to be asked what you make of it and have to answer ‘Scientific Humanism.’ That won't do. A poor show. Life is a mystery, love is a delight. Therefore I take it as axiomatic that one should settle for nothing less than the infinite mystery and the infinite delight, i.e. God. In fact, I demand it. I refuse to settle for anything less.”
- 4 A contemporary example of someone with the “materialist” view is Richard Dawkins.
- 5 This is a most infelicitous term, given as it is subject to dualistic or idealistic misappropriations. Nonetheless, I think it captures aptly the wide variety of anthropologies which attribute to man some spiritual aspect.
- 6 Walker Percy, “The Delta Factor.” In *The Message in the Bottle*. (New York: Picador USA, 2000), 7.
- 7 I use this term as a matter of convenience. I am most sympathetic to those who hold that, rather than “post-modern,” our age ought to be called “hyper-modern.” For this insight, I am particularly indebted to Dr. Brian Clayton, Professor of Philosophy at Gonzaga University.
- 8 “The Delta Factor,” 7.
- 9 “The Delta Factor,” 17.
- 10 Tom Harmon. “An Analysis of Walker Percy's Semiotic Theory of Triadic Language Use and an Application of that Theory to Claims that Animals Can Use Language.” (Senior Philosophy Paper. Philosophy 499: Senior Seminar in Metaphysics and Epistemology. Presented to Dr. David Calhoun, Gonzaga University. April, 2003), 1. I am deeply indebted to Mr. Harmon, a fellow alumnus of Gonzaga University, for his perspicacity in formulating for me for the first time the general lines of Percy's argument, especially in his lecture at the Intercollegiate Studies Institute's conference on Percy at Gonzaga University in 2004.
- 11 For further study on the role of Peirce in the thought of Percy, see P. Samway, Ed., *A Thief of Peirce: the Letters of Kenneth Laine Ketner and Walker Percy* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1995).
- 12 Walker Percy, “The Fateful Rift: The San Andreas Fault in the Modern Mind,” *Signposts in a Strange Land*. (New York: Picador USA, 2000), 279–280.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 280.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 280.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 280.
- 16 Harmon, 5.

17 “The Delta Factor,” 34–35.  
 18 Walker Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos* (New York: Picador USA, 1983), 96.  
 19 It is important to note that, for Percy, she was always a person—even when not using triadic language. Her language use, however, makes her aware of her personhood, which does not enhance her intrinsic dignity but rather makes possible her flourishing.  
 20 *Lost in the Cosmos*, 35–36.  
 21 *Ibid.*, 39. (The emphasis is Percy’s.)  
 22 *Ibid.*, 39.  
 23 “Fateful Rift,” 287. (The emphasis is Percy’s, but it would be mine, too!)  
 24 Here I am particularly indebted to Mr. Harmon’s presentation at the 2004 ISI conference on Percy at Gonzaga.

25 Harmon, 12–13.  
 26 This can be taken both in the broader Chestertonian notion of “common sense,” as well as the idea of *le sens commun* in the metaphysics of R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.  
 27 “The Fateful Rift,” 287.  
 28 Walker Percy, *Love in the Ruins*. (New York: Picador USA, 1971), 328.  
 29 Allowing, of course, for problems related to the survival of the soul after death and the soul’s state between death and the resurrection from the dead.  
 30 “The Fateful Rift,” 290–291.

# A Question About Names: Roman Catholic Church–Catholic Church– Orthodox Church/Churches–Eastern Orthodox Church/Churches

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*Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church*

**T**he Ravenna Statement<sup>1</sup> (October 2007) issued by the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church marks a new and encouraging step in the process of reconciliation between Catholic and Orthodox Christians. This note, offered for discussion and debate, deals solely with the designated names of the two Church bodies conducting this dialogue. What is the proper name of these respective Church bodies? Is there a difference between the names Church bodies give to themselves and those which others may give to them? More precisely, is there a difference between their ecclesiological names as seen by themselves but perhaps diversely by others, and the sociological designations they accept?<sup>2</sup> And what is the significance of these differences and how should we deal with them?

The Catholic Church (here understood for discussion purposes as the communion of all the Churches of whatever rite with the Bishop and See of Rome) does not refer to itself in its official documents as the “Roman Catholic Church,” but simply

the “Catholic Church.” The former phrase, for example, will not be found in the text (excluding footnotes) of the Second Vatican Council documents. The title of the bishops’ conference in the United States is the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The national directory for church institutions and personnel is titled the Official Catholic Directory.

Civil law documents, however, often use **Roman Catholic** to distinguish the Catholic Church, as popularly identified, from other Churches that have **Catholic** in their titles. For example, some Anglicans describe themselves as Anglo-Catholic; some Anglican splinter bodies (splintered from The Episcopal Church-USA or from the Anglican Church of Canada) have “Catholic” in their official names. A U.S. Eastern Orthodox Diocese—the Carpatho-Russian Greek Orthodox Catholic Diocese, based in Johnstown, Pa. includes **Catholic** in its official title. A church deriving originally from an 18<sup>th</sup>-century schism in Utrecht, Holland, but enlarged by an influx of persons departing the Catholic Church after the First Vatican Council (1869–70) calls itself the Old Catholic Church. Several mini-churches claiming an origin from this Church also have **Catholic** in their official titles. Catholic parishes using the Roman Rite liturgy are incorporated as Roman Catholic Churches and commonly bill themselves as such.

The phrase *Roman Catholic* can be used and is used in several ways:

To identify the Roman Rite Church – the communion of all local Churches following the Roman liturgy and canon law, the latter called the Code of Canon Law for the Latin Church. The Eastern (Catholic) Churches in communion with Rome do not follow the Roman Rite liturgy, have their own distinctive liturgies and canon law. They usually refer to themselves as Greek Catholic, Byzantine Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Ukrainian Catholic, Melkite, Maronite, etc. And ordinarily they do not wish to be referred to as “Roman Catholic.” Their code of canon law is called the Code of Canon Law for the Eastern Churches. They especially abhor the name “Uniate,” a term of disparagement, as they see it, given them by their Orthodox counterparts.

To refer to Churches of whatever rite in communion with Rome. Various non-Catholic church groups often use the phrase in this sense, which does not take account of the distinction between the Roman Rite and the several Eastern Rite “*sui iuris*” churches. Other Church communities commonly use the phrase directly as a “limiting qualifier” since they do not accept the Catholic Church’s self-understanding that it is the Catholic Church of Christ or that Christ’s Church subsists uniquely in the Catholic Church. In other words, “Roman Catholic” used in this context signifies their evaluation of “the Roman Catholic Church” as a part of the Catholic Church designated in the Creeds, not simply the Catholic Church of and by itself. Most Orthodox hierarchs and theologians, together with other Christians not in communion with Rome, regularly use the phrase in this sense.

The Orthodox believe that the communion of canonical Orthodox Churches is the “Catholic Church” and all others are heterodox, that is, adhering to false doctrine at least in part. Anglo-Catholics believe the Catholic Church is constituted in three branches—Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican. They use “Roman Catholic” in this qualifying sense, as Reformation Church Christians use it to signify their understanding that all faithful Christians together form the Catholic Church. In these latter two cases “Roman Catholic” particularizes or draws a distinction between understanding the Catholic Church

as the communion of the Churches with Rome and a broader and larger understanding that would encompass potentially all Christians.

We may note here, too, that the phrase “Roman Church,” sometimes used to denote the entire communion of local Churches with Rome, belongs properly only to the (geographical) Church (Diocese) of Rome and its bishop’s curia. Though used, as mentioned, particularly in the past, to characterize, the entire communion of Churches with Rome or the “Latin Church of the West” alone, it is not used properly in this way. There is only one Roman (local) Church and one Roman bishop and he is the Bishop of Rome. Other bishops in communion with him are Catholic bishops, some of the Roman Rite, some not.

By using officially in reference to itself only “Catholic Church,” this church makes clear its own self-understanding that it is the Catholic Church of Christ or that the Church of Christ subsists in it alone. It does not subsist in any other Church body though other Churches may contain many, even in some cases, most of the endowments of the Church of Christ. Thus **Catholic Church**—in its own self-understanding—is its proper ecclesiological name.

Orthodox theologians commonly refer to their autocephalous (self-heading) churches as the Orthodox Church but they also use the phrase **Catholic Church** of their own communion to guard against weakening in any way their conviction that the Orthodox Communion of Churches constitutes the Catholic Church of Christ. Both Church communions, Catholic and Orthodox, rightfully use in their own documents only that terminology which correctly presents their authentic self-understanding. Those Eastern Churches that departed the universal communion after Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451) refer to themselves as (431) the Catholic Church of the East or the Assyrian Church and (451) the Oriental Orthodox Churches, as they do not want to be referred to as (431) “Nestorian” or (451) the non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches or the “lesser” Eastern Churches.

**Orthodox Church or Orthodox Catholic Church:** Because Orthodox theologians consider their communion of canonical self-heading Orthodox Churches with the Ecumenical Patriarch to be the authentic “Catholic Church,” they sometimes use



the phrase *Orthodox Catholic Church*. All Christians outside this communion are not the Catholic Church and their relationship to it is variously explained by different Orthodox theologians. Thus, for the Orthodox, the *Catholic Church*, in its own self-understanding, is a proper ecclesiological name and is a proper designation of its church or its communion of churches.

As Catholics, we customarily speak of the Orthodox Church (signifying one fully united communion of Churches). But should we understand, rather, the Orthodox Churches? As has been said, Orthodox theologians generally hold that their Church—the various autocephalous and autonomous Churches and the separate jurisdictions, existing simultaneously in the United States and some other countries—constitute one fully united Church. For them, doctrinal unity and a shared apostolic sacramental life constitute this unity. That these Churches are factually divided and that their separate leaders are sometimes in sharp conflict with one another does not, from their perspective, affect this unity. Nevertheless, these Churches have not been able to hold a general (or ecumenical) council in more than 1200 years. Although they called for such a council almost 50 years ago and began to prepare for it, we hear little about this project today.

Catholic theologians, on the other hand, basing themselves on the self-understanding of the Catholic Church as specified, for example, in Vatican II, hold that beyond doctrinal unity and a shared apostolic sacramental life, the Lord Jesus Christ endowed His Church with a unity of governance, a practical solidarity, and that the instruments to insure this solidarity lie in the Petrine Office and the college of bishops, with the various other primacies that may exist among the bishops. To possess fully the unity willed by Christ for His Church, a Church community must exhibit *all* these components of unity. Therefore the Catholic understanding of the Orthodox Communion of Churches is that they do not in fact at present exhibit the full unity of the Church of Christ. They are, in the final analysis, a communion or federation of Churches that lacks necessary elements of the unity with which Christ endowed His Church.

Clearly both Catholic and Orthodox theologians,

together with their Church authorities, must follow their own convictions based on their ecclesiological doctrine as to the terminology which they use to refer to themselves. But they must acknowledge—in dialogue—their diverse positions, treat the dialogue partner with complete respect and use the terminology the other uses of itself without any implication that it represents a mutually agreed terminology or ecclesiology. The Orthodox delegation at Ravenna in 2007 was concerned to make this point by the only footnote appended to the Ravenna Statement. Catholic leaders and theologians willingly refer to the “Orthodox Church” but Orthodox leaders or theologians rarely if ever refer to the communion of all the Churches with Rome as the Catholic Church. Understandably they studiously avoid such a designation.

Conversely, the Catholic Church (communion of Churches with Rome) has never officially designated itself as the Orthodox Church although it is fully convinced that doctrinally it is uniquely orthodox. The latter name—meaning “right-believing”—has been associated with the Eastern Churches of the old (Eastern) Roman Empire because important heresies circulated there in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries and the great councils that rejected them (Ephesus 431; Chalcedon, 451) were held in the Eastern part of the Empire and were attended principally by “Orthodox” or right-believing bishops from these Eastern Churches. Thus “Orthodox” or “Eastern Orthodox” became the common way of designating these churches. Orthodox bishops and theologians generally omit the “Eastern” today because their churches now are represented all over the world. They commonly use “Uniate,” however, to characterize those Eastern Churches in communion with Rome. Because this usage suggests that these Churches are irregular appendages, it is to be hoped that this usage will end.

Another, although less contentious, example of terminology doctrinally imprecise but sociologically acceptable is the self-designation of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA as simply, The Episcopal Church (TEC). Indeed, this church professes to have the Holy Orders of bishop (Latin: *episcopus*), priest, and deacon. Several other Christian Church bodies profess to have the same threefold ministerial order; and so no one Church can claim to be

uniquely *The* Episcopal Church. However, in fact, few object to such a designation, understanding it not as an ecclesiological statement but as a sociological identification; and The Episcopal Church is a relatively small Church community. It would surely be found objectionable if dialogue partners insist on referring to The Episcopal Church as the Protestant Episcopal Church.

A relaxed attitude towards the names Churches claim as their own is acceptable in popular discussion. But in ecumenical dialogue, more precision is needed. An agreed protocol on the proper use of a church's name as employed in various contexts would be helpful, not for polemical reasons but so that the various Church communions will be understood as to how they wish to be referred to in ecumenical dialogue and what they understand by these names.

## ENDNOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Information Services, PCPCU, Vatican City (2007/IV), No. 126, pp.178-84.
2. The only footnote to the Ravenna Statement reads: Orthodox participants felt it important to emphasize that the use of the terms "the Church", "the universal Church", "the indivisible Church" and "the Body of Christ" in this document and in similar documents produced by the Joint Commission in no way undermines the self-understanding of the Orthodox Church as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, of which the Nicene Creed speaks. From the Catholic point of view, the same self-awareness applies: the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church "subsists in the Catholic Church" (*Lumen Gentium* 8); this does not exclude acknowledgement that elements of the true Church are present outside the Catholic communion.
3. For a candid discussion of Orthodox disunity, especially in North America, by an Orthodox official, see Ajalat, Charles "Regarding Orthodox Unity," Part I in *The Word*, Vol. 52, No. 3, March 2008, pp.4-9 and Part II, "Orthodox Unity in America," Vol. 52, No. 4, April 2008, pp.4-9.
4. At the October 10-12, 2008 Synaxis or Assembly of the Heads of the 14 autocephalous Orthodox Churches and an additional 50 bishops in Istanbul (Constantinople, the Phanar), Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I who presided at the meeting was at pains to lament disputes that had marked the relationship of some of the autocephalous churches in recent decades and to reject the image of Orthodoxy as a federation or confederation of churches rather than a strict unity. He particularly urged the activation of a consultation established in 1993 for settling the problem of the relationship of the various daughter churches in the diaspora and a moving ahead with plans for the Great and Holy Council first announced fifty years ago.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Exploring Personhood: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Nature*, by Joseph Torchia, O.P. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008, 336 pages, Paper, \$29.95.

Reviewed by Prof. Dennis McInerney,  
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Father Joseph Torchia, who is an Associate Professor of philosophy at Providence College, and the editor of *The Thomist*, explains, in the Preface to *Exploring Personhood: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Nature*, the scope and purpose of the book: "In its broadest terms this volume explores the metaphysical underpinnings of theories of human nature, personhood, and the self, with special attention to accounts of the relationship between soul and body

(or alternatively, between mind and body)" (xii). The governing question of the study he states as follows: "*What does it mean to be fully human, and what are the fundamental constituents of our personhood on its most fundamental level?*" (xv, emphasis his). The author surveys an array of seminal thinkers who have over the years propounded theories relating to human nature, personhood, and the self, beginning with the Presocratics and ending with the Postmodernists. In between those two collectives, he gives close and considered attention to the thought of Socrates/Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, and Hume. The book culminates in the presentation of his own views on the issues under examination, views which reflect the Aristotelian/Thomistic tradition, as expressed in a poignantly developed way.

What Fr. Torchia's survey reveals is the fact that, almost from the time that serious thought was first given to the questions of human nature and personhood, there have been two warring perspectives in response to them, the teleological and the mechanistic. According to the teleological view, the human person is what he is, by reason of the foundational meaningfulness of his life, that is, by reason of the fact that he had an eternal destiny which is fulfilled in his returning to the Source of his being. In sum, the nature of the human person, if it is to be correctly understood, must be understood, ultimately, in terms that transcend the purely natural. The mechanistic view, on the other hand, denies outright that there is any realm other than the natural, and therefore human nature and personhood are to be interpreted in exclusively naturalistic terms. Man

is simply an animal among animals—what differences he has from the other animals are to be regarded as differences in degree, not in kind—and his personhood, such as it is, assumes so vague and indeterminate a quality as not to be considered as something which is unique to *homo sapiens*. It is the author's design to examine the reasoning that has been advanced over the course of Western philosophy in defense of these two diametrically opposed positions, while not disguising, in the process, the point of view from which that examination is being made. He states forthrightly that “this volume defends the somewhat controversial position (at least by contemporary standards) that humanness and personhood coincide (i.e., that every human being qualifies as a person in his or her own right).” (2)

A purely reductionist rendering of human nature, it is Fr. Torchia's intent to show, is fatally limited. The anemic “nothing but” approach to the human person—prominently characterized by the equation of mind and brain—ends up by effectively eradicating any meaningful understanding of personhood. In countering the now not uncommon attitude which refuses to recognize the inseparableness of being human and being a person, Fr. Torchia mounts a staunch defense of “the mode of existence appropriate to persons as dynamic centers in their own right who participate in human nature even as they transcend it in their uniqueness.” (11) We share a human nature, but personhood is something which is unique to each of us, and it is only Christianity which, giving full recognition to that fact, thus gives proper honor to the individual.

What then does the history of philosophy have to tell us of the ways men have thought about human nature and the human person? It was the Presocratic philosophers who first lent studied attention to these subjects, and although they were severely limited by the metaphysical materialism to which they too quickly succumbed, nonetheless there was a noteworthy positive character to their thought in the recognition that “an adequate explanation of a changing world requires a

cause that stands apart from the world's constituents.” (34) The chief concern of the Sophists, who followed upon the Presocratic philosophers, was morality, but it was a concern which too often devolved into an advocacy of moral relativism. They gave the kind of emphasis to the individual which is a common feature of our own times, one that “is bound up with a spirit of egoism and its assumption that moral judgments are based on considerations of practical expediency alone.” (41)

It was the pertinacious opposition to the sophisticated spirit of relativism, and to the wanton advocacy of individualism, that became for Socrates the backbone of his life's work. In delineating Plato's thought on human nature and the person, Fr. Torchia focuses his attention on the *Phaedo*, for which he provides a pointed and illuminating explication, especially in dealing with Plato's arguments for the immortality of the soul. Plato can be identified as both a dualist and an essentialist: a dualist for the way he accentuates the difference between body and soul, to the decided benefit of the soul and detriment of the body, an essentialist for the way in which he equates soul with person. The essence of the human person, for Plato, is the soul, which in its earthly state is temporarily imprisoned in the body, and sorely hampered by the fact, but which can look forward gratefully to death, when the soul will be released from its corporeal incarceration and free to resume its presumably natural state as pure spirit. Of course, if the Platonic doctrine on this score is true, i.e., that man is essentially soul, then there is no real ontological difference between human beings and angels. One of the more unfortunate consequences of Plato's lop-sided anthropology, which has had an enduring and deleterious effect on Western philosophy, is the skeptical attitude he took toward sense knowledge, an attitude which will be given renewed life with the advent of modern philosophy.

It is often said, not incorrectly, that Aristotle brought formal causality down from the celestial sphere, where Plato had established it, and relocated

it securely in the terrestrial realm. For Aristotle, the human person is a substance composed of body and soul, of matter informed by an animating principle. The relation between body and soul is not tangential, much less adversarial, but integral. The soul is the substantial form that determines a human body to be precisely that—a human body. Aristotle remained enough a Platonist in his anthropology to confer primacy of place upon the soul, for the soul was the seat of that peculiarly human activity which is intellection. Soul and body complemented one another. It was the soul that was capable of soaring to the heights in contemplation, but its flight was not possible without initial assistance from the body. There is no skepticism regarding sense knowledge to be found in Aristotle. Far from something to be denigrated, it was to be revered, for who does not, for example, take rightful delight in the mere act of seeing? Only a human being can look upon a rose as a rose was meant to be looked upon.

St. Augustine provided a prominent turning point in Western thought with respect to the ideas of human nature and personhood, and the ultimate explanation for this is his Christian belief. It is with St. Augustine that we get the first fully developed Christian account of what it means to be human, an account which bore “the special burden of navigating between two worlds, so to speak, and thereby upholding the unity of the whole person.” (100). In that impressive navigational feat, the marked influence of Platonism (specifically Neoplatonism) is not to be missed, and thus there is a strong accent given by St. Augustine to soul, as is evident in passages where he writes things like, “man as he appears to us is a rational soul, making use of a mortal and earthly body.” (109). However, whatever distorting effects his reliance on Neoplatonism might have had on his anthropology, they were remedied by the central role which Christology played in his thought, and the keen realization this gave him of the profound implications for human personhood which result from the commanding fact of the Incarnation.

In the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas we find a remarkably complete and balanced account of human nature and personhood. Following in the footsteps of Aristotle, the Common Doctor regarded substance “as the irreducible referent for discussions of the really real,” (128) which meant that personhood itself is for him an irreducible reality. The human person is a substance, a composite of body and soul, where soul acts as the determining form. The soul is the *actus essendi*, the active principle of being which founds human personhood. Soul is foundational, then, for *esse* is paramount, but soul and person are not to be equated, for it is body and soul together, the perfect psychosomatic union, which constitutes the human person. “By means of his creative adaption of Aristotelian principles,” Fr. Torchia notes, “Aquinas overcame the difficulties of earlier Christian anthropologies that displayed an excessive spiritualism or naive materialism regarding human nature.” (138) It was St. Thomas, with his subtle and thoroughgoing analysis, who brought personhood into its proper light, where it can be clearly seen as a status of the most noble kind.

As the result of the telling influence of René Descartes, the great accomplishments on behalf of a sound anthropology which had been set in place by Aquinas were not to see continuation and development in the mainstream of Western philosophy after the seventeenth century. Since that century, which marked the beginning of what we now broadly identify as modern philosophy, we have witnessed the prevailing dominance of a dualistic view of man, which we owe directly to Descartes. Descartes sought to sever the essential union of body and soul—in the process incoherently making of each a distinct substance—and returned to what was, at bottom, a Platonic way of regarding the human person. Man was, for Descartes, in his essence a “thinking thing”; mind, or soul, constituted his fundamental identity. He conceded that soul had a close association with body, but somewhat in the way that a driver seated behind the wheel of his Dodge

is closely associated with the machine he motors about in. Indeed, for Descartes, the body *was* a machine, which was given impulse and direction by the soul. Descartes’ thought also represents a reversion to Platonism in the flagrant skepticism he displayed toward sense knowledge. Like Plato, he was a dedicated advocate of innate ideas, which is not surprising, for such advocacy goes hand in hand with a distrust of the deliverances of one’s senses. Descartes’ methodological doubt might be regarded as the inevitable outcome of his sweeping rejection, in theory at least, of all philosophical antecedents to his own system. By effectively positing the *cogito* as the only proper starting point for serious philosophizing, he managed to get things precisely backwards, and for that reason set Western philosophy on a wayward course from which it has yet fully to recover. As Etienne Gilson once pointedly observed, he who starts with the *cogito* ends with the *cogito*. Systematic doubt serves inevitably as the foundation for doubtful philosophical systems.

The upshot of Descartes’ anthropology was that it undermined the psychosomatic unity constitutive of the human person. Fr. Torchia comments trenchantly: “For better or worse, Descartes’ bifurcation of the human being into a thinking substance of mind and an extended substance of body would exert an incalculable influence on subsequent theories of human nature.” (162)

And then there comes along, in the following century, the urbane and cosmopolitan Scotsman, Mr. David Hume, who, Fr. Torchia writes, “brings home the full implications of a rejection of metaphysics in discussions of personhood.” (185) There are so many foundational confusions in Hume’s thought that one is hard pressed to know where to begin, though his idea of an idea might be as good a place as any. The problem there is that he makes an idea virtually indistinguishable from a sense image, which guarantees a garbled psychology and epistemology. Hume’s impoverished metaphysics is given prominent expression in his notions of causality, the

ultimate explanation of which, as well as of many other aberrant notions in his philosophy, is to be found in his rejection of the seminal concept of substance, a rejection so serious that it is tantamount to putting oneself at odds with reality. Having gone that far, it is little wonder that David Hume eventually began to wonder if there was really a David Hume. Thus the perils of armchair philosophizing. Given his denial of any fixed personal identity—the self is just a bundle of perceptions—it is clear that we cannot look to Hume for any reliable account of personhood. The self is little more than a fiction, Hume believed, and whatever tenuous personal identity we can lay claim to has its source in memory. But if that is the case, one has the temerity to ask, *Whose* memory? If the self is but a fiction, the memory of that self could only be a fiction within a fiction, no more stable than the vaporous self which depends upon it. Fr. Torchia notes that Hume reminds one of Heraclitus, that Presocratic thinker for whom all things are in flux and nothing stays the same. The implications of that, if taken as a comprehensive account of reality, is that no real distinction can be made between observer and observed, in which case no meaningful observations can be made about anything. Those who are one with the flow cannot even be conscious of that fluid fact.

We now live in a particularly interesting age because, among other reasons, we, like the citizens of the eighteenth century, have saved future historians the trouble of naming our age by naming it ourselves. For those living in the eighteenth century, theirs was the Age of Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason. Today, we tell ourselves, we live in the Age of Post-modernism, the chief characteristic of which—and this is considered to be a virtue—is an ardent dedication to skepticism and relativism. The two are, of course, opposite sides of the same coin. Fr. Torchia offers a very apt general description of the post-modern mind-set when he identifies it as antifoundational, meaning that it represents a frank repudiation of

metaphysics. To do that is essentially to give up on reason, which the postmodernists have done, and that is why they regard the unconditional trust which the eighteenth century invested in reason to have been egregiously wrongheaded. The modern age prides itself in touting a “rationality” which has been reduced to feeling, and a “reality” which looks upon the objective order as a playground where an untrammelled subjectivism can romp about freely.

For the postmodernist, language is seen as basically self-referential, not as the means by which mind connects with world, not as the ground on which human community is built. The interpretation of a written text thus becomes a matter of ingeniously superimposing upon it the full panoply of one’s own ideological pretensions. The correspondence theory of truth gives way to the coherence theory. Directly germane to the subject which is the central concern of Fr. Torchia’s book, postmodernism attempts to do away with human nature as it has been traditionally understood, which serves to provide a justification for the re-invention of personhood. One of the more bizarre results of this project is to deny to human beings any exclusive claim to personhood. In the mind of the postmodernist, personhood becomes so flexible and user friendly a concept that it is thought capable of being applied promiscuously to just about any creature which nurtures itself, grows, reproduces, and can move from place A to place B—but these applications are being made, please note, by *human* persons only. Apparently certain privileges in the assignment of terms accrue to those who take it upon themselves to redefine the terms. Whether pet rocks will one day be considered fit candidates for personhood remains to be seen.

In the naive monistic materialism that is the hallmark of postmodernism, Cartesian dualism is briskly done away with by the deft move of reducing soul to body. Platonism in reverse. We are now instructed that mind equals brain. Man ceases to be a thinking thing and becomes something along the lines of a computer

with ears, and a pesky penchant for reacting in allergic fashion to a high pollen count. “In the postmodernist context,” Fr. Torchia writes, “a person is defined principally on the basis of overt behavioral characteristics, rather than in terms of what one is, by virtue of a uniquely human nature or distinctive mode of being.” (209) Again, the postmodernist project is to try to sever the bond between being human and being a person. Ontologically, it of course cannot be done, but the postmodernists have been depressingly successful in promoting their agenda on behalf of the unreal.

Before proposing his solution to the various problems relating to a right understanding of human nature and personhood, the most serious of which came in with modern philosophy, Fr. Torchia cites the work of Alasdair MacIntyre as offering a response to those problems which, though not above criticism, is decidedly positive in its basic orientation, principally by reason of the fact that MacIntyre returned to Aristotelian and Thomistic sources to discover there rich veins of philosophic soundness and sanity.

Fr. Torchia recommends an unqualified rejection of the mechanistic model of personhood—which, given the dire influence of postmodernism, now seems to hold sway over much contemporary philosophic thought—and a return to the teleological model which has its roots in the thought of Aristotle and St. Thomas. Mechanistic or naturalistic interpretations of man fail to “really explain the dynamism inherent in our humanity,” (244) a dynamism which finds instantiation in the ongoing drama of the acting person. Countering the tragic attempt to separate humanness and personhood, Fr. Torchia stresses the point that every human being is a person simply by virtue of the fact of being human. The two are inseparable. The modern mind needs to introduce itself to the seminal concept of substance; if we can succeed in getting substance straight, then our getting personhood straight will follow automatically. It will be possible for real community to be born, and genuine love can dissipate the cloying sentimentality which

has settled like smog upon contemporary culture. “We can enter into interpersonal relations with others only because we are already substantial as persons.” (249).

In the final analysis, however, there can be no right understanding of personhood without a thoroughgoing consciousness of our existential status as creatures of God, made in His image and likeness. “In the absence of an understanding of persons as created in the image of a good, loving, and benevolent Godhead, any account of human dignity must rest on variable naturalistic factors alone,” (252) Fr. Torchia writes, and the naturalistic account is, to say the least, woefully inadequate. We are, as human persons, embodied spirits, possessed of free will, whose human nature is what it is because of its being grounded in metaphysical laws whose ultimate source is at once the very Source of our being. Human nature is not something which we define, but that by which we are defined. The human person, the self, is irreducible, which, paradoxically perhaps, makes us capable of our becoming more than ourselves. “We are the beings that carry within ourselves an aptitude for the totality of things and a dynamism to self-transcendence.” (277).

*Exploring Personhood* is an excellent book. Fr. Torchia has provided us with a rich and inventively explored historical context in which we are enabled better to see what human nature and personhood are really all about. His survey of prominent thinkers, from the Presocratics to the postmodernists, is replete with penetrating and provocative insights. The contribution he makes by this book is distinctive, even unique, for his choice of subject matter, and for the fertile manner in which he develops it. It is a very valuable contribution. The book would serve as a first-rate text for a college course, and it should be in the library of every institution which is interested in making available to readers an accurate and extraordinarily perceptive account of the intellectual and moral climate in which we now live, and how it came to be what it is.

*Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* by Margaret A. Farley. New York: Continuum, 2006. xiii+322 pp. A paperback edition was published in 2008.<sup>1</sup>  
 Reviewed by William E. May  
 Emeritus Michael J. McGivney  
 Professor of Moral Theology,  
 Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies  
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Farley's book needs to be given serious attention and critique. Professor of Christian ethics at Yale University, she is also a Sister of Mercy (although the book does not indicate this) and a well-known Catholic theologian, who has served as president of both the Catholic Theological Society of America and the Society of Christian Ethics.

In Chapter 1 she identifies the book's "modest task" as a consideration of "some of the elements for a comprehensive sexual ethic." She then provides an overview of the rest of the book: chapter 2 provides an historical perspective for Western culture; chapter 3 offers an examination of issues of cross-cultural difference; chapter 4 explores human embodiment, gender, and sexuality; chapter 5 takes up preliminary questions for formulating a framework for sexual ethics; chapter 6 contains her proposal for a framework for a human and Christian sexual ethics; and chapter 7 considers three "patterns of relationships" involving sexuality, namely, marriage and family, same-sex relationships, divorce and remarriage (p.16).

I will focus on key themes and ideas central to Farley's proposals for a framework for a human and Christian sexual ethics, beginning with her presentation of human embodiment.

### Human Embodiment

Farley centers on "experience" to explore what it means to be "embodied spirits" and "inspired bodies" (pp. 115-116). After examining various experiences of *disunity* between body and spirit, when the body is felt as a burden and one feels oneself to

be a "divided self" (pp. 119-126), she argues that the most dramatic experiences of disunity nonetheless show the unity of the person. These experiences are possible only "in unified, inspired bodies, embodied spirits. It is as such that we are self-constituted....If you touch my arm you touch me....The bodies that we 'have' are the bodies that we 'are'" (p. 127).

She continues by emphasizing that our embodiment is "transcendent" because we are, first, free to determine ourselves by our free choices and, second, free to enter into relationships with other persons. Whatever transcendence is ascribed to spirit must also be ascribed to body, "for they are intimately one" (pp. 128-130). Finally, she stresses that at the heart of the Christian tradition is the affirmation that the human body is not only good but also intrinsic to being human (pp. 130-131).

To this I say "amen." But, as I will now show, we must question her understanding of all this. I am convinced that Farley "speaks with the voice of Jacob but her hands are the hands of Esau." For example, in chapter 6 (p. 210, note 3), after saying that she will not answer the question of who is to count as a person she immediately adds: "all those *born* of persons can be included" (emphasis added). Why are not the unborn included in the category of "persons," i.e., incarnate spirits, inspired bodies? We find the answer to this question in her analyses of "autonomy," "relationality," and "person" in chapter 6.

### "Autonomy," Relationality," and "Person"

Farley affirms that *the two basic features of human personhood are autonomy and relationality*. These, she maintains, "are 'obligating features' because they *ground* an obligation to respect persons as *ends in themselves*.... Persons are autonomous in the sense that they have a capacity for *free choice*....*self-determination*," that is, she continues, "*the capacity to set our own agenda*" (pp. 211-212). This is *most important*. Farley clearly regards our freedom of choice as the "freedom of indifference" that Servais Pinckaers, O.P. described so

well in contrasting it to "freedom for excellence."<sup>2</sup> Farley likewise regards *persons*, i.e., "embodied spirits, inspired bodies," as *autonomous agents*, i.e., as agents who are a law unto themselves precisely because they have "the capacity to set their own agendas." Obviously unborn children are *not autonomous agents* in this sense. They are far from being autonomous agents; rather they, and young children as well, are totally dependent on others.

Farley's understanding of human freedom of choice, moreover, is far different from the way this freedom is understood by Pope John Paul II, for example, in his *Veritatis splendor*, where he contrasts "autonomous" freedom from what he calls, following *Gaudium et spes*, a "rightful autonomy" or better a "participated autonomy" (*Veritatis splendor*, nos. 40-41).

### The Significance of Gender and "Complementarity"

In her lengthy discussion of *gender* (pp. 133-159) and the distinction between "sex" as a biological category and "gender," considered as a socially constructed category (133-135) Farley argues that "considerations of sex and gender...begin... as efforts to correct or reinforce previous understandings and to challenge or deny imbalances of power based on gender" (p. 136). She surveys the Christian tradition found in the Fathers, the Schoolmen and others—a misogynistic tradition in her judgment—along with biblical insights, the thought of John Paul II (which, as I will show, she fails to understand), and feminist writer Mary Rose D'Angelo (pp. 137-144).

Toward the end of this section Farley says that the gender divide does not lie in an uncritical understanding of "complementarity" (156-157). Farley understands this to mean "that we are 'halves' of persons who will be 'whole' only when we find our gendered complement" (p. 157). This understanding is what Prudence Allen calls "fractional complementarity,"<sup>3</sup> and it implies, as Allen says, that we are moving "to an androgyny."<sup>4</sup> This understanding of "complementarity" is utterly incompatible with and other than the "asymmetrical" male-female

complementarity we find in John Paul II's "theology of the body" and in the thought of Robert Joyce and others.<sup>5</sup> Farley completely ignores this understanding of complementarity.

### Sexuality and Its Meanings

(pp. 159-173)

For Farley sexuality includes everything pertaining to the sexual: physical, psychological, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, personal and social, individual, relational, species and cosmic, private and public, etc. (159). She thinks that as yet we do not understand that "the 'sexual' fits well with our contemporary recognition that so much of the meaning of body, gender, sex and sexuality is socially and historically constructed" (160). "In most sexual experiences," she writes, "pleasure is a key component. This is one reason sexual activity can be desired for its own sake; *pleasure is a good in itself* (emphasis added), (though not all traditions have thought this, and it remains for us to consider whether sexual pleasure is in every context and circumstance an overall or moral good)" (162).

Here Farley is badly mistaken. Pleasure is *not* something good in itself. In fact, it can be evil and pain can be good. If I put my hand on a hot stove and it feels pleasurable rather than painful I soon may not have my hand, and that is not good.<sup>6</sup>

Sex is also a language and mode of communication, "procreative" (in ways not limited to generation of new life), and above all, power is associated with sex (p. 163). Farley understands love as "simultaneously an affective response, an affective way of being in union, and an affective affirmation of what is loved" (p.168). She declares that "only a sexuality formed and shaped with love has the possibility for integration into the whole of the human personality" (164). Nowhere, however, does she consider love as *the gift of self*, its key meaning in Christian thought, as Vatican II and John Paul II have insisted.

Farley's analyses of love are superficial. One ought to contrast her analyses with those offered by Karol Wojtyla in chapter two of his *Love*

*and Responsibility* and to contrast her evaluation of emotional love, romantic love, and pleasurable (erotic or sensual love) with Wojtyla's magnificent analyses of "sensuality" and "affectivity" (=sentiment, intimacy) as "raw materials of love" that need to be integrated into the person in order to be love.

### Moral norms for a just love

(pp. 200-204)

This is the heading of a section in Chapter 5. Farley maintains that the basic criterion or norm is "the *concrete reality of the beloved*... a love is right and good insofar as it aims to affirm truthfully the concrete reality of the beloved. This is in large part what I mean by a 'just love'" (p. 200). She says that this is so "in large part," because "it must also be 'true' to the *one loving* and to the *nature of the relationship* between lover and beloved" (p. 200).

Among topics taken up in Chapter 6 are "Justice," "Norms for a Just Sex," and "Special Questions." In considering "Justice," she argues, as we have seen already, that the basic features of personhood are "autonomy and relationality." They are "obligating features" "because they *ground* an obligation to respect persons as *ends in themselves*." We have likewise already seen and criticized her claim that human free choice is the autonomous "capacity to set our own agenda" (212). In "Norms for a Just Sex" Farley enumerates 7 norms: 1. Do no unjust harm (216-218); 2. Free Consent (218-220); 3. Mutuality (220-223); 4. Equality (223) 5. Commitment (223-226); 6. Fruitfulness (226-228); and 7. Social Justice (228-230).

### Applying these norms

I will comment on some of these norms as presented by Farley in order to help us see how Farley herself understands the norms she proposes. This can be shown more clearly when we relate the norms both to two "special questions" she takes up in Chapter 7 (teen sex and sex with oneself, pp. 232-236) and to her discussion of marriage and family, same-sex relationships, marriage and divorce in

Chapter 8.

*Do no unjust harm* is a self-evidently true proposition because by definition "unjust" harm cannot be just. But what specifically counts as "unjust harm"? Farley lists many kinds of behavior that are surely *prima facie* harmful in an unjust way: violent sex (e.g., rape), battering, deceit, pornography, prostitution, pedophilia, and similar deeds. Among behaviors causing unjust harm she also includes "negligence regarding knowing what we must do for sex to be 'safe-sex,'" along with "terrible things done to those who deviate" (p. 217). To what does she refer here? I suggest, in light of what Farley later says about "mutuality" and "same-sex relationships" that the reference is to the "terrible things" done to those who engage in sodomitic sex.

Farley prefers mutuality (pp. 220-223) to the older "complementarity" "steeped in images of the male as active and the female as passive" (p. 221). She declares that today we know "the possibilities of mutuality exist for many relationship—whether heterosexual or *gay* (emphasis added), whether with genital sex or the multiple other ways of embodying our desires and loves" (p. 221). Coupling this passage with her fervent defense in Chapter 8 (pp. 271-295) of "same-sex relationships" that in some way embody the seven norms set forth in Chapter 7, it is evident that "gay" sex is a good illustration of "mutuality."

With respect to *commitment* (pp. 223-226) Farley first asserts that in the Christian past commitment was "largely identified with heterosexual marriage" (does this imply that there can be homosexual marriage?) and "was valued more for the sake of family arrangements than for the sake of the individuals themselves" (p. 224).<sup>7</sup> She then speaks of ways persons can keep alive the power of sexual desire within them. One way, which she endorses, is "through a relationship extended sufficiently through time to allow the incorporation of sexuality into a shared life and an enduring love," which seems possible "through commitment" (p. 225). In the next chapter she deems this kind

of commitment—and not a commitment based, as Vatican II teaches in *Gaudium et spes* (no. 48) “in the conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent”—sufficient to ground heterosexual marriage (see p. 265 where she sees a lifelong permanent commitment as an ideal but by no means only kind of commitment on which such a marriage can be based). And in that chapter she discusses same-sex unions at length (pp. 272–294), setting forth criteria for “just” same-sex genital relations and, on pp. 293–294, affirming that the more persuasive position regarding same-sex marriage is that “the possibility of gay marriage would actually reinforce the value of commitment for heterosexuals as well as for homosexuals.”

*Fruitfulness*, treated in Chapter 6 (pp. 226–228), in her discussion of children in marriage (pp. 269–271), and again in the discussion of same-sex unions (see especially p. 290) of Chapter 7, encompasses a great deal for Farley. It obviously refers to the generation of new life or procreation, but it has a far wider ambience. As far as procreation is concerned, Farley adopts a sophisticated version of the slogan, “No unwanted child ought ever to be born,” and of course one way to assure that no unwanted child is born is to use contraceptives in the exercise of “responsible parenthood.” Farley articulates this view when she writes: “Traditional arguments that if there is sex it must be procreative have changed to arguments that if sex is procreative it must be within a context that assures responsible care of offspring” (p. 227). In Chapter 7 after reviewing new modes of reproduction and social conditions affecting child-rearing, Farley offers a “principle” to guide us and that can perhaps extend to the “consequences of sex.” It is this: “no children should be conceived who will be born in a context uncondusive to their growth and development in relationships, or uncondusive to their ultimately becoming autonomous, morally responsible for themselves” (p. 271). This principle obviously does not exclude having children by new reproductive meth-

ods, using contraception (or abortion) to prevent conception of children if one judges that they will be born in the context Farley sketches. In these sections she also makes it clear that couples (heterosexual or gay) can be “fruitful” in many creative ways that do not involve the generation of new life.

*Teen Sex.* Farley considers this a “special question.” Although she is certainly not a strong advocate of teen sex, she leaves open the possibility that some teens can have the maturity and capacity for just sex. This is clearly what she proposes on pp. 234–235.

*Sex with oneself or masturbation.* Farley regards masturbation itself as “morally neutral,” and believes that “masturbation actually serves relationships rather than hindering them” (p. 236).

*Divorce and Remarriage.* This is considered at great length on pp. 296–312. Farley definitely believes that some marriages, including those whose husbands and wives would acknowledge that they were valid marital unions, surely fail and that the proper response to such failures is divorce followed by remarriage.

*Conclusion.* Farley’s work is obviously incompatible both with the teaching of the Church on human sexuality and sexual ethics, and incompatible too with sound philosophical ethics.

I think it important to note how M. A. Scaperlanda, a mother, concluded a review she wrote of Farley’s book for Amazon.com. She ended with the following excellent advice: “Those who believe that ‘just sex’ and ‘just relationships’ are possible should read Karol Wojtyla’s groundbreaking work *Love and Responsibility* with, or better yet, instead of Farley’s book. My college age children asked me to read *Love and Responsibility* earlier in the year. Since then I have come to believe that it will provide the framework for Christian sexual ethics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”<sup>8</sup>

ENDNOTES

1. This is a somewhat abridged version of a review in National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly 8.4 (Winter, 2008).
2. Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, translated by Sister Mary Noble, O.P. (Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America, 1995, pp. 327–378).
3. Prudence Allen, “Man-Woman Complementarity: The Catholic Inspiration.” *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 9.3 (Summer 2006), 67–108.
4. Allen, “Integral Sexual Complementarity and the Theology of Communion,” *Communio: International Catholic Review* 17 (1990), p. 533.
5. On this see Chapter Two, “Marriage and the Complementarity of Male and Female” in my *Marriage: The Rock on Which the Family Is Built* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995) [A substantively revised edition of this work will be published in 2009]. See also Robert Joyce, *Human Sexual Ecology: A Philosophy and Ethics of Man and Woman* (Washington: University Press of America, 1980), pp. 70–75; Pope John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, introduction, translation, and index by Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), p. 197, Catechesis 17, par. 6).
6. Germain Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, Vol. 1 of his *The Way of the Lord Jesus* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), 119–120, 210–212.
7. This assertion is grossly unjust to the Christian tradition. St. Augustine, for instance, spoke highly of the sweetness of the relationship between husband and wife in his *De bono coniugali*, and St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure wrote of the “singular, intense love that is to exist between husband and wife,” etc. On Thomas, Bonaventure and other medieval appreciations of love in marriage and the personal nature of the bond between husband and wife see the eye-opening two part article by Fabian Parmisano, O.P., “Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages,” *New Blackfriars* 80 (1969) 599–606, 649–660. Farley seems totally ignorant of this and similar studies, written partly to correct misinformation found in John T. Noonan’s celebrated *Contraception* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap Press, 1965). See also Germain Grisez, “Marriage: Reflections Based on St. Thomas and Vatican Council II,” *The Catholic Mind* (June, 1966), 4–19.
8. [http://www.amazon.com/Just-Love-Framework-Christian-Sexual/dp/0826429246/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&S=books&qid=1215603872&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Just-Love-Framework-Christian-Sexual/dp/0826429246/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&S=books&qid=1215603872&sr=1-1), accessed July 9 2008.



**Render Unto Caesar: Serving the Nation by Living Our Catholic Beliefs in Political Life**, by Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., New York: Doubleday, 2008. 258 pp. \$21.25.

Reviewed by William E. May,  
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Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family  
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This timely book by the Archbishop of Denver is of crucial importance for all American Catholics, who should all be struggling to combat the “culture of death” and develop the “culture of life.” One of his major reasons for writing the book was that he was becoming increasingly tired “of the church and her people being told to be quiet on public issues that urgently concern us” (p. 3). He wrote it to challenge “all of us who call ourselves Catholic...to recover what it really means to be ‘Catholic.’...[and] to find again the courage to be *Catholic Christians first*—not in opposition to our country, but to serve its best interests” (p. 7). Although speaking as an American Catholic to American Catholics, he hopes “many other people of good heart will see the importance of these issues and find value in these pages” (pp. 6-7).

Chaput reminds us that the Declaration of Independence has a broad religious resonance, referring several times to a Creator or Supreme Being. Moreover, and more importantly, that document is shaped by natural law principles rooted in Christian medieval thought that in turn was nourished by the Hebrew tradition, Greek thought and Roman jurisprudence (pp.83-86, 94-96 and elsewhere). Chaput shows that its principles have historically formed the core of the “truths” the American people held that made them a people and not a motley crowd. Similarly, he shows that the first Amendment to our Constitution, while forbidding the establishment of religion, far from hindering citizens from bringing their religious convictions into the political arena guaranteed their right to the public exercise

of their faith, including their right to participate fully as religious people in the public market place. Their faith was not a “private” matter with no bearing on public life (pp. 86-87).

Religious bigotry, particularly against Catholics, has been and still is a problem, as has been atheistic opposition to all belief in God. But Chaput does a marvelous job in describing contemporary phobia of God in the U.S. He notes that it comes in two forms: hard and soft. The hard variety pushed by people like Richard Dawkins is, he thinks, more honest and not as serious a threat to the exercise of one’s religion in the public market place. The soft variety is subtler and more dangerous. Its song is that a pluralistic society like ours must avoid sectarian warfare by keeping religion out of the national public conversation. The soft variety simply contemns religion and fosters what C.S. Lewis described in *The Abolition of Man* as a civilization of “men without chests,” people who have plenty of comforts but no greatness of soul. This, it seems to me is what he thinks is our real enemy today in “serving our nation by living our Catholic [or other deeply felt religious beliefs] in political life.” [On all this see pp. 23-30, 33.]

Chaput offers a marvelous overview of the true achievement of Vatican Council II, particularly in its final documents, *Dignitatis Humanae* (Declaration on Religious Freedom), *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions), and *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World). He masterfully corrects grave misunderstandings of these documents and sets forth their major teachings accurately. He also gives his readers a magnificent vision of what precisely living as a faithful Catholic entails, reminding Catholics, clerical and lay, that they are called to holiness, to be saints, to love with a healing, redemptive love, to sanctify their work and to change the world, including the political world in which they live, for the better. The lay faithful, in particular, are called to live their faith *in the day to day secular world in which they work and play—and exercise*

*their political responsibilities.* [For this see chapter 6.]

In chapter 7 Chaput reports with sadness that in contemporary America far too many Catholics, instead of transforming the secular culture in which they live have capitulated to it and its values, placing them above the truths central to the Catholic faith. He points out that unfortunately John F. Kennedy, allegedly our first “Catholic” president, in fact made it clear that for him his Catholic faith was a purely private matter with no relevance to public life. And that, unfortunately, seems to be true of far too many Catholics in public office today. Chaput likewise notes that traditionally, particularly since the time of FDR’s new deal, Catholics have as a whole found their home in the Democratic party, but that its commitment to the so-called “pro-choice” position has forced more and more Catholics to leave the party. He notes that neither major party’s platforms nor policies are fully compatible with politically relevant truths of the faith. He likewise notes that laypeople, who have unfortunately been badly instructed in the faith over the past forty years, are not alone in failing to live their Catholic faith fully—bishops have their shortcomings, weaknesses, and failings to atone for.

In the final two chapters of his book Chaput gets into the nitty gritty of the crucial political/moral question facing us: abortion, along with the responsibilities of Catholic legislators. The issue of abortion is front and center in the penultimate chapter. Chaput recognizes that the moral difference among social issues is crucial. But, he goes on to say, “some acts are so evil that tolerating them *itself* becomes a poison that weakens the whole of society.... In our day, sanctity-of-life issues are foundational—not because of anyone’s ‘religious’ views about abortion... but because the act of dehumanizing and killing the unborn child attacks human dignity in a uniquely grave way. Deliberately killing the innocent is *always*, inexcusably wrong” (p. 207; emphasis in original). He stresses that bishops must give clear Catholic teaching. He thinks that they have

done so in their 1998 statement *Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics*. While recognizing that Catholic public officials are obliged to promote respect for human persons at all stages and work to resist the violence of war, the scandal of capital punishment, and to help alleviate poverty, etc., they emphasize that “‘being right’ on such matters can never excuse a wrong choice regarding direct attacks on innocent human life [emphasis in the original]” and they go on to declare: “If we understand the human person as ‘the temple of the Holy Spirit’—the living house of God—then these latter issues [war, poverty etc.] fall logically into place as the crossbeams and walls of that house. *All direct attacks on innocent human life, such as abortion and euthanasia, strike at the houses’s foundation* {emphasis in original}.” This is most clear and has obvious implications for political life.

The final chapter takes up the issues of refusing to allow Catholic legislators who support abortion to receive Communion and of voting for specific candidates. Regarding the first Chaput first makes it clear that no one has a “right” to receive the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist and he reminds readers of St. Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 11: “Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in and unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.” He also writes that “if we ignore or deny what the church teaches, or refuse to follow what she teaches, we are not ‘in communion’ with the Catholic faith.... If we receive communion anyway, we engage in a lie” (p. 224). Denying anyone Communion is a grave matter and “should be reserved for serious cases of public scandal where it can actually make a difference” (p. 225). He declares: “Catholic officials who act against Catholic teaching in their political service on a foundational matter like abortion should not present themselves for Communion” (p. 225). What if they do? After citing a 2004 statement by the U.S. Bishops that leaves the issue up to the prudent judgment of individual bishops Chaput then raises and answers some

questions. The first is “*What would I do if a Catholic public official... publicly acting against Catholic moral teaching on a grave moral issue like abortion... presented himself for Communion?*” He then makes a distinction. If the official is not from his diocese and he received no contrary guidance from the individual’s own bishop he would assume his honesty and goodwill and not refuse him Communion and would so instruct his priests. But if the person were of his diocese he would first instruct and admonish the official in private and if that failed to persuade him not to present himself for Communion he would then, should he so present himself, publicly ask him not to take Communion and explain why. If he persisted in presenting himself Chaput would then refuse him Communion “because of his deliberate disregard for the rights of other Catholics and the unity of the church” (pp. 227–228).

He then asks whether a Catholic in good conscience could vote for a “pro-choice” candidate. His answer: “I couldn’t. Supporting a ‘right’ to choose abortion simply masks and evades what abortion really is: the deliberate killing of innocent life” (p. 229). But he knows some Catholics, troubled by war and other serious problems, who judge differently. They struggle with abortion and “keep fighting for a more humane party platform—one that would vow to protect the unborn child” (p. 229). He respects their judgment of conscience and will not judge them. They think that there is a “proportionate reason”★

★ *Here I must note that Chaput is using the term “proportionate reason” not in the sense it has been and is used by those theologians who think that no specific moral norms such as the one proscribing the intentional killing of the innocent are absolute but can be violated if there is a “proportionate reason.” John Paul II condemned this understanding of “proportionate reason” in Veritatis Splendor. Chaput is using the expression “proportionate reason” in the classical sense in which it was used to articulate the fourth condition of the principle of double effect, namely, a proportionate reason for “tolerating” or “allowing” the unintended bad effect of an action having more than one effect.*

to allow abortion, one that we could, “with an honest heart, expect the unborn victims of abortion to accept when we meet them and have to explain our actions” (p. 230). Chaput’s final question is the problem facing Catholics when both major candidates are both “pro-choice.” Here he thinks there is no “right” answer. Committed Catholics could either vote for the major candidate more closely fitting the moral ideal, for an acceptable third party candidate, or refrain from voting (pp. 230–231).

As one can see, this is a most significant book. Some of Archbishop Chaput’s positions will undoubtedly be challenged, particularly regarding well known Catholic legislators who year in, year out, vigorously support pro-abortion legislation, going even so far as to oppose efforts to stop partial-birth abortion, and misrepresenting Catholic teaching in their public statements. But Chaput, it seems to me, holds that if this is so then those legislators ought to be denied Communion, for he writes explicitly: “Catholics who actively and prominently work to advance permissive abortion or any other serious violation of human dignity, persons who deliberately treat the church, her people, and her sacraments as political theater to attack Catholic convictions and faith, should never present themselves for Communion and should never be surprised at being denied if they do” (pp. 228–229).

**Faith, Reason, and the War against Jihadism: A Call to Action**, by George Weigel, New York: Doubleday, 2007; 195 pp.; HB; \$18.95

Reviewed by Kenneth D. Whitehead, author

**A**mong commentators on national and foreign policy issues in the United States today, few can claim any genuine competence in the areas of Catholic teaching and theology. A notable exception is George Weigel, author of the 1999

magisterial biography of Pope John Paul II, *Witness to Hope*, as well as of a respected biographical study of Pope Benedict XVI, *God's Choice*, published in 2005. A fellow of Washington's Ethics and Public Policy Center, Weigel is among other things an acknowledged just war theorist, who has ably defended America's role in both the Gulf War and the Iraq War at a time when many have tended to assume that any authentic "Catholic" view would necessarily have to be against, or at the very least, seriously question, these American military forays into the heart of the Middle East.

In some minds, the difficulties encountered in the course of the Iraq War have even served to discredit what President George W. Bush has called the "war on terror," as if it were somehow *not* a war that was declared *on us*! For his part, George Weigel has no doubt that a war has been declared on us, a war that he believes we perforce have to fight and win, not only for the sake of our country, but also in the long term interests of the Christian way of life itself.

This book, *Faith, Reason, and the War against Jihadism*, subtitled "a Call to Action," is a relatively short but spirited account of where we stand in the United States and what we have to do, more than a half dozen years after the deadly 9/11 terrorist attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. These attacks supposedly woke America up to the dangers of what Weigel aptly calls "Jihadism"—a thesis about which the author is seriously doubtful, if he is not actually alarmed at the degree to which Americans still fail to understand what happened to us on 9/11, and what it really means.

"Jihadism," the author explains, is the religiously inspired ideology that calls upon Muslims to employ violent and lethal means, not only including, but actually featuring, the killing of the innocent, in order to establish in the world a version of Islam believed by the terrorists enlisted in the war against America to be the true religion of God. Weigel believes that not only has America not taken the true measure of the jihadist challenge we

face, but that it is urgently necessary for us to return to the sources of both faith and reason in our tradition if we are to succeed in understanding and ultimately winning the new kind of war that has been thrust upon us. Simply to talk in terms of a generic "war on terror" is to misunderstand the kind of war that it is. Thus, among other things, this book is an examination and elaboration of some of the themes of Pope Benedict XVI's well-known Regensburg Address.

It is of particular importance, in the author's view, among other things, that we achieve a true understanding of Islam and of Muslims and of how we must relate to them. Not all Muslims are terrorists, but the terrorists who are determined to fight against America today generally are Muslims, a fact that is too often passed over and is sometimes even denied. In any case, American policy makers and policy executors, oriented as they are towards the contemporary secularist mind-set, have a long-standing and built-in reluctance to deal with the question of Islam as such, or, indeed, with that of any religion, as having any possible bearing on current events. Religion, according to the typical American secularist mind-set, is not supposed to have anything to do with policy. Church and state are supposed to be separate in this country. Policy makers and public officials need not, indeed, must not, allow religious considerations of any kind to enter into their thinking. So goes the thinking. But these are ideas that can only *prevent* us from understanding Islam, or Muslims, or how we should deal with them.

Added to this tone-deafness about whether religion just might still have some effect on the world is the prevalence of today's political correctness, which dictates that those who are culturally different from us such as, e.g., Muslims, must not ever be singled out in any way. Such attitudes virtually guarantee that we are *not* going to be able to understand and respond adequately to the actual terrorist challenge that currently faces us. George Weigel aptly remarks on the currently prevailing idea that what we need to

do, apparently, is "convert 1.2 billion Muslims into good secular liberals." This is foolishness, and it is hardly an adequate response to the challenge that we do, in fact, face. For it is what Weigel correctly calls a "new kind of war" that we have only partially and not always effectively begun to fight.

"Jihadism" is the appropriate term chosen by the author to make clear that there is unfortunately an inescapable Islamic religious dimension or component in the brand of terrorism that confronts us today. This term correctly identifies the Islamic religious dimension in the new kind of war in which we are engaged without thereby implying a blanket condemnation of Islam as a world religion with which we surely have to co-exist.

Understanding that "the great human questions today are ultimately theological," Weigel competently analyzes both Islam itself and the lethal variant of it that is jihadism. While he does not pretend to be an academically qualified expert on Islam, he intelligently draws upon the work of such experts as Bernard Lewis. He has surveyed a good deal of the current pertinent literature on the subject, in fact, and, among other things, this book provides leads to further reading that some readers may wish to pursue.

Following an Introduction entitled "Deadly Serious Business" describing the nature of the terrorist challenge that we face, the author then makes his case in fifteen relatively brief "lessons," as he styles them, divided into three major sections with the headings "Understanding the Enemy," "Rethinking Realism," and "Deserving Victory"—for he believes that we definitely *must* rethink what most people consider to be "realism" in the light of the unique nature of the enemy we now face, just as he believes that we must also truly understand, in order to "deserve," victory. He believes, moreover, that only the United States has the ability and the resources to *lead* the fight against jihadism that is necessary.

The case he makes is quite compelling, and deserves the attention of serious Americans, particularly

Catholics as well as Christians generally. Weigel's own theological background and training provide him with understanding and insights that are sometimes woefully lacking in today's typical secular analyses. This is an aspect of this book which Christian readers will appreciate. In Weigel's view, the new kind of war which has been thrust upon us by the jihadists, and which we cannot escape having to fight, is going to occupy us for a long time to come whether we like it or not. We might as well be prepared.

*The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession; Canonists, Civilians and Courts*, by James A. Brundage, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. xvii + 607 pp. Cloth, \$49.00.  
Reviewed by *Jude P. Dougherty*, The Catholic University of America.

James Brundage traces the history of the legal profession from its beginning in ancient Rome to its rebirth in the early Middle Ages when it enjoyed a resurgence in the courts of the medieval canonists. The book, Brundage tells us, has been forty years in the making, and given its richness, the reader can be grateful for those decades of research.

Brundage is convinced that "the fall of the Roman empire" is a misleading phrase. The eastern half of the empire, he tells us, remained reasonably intact throughout the early Middle Ages. The "fall" affected only the western territories. Although the Roman government did eventually crumble in the west, its demise was slow, in fact, so silent that a great many of those who lived through the period failed to notice that the empire was no longer there. Europe's population suffered a decline through the third and fourth centuries and did not stabilize until sometime after the year 600. By the end of the sixth century, only a handful of substantial cities remained in the west. In Italy, these included Ravenna, Rimini, Ancona, and Otranto. Pavia continued to be an important administrative center, and Milan remained relatively populous.

Rome, by the beginning of the sixth century, had ceased to be the principal center of imperial administration, but that was to change with the growth of papal power during and after the pontificate of Gregory the Great (590-604). It was the See of Peter that guaranteed Rome's continuing importance. As Roman civil administration began to fade away, popes and bishops stepped in to manage much of the day-to-day machinery of local government, taking over a host of functions previously performed by civil servants. Thus we find bishops proving wills and supervising the administration of descendants' estates, provisioning garrisons, supervising the maintenance of roads, bridges, and aqueducts, operating schools, and overseeing tax collection.

Brundage is primarily interested in the period 1150-1250, when the practice of canon law in the ecclesiastical courts became a full fledged profession. In the middle of the twelfth century only a small number of jurists were teaching Roman and canon law and practicing in the ecclesiastical courts in a handful of cities. The evidence shows that prior to the mid-twelfth century there was nothing that existed anywhere in Europe that could be described as a legal profession in the strict sense of the term. When the Roman law schools faded away toward the end of the sixth century, no social or vocation identity remained. That was the case until the mid-decades of the twelfth century. During the one hundred years that followed, namely by 1250, professional lawyers had set up shop in every major European city. Brundage detects a paradigm shift. Roman and canon lawyers who were writing during the second half of the twelfth century and the opening decades of the thirteenth were primarily interested in the intellectual or philosophical problems that the law presented. By the middle of the thirteenth century their successors were far more preoccupied with the details of legal practice and procedure. The lawyers of the late twelfth century may have argued on behalf of clients with some regularity, but trained jurists only began to

appear regularly in the courts after the vulgate version of Gratian's *Decretum* (1150) had taken its final form. What had been an academic occupation in one generation had become a learned profession in another. By the end of the twelfth century at least a few men were able to make a living arguing on behalf of litigants.

By the mid-thirteenth century many lawyers held academic degrees in law. Law faculties and law curricula began to emerge in the nascent universities of Bologna, Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge. University law faculties furnished students with systematic study of Roman and canon law. Lawyers by the mid-thirteenth century were professionals in the sense that they had been formally admitted to practice in one or more courts and at the time of their admission had pledged themselves to a code of legal ethics. The word "profession" itself, Brundage relates, has religious roots insofar as it is connected with making a solemn profession or undertaking, much as theologians and monks made a profession of faith. The ethical aspirations formulated in the thirteenth-century admission oaths remain largely unchanged to this day. Throughout the West modern oaths of admission to the bar strikingly resemble their medieval counterparts.

Another element in the creation of a legal profession had to do with the fact that the jurisdiction of medieval church courts, despite variations in practice among different regions of Western Christendom, transcended political boundaries between kingdoms and principalities. Properly trained members of the legal profession could practice their trade just as well in Riga, Rouen, Regensburg, or Rome. Brundage finds that by the last quarter of the twelfth century, popes and bishops had begun to delegate their routine juridical duties to officials who had some training in Roman and canon law, thus contributing to the expansion of the legal profession. Four distinct practices or callings soon emerged, those of advocates, proctors, notaries, and judges. Development of a professional identity among the canonists became the

model for other professional groups. Brundage finds that the study of law attracted a great many of the most original and talented minds in the centuries that followed, to the disadvantage of philosophy, theology, and other academic disciplines.

There is an interesting chapter on the formation of an educated elite and, one might say, an amusing chapter on the rewards and hazards of the legal profession. Almost as soon as trained lawyers became a recognizable social group, people at every level of society and in all walks of life began to denigrate them. Brundage writes, "Lawyers inspired admiration as well as envy, hostility mixed with respect, together with dependence on their skills." The more prominent and successful that lawyers became, the more complaints about them grew in volume and vehemence: "Theologians, merchants, preachers, popes and poets complained that lawyers were bloodsuckers, hypocrites, sacrilegious, foul-mouthed, devious, deceitful, treacherous, proud and arrogant." Brundage quotes Hugo von Trimberg (1230-1313) who observed that despite its utility in worldly matters, the study of law fails to teach men to live virtuously and Robert of Flamborough who, in his *Summa de poenitentia* (1208-1215), suggested a series of pointed questions that priests ought to put to lawyers and judges who came to confess their sins.

This book is obviously more than an account of the genesis of the legal profession. It is a fascinating record of a development within the common-law tradition that has made Western civilization possible and upon which it continues to depend. Brundage concludes his study with this thought: "The legal professions, together with the universities, the papacy, the corporation and constitutional government, are institutions that must rank among the most influential and most enduring creations of the thousand years that constitute the European Middle Ages."

***The Quantum Ten: The Story of Passion, Tragedy, Ambition and Science*** by Sheilla Jones. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2008. pp. 336. \$24.95 (Cloth).

Reviewed by Jude P. Dougherty,  
*The Catholic University of America.*

**T**he *Quantum Ten* is obviously not a metaphysical treatise, but it may be appreciated by any philosopher who has ever grappled with the ontological status of quanta. Metaphysicians and philosophers of science have devoted many a paper to the seemingly irreconcilable discontinuity between the classical and the quantum worlds, between Newtonian mechanics and quantum mechanics. From the very beginning it has been recognized that the quantum world of atoms and electrons does not operate by the same rules of physics that govern the everyday, classical world.

Sheilla Jones has written a fascinating account of one of the most exciting periods in the history of modern science. Max Planck is credited with introducing the word "quanta" into the lexicon of physics in 1900, and he was to play a significant role in the "quantum revolution" of the mid-1920s. Jones acknowledges that a distinction can be made between quantum mechanics and quantum theory but elects to speak of the package as "quantum physics."

There is no obvious point at which the old order of physics gave way to the new order of quantum physics, just as there was no obvious point at which Newtonian physics replaced Aristotle's natural philosophy. Mathematical physics may be used to describe how the quantum world operates (quantum mechanics), but explanations of why the quantum world behaves as it does are another thing (quantum theory) and defy the imagination. In classical physics, energy flows in a continuum, but in quantum physics it comes in chunks or quanta, which can only be described mathematically. For most physicists it wasn't necessary to visualize the quantum world so long as their calculations matched their experimental results. It did not mat-

ter that the symbols and mathematics they used might or ought to have any link with the physical world. Nobel laureate Murray Gell-Mann is quoted as saying, "We all know how to use it and apply it to problems; and so we have learned to live with the fact that nobody can understand it." After 80 years physicists are still having trouble reconciling the classical and quantum worlds.

Jones finds her big ten (among them seven Nobel Prize winners) in attendance at the 1927 Brussels Fifth Solvay Conference. Any college physics student will recognize their names, although some are better known than others: Bohr, Ehrenfest, Einstein, Born, Schrödinger, Pauli, de Broglie, Heisenberg, Dirac, and Jordan. She could have added to the list with equal justification Boltzmann and Planck, who played important roles in the creation of the new physics. It was the failure of Newtonian physics in the nineteenth century to construct a mechanical or atomic model of matter and aether that would explain thermal and magnetic properties that led Boltzmann to develop his probabilistic physics in a seminal article in 1887 and Planck to introduce the notion of "quantum" a little more than a decade later. Boltzmann's statistical mechanics, not only assumed the existence of invisible molecules but relied on mathematical probabilities instead of experimental measurements. For that he incurred the scorn of Ernest Mach and the positivists of the Vienna Circle. Mach's positivism, following the lead of the French philosopher Auguste Comte, denied the power of intellect to reason from the seen to the unseen and led Mach to oppose the use of atoms and probabilities in scientific explanation. The only meaningful statements a scientist can make, Mach held, are about what can be measured, counted, tested or which otherwise rest on the experience of the senses. Mach refused to accept the existence of atoms even when presented with experimental evidence. Jones remarks, "'Positivism,' perhaps more accurately called 'negativism,' had all but killed theoretical physics in France." The dramatic shift from

the certainty of Newtonian physics to the puzzling world of quantum gave rise to many a philosophical treatise. Aware of the philosophical landscape at the time, Jones, in a humorous passage, offers her assessment: "Positivism has no God and no external world; logical positivism has no God and no external world but it does have mathematical logic; Kantianism has no external world but does have God; and realism allows for both God and an external world." German mathematicians and physicists, while not philosophically illiterate, did not usually demonstrate philosophical leanings, at least not on the job and for the most part did not try to bring their scientific activity into logical connection with their philosophy. By the 1930s most physicists simply abandoned the need for a philosophical theory of quantum physics.

*The Quantum Ten* is not a straightforward history of the development of quantum physics. Jones's narrative is interspersed with biographical snippets of her *dramatis personae* and some gossip surrounding their per-

sonal lives. We learn that Niels Bøhr was once a celebrated soccer player, that Heisenberg was an accomplished pianist, and that Einstein initially objected to the rules of quantum physics because they appeared to preclude any means of reconciliation with the classical rules upon which his generalized theory of relativity was based. We witness the cooperation of the principals as they learned from and incorporated into their theories each other's work. One of the unsung heroes of the quantum movement is Paul Ehrenfest, whose hospitality and spacious living room served as a meeting place for high-level discussions among colleagues and visitors, a catalytic role that once brought Bøhr and Einstein together for a week-long discussion, each occupying one of the two spare bedrooms in the Ehrenfest household.

From Graz, Vienna, and Prague to Breslau, Leiden, Copenhagen, and Manchester the saga of quantum physics develops as a remarkable multinational European enterprise. A seismic shift was to occur after

World War II, when the center of physics moved from Germany to the United States. Whereas there had been no American physicist at the first Solvay Conference in 1911 and only two at the 1927 Conference, of the 60 invited participants to the 2005 Solvay Conference, more than half were Americans. Much like the 1911 and 1927 conferences, the 2005 conference ended, as David Gross put it in his wrap-up speech, "in utter confusion." The unification of quantum mechanics and relativity theory, sought by Bøhr and Einstein, remained as elusive as ever. In the fall of 2007 Gross placed his hopes on string theory as the most likely source of a unified theory, but with this qualification: "Even those of us who work in the field aren't really sure what string theory is or what it is going to be. When you are in this kind of speculative, explanatory science, it is important to have faith because you are out on a limb." Whether Sheilla Jones intended it or not, the message is clear; philosophers should be wary of becoming entangled in string theory.

## REVIEW ESSAY

### The Temporal and the Eternal: *Review Essay on Cardinal Giovanni Bona's Guide to Eternity*

by Anne Barbeau Gardiner, Prof. Emerita of English, John Jay College of CUNY

Cardinal Giovanni Bona (1609–1674) is best known for his marvelous *Guide to Eternity* (in Latin, *Manuductio ad Coelum*), translated into English three times in the early 1670s, with the palm for literary excellence going to the high-church Anglican Sir Roger L'Estrange, whose version appeared in 1672.<sup>1</sup> This translation of the *Guide* went through seven editions and even more printings in England before 1722. Cardinal Bona was a Cistercian abbot who lived an austere, truly exemplary life, and his *Guide* is a collection of inspiring maxims drawn from both the Church Fathers and ancient sages

like the Stoic Seneca. To these maxims Bona added his own insights to create a universal remedy for human folly. In his preface, he calls the world a "large hospital" where he resides not as a physician, but as a fellow-patient. This essay offers only a few highlights from this truly wise, brilliant, witty, and edifying work.

Bona finds a "monstrous" carelessness in us regarding our final destiny. There's nothing we see more often than death and nothing we forget more quickly. Yet death is the condition annexed to life, because every generation must make room for another. Bona reflects: "What is time, but the passing of a shadow? Life, but a point? or less, if possible. How small a distance is there betwixt the cradle

and the tomb! Try if you can make the sun stand still but one day, one hour, one moment. No, no, it will not be. Time is inexorable and will hold on its course till it has brought all created Nature to destruction." Therefore, we need to rescue ourselves from time by an anticipation of Eternity.

When we lavish excessive affection on creatures, we offer up to them not just "an ox or a goat, but ourselves and our salvation." Although the Day of Judgment draws near, we continue to laugh and amuse ourselves until death arrives, and then we are lost for lack of preparation: "Who but a madman, when he may put to sea in fair weather, will linger for a storm?" Caution comes too late when one is "under water."

The reason death inspires us with so much fear is that we squander our time here below in vanities and sins and forget to lay up something to give us hope for life hereafter. Half the labor we dedicate to worldly projects would secure us a “blessed Eternity.” If this thought tempts us to grieve over lost time, we lose yet more time, for the worth of a day or an hour is “inestimable,” and the loss of it “irreparable.” It might be the work of a single day to come to “the highest pitch of holiness if we would but turn with our whole hearts from the creature to the Creator.” This is so because our life is not measured by years, but by how well we employed those years. If the oldest man alive were to subtract the time he spent doing nothing, or nothing with respect to salvation, he would find that after a hundred years he dies a child.

We die in peace if we have weaned ourselves from the world beforehand by parting from the possessions we are soon to leave behind. Then, at the last hour, there is less stuff for death to work on. To develop a proper contempt for the world, we need to reflect each day that we are soon to leave it. Bona is not surprised at how hard it is to bring our mind to “a contempt of *life*, considering that (short of Heaven) it is of all comforts, incomparably the greatest blessing.” Yet he thinks it unwise for a Christian to regard death as an evil, for it is “the end of evils and the beginning of life everlasting.”

We cannot conceive of the “boundless Eternity” that awaits us. Bona calls it “an everlasting instant” and “a restless wheel.” Indeed, “it is a continued and endless and still commencing beginning.” Whoever reflects that the pangs of Hell are always starting and never ending must have “a heart of flint” not to be moved to repentance. Surely, too, if we set our hearts on Eternity we’ll never envy anyone else’s enjoyments on earth, for that would be as if a prince envied a cobbler. All the pleasures of this world are no more than “a leaf, or a feather” when weighed against the smallest portion of eternal happiness.

“How miserable is that man that

loves, and loves not God,” Bona exclaims, for “what proportion is there between a corruptible object and the immortal soul!” There is no place so remote as to exclude the omnipresent God in whom we live, move, and have our being. Therefore, we should live as if there were only God and us in the world, cheerfully accepting whatever Providence sets before us, even if it’s adversity. Just as the sunbeams warm the earth and are “at the same time in the great luminary that sends them,” so is “the soul of a perfect Christian” in Heaven while we “enjoy his company here below.”

### Victory in Adversity

Bona’s *Guide* teaches us how to be steadfast and victorious in adversity. One of his chief maxims is this: “A good man cannot be properly said to lose anything; for whatever can be taken from him is no part of himself.” He urges us to keep a distance between ourselves and transitory goods, because nothing here below is truly ours except the virtue that “immortalizes even our mortality.” He draws a sharp contrast between the grief we show when we lose our money or when our house burns down to the calmness with which we “part with our modesty, our honesty, our constancy.” Yet only in the latter case do we lose “a substantial good and what’s our own too.” We thank and reward the surgeon who amputates one of our limbs to save our life, but when God sends adversity to save our soul we grumble and complain and “mistake that for a loss or misery which both in the intention and in the effect is a cure.” If the poverty and sickness we endure could speak to us, they’d rebuke us in this manner: “have we taken away any of your prudence, justice, fortitude, or anything else that was good and you could call your own?” We cannot call our own such temporal goods as our perishable bodies, our wealth, or our reputation, and therefore sickness, poverty, and disgrace are not within our control. Neither are such afflictions evil in themselves or worthy of our fear and

hatred. But rather, we should “turn all our fear and all our hatred to the fear and hatred of sin.”

In one of his great, spine-stiffening passages, Bona asks: “What have I now to fear? Bodily sickness? My soul will be the better for it. Poverty? My life will be the safer and the sweeter for it. ...Banishment? I’ll travel and banish myself. Loss of my eyes? It will deliver me from many temptations. What if men speak evil of me? It is but what they are used to do and what I deserve. Shall I fear death? It is the very condition I came into the world upon. Well, but to die in a strange country! All countries are alike to him that has no abiding-place here. But for a man to die before his time! As if a man should complain of having his shackles knocked off and being discharged of a prison before his time. We are not to look upon death, or banishment, or causes of mourning as punishments, but only as tributes of mortality. It is a senseless thing to fear what we cannot shun.” Here he’s like a general rallying the troops for battle.

St. Paul states that in affliction he has become a “spectacle” before God. Bona comments that God loves the spectacle of a brave man in adversity gaining the victory over fear, anger, and impatience. We are not to despair under the crosses He sends: “The Pilot deserves to be thrown overboard that quits the helm in a storm and sets the ship adrift at the mercy of the billows; but he that stands to his tackle and bears up against foul weather (though he sinks with the vessel) perishes yet with honor and the comfort of having done his duty.” In another passage on being stalwart in adversity, Bona says the brave man “keeps his legs when others are at their length upon the ground. It is not dishonor, repulse, exile, oppression, no, not prisons, tortures, nor even death itself that can startle him.... He presses forward still, acquits himself of his duty.” Here he rallies us not just to ordinary courage, but to all-out heroism.

One of his unforgettable maxims regarding adversity is this: “If it may be borne, we are not to despair but to endure it; if not, it will make a quick end both of itself and of us too, and

we are not to despair there neither.” And again, “The more danger the more honor. Man, when he is truly himself, can do more than we think.” He repeats in another place that we can accomplish heroic feats beyond our imagining if we’ll only stick to our duty in times of trial: “Does not He that made us what we are and gave us what we have know best what we are able to do? Blind and impious temerity! That dust and ashes should presume to expostulate with the most high God! As if he imposed more upon us than we are able to perform; and designed rather our misery than our salvation.” He exhorts us continually not to “undervalue ourselves,” but rather to trust that “God will not desert his soldiers, but give them (even for the asking) ability sufficient for any warrantable undertaking.” A good man regards adversity merely as something “for his patience to work upon, as the instrument of divine grace, and that which opens him a way to eternal glory.” At all times he is comforted by his “good conscience,” the only substantial joy on earth.

The type of adversity that is perhaps hardest for us to bear is an attack on our good name. Yet even in this case Bona urges us to maintain equanimity. We are to consider that “Nothing can hurt us, unless we join with it to hurt ourselves. The mind is safe and inaccessible; out of the reach of injuries and accidents. It moves itself and in judging of externals it makes everything only to be as it is taken.” We can remain still, then, even if the world is heaving around us. Should one become so angry as to desire revenge, Bona tells him to go ahead and fall first on his worst foe, his own anger: “Let him begin with his extravagant fury and rage. Is not he a madman that runs into the streets to beat boys for breaking his windows, when he has thieves in his house that are ready to rifle him and cut his throat?” It is wrong to imagine that slander can really harm us, for “Such as we are with God, such we truly are, and neither the better nor the worse for the opinion or discourse of men.”

The victim may protest that it’s a shame not to vindicate his honor. No,

says Bona, it’s a shame rather to fear to be despised. “A wise man reckons nothing disgraceful but sin; for he governs himself not according to the judgment of men, but of God.” This is why he bears his joy in his own heart. Bona offers yet another consolation to the victim of detraction or slander: “When any man is ill spoken of, let him consider; if I have not deserved it, I am never the worse; if I have, I’ll mend.” The victim should consider, too, that this earth “is but a point, and this is done but in a corner even of that point.” Besides, no one escapes the lash of a slanderous tongue, not even the most powerful and most holy: “Nay, our Blessed Savior himself, when he was upon earth suffered under contumely and reproach.” Hence, we must not let the opinions of others disturb our peace, for “no man shall ever be happy whom contempt can make miserable.”

We ourselves, however, should always speak and write the truth, because “nothing can be more scandalous than a false tongue in the mouth of a Christian.” We must never “speak one thing and think another,” as hypocrites do, but state things as they really are, “without aggravating, amplifying, palliating, shifting, or juggling. Plain truth must have plain words.” Moreover, we must keep our word, and be willing to break our heart sooner than our word, even when it was given to an enemy. Once our word has been given, we are to stand “firm as a rock,” unless the promise was unlawful in the first place, and then the obligation ceases.

### Humility and Heroic Exploits

One of Bona’s great themes is the absurdity of pride, which he defines as being “enamored of an outside.” It is folly to spend much care and cost on our appearance while we abandon our souls to crookedness and filth: “It is not gold and pearl that will keep any man from being deformed who is not clothed with Christ’s righteousness. This is the everlasting beauty that shines in the soul when the flesh is worm’s meat. Who but a madman will be at the charge to gild a dung-

hill?” Here he calls our mortal body a “dunghill” to take down our pride, while elsewhere he calls it ironically a “carcass”: “we are born to nobler ends than to be slaves to our carcasses”; and “of all our possessions, we shall have only so much as will serve to cover a cold and rotten carcass.” He uses this rhetoric to draw a stark contrast between the temporal and the eternal.

In a passage that may have inspired Swift, Bona writes: “A man could hardly forbear laughing to see a horse or a dog take upon himself an authority over the rest of his kind: and is it not more ridiculous for a man to do it because he has more money perhaps or more power? Proud dust and ashes! to exalt himself upon his own bottom, when he has nothing good in him but what he has received from above.” In another such passage, he writes about how weak and corrupt we are, despite our grandiosity: “What is man? A weak and sickly body; a pitiful, helpless creature exposed to all the injuries of time and fortune; a mass of clay and corruption, prone to all wickedness, and of so perverse and depraved a judgment as to prize earth above Heaven, temporal pleasure before eternal felicities: Every man living is altogether vanity. He is one of the most furious, lustful and timorous creatures of the Creation: what have we then to be proud of?” Even when he gives us this Juvenalian lashing, Bona wants us to remember we have an eternal destiny, and so he rebukes us here for putting “temporal pleasure” before “eternal felicities.”

It is because of our ridiculous pride that we refuse to confess our sins and repent. When a physician says we are gravely ill, we thank and pay him, but when a friend tells us “we are sick of burning lusts, vain opinions, inordinate affections, it puts us into a rage.” We might as well quarrel with a mirror as with one who tells us the truth about our sinful minds. We are not ashamed to present our diseased bodies to a physician to be cured, yet we try to cover the “infirmities of our souls, as if to conceal them were really to take them away.”

The remedy for our pride is humility: “If we may compare to a Tree



the Old Man in us that derives his original from the infected seed of Adam, we may resemble self-love to the root, a perverse inclination to the trunk, perturbations to the branches, vicious habits to the leaves, evil works, words, and thoughts to the fruit. Now the way to hinder all subsequent corruptions and wickedness is to lay the axe to the root and to begin with self-love." We must become humble, then, and "not fear either the scorn or the displeasure of men." People imagine that humility involves the "mere contempt and abjection of ourselves," but this is not the case. Rather, it involves "the just and moderate pursuit of honor and glory; of glory, not for ostentation, but for the virtue itself, of which that glory is the reward." Humility leads one to engage in "illustrious exploits without danger of being puffed up," for the humble man knows full well "how little it is that he can contribute out of his own to the works of virtue."

Humility also teaches us the love of neighbor, making us judge ourselves by what is "our own" and esteem others by "what they have received from God." Thus we set our faults against the virtues of others, and by this rule the most perfect person alive will see himself as worse than others. Furthermore, humility prevents us from hating anyone, because we realize that no one is so bad as not to have "some mixture of good in him" and that the only thing that is really hateful is sin. And so, we should hate, not the man, but the "wickedness," and "it is there only that we can justify our hatred."

## Unceasing Combat

In his *Guide to Eternity* Bona presents the good life as unceasing combat,

not only to gain victory over adversity and to overcome our pride with humility, but also to withstand the perils and snares of the world. We are no sooner born than "we are encompassed with dangers, as if we were dropped into the quarters of an enemy." There is so much disorder in the world that we could call it an insane asylum, except that the "madmen" outnumber the sane and their great number is their "justification." In public places there are more vices than men, laws are turned into snares, and wicked judges are more criminal than the prisoners. On one side we see a pack of perjured scoundrels, and on the other, a troop of bootlicking parasites. How can we remain innocent in the midst of so much wickedness? If we are not corrupted, we will surely be hindered in our progress toward Heaven. The best way, Bona counsels, is "to retire into ourselves, where we may look upon the world without being endangered by it."

Besides the world, we also have to cope with the "restless enemy" that lurks in our own veins: "nay, the one half of us is in a conspiracy against the other." Curbing our passions is a more heroic feat than conquering a city. Even so, Bona declares, "I am not for a Stoical apathy," for if we take away all affections we take away all virtue as well: "Where there is no combat, there can be no victory." Though we cannot prevent the "first motions of nature," we must "keep a strict watch over them that they do not grow upon us; and if we find them unruly or impetuous, to subject them to the government of reason. We may better struggle with beginnings than with habits." Once we have formed bad habits, however, we must tear them up by the roots so they'll never shoot up again: "It is not the bare lopping of

the branches that will serve the turn." This interior combat can only end with life.

To conclude, Bona provides us with a vivid sense of the exalted dignity of human nature by taking its measure against the backdrop of Eternity. He raises our awareness of the vast difference between the temporal and the eternal, a difference much obscured in our own day. Bona deplors our attachments to the world and the flesh as so many "remoras" that slow down our ship on its voyage to the port of Heaven: "How shall any man think to partake of the joys of Heaven so long as he carries the corruptions of earth and flesh about him? Every pleasure, every vanity, every vicious affection stops him in his full course, endangers the whole lading, and keeps him from his port. God is unity, and takes no joy in a soul that is divided." And finally, he warns against the intemperate pursuit of knowledge, the vain appetite for "subtleties and curiosities" in learning, urging us instead to meditate daily on the life and Passion of Christ, because "That story is the Book of Life and sufficient to bring us to Heaven, if all the libraries in the world, authors and all, were utterly destroyed."

## ENDNOTES

1. Cardinal Bona, *A Guide to Eternity*, [translated by Sir Roger L'Estrange], with notes and introduction by J. W. Stanbridge, B. D. (London, Methuen, 1900). This translation by L'Estrange – who was a great defender of the English Catholics in the time of the pretended Popish Plot (1679–1682) – is faithful to the original. The other two excellent translations are by the Benedictine Thomas Vincent Sadler, published in 1672, and by the secular Catholic priest James Price, printed at Rouen in 1673. Bona's *Guide* was also turned into a poem in the same period.



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## BOOKS RECEIVED

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](mailto:osberger.1@nd.edu)

If there are books you know of that should be reviewed, let Dr. Brian Benestad know at [benestadj1@scranton.edu](mailto:benestadj1@scranton.edu)

*Jesus of Nazareth, From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), Ignatius Press: San Francisco, CA (2008). Includes A Study Guide.

*The Audacity of Spirit: The Meaning and Shaping of Spirituality Today*, Jack Finnegan, Veritas Publications: Dublin, (2008), 400 pp., Paper.

*The Language of Poetry as a Form of Prayer: The Theo-Poetic Aesthetics of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, Francis X. McAloon, The Edwin Mellon Press: Lewiston Queenston Lampeter, (2008), hardcover, 245pp.

*Sacrilege: Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church*, Leon J. Podles, Crossland Press: Baltimore, MD, (2008), hardcover, 675 pp.

*Christian Humanism: Creation, Redemption, and Reintegration*, John P. Bequette, University Press of America: Lanham, MD, (2007) Paper, 178 pp.

*The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, Charles Edwin Jones, The Scarecrow Press: Lanham, MD, (2008), Hardcover, 500 pp.

*Answering the New Atheism: Dismantling Dawkins' Case Against God*, Scott Hahn & Benjamin Wiker, Emmaus Road Publishing: Steubenville, OH (2008), Paper. 160 pp.

*Escape and Return: The Search for Identity*, A Cultural Journey, Anne Paolucci, Griffon House Publications: Middle Village, NY, (2008), Paper. 460 pp.

*Wellness: Life, Health and Spirituality*, Richard J. Woods, O.P., Veritas: Dublin (2008), Paper. 271 pp.

*Christ in His Mysteries: Blessed Columba Marmion*, trans. Alan Bancroft, Zaccheus Press: Bethesda, MD, (2008), Paper. 466 pp.

*Constitutional Adjudication: The Costa Rican Experience*, Robert S. Barker, Vandepas Publishing: Lake Mary, FL, (2008), Paper. 180 pp.

## PLEASE CONSIDER CONTRIBUTING TO THE FELLOWSHIP

This past year the Fellowship received a challenge-grant for up to \$10,000, to establish a special fund to support the travel and lodging expenses of the speakers at our annual conventions. Heretofore the Fellowship has had to depend upon the generosity of our speakers and their home institutions to pay these costs. I am happy to report that many of the individuals who serve on the FCS Board have already stepped forward and personally pledged over half of that amount, and the anonymous donor has now awarded \$3000 to match the cash donations thus far received. But we remain in need of donations from others if we are to meet the entire amount of this challenge-grant. Difficult as it is to ask for money during these difficult times, we need to put this request forward for your consideration. Please help us if you can.

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## Beauchamp and Childress Endorse “Physician-Assisted Dying”

A very popular book used for many years in bioethics courses around the country is *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (sixth edition), written by Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress. The former works at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics and teaches in the Department of Philosophy at Georgetown University; the latter teaches in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia. After mentioning some of the arguments against the legalization of “physician-assisted dying,” the authors pronounce them unconvincing because of Oregon’s experience with the Oregon Death with Dignity Act (ODWDA). In the judgment of Beauchamp and Childress the predicted abuses have not come to pass. Our authors say that they would not support physician-assisted dying “if legalization were to bring about unwarranted, involuntary deaths, reduce the quality of palliative care, result in deep-seated and widespread mistrust of physicians, and the like, . . .” Everything is going well, they say. In fact, they think that patients and their families are even likely to mistrust doctors if they fail to help patients end their lives when suffering seems unbearable. Moreover, our authors further argue that the Oregon doctors are not really killing patients “in any meaningful sense.” They just prescribe the lethal “medication” and patients decide to take it or not. In fact, one third of patients requesting help in dying decide not to take the lethal pills.

The decisive considerations for Beauchamp and Childress are their understanding of autonomy and consistency with the present practice of allowing the withdrawal of nutrition and hydration in order to bring about death. Once a patient says that he regards death as personal benefit for him because of pain and suffering, then a physician does no harm or wrong in prescribing a lethal dose of drugs. The consent of the patient removes any moral culpability on the part of physicians. They are simply showing their respect for the patient by honoring the principle of autonomy.

Not to respect a person’s request for death-producing drugs “shows a fundamental disrespect for the person’s autonomy.”

For medical practice to be consistent, it should expand the right of patients to refuse nutrition and hydration to the right to receive aid-in-dying from their doctors. The two authors argue that “responding to a request to provide the means to hasten death seems morally equivalent to responding to a request to ease death by withdrawing treatment, sedating to coma, and the like.”

Not surprisingly they offer as a kind of conclusion to their arguments the appearance of a link with previous understandings of the purpose of medicine: “We maintain that physician assistance in hastening death is best viewed as part of a continuum of medical care.” That’s not all. In addition to respecting autonomy and constituting a form of medical care, the physician’s role in bringing about the death of patients is beneficent, nonmaleficent, just and compassionate.

Beauchamp and Childress are introducing new modes and orders by redefining terms that used to have nothing to do with administering death-producing drugs. Lethal pills are called medication; helping suffering patients to kill themselves is called virtuous (beneficent, just, etc.). Not helping these patients is a failure to respect their dignity. The principle of consent is misused to make physician-assisted dying seem right. Beauchamp and Childress also avoid using such terms as euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide to describe the death-dealing actions they are defending. In fact, the hastening of death by physicians in Oregon, they say, is really not properly called killing.

This is not the place to make a full-blown argument against the practice of physician-assisted dying or assisted suicide. My main purpose has been to make known typical arguments in defense of euthanasia that are persuasive to many people. I will simply mention three considerations, based on reason, which Beauchamp and Childress have failed to

consider sufficiently. In his *Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity* Leon Kass presents three cogent arguments against the so-called right to die. “First, the right to die, especially as it comes to embrace a right to ‘aid-in-dying,’ or assisted suicide, or euthanasia, will translate into an obligation on the part of others to kill or help kill.” This necessarily means that the state “would thus surrender its monopoly on the legal use of lethal force.” Private individuals could legally participate in the killing of fellow citizens. Second, as the experience of involuntary deaths in the Netherlands shows, once physician-assisted dying is legalized, “[n]o one with an expensive or troublesome infirmity will be safe from the pressure to have his right to die exercised.” Some family members will subtly or not so subtly suggest

suicide to their suffering relatives or conspire with willing doctors to have overdoses of pain medication administered. The attending family members could easily hide their own self-interest from themselves behind the face of compassion. “Third, the medical profession’s devotion to heal and refusal to kill—its ethical center—will be permanently destroyed, and with it patient trust and physicianly self-restraint.” Once doctors have the right to prescribe lethal drugs, the public will worry, for example, that they will not always keep the well-being of patients uppermost in their minds. Financial considerations, such as incentives from insurance companies, could interfere with their best medical judgment. ✠

*J. Brian Benestad*

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