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EX CATHEDRAJ. Brian Benestad

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IN MEMORIAM

Msgr. William B. Smith, R.I.P.

What’s new is usually not true, and what’s true is usually not new. This old adage is more germane for some fields than for others, but one of the fields in which it has special relevance is the field in which the late Msgr. William B. Smith practiced—moral theology.

It is not that this field lacks novelties—new topics emerge all the time, and a glance at the list of Msgr. Smith’s publications over the years from his earliest articles in *New York Catholic News*, for which he wrote a weekly column from 1972 to 1981 through the rest of his life, he dealt with countless novelties, especially in regard to the brave new world of bioethics, a field that seems to churn out novelties without stop.

Each of the new techniques and new issues that come up in a field like bioethics needs a careful consideration. But more important than noting their novelty is the steady application of the timeless principles of sound moral theology. Msgr. Smith’s articles and columns tirelessly worked to apply the tested principles of Catholic ethics to this domain, with great benefit to the Church.

Msgr. Smith replaced Fr. Joseph Farragher, S.J., another member of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars as the question-and-answer columnist for the *Homiletic & Pastoral Review*. In a wonderful example of ecumenism, that important post has been honorably filled since 2006 by Father Brian T. Mullady, O.P. In the twelve years of Msgr. Smith’s service he covered a vast range of topics, from “Matter for the Eucharist” in his inaugural column (October 1992) to “Without Parental Consent” (January 2006).

Besides his regular column, Msgr. Smith published some forty articles and book chapters in a variety of books, popular magazines, and such learned journals as *Linacre Quarterly*, *Human Life Review*, *Social Justice Review*, *Issues in Law and Medicine*, *Catholic Dossier*, *Catholic Lawyer*, *Dunwoodie Review*, *Crisis*, and, of course, the *Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly*, not to mention a host of encyclopedia entries. Behind the scenes he labored long and vigilantly in support of the Bishops’ Conference, particularly by his service in drafting and revising the “Ethical and Religious

Directives for Catholic Health Care Services.” Here the work included concern for the clear statement of moral principles, thoughtful applications of principles to the situations that frequently arise in health care institutions, and firm resistance to various forms of consequentialism and proportionalism in moral theology that would have compromised Catholic doctrine for solutions more palatable to utilitarian forms of practical reasoning.

Deadly serious in doctrine, Msgr. Smith also possessed an acerbic wit and often displayed his sense of humor as an after-dinner speaker for conventions of the Fellowship. Some of his barbs made for fine reading in the pages of the FCSQ, including his 1987 article entitled “Bishops as Teachers and Jesuits as Listeners”—a colorful reminder of the proper relation between the ordinary magisterium and the theologians of religious orders like the Society of Jesus. In his articles for *The Social Justice Review* and for *Crisis* he also took up the question of theological dissent from the magisterium and the authentic understanding of the relation between truth and freedom in the area of moral theology.

Whatever the venue, the writings of Msgr. Smith always exhibited clarity of thought and complete fidelity to the teachings of Christ and His Church. As we now remember his legacy and pray for his soul, we do well also as fellow Catholic scholars to take his example and aim for the same clarity and fidelity in our own work. Requiescat in pace.

Fr. Joseph W. Koterski, S.J.
President, Fellowship of Catholic Scholars



Homily at the Mass of the High Priest in honor of Monsignor William B. Smith.

January 27, 2009

This is a stunning loss, the death on Saturday of Msgr. Bill Smith, unexpected and shocking, despite his recent illness. It was shocking and painful first of all to his family. We all extend our prayers and condolences to the family of Msgr. Smith,

as well as our gratitude. Frankly, I will say that I feel a terrible loss in his death, not least because it came so suddenly. Last Sunday I was visiting him in the hospital when a Filipino nurse entered the room who knew me from the parish where I say Mass on Sunday. She said “Father, is this your father?” I looked at Bill and then I said to her, “Yes, in a certain sense, he is.” Every priest here knows that another priest has been a father to his priesthood. He was mine.

And I know for all who are here now in the seminary as students, or as faculty or staff, it is a painful hour. Dunwoodie will experience an absence that will not lift any time soon. But the impact of this death reaches far beyond these walls. The priests of the Archdiocese of New York, young and old, have all lost one of our greatest ever, for so many a friend, for many of us in the priesthood the finest teacher we ever had, a model of exemplary priestly life, a priest’s priest in every way. And the wider Church, too, has suffered a great loss with his death.

On that latter note, let me share with you some comments received by his close friend and colleague here at the seminary, Sr. Sara Butler, and graciously passed on to me.

Jesuit Fr. Don Keefe, who taught dogmatic theology here in the 1990s until 2001 wrote: “Msgr. Smith has long been identified with Dunwoodie in my mind and in the minds of many others; he is close to irreplaceable... a splendid moral theologian who trained two generations of archdiocesan priests, a founder of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars and a perduring major influence in it, a man who has given distinguished service to the Church for forty years.”

Gerard Bradley from Notre Dame Law School wrote: “He was a strong, good and faith-filled man, and so very, very smart. Most of all (at least to me) Monsignor was a model of devotion to the intellectual apostolate of the Church. He surely could have obtained greater status and renown in the academic world and in the Church if he had wished. But he seemed to be genuinely and completely indifferent to such charms. Monsignor wanted only to do the work which Jesus had seen fit to put before him.” A wonderful tribute indeed.

And from Kenneth Whitehead: “Msgr. Bill Smith, as most of us know, was a priest of great faith and utter integrity. He was a tower of strength especially on the life issues that we are confronting today. I well remember the help and advice he more than once gave to me when I still lived in New York. He was always accessible

and available, and I always treasured the renewal of our friendship—and his sharp mind—when seeing him at our annual conventions... It is hard and heart-breaking to believe that he has now left us.”

Yes, hard for all of us, and heart breaking to realize he has now left us. One has a sense of a rupture, a tearing away of something precious, when a man like this goes to his eternal reward. For the seminary it is the end of an era; for the Archdiocese the departure of a uniquely respected priest; for the Church it is the death of one of the great brave soldiers of our time, one who now challenges us to embrace fortitude ourselves in our love for Jesus Christ and the truth as taught by his Church.

I believe this mass tonight with Msgr. Bill Smith lying in a coffin in front of us offers an opportunity, especially for priests and those in preparation for the priesthood, to ponder the value of Catholic faithfulness. If there is one thing among many that marked this man as a priest, it was a very exalted commitment to being faithful—faithful first of all to everything pertaining to the Church’s truth. He had an immense intelligence, but with that he combined always a quality of humble loyalty to the Church and its doctrine, a willingness always to be led by the Church and so to put his mind at the service of its doctrine. With his powerful mind, he was nonetheless humble intellectually, a man who enjoyed studying and learning, especially from the writings of John Paul or then Cardinal Ratzinger, from Aquinas, from Augustine, from eminent contemporaries in moral theology. His intellectual life was inseparable, I think, from his spiritual life. My first contact with him was to observe him offering Mass at a Missionaries of Charity chapel in the Bronx, and in a sense my view never changed from that time. To me, in all the years I knew him, he was first of all a spiritual man, a prayerful man whose daily presence in prayers at the seminary or at mass radiated a love for these actions, a man whose soul had long been given to God. His thought, when dealing with serious matters involving theological controversy, developed in a very spontaneous manner from this fidelity to his Lord. He was a man of God first, and then a theologian and teacher.

Sometimes, we might mistake being faithful with mere submission to the burden of obligations or of imposed restraint. But of course faithfulness is not that at all, except superficially. Faithfulness, as a man like this lived it, was an expression of love; it was the fruit of personal love for Jesus Christ. We heard St. Paul’s words just now that strike me very much in regard to Bill

Smith: “I count everything as loss for the sake of Christ, because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ.” The reputation of Monsignor Smith as a zealous defender of Catholic moral doctrine in the gritty arena of theological struggle, and especially in his efforts to uphold the protection of human life, has long been known. But we should not think this simply an intellectual stance. It was most certainly a deep quality of soul that was evident in these endeavors. His strong public witness to authentic Catholic moral doctrine was the fruit of an exalted love for truth, one of his most distinguished traits. He held steadily through all the years of his priesthood; he persevered in the struggle to defend Catholic truth, unconcerned for human respect, undaunted by the wearying demands of battle when truth was at stake. Sometimes, he certainly suffered for this stance. One is reminded in this regard of Augustine’s description: “God gave me the resolve not to prefer anything to the search for truth, not to desire, think, or love anything else.”

One time in Rome during the pontificate of Paul VI he met the pope, who asked him what he taught in the seminary. Moral theology, he answered. “And how do you go about teaching moral theology,” the pope asked. His quick response was a Latin phrase for “thoroughly and completely, your Holiness,” quoting in these words Paul VI’s own phrase in *Humanae Vitae*. Yes, many years of seminarians learned how thorough and complete his teaching was—as well as superbly engaging—and how deeply it attracted one to a love for truth. Paul VI sent a signed copy of *Humanae Vitae* the next day to the residence where he was staying.

His repudiation of dissent in the Church was likewise a matter of his care for truth; to some in the Church it was acerbic, or too zealous, but it is not difficult for those who knew him to see that his manner was simply an expression of his love for God. His was not the approach of posturing or contrived sincerity, to believe at all costs in the correctness of one’s own convictions. His convictions paralleled his sense of vocation. As a priest he placed himself at the service of received truth, and this alone mattered, to represent the Church’s clear teaching, never to minimize it, never to allow distortion of it. Certainly in this regard there were vivid, memorable days in his classroom. There are priests, for example, who can recall from many years past his rundown of the events leading up to the Majority Report of the Birth Control Commission and its subsequent effect on the reception of *Humanae Vitae*, as they might recall a favor-

ite movie. What Msgr. Smith really disliked in all these matters was dishonesty, and dissent in his view always combined some chemistry of dishonesty and personal pride.

Yes, Bill was a servant of truth, and one could not spend time in his classroom without a profound impression of the truthfulness that he embodied. I remember my classmate Keith Outlaw once saying: "I admit that I don't always understand everything in Fr. Smith's moral theology classes, but I am sure of one thing — everything he says is true." Precisely. For he was a man of truth. One of his favorite gospel passages recited in the classroom was from John: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." As seminarians, we used to joke sometimes that he was unable to give his oral true and false quizzes properly. Anytime he read a false statement he managed to give it away with a cough or some stumbling over a syllable or word.

In each of our priestly lives there must be some experience of the grain of wheat falling into the earth and dying, of losing our lives in generosity for God and the Church. Bill Smith's faithfulness extended beyond simply intellectual engagement in his many and diverse teaching commitments. He exhibited a steadiness in all his commitments over many years that mirrored the steadiness and regularity which he lived in his daily life of prayer and study and teaching in the seminary. He not only taught 37 years of seminarian classes; for many years he taught in the Institute of Religious Studies, in the Deaconate program, once a month for the pre-Cana program, at St. John's University, at New York Medical College, for the Sisters of Life and his beloved Missionaries of Charity. He also responded generously to many invitations over the years to speak to priest or seminarian gatherings in other dioceses, at NCCB ethics meetings, pro-life meetings all over the country, and parish talks. He served on Ethics committees and boards at Calvary Hospital, St. Vincent's, St. Clare's, Our Lady of Mercy. And the list could go on. In all this work he died to self, never avoiding a chance to teach.

These commitments also expressed how personal was his faithfulness to people. He was very loyal once he saw a kindred soul in another, and his kindred souls were many and varied. This was true also in his life as a seminary faculty member. As a seminary colleague, I watched him over the years repeatedly value goodness and honesty above all in the men studying for the priesthood—not cleverness or any kind of display of natural talent. As he lived faithfully, he wanted above all to see fidelity in the

men who entered the priesthood from Dunwoodie. If he saw a love in you for the Church and for prayer and for hard work, he simply liked you and before too long you knew you were his friend as soon as you heard him say one day in hallway, "How are you, champ?"

He was a man who loved the priestly fraternity; any gathering of priests, small or great, animated him. He loved to be with priests, and surely it would be amiss not to mention his wit and humor, well known in classrooms, in conferences, and at table. Only the weak and fragile could be offended. My own taste of his enjoyable humor went back to my first contact with him. I was living as a volunteer at the Missionaries of Charity men's shelter in the Bronx. I decided after much urging from their Superior finally to sit down for a talk with the seemingly intimidating Father Smith while he ate breakfast after his Wednesday morning mass. I spoke of an interest in the priesthood and he asked about philosophy in college. I told him I had taken four courses, the last two in Buddhist philosophy and in Chinese philosophy. The eyebrows arched. "Buddhist philosophy? Chinese philosophy? Hmm, I see. The excesses of youth. We will try to overlook yours." Another time entering my fourth year in the seminary, I asked him to be my spiritual director. "Donald, you really can be very imprudent. You have a year yet to complete and you'd be wise not to cast away my faculty vote. You may need every one you can get." Yes, he was quick on the uptake, as they say, especially with priests. Msgr. John Farley returning to the seminary from the Missionaries of Charity one day said he met a sister named Sister Anawim. "What a lovely name," John said, "I think I would name my daughter Anawim." "Anawim?" said Bill. "John, for good reason God has called you to the celibate priesthood."

One aspect of his life perhaps less well known that ought also to be shared was his great love for Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity. In 1981 he accepted their invitation to offer Wednesday morning Mass and then return on Friday to give a weekly conference and hear confessions. He was told the first week to speak for 15 minutes before the confessions; as he was leaving he was asked to make it a half hour the following week, and then, within short time, he received a further request, "Father, please, we would like to have an hour conference each week." He was steady, faithful, committed in love for 27 years to his work with these Sisters. He loved them dearly and they loved him. Between the two of us, our Missionary of Charity connection remained always our closest bond, not moral theology or

seminary life.

And Mother Teresa loved him very much, consulted him, always asked for him once she knew you were a priest from New York. After he had been a year or so with the Sisters, she had gotten to know him during her US visits, and she insisted, as only Mother Teresa could, that he come to Calcutta for a retreat. When he finally agreed after some reluctance, she prevailed upon him to give not one but two retreats in the brutally hot Calcutta summer. He told a story about this when he gave the sermon at the Holy Hour on the night before my class's ordination. One day at the end of an afternoon conference in the middle of the first retreat, Mother Teresa walked from the back of the chapel up to him and said: "Come, Father, I want to show you Jesus."

They began walking briskly, Mother Teresa in the lead, along a walkway past buildings on the property where the sisters take care of some few hundred mentally ill adults, and run an orphanage. Bill said he thought that Mother Teresa was about to show him a recently donated picture or statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. At any moment a sister would appear with holy water for the necessary blessing. Instead Mother Teresa walked him wordlessly out to the front gate of the compound which the gateman opened, and Bill found himself outside, under the blistering sun of a Calcutta afternoon. Mother walked a few yards along the wall and then spoke, simply a phrase, nothing more—"Father, here is Jesus"—and then she walked away. Left alone, with one hand shading his eyes, squinting, Bill said he saw what at first the blinding sun prevented him from seeing—an old man, a beggar, wretched looking, thin, dirty, lying near his feet. The man stared up into his eyes and for the moment nothing more was necessary. I spoke to him afterward about this and he commented: "I realized later she may have invited me to Calcutta in part for that old man to look me in the eye like that, that I should know her and her Sisters in a deeper way, and to know Our Lord in a different way. And indeed like most things she does, she succeeded."

That, too, was Bill Smith, not just intellectual theologian, but the servant of Christ Jesus in his disguises of poverty—answering countless phone calls sent from the Dunwoodie switchboard seeking his answers and advice, hearing confessions for hours and hours, teaching over and over his faithful classes. For sure, he knew a greater poverty and purification in his last years and this too was part of his priestly offering: "that I may know the power of his resurrection, and may share his suffering, becoming like him in his death, that

if possible I may attain the resurrection of the dead; not that I have already obtained this... but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own."

One time he told me that he was never hesitant about choosing the priesthood or religious life. "I never wanted anything, but to be a priest." To be "nothing but a priest"—tonight, tomorrow, and forever. In these days ahead we have a chance to admire how profound are the possibilities in being nothing but a priest. Let us not forget him, this man of much more than books—a man who prayed daily his rosary, who never missed, I expect, an hour of his divine office, who read every day a chapter of the gospel for prayerful reflection, who accepted with love and fervor the privilege of offering his daily mass, who gave and gave, and then gave more. A man who found his joy and his suffering complete in his union with Jesus Christ, a grain of precious wheat fallen into the ground and whom we can expect will now bear much fruit.

Fr. Donald F. Haggerty
St. Joseph's Seminary



I have known Msgr. Bill Smith for more than 30 years. He was a great friend, a holy priest, a good moral theologian, utterly faithful to the teaching of the Church. He also knew how to entertain his colleagues in the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars with his at times acerbic but always very humorous accounts of events in the Church. He was a splendid friend, ready to give himself to others in need. I want here to illustrate this. In 1981 when my son Tom was coming home from college for Christmas, he was involved in a car accident not too far from St. Joseph's Seminary, known as Dunwoodie in Yonkers NY, and he was taken to a nearby hospital. When I was informed of his accident and hospitalization, I called Father Smith, who immediately went to visit Tom in the hospital. That is the kind of person he was: a true man of God.

Requiescat in pace!

William E. May
*John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family
at The Catholic University of America*



Monsignor William Smith was, first and last, a man of conviction, a priest who took seriously the apostle Paul's charge to Timothy to "speak the truth in season and out of season." But the nearly forty years of his teaching and preaching was "out of season", in the sense that the truth embodied in Scripture and Catholic moral teaching was heavily obscured by what he sometimes called a "gray moral mist." That the source of this gray mist was not only from the outside culture, but also arose from within the Church, from outright dissent and clouded theological opinions, was a reality that did not diminish either his conviction or his courage. Throughout his life as a priest and as a moral theologian teaching seminarians he was a beacon in the mist.

He was keenly aware of the power of words to shape ideas. "Smith's Law," as he sometimes called it, described the way language is used to distort reality, seducing people into accepting intrinsically repugnant acts by changing the words used to describe them: killing unborn children or the inconvenient elderly became "the right to choose," or "termination of pregnancy," or the "right to die."

Among friends, including the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, which he helped to found, he often used words of wit to describe our distorted moral world. His commentaries on the contemporary scene were a highlight of many, many FCS conventions, and were funny and entertaining. But they went beyond amusement. Though never cynical, his wit could cut through the curtain of cultural chaos and, like a sharp surgical instrument, was corrective, medicinal. Sometimes scalpels are required to get at the source of the disease.

Transmitting the truth was always Monsignor Smith's primary goal and his great witness. Once when asked how a priest can teach the truth of the Gospel, he responded:

"Most of us can be funny every now and then ... but that's not what we are ordained for. We are ordained to live the Gospel and to preach the Gospel, and it is up to each one of us in every setting, every assignment, to find the right words and the right examples to take that message which is true for all of us and put it into terms that the community you're preaching to, and living with, can say yes

to. Whether that persuades them or not, that's up to them, but if you are to fulfill your ministry, then you do the truth in love."

Monsignor Smith's matchless ability to teach the truth with intelligence, wit and grace was a great gift to us—a gift that we will very, very sorely miss.

"For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling ... Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps 116:8, 15).

Helen Hull Hitchcock

Founding director of Women for Faith & Family and editor of Voices and the Adoremus Bulletin



Msgr. Smith published relatively little, which I thought was unfortunate, until I realized that he was continuously consulted by bishops and others and by that means probably had greater influence than if he had written more. Whenever I heard him give a serious paper, I was highly impressed by the incisiveness of his mind and his absolute command of his subject. (His was also the first name I would suggest in answer to the frequent question, "Who ought to be a bishop?").

But people who have attended the FCS conventions over many years also remember, like a sinfully rich dessert, Msgr. Smith's post-dinner surveys of the state of the Church, in which one of our most distinguished moral theologians exercised his wit. One year, as he ticked off all the discouraging events of the previous twelve months, he famously added after each one, "And help is not on the way." It was salutary reminder, during discouraging times, to cultivate the virtue of hope rather than optimism. (He lived long enough to see things improve).

After each dinner I enjoyed nothing more than continuing the subject with him over drinks, something that in itself made attendance at the convention worthwhile. He had unerringly accurate opinions about men and events, and he had his fund of experiences, such as the gangster he met at a Communion breakfast (!) who told him, "Don't worry, Father. We aren't going to let those abortion places keep standing." (It was only with difficulty that Msgr. Smith

persuaded this soldier of Christ that such was not the appropriate tactic).

There were years when the after-dinner speech was omitted, mainly because of reports that some bishops were discomfited. But one year, from my place at the head table, I could see in profile a bishop who kept his hand in front of his mouth so the audience would not see how much he was laughing.

If New York is indeed Babylon on the Hudson, there were few places that offered serious Catholics a richer and more authentic Catholicism during the decades following Vatican II. At one time St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, where Msgr. Smith was dean, was one of the few seminaries that could be unreservedly recommended. In time there were more, probably owing much to Dunwoodie's example.

Msgr. Smith's passing really does mark the end of an era, one of the last of a group of New York priests who were among the national leaders of orthodox post-conciliar Catholicism. Msgr. George Kelly, Msgr. Michael Wrenn, the saintly Bishop Austin Vaughan, the bold Cardinal John O'Connor, Cardinal Avery Dulles, Father Richard John Neuhaus, now Msgr. Smith—all gone.

Jim Hitchcock,
St. Louis University



For many years the Jacques Maritain Center at the University of Notre Dame put on a summer program called Basics of Catholicism. In every one of those years we had the good fortune

to have Monsignor William Smith provide a reliable summary of moral theology. He always specified that his field was Sacred Theology. This clearly meant that it was biblical in its sources, Thomistic in its development and magisterial in its reliance on recent Church documents. There are teachers who, having taught much the same thing over the years, either end up quoting themselves or winging it. Smith was always prepared with a fresh presentation. He spoke to be understood; he had an ideal professorial manner and delivery. Often one thanked God that future priests were trained in moral theology under this man. At first blush, he seemed formal, offish, aloof. I never saw him in other than clerical clothes, but then I never golfed with him, at Wingfoot or anywhere else. The immaculate Roman collar, black suit, french cuffs and, during breaks, the cigarette. He was the most popular lecturer in our program, year after year. Participants came to him for spiritual advice; he was with them at Mass in the morning, celebrant or concelebrant; in the evenings he was with them for pizza and beer. At the annual banquet of the FCS, the acme of the evening came when Smith was called on. His was a ready and caustic, call it Irish wit; he had an unerring eye for nonsense. I will never forget his examination of the way in which 'ministry' has come to be used. In later times, some objected to these splendidly funny talks. Well, Smith could make you laugh but he could not give you a sense of humor. Now he is gone. God bless him. Have you ever wondered why the most extraordinary people bear the ordinary name of Smith?

Ralph McInerny,
University of Notre Dame



Is Obama Worth a Mass?

Reprinted from *The Catholic Thing*, (c) 2009
Sunday, March 22, 2009

By Ralph McInerny

Now that the abortion president will be honored and feted and listened to at Notre Dame's commencement, the question becomes, who will say the commencement Mass?

The University of Notre Dame has officially and with much self-satisfaction invited President Barack Obama to address its 2009 graduates and to receive an honorary law degree. Not to put too fine a point on it, this is a deliberate thumbing of the collective nose at the Roman Catholic Church to which Notre Dame purports to be faithful. Faithful? Tell it to Julian the Apostate.

That someone who procures or advocates abortion thereby excludes himself from communion with the Church has been clear doctrine all along, and increasingly bishops have found the courage to tell those Catholic politicians who are the great enablers of abortion legislation that they cannot receive Holy Communion. Is it any worse to celebrate such a politician as Barack Obama? So where does that put ND President Father Jenkins? He can hardly say Mass without receiving the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, so doubtless he will recuse himself and have someone else say the Mass. But to whom will he go? All his cohorts must come under the same cloud as he. Perhaps the pastor of the president's erstwhile church in Chicago will be invited to harangue the assembled graduates and parents and faculty—those who can bring themselves to attend commencement this year. Why not?

Perhaps because, having been reminded of the sermons he heard over the years, Barack Obama distanced himself, as they say, from the fiery orator at whose feet he sat for decades. In this, whatever his motives, he has perhaps pointed a way for the Notre Dame administrators to redeem themselves. Perhaps they are unaware of Obama's record on abortion. Perhaps they have not been paying attention to what he has already done as president. On being reminded of all this, and mindful of the parlous position this puts them into vis-a-vis the

Church if they thus celebrate the president, perhaps they will as publicly rescind their invitation as they have issued it? Don't count on it.

For one whose fifty-four year career as a member of the Notre Dame faculty is coming to an end this June, it is a bitter thing to reflect on the 2009 commencement speaker. It is of course convenient to have an excuse to absent oneself from the festivities. Listening to commencement addresses is the penalty that graduates must pay to receive their diplomas. One can count memorable commencement speeches on the cuticle of one finger. They are ceremonial occasions that will be little remembered and less celebrated. One has groaned at previous selections, but the invitation to Barack Obama is far from being the usual effort of the university to get into warm contact with the power figures of the day. It is an unequivocal abandonment of any pretense at being a Catholic university. And it is in sad continuity with decades of waffling that have led with seeming inevitability to it.

No event was more crucial for Catholic universities than the infamous 1967 Land O'Lakes statement in which the assembled presidents of Catholic institutions declared their freedom from the supposedly baleful influence of Catholic orthodoxy. They would continue to call themselves Catholic, but the definition of the term was constantly under construction. And this by institutions whose task is decidedly not to define what Catholicism is. And now we have come to the point where the University of Notre Dame is publicly excluding itself from allegiance to and acceptance of one of the most fundamental of Christian moral truths, mentioned explicitly in the Didache and again and again over the centuries. Abortion is an essentially evil act, both from the viewpoint of natural morality and from the explicit teaching the Church. There is no way in which an individual, a politician or an institution can finesse that fact.

By inviting Barack Obama as commencement speaker, Notre Dame is telling the nation that the teaching of the Catholic church on this fundamental matter can be ignored. Lip service may be paid to the teaching on abortion, but it is no impediment to upward mobility, to the truly vulgar lust to be welcomed into secular society, whether on the part of individuals or institutions.

Some years ago, Archbishop Michael Miller in his Vatican capacity as overseer of Catholic education, said in an address at Notre Dame that the Holy Father was considering prohibiting the use of the word “Catholic” by institutions whose behavior contradicts that use. By inviting Barack Obama to be the 2009 commencement speaker, Notre Dame has forfeited its right to call itself

a Catholic university. It invites an official rebuke. May it come.

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Controversial Situations and the Catholic University *Selecting Honorary Degrees Recipients and Others Invited to Speak*

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Introduction

The recent and very public controversy that erupted when the University of Notre Dame invited President Obama to give the commencement address and to receive an honorary doctorate in law makes our discussion about “Honorary Degrees and Invitations to Speak” all the more timely, yet, in my opinion, the issue underscores the need to understand who we are as Catholic institutions of higher learning. So, while the invitation is certainly a serious public relations problem for the University, the concern should neither be political, nor limited to this particular event. The discussion should encompass a deeper reflection about the purpose of the university as an institution, and should be aimed at helping all of us entrusted with running Catholic universities, towards becoming more faithful guardians of the patrimony with which we have been entrusted.

Two distinct, though interrelated, principles must frame the conversation. Those are the interplay between, on the one hand, the nature and mission of the Catholic university and, on the other hand, the concept of academic freedom as understood from a Catholic point of view. These principles govern the deeper questions about the search for truth, the role of a university in the intellectual arena, and its responsibility towards society. They are the principles which, for example, at Franciscan University of Steubenville, govern how we decide who should receive honors or be given oppor-

tunities to speak. These tenets—mission and freedom—should also help guide all those who are entrusted with directing the work of Catholic universities because they do, in fact, emanate from the nature of the Catholic university as an institution committed to truth.

The Nature and Mission of a Catholic University

In gatherings of fellow partners in Catholic Higher Education, I have often asked people about what they believe is the primary mission of a Catholic university. Most say it is the pursuit of social justice issues or the upholding of the cultural heritage of universities’ various traditions (e.g., Franciscan, Jesuit, Dominican, etc.). Let me be clear, however, at the outset, that this, however admirable, is not the primary purpose that the Church holds for her institutions of higher learning.

Pope Benedict in his address to presidents of Catholic universities had this to say, “Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth.”¹ The emphasis not to be lost on those of us entrusted with running Catholic universities is that, “first and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God.”

This statement serves as the proper interpretative key to *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*’s declaration that, “the objective of a Catholic University is to assure in an institutional manner a Christian presence in the university world.”² This “Christian presence” cannot simply be a

proclamation of social justice, for example (an ethically-minded atheist could do that!), or some other worthy, though lesser, goal. The Christian presence that is envisioned in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* is one that is oriented towards the proclamation of the Gospel, or, as Pope Benedict puts it, to be a place “to encounter the living God.” This, then, provides the context for *Ex Corde*’s four *essential* characteristics of a Catholic university:

1. *A Christian inspiration* not only of individuals but of the university community as such;
2. *A continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith* upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research;
3. *Fidelity to the Christian message* as it comes to us through the Church;
4. An institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family *in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life.*³

All four characteristics are explicit references to the direct contribution a University should make towards the overall mission of the Church to proclaim salvation in Christ.

If a university embraces these characteristics as essential aspects of its mission to bring the Christian message to the academy, then it is not enough to proclaim its Catholicity by just having Mass on campus, no matter how well attended those Masses are. It is not enough to encourage living a virtuous life in the dorms, no matter how well those virtues are lived out. It is not enough to stand up for social justice issues, no matter how important they are. Instead, it is also essential to consider what is taught in the classroom, what is expressed in the auditoriums, what is discussed in seminars; in short, it is essential to consider what happens throughout the entire university as part of a constant effort to consider, to evaluate, and to verify the depth and reasonableness of the Christian proposal in light of human experience. The requirement imposed by the mission of a Catholic university that is not present at secular schools is the conviction of the Church that the claim that Jesus makes about himself is in fact reasonable. That is the foundation on which we are to judge anything else that happens at a university.

This presents a particular opportunity for the Church, which, at the same time, at Catholic universities challenges the approach we are expected to take in relationship to our students and the public, and to some

extent, at least, it comes into conflict with the current secular understanding of academic freedom and how we promote dialogue within the university.

Academic Freedom

The current secular understanding of freedom sees academic freedom as an avenue to offer, and even celebrate, anything that can challenge the intellect. The traditional Catholic understanding of freedom, as we will see shortly, is more carefully nuanced to direct the individual to seek truth in what brings fulfillment.

Let’s take a moment, then, to look at the right application of one of the fundamental aspects of university life: academic freedom. Both Pope Benedict in his address to presidents of Catholic universities and Pope John Paul II in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* have affirmed the Church’s support for academic freedom. Yet, they have not done so in an unqualified manner. They have offered limits to this freedom. These limits are related to the mission of a Catholic university to, above all, proclaim the fact that in God’s incarnation, humanity has found the summit of Truth. Which limits they impose is a vital question for the integrity of a Catholic university as a place of higher learning. This may lead to the question of whether those imposed limits are valid in the first place. Let us first look at those limits.

The two popes, both great intellectuals in their own right, express the boundaries of academic freedom in the following way. Pope John Paul states that a university,

possesses that institutional autonomy necessary to perform its functions effectively and guarantees its members academic freedom, so long as the rights of the individual person and of the community are preserved within the confines of the truth and the common good.⁴

Similarly, Pope Benedict states that,

in regard to faculty members at Catholic colleges universities, I wish to reaffirm the great value of academic freedom. In virtue of this freedom you are called to search for the truth wherever careful analysis of evidence leads you. Yet it is also the case that any appeal to the principle of academic freedom in order to justify positions that contradict the faith and the teaching of the Church would obstruct or even betray the university’s identity and mission, a mission at the heart of the Church’s *munus docendi* and not somehow autonomous or independent of it.⁵

Thus, both popes limit the reach of academic freedom, one by appealing to the right of individuals and the common good, while the other, more explicitly, referring to the *munus docendi* of the Church, declaring it foundational for a Catholic university.

Yet the question of whether those limits are reasonable parameters within a rightly understood academic freedom is at the center of any acceptance of such proposals, and has fueled much of the current debate.⁶ It is, therefore, important to turn to the question about the nature of academic freedom to seek an answer to the question of the reasonableness of the limits proposed by the Church.

Because the Church is convinced about the nature of her relationship with Christ, who is font and summit of all truth, all institutions that emerge from within the Church are participants and co-missionaries in the work of the proclamation of this truth. Thus, one must understand freedom and the place of dialogue that a university has within society as service to the salvific work of Christ. For a Catholic university, as a key place within the Church for both dialogue with the world and the formation of mature Christians, the attitude should be one of openness to the discovery of truth and the conviction that one has found it in Christ. Ideological considerations, which are bound to emerge within the university campus, must be evaluated first and foremost for their claim to truth. This is what the Church expects of all of us.

The Notion of Freedom in the Tradition

At risk of oversimplifying the issue but hoping, nonetheless, to provide a valid path that might be helpful, I would like to point out how the tradition has understood the notion of freedom.⁷ There are essentially two major notions of freedom that have developed in Christian tradition. The most popular in modern times is one that defines freedom as the possibility to choose between alternatives (derived principally by William of Ockham, c. 1288 – c. 1347). Thus one is truly free when one is given the choice to select. Our American system of government is predicated on the ability of the electorate to choose among a pool of candidates. The possibility of making a choice is considered one of the highest expressions of freedom.

This notion, with its attendant variations, which can vary from one extreme to another (e.g., a democratic ideal, an individualistic approach to choices), stands in

contrast with the earlier tradition, which sees freedom as giving the individual the possibility for excellence. St. Augustine, St. Anselm, St. Thomas Aquinas, and most of the patristic tradition would follow this second notion of freedom.⁸ It assumes that freedom must be oriented towards the good of the person, opening the horizon towards perfecting the individual and society. The highest ideal, then, is not to have the option to choose, but the option for excellence. And this is, in fact, what makes freedom valuable.

Learning and perfecting an art, for example, with its requisite toil, moves the learner towards the perfection of expression. Thus, as the learner of the art improves in the art, he or she is moved towards a greater excellence that provides the ability to create great art. The self-denial that brings mastery to an art or an academic field, or even in life, is a culmination of freedom, and the process of reaching great expertise requires choices that by nature constitute the blocking of future choices. The principle that governs this effort is the perfection of the human person, not the availability of choices. Choices are secondary to the attainment of excellence. This approach to freedom that seeks excellence is what *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* uses to define the Catholic university. Thus, what to the modern eye may seem as limitations to academic freedom (i.e., that some possibilities are denied to the university and its agents), to the Church, by virtue of higher goods—foremost among them the dignity and sanctification of the person—some limitations are perfectly acceptable. That is to say, universities, as do people, make choices all the time; those choices, however, must be made with the end in mind, the *telos*, the goal that is desired, not simply with the idea of giving choices for the sake of having varied possibilities.

This understanding of freedom is what justifies the limitations that the popes and the Church present to Catholic universities' use of academic freedom. It explains why the limitations on the grounds of the common good and the proclamation of the Gospel are not only acceptable limits, but also necessary guideposts towards a properly understood notion of the human quest for truth and fulfillment. This notion stands in stark contrast to the prevalent assumption that universities in the western world have a duty to maintain an unrestricted flow of information so that the student will have access to all points of view.

Academic Freedom and Controversial Speakers and Topics

The secular view of academic freedom often leads to the welcoming of controversial speakers, theater productions, and activists from outside, as well as allowing and nurturing on the inside a professoriate with divergent and opposing views. Additionally, same-sex marriage proponents, reproductive rights activists, the availability of pornography on campus, and people or activities that are at odds with Church teaching, may find a welcome sign at universities precisely because those views imply choices, and thus freedom for the students' intellectual development. The university, the argument goes, must not be a bubble that keeps the student from the maturity that he or she must attain by exploring the possibilities the world offers.

The Catholic university's response, however, must be careful not about denying entrance to many voices, as those are indeed necessary for a proper and mature formation of the student, but about how those voices are presented and understood within the context of the freedom that seeks excellence. Dialogue, even animated and controversial is not, in and of itself, a problem within Catholic academia. On the contrary, debates are often enormously helpful in framing questions and finding solutions. At Franciscan University, for example, we not only allow, but also have actively invited controversial and dissenting speakers to present and engage in debate. What has marked a drastic difference in the approach we take is that we have made it clear that our position is one that seeks to promote the common good, the dignity of the person, and ultimately the salvation of souls, and not simply the free flow of information.

Honorary Doctorates and Controversial Speakers

The commitment that a university makes as a Catholic institution of higher learning to support the salvific message the Church proclaims requires it to evaluate under the same lens those people it might wish to invite as commencement speakers or honorees. The current case of the University of Notre Dame's invitation to President Obama to its commencement exercises serves as an illustration to this point. Franciscan University of

Steubenville, as I said, while it is not opposed in theory or in practice to inviting controversial speakers to engage in real dialogue with professors and students, would not invite President Obama to campus to receive an honorary doctorate and to address its graduating class—a setting that is obviously neither a dialogue nor a debate. Instead, the commencement proclaims primarily and very publicly that the university officially holds the person who is being honored as a role model for the lives of the new graduates. While there is much to honor and respect about President Obama, Franciscan University would not have made that choice based on the University's understanding of its Catholic identity. The reasons for this stance should be clear. The very fact that as a Catholic university Franciscan seeks to recognize the event of Christ's incarnation as the pivotal point for all human reality, sets for us a series of obligations. First of all, we embrace the principle of ecclesial unity, especially with the College of Bishops, as an absolutely necessary aspect of Franciscan's existence. Secondly, we recognize the fundamental importance of the proclamation of the Gospel of Life, with its attendant commitment to Catholic social justice, which is grounded on solidarity with those in greatest need—the unborn, and that this recognition, which emanates from the Gospel itself, demands that those who are invited and presented as role models for our students be men and women who, while not perfect, do not ardently, in word and action, act against the excellence the University wishes to inculcate in its students. The invitation of someone who is such a passionate and powerful supporter of the pro-choice position amounts to a betrayal of the principles of excellence that ought to guide Franciscan University. This is not a matter of politics or ideology, but it is a position that we see as something grounded in the University's understanding of its relationship to Christ.

Conclusion

Thus, we at Franciscan make an important distinction between inviting people to discuss or debate issues, and inviting people to present them as role models for our graduates, especially if we honor those guests in a very public forum. That distinction, grounded in our understanding of freedom that seeks truth and the mission of the Catholic University as a privileged place to proclaim the Truth, enables the Catholic university not only to be true to its commitment to society as a locus of

inquiry and unbiased exploration, but also as a place where that exploration has brought us to the realization, after full use of the powers of the intellect, that an event two thousand years ago has pointed us in the direction of, and brought us to the culmination of, all true human aspirations. The encounter with this event, God made Man, imposes on the Church, but particularly on the institutions within her committed to education, an obligation to be true to that encounter especially when announcing it to youth and the world.

Any actions that are taken within the university should be considered in light of its mission as a servant to the truth of God's love, and in accord with the demands of freedom. Without those two elements, the work of a university becomes subject to ideological distortions that do not serve the common good. Trustees and all others entrusted with guiding the work of Catholic universities ought to carefully reflect about these things, and demand of administrators and faculty a clear commitment to seek the truth without bias, and to promote freedom that leads to the perfection of the individual and society.

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Endnotes

- 1 Pope Benedict XVI, Remarks at the Catholic University of America, April 17, 2008
- 2 ECE, 13.
- 3 ECE, 13. Emphasis added.
- 4 ECE, 12.
- 5 Pope Benedict, Remarks.
- 6 The debate has been long. Consider, for example, Annarelli, James John, *Academic Freedom and Catholic Higher Education*, Contributions to the Study of Education, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); Cafardi, Nicholas P. and Duquesne University., *Academic Freedom in a Pluralistic Society: The Catholic University* ([Pittsburgh]: Duquesne University, 1990); Carron, Malcolm Theodore and Alfred D. Cavanaugh, *Readings in the Philosophy of Education*, 3d ed. ([Detroit]: University of Detroit Press, 1963); Curran, Charles E., *Catholic Higher Education, Theology, and Academic Freedom* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990); Curran, Charles E. and Robert E. Hunt, *Dissent in and for the Church: Theologians and Humanae Vitae* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1970); Curran, Charles E. and Richard A. McCormick, *Dissent in the Church*, Readings in Moral Theology (New York: Paulist Press, 1988); Dovre, Paul John, *The Future of Religious Colleges: the Proceedings of the Harvard Conference on the Future of Religious Colleges, October 6-7, 2000* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2002); Finkin, Matthew W. and Robert Post, *For the Common Good: Principles of American Academic Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Hesburgh, Theodore Martin, *The Hesburgh Papers: Higher Values in Higher Education* (Kansas City, Kan.: Andrews and McMeel, 1979); Hunt, John F. and Terrence R. Connelly, *The Responsibility of Dissent: The Church and Academic Freedom* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1970); Manier, Edward, John W. Houck, and University of Notre Dame., *Academic Freedom and the Catholic University* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides Publishers, 1967); May, William W., *Vatican Authority and American Catholic Dissent: The Curran Case and Its Consequences* (New York: Crossroad, 1987); Orsy, Ladislav M., *The Church: Learning and Teaching: Magisterium, Assent, Dissent, Academic Freedom* (Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, 1987); Vigilanti, John Anthony, *Academic Freedom and the Adult Student in Catholic Higher Education*, Original ed. (Malabar, Fla.: Krieger Pub. Co., 1992); Worgul, George S., *Issues in*

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- 7 For an in-depth treatment of this subject, see Pinckaers, Servais, *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995, pp. 327ff).
- 8 See St. Augustine's, *De libero arbitrio*, BK II, ch. 19, whose treatment of the subject is pivotal for the patristic tradition. See also, St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 13, aa. 3-6.

“Walker Percy the Philosopher,”¹ Revisited

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Walker Percy sees our culture as a diseased patient who has already died – perhaps around 1914. The name of the culture was Christendom. The greater difficulty beyond ascertaining death is to name the disease; or, as he says, “if not to isolate the bacillus under the microscope, at least to give the sickness a name, to render the unspeakable speakable.”²

Percy was acutely sensitive to the bacillus, and all the male Percys before him. His biographer Jay Tolson remarked: “The problem, specifically, was depression – a wracking, disabling depression... partly hereditary”³ that engulfed his great-grandfather (suicide), his two uncles (LeRoy accidentally shot himself) and his father who deliberately shot himself after a previous attempt at slashing his wrists. Walker suffered acutely from the same fugues, melancholy and meaninglessness. While in medical school at Columbia, he was seeing a psychotherapist on a regular basis. While interning at Bellevue’s pathology lab, he contracted tuberculosis, was sent to a sanatorium in Saranac Lake, New York. Percy reports: “I lived a strange life then. For weeks I saw no one, except the person who brought me food, on a tray, three times a day, and occasionally a doctor. I read and read.”⁴ What did he read? Thomas Mann, Kafka, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard. He left the sanatorium and the practice of medicine, returned to the south, traveled with Shelby Foote to New Mexico and there expanded his read to Gabriel Marcel, Heidegger, Mounier, Jaspers, and Sartre. Like Kafka, the scientist, he was on the hunt in search of the bacillus that was killing him (and everyone else).

What did he seek? Himself. Not himself in a selfishness of everything “for me,” but the identity and the reality of me as a unique subject; a “me” that did not fit

into any category. He was not, I will argue, in search of abstract thought or immateriality as the key to conceptual knowing, but the unique and un-repeatable “me” that had fallen through the categorical “gaps” of scientific abstraction.

The thesis of Joseph F. Previtali’s “*Walker Percy the Philosopher*” seems to have interpreted Percy’s diagnosis of the malaise as a materialist entrapment that can be cured by an apologetic of immateriality in the human person, and this by the immateriality involved in the semiotics of sign-giving or naming. He writes: “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.”⁵ This would be the traditional neo-scholastic response to the reduction of sensible reality to mere matter and measurement. Percy, indeed, uses the Helen Keller experience of naming the water at the well in Tusculumbia, Alabama as the *eureka* moment when it seems that she has escaped from the dyadic physiology of stimulus (S) – response (R) as the connecting of the Braille symbol for water to the wet liquid. Previtali says: “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.”⁶ And Previtali is led to think that Percy is fixing his attention on the psychic work of abstraction and immaterial conceptualization from whence comes the name. He presumes that Percy’s philosophical perspective is an “Aristotelian/Thomistic metaphysical view.”⁷

He is clearly right in that symbolization has taken place which is a “throwing” (*Ballein*) “together” (*sym*) of name (an abstraction) and individual thing by the

verb “is.” Percy says: “A child points to a flower and says ‘flower.’ One element of the event is the flower as perceived by sight and registered by the brain: blue, five-petaled, of a certain shape; and the spoken word ‘flower,’ a Gestalt of a peculiar little sequence of sounds of larynx vibrations, escape of air between lips and teeth, and so on. **But what is the entity at the apex of the triangle, that which links the other two? Peirce, a difficult, often obscure writer, called it by various names, interpretant, interpreter, judge. I have used the term ‘coupler’ as a minimal designation of that which couples name and thing, subject and predicate, links them by the relation which we mean by the peculiar little word ‘is.’ It, the linking entity, was also called by Peirce ‘mind’ and even ‘soul.’**

“Here is the embarrassment, and it cannot be gotten round, so it might as well be said right out: By whatever name one chooses to call it – interpretant, interpreter, coupler, whatever – it, the third element, is not material.

“It is as real as a cabbage or a king or a neurone, but it is not material. No material structure of neurons, however complex, and however intimately it may be related to the triadic event, can itself assert anything. If you think it can, please draw me a picture of an assertion.

“A material substance cannot name or assert a proposition.

“The initiator of a speech act is an act-or, that is, an agent. The agent is not material”⁸(bold mine).

In this text, Percy is not referring to the work of an immaterial intellect, precisely because “intellects” do not *work*. The agent of the naming is an “interpretant,” a “interpreter,” and a “judge.” The “coupler,” the “namer” is not “the human intellect”⁹ as Previtali suggests. Rather, and in accord with the best of thomistic anthropology where “*actiones sunt suppositorum*,”¹⁰ the coupler or namer is an “**act-or, that is, an agent. The agent is not material.**” Previtali assumes that the coupler is the intellect as “immaterial agent.” Having identified agency with the intellect as a medium of knowing names and not the knower, he then finds himself with the false problem of “*how... the immaterial part of the intellect interacts with our brain matter in the phenomenon of coupling the sign and the signified?*”¹¹ Discovering that Percy does not deal with such a problem because he never entered into it, he suggests that “*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.*” He then goes on to say: “*In this view, the human being is a single substance composed of a unity of body and soul of materiality*

and immateriality... 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.”¹²

I would suggest Percy’s whole endeavor works on a different level, namely, the level of the subject as “I.” Percy’s take on Helen Keller’s discovery in the act of naming the water is not that she discovered thought. Rather, she discovered *herself* – her existential “I” – in the exercise of her subjectivity by “throwing” the sign and at the water and uniting them in “meaning.” She experienced herself as a “thrower,” an agent exercising causality.

Percy’s whole discovery is the act of conjoining of signs with signified by a signifier. His problematic is that there is no sign that can be “thrown” at the sign-user whereby he is signified. “*Semiotically,*” he says, “*the self is literally unspeakable to itself. One cannot speak or hear a word which signifies oneself, as one can speak or hear a word signifying anything else, e.g., apple, Canada, 7-Up. The self of the sign-user can never be grasped, because, once the self locates itself at the dead center of its world, there is no signified to which a signifier can be joined to make a sign. The self has no sign of itself.*”¹³ Hence, the signifier cannot have “substance” as its “name” since the signifier as active agent is irreducibly “I” as in George, or James or Helen. “*You are Ralph to me and I am Walker to you, but you are not Ralph to you and I am not Walker to me*”¹⁴

Karol Wojtyla expressed the need, as we approached the Third Millennium, to undergo this migration of seeing the human person as existential subject rather than as the objectivized mental category, “*rational animal.*”¹⁵ He went on that “*the antinomy of subjectivism vs. objectivism, along with the underlying antinomy of idealism vs. realism, created conditions that discouraged dealing with human subjectivity – for fear that this would lead inevitably to subjectivism.*” But as “*we are seeing a breakdown of that line of demarcation... we can no longer go on treating the human being exclusively as an objective being, but we must also somehow treat the human being as a subject in the dimension in which the specifically human subjectivity of the human being is determined by consciousness. And that dimension would seem to be none other than personal subjectivity.*”¹⁶

Previtali ends by saying that “*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.*”¹⁷ Such a conclusion squares with his thesis that Percy’s discovery is the im-

materiality of the intellect, and therefore the immateriality of the soul that transcends the here and now into immortality.

But, in line with the perspective that Percy is talking about the self not only as immaterial, but more deeply as “subject,” I would submit that Percy’s thesis has much to do with the world of here and now. His explicit complaint and suffering – “the modern malaise” – is the feeling “in the deepest sense possible that something has gone wrong with one’s very self? When one experiences the common complaint of the age, the loss of meaning, purposelessness, loss of identity, of values, and so on?”¹⁸ The partial and temporary solution he proposes points to the recovery of – not immateriality – but of identity... even as “neurotic.”¹⁹ Being able to be named such by the “experts” is an achievement in identity and becomes in this moonscape a glimpse of recovery: “I may be sick but how happy I am when I can present my doctor with a sickness or a symptom or a dream which is recognized as a classical example of such-and-such a neurosis: I am an authentic neurotic.”²⁰

Endnotes

- 1 Joseph F. Previtali, “Walker Percy the Philosopher,” *Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly*, 31, Number 4, Winter 2008, 26–31.
- 2 Walker Percy, “Diagnosing the Modern Malaise,” *Signposts in a Strange Land* ed. Patrick Samway, The Noonday Press, Farrar, Straus, Giroux (1991) 206.
- 3 Jay Tolson, “Pilgrim in the Ruins” Chapel Hill, (1992) 28.
- 4 Robert Coles, “Walker Percy – An American Search” Atlantic-Little Brown (1978) 66–67.
- 5 Previtali, *op. cit.* 29
- 6 Previtali, *op. cit.* 29.
- 7 Previtali, *op. cit.* 29.
- 8 Walker Percy, “The Fateful Rift: The San Andreas Fault in the Modern Mind,” *Signposts in a Strange Land* ed. Patrick Samway, The Noonday Press (1991) 287.
- 9 Previtali, *op. cit.* 29
- 10 S.Th. II-II, 58, 2, Respondeo: “Now actions belong to suppositis and wholes and, properly speaking, not to parts and forms or powers, for we do not say properly that the hand strikes, but a man with his hand, nor that heat makes a thing hot, but fire by heat, although such expressions may be employed metaphorically.”
- 11 Previtali, *op. cit.* 30
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 Walker Percy, “Lost in the Cosmos,” Noonday Press (1996) 106–107.
- 14 *Ibid.* 107.
- 15 Karol Wojtyla, “Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being,” *Person and Community* (1993) 209.
- 16 *Ibid.* 210.
- 17 Previtali, *op. cit.*
- 18 Walker Percy, “Diagnosing the Modern Malaise,” *Signposts... op. cit.* 211.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 *Ibid.*

Is “Beauty” an Objective Reality or Only in the Eye of the Beholder?

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The nature of “Beauty” is a question that has challenged thinkers from antiquity onward right up to our own times. But, before trying to present the problems and, God willing, some answers to the question of beauty, or aesthetics, I should like to start with the question, “What is art?”

The word art, it must be remembered, comes from

the Latin *ars*, akin to the Greek *techne*, which, for the ancients, referred to certain skills. Thus we speak of the art of writing, the art of medicine, the art of building, the art of painting, or the art of flower arrangement, and so on. The object of these “arts” was to make or do things as they ought to be done, *recta ratio factibilium*.

The “fine arts,” as more clearly seen in other languages,—*beaux arts*, *bellas artes*, *schöne Kunst*—deal with the production of beautiful objects, or the appreciation thereof.

To understand our traditional conception of beauty,

we have to go back to the ancient Greeks, who were the first to speculate on the subject from a rational perspective. For Plato, beauty was the splendor of truth, or as he posits in the *Symposium*, beauty is akin to the good—all three being transcendental attributes of the divine essence. These attributes exist absolutely as “archetypes” and all physical manifestations of beauty merely imitate the one divine beauty. Human art, pictures, sculptures etc. are, therefore, “imitations of imitations” and are on the third or lowest level. The true artist, however, through divine “inspiration,” *Thea mania*, makes present the effusions of pure beauty or “divine goodness” and is, according to Plato, on much the same level as the philosopher involved with “divine truth.” Platonic, and Neo-platonic philosophy have had a tremendous influence on Western art, especially in the Renaissance, when the pursuit of evermore rarified experiences of beauty were seen as a means of approaching God; hence the epithets for such geniuses as the “divine” Raphael, the “divine Michelangelo, the “divine” Leonardo. Platonic and Neo-platonic theories of beauty abounded well into the 19th and early 20th century and are, in some circles, currently in vogue again.

For Aristotle, beauty exists in the here and now and points to the elements of symmetry, harmony, and definiteness in a given work or composition. In a true work of art it is not possible either to take away or to add anything, implying that excess and defect destroy the goodness of any work of art. This may be called the “realist” view of beauty as opposed to the Platonic “idealistic” view. This “realist” view is based on the discovery—not invention—by the Greeks, of the underlying geometry and mathematics of the Cosmos. The “Golden Section” —TB:AT :: AT:AB—a ratio found in natural phenomena such as the growth of sea shells became the norm for Greek architects and remained the norm in Western architecture up to the first half of the 20th century. In music, Pythagoras identified the resonance of the strings of instruments in “octaves” and the harmonic fractions that they contained and brought about a rational method of tuning, according to the length of strings, that pleases the human ear. The Greek *Kithara*, a fifteen stringed instrument, was thus tuned according to the theories of Pythagoras to produce different “modes” to augment the aesthetic and emotional range of music beyond the *dithyrambic* [— ∪ ∪ —]—Bacchic meter. (Music, according to Plato, began with the rites of Bacchus and the lewd songs and dances performed in his praise) The Pythagorean classification of harmonious

sounds held sway in the West up to the mid to late 16th century when it was modified—not replaced—by the *tempered scale*. The Greek scale also passed on into Arabic music via the 10th century Muslim philosopher *Al Farabi* and his followers who broke the octave into 24 notes of *equal temperament* but with 7 of these notes to be chosen for a given scale. It would appear that the 7 tone scale, with but slight variations as in the Chinese *pentatonic* scale which leaves out the 3rd and 7th notes, is near universal to the folk music of all peoples.

For the “realist” philosopher, beauty exists in nature or, the created order. For the believer, as man is created in “the image and likeness of God,” he derives pleasure from the infinitely complex but ordered work of the Creator and turns to Him in praise. As for the non-believer, he simply delights in participating via the senses in contemplation of the existing cosmic design of which he forms a part

St. Thomas Aquinas, indebted to Plato and Aristotle, placed beauty in both the supernatural and natural orders. Accordingly, Aquinas acknowledges that “God is beautiful in himself...and the source of all beauty” (Cf. *Commentary on the Divine Names*), but also lists the attributes of beauty to be found in nature. These are proportion, clarity, and integrity. *Proportion*, or the harmony of the parts to the whole and to each other is, based on the mathematical and geometric relationships discovered by the Ancient Greeks; *clarity* refers to the intelligible quality of design, as well as the luminosity of coloration. The concept of *Integrity* follows the Aristotelian proposition that nothing can be added to or taken away from a perfect work of art. St. Thomas taught that beauty is intimately tied to knowledge, and that we form our judgments according to what pleases us. As such, “Carnal people love carnal beauty and spiritual people love spiritual beauty” (*Commentarium in Psalmos*). The subjective element of beauty, therefore, involves discernment, not opinion.

St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas’s contemporary, in order to bridge the Platonic “ideal” and Aristotelian “real” referred to this autonomous natural beauty as the *vestigia* or “imprint” of the divine on the created order which brings about delight and praise. For a modern day realist philosopher, the late Joseph Pieper, “Beauty is the glow of the true and the good that shines forth from every ordered state of being” (*The Four Cardinal Virtues*).

The modern subjectivisation of art can, I believe, be traced back to René Descartes who in his 1641 *Discourse on Method*, uttered his famous “*je pense donc*

je suis.”—I think therefore I am—thereby moving the concept of truth from observed reality to the mind of the individual thinker. Although Descartes was not interested in aesthetics, a corollary to “truth being in the mind of the thinker, would be, “beauty is in the mind (eye) of the beholder.

Immanuel Kant, following Descartes’s estrangement from reality, actually proposed this subjective approach to beauty in his *Critique of Judgment*, in that the aesthetic experience is purely subjective and takes place within the mind. The feelings of pleasure derived from the aesthetic experience do not derive from the object observed but from one’s own refinement of individual taste in order to achieve an experience of the sublime. “If a man does not find a work of art beautiful, a hundred voices praising it will not force his innermost agreement.”

G.W.F. Hegel, writing his *Aesthetics* in the early 19th century, locates the beautiful in the realm of “art” excluding it from nature entirely, and submits it to a historical process, which is also a process of gradual dematerialization and subjectification. For Hegel, external nature is inanimate and inert. Art for its part is “born of the spirit and born again.” For him, art, is higher than nature for it represents the manifestation of “*Geist*” (spirit) in a self-splitting, self-readjusting, and self-reunifying progression toward the “Absolute.” Man, the artist, creates by this process ever new “epiphanies of beauty.” Beauty, then for Hegel is neither an eternal given nor present in nature; it is the procession of the spirit through time as made manifest by individual men of genius in every age.¹ For Hegel, the artist, not the priest, is the *pontifex* between the natural and evolving supernatural order. Hence the importance of aesthetics in the Hegelian system.

The influence of Hegel on modern thought in general and art theory in particular can not be overstated. ★ This school of thought is not only the underlying philosophy of modern abstract movements in art, but, has produced the cult of creativity, spontaneity, innovation, and originality as the criteria for judging what is, or what is not “art.”

But, who are these artists, and who is now to say, what is art and what is beauty? It would appear that the artists with the most “*Chutzpah*” take the lead and a self-promoting and inbred establishment of experts, academics, museum directors, and gallery owners, have arisen to point out and promote the chosen ones within, of course, the guidelines of the on-going dialectic. By the end of the 19th century artists no longer looked to nature for inspiration, but into a spiritual order be-

yond nature—a new form of mysticism tied to the evolving spirit.²

It started in Europe with such “Theosophical abstractionists” as Kandinsky, Malevich and Mondrian as “thesis” while the fragmentation of nature by the “Cubists” Braque and Picasso, along with the “Fauves” (wild beasts) Derain, Matisse and de Vlaminck served as “antitheses.” There was the 1917 Armory Show in New York displaying “Dadaist,” Marcel Duchamp’s “Urinal” to “*épater le bourgeois*” (shock the middle class) and break down traditional aesthetic values and thus pave the way in America.

Following the Second World War, such experts as Clement Greenberg, Harold Rosenberg, and Leo Steinberg, redefined art for the so called, “Modern Age.” Rosenberg spoke of the “purities,” “opticalities,” and “formal factors” of art” espoused by a select group of “Abstractionist” Bohemians, mainly in New York City, as “thesis” while Rosenberg espoused the “action painting” of Jackson Pollock and De Kooning et al. as “antithesis.” Steinberg introduced Pop Art, as a “synthesis,” but that never really took hold. He is best remembered for his pithy aphorisms such as, “All great art looks ugly at first.” The modernist movement “must applaud the destruction of values we still cherish,” and Modern art, “must transmit this anxiety to the spectator.”³ As the general public was left clueless as to what was going on, a new art market emerged, manipulated by the self-proclaimed “experts” that appealed to wealthy patrons wishing to cash in on this gnostic “wave of the future.”⁴ Individuals and investment firms have invested billions in this highly dubious market. Paintings by Pollock, Rothko and de Kooning et al. until recently, fetched prices in the millions and tens of millions of dollars. The collapse of these investments will predictably be in an order of magnitude equal to Bear Sterns and Bernie Madoff.

At the moment—the beginning of 2009—*avant-garde* art, as seen in the prestigious galleries and periodicals, is polarized between “*Eros*” with a proliferation of “art works” depicting joyless mechanical sex, and “*Thanatos*” the “culture of death” as in von Hagen’s “Body Works” featuring plasticized corpses in grotesque positions. Where will the dialectic now take us? Nobody knows because, according to the theory, anything goes, as propelled onward and upward by the march of the “*Zeitgeist*” (spirit). Unfortunately, rather than onward and upward to the “Absolute,” present trends point rather towards barbarism and the demise of aesthetics and Western values on all fronts.

There is, however, a renewed interest and concern among prominent religious figures, led by His Holiness Benedict XVI and even secular thinkers, regarding the relativisation of truth, beauty, and traditional morality. How this will affect the arts, remains to be seen..⁵

Endnotes

1. See: Alain Besançon, *The Forbidden Image* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) Chapter six, for a resume of the aesthetics of Kant and Hegel.
* Hegel's philosophy was not only influenced by such thinkers as Descartes, Kant, Fichte and Schelling, but by the German Romantic milieu and Pietist circles in which he lived, and, as shown by the contents of his library, the writings of such occult and Hermetic thinkers as Paracelsus, Agrippa Von Nettesheim Giordano Bruno, and Jacob Böehme, as well as the Kabbalists, Oetinger and Knorr Von Rosenroth. He also was involved, off and on, with Rosicrucianism and theosophical Masonry.

2. Carl Jung, *Man and his Symbols* (NY: Doubleday, 1964) Part 4 by Aniele Jaffe, esp. p. 264
See also: *The Spiritual in Art : Abstract Painting 1895—1985* (New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Abbeville Press, 1985)
3. Tom Wolfe, *The Painted Word* (NY: Bantam, 1965) Chapters 4, 5
4. The following is a typical example of the mystifying Hegelian style of contemporary art criticism:
Referring to some limestone abstract sculptures, Burton Wasserman wrote for *Art Matters* in 1996, "The limestone carvings of Bradford Graves are a celebration of profound perplexity and mystery. They explain themselves neither quickly nor easily. Instead, they invite deliberately paced intellectual search and spiritual speculation... Stimulating the exercise of imagination, the sculptures challenge to invent their own relevant meanings... these silent pieces of chiseled rock plumb the sublime. In their unique way they illuminate mystical depths... there is a growing coterie of admirers able to appreciate the majesty implicit in Graves language of form."
5. The Jan. 2009 issue of the prestigious *New Criterion* magazine, edited by Hilton Kramer, a former art critic for the *New York Times* and guru of the *avant garde*, is most interesting in this respect.

A Religion of Spirit and Flesh

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Not long ago, I read an article about cremation by Rabbi Marc Gellman of "God Squad" fame, (cf. *View of Cremation Varies Widely Among Religions* by Rabbi Marc Gellman, Tribune Media Services). It was in response to a question from a Protestant woman in Florida who had written to ask, "Is it acceptable for a Christian to be cremated, or must my husband and I be buried?" Rabbi Gellman replied that generally it is allowable for Christians to be cremated, but that on a personal level he is "...vigorously opposed to cremation and especially so if the intention is to scatter the ashes somewhere. I have seen and I know the spiritual value of a grave. A grave is a place where mourners can come before holidays and on special occasions to pay their respects and focus their memories."

First of all, let me say that I completely accept the Church's *allowance* for cremation. The Church speaks directly on this in the *Code of Canon Law*, which is the official listing of the laws of the Church. The following is the quotation from the relevant canon (#1176 paragraph 3) in the Code on cremation. "The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burying the bodies of the deceased be observed, nevertheless, the Church does not prohibit cremation unless it was chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine."

One obvious example of a reason "contrary to Christian doctrine" would be a person being cremated because of a lack of belief in the resurrection of the body.

The reason the Rabbi Gellman's article resonates with me so deeply is that I have a very "incarnational" sense of life, death, and religion. This is one of the things I most love about our Catholic Faith. Catholics are not deconstructionists and we see the reality that we are not purely spiritual beings like angels, but rather that we are body-soul composites. Not only the soul, but also the body is important and good. It is constitutive of the human person. Originally, we were never meant to be without it. Now, because of the effects of original sin, we will be without it for a time, but only until the Second Coming of our Lord. Our Lord gives us a preview of this in His risen and glorified body and we get a glimpse of it as well in Our Lady's Assumption. At the end of her earthly life, God took the Mary into heaven body and soul. We have to wait for this reality, but, as we state each Sunday in the Creed, we believe in the resurrection of the body for ourselves as well. Not only that, but those who die in God's grace and friendship will have glorified bodies, with magnificent characteristics and properties. The fact is, the current state of separation of body and soul at death is a very unnatural state and also a temporary one.

God imprints the "Incarnational Principle" throughout His Creation and throughout the Church.

It is imprinted most especially in His own Incarnation (cf. Gospel of John 1 Prologue, 1John. 1: 1-4). Even in terms of Sacred Scripture, the Incarnational Principle is at work. The Holy Spirit does not simply drop the books of the Bible from the sky (though He surely could have), but rather, inspires human authors to write what He wants them to write, while making full use of their own talents, personalities, and experiences, to convey His eternal truths.

I love the fact that the Incarnational Principle is in play in Catholic art and architecture. We Catholics are not iconoclasts. That heresy was condemned rather early in the Church's history. Rather, we have always realized that depictions of God and of sacred persons, places, and things can help us to come to a greater love and knowledge of Him. It is not that they replace the Creator, but that they help us creatures (albeit creatures in His image and likeness) to raise our minds and hearts to Him. We make full use of physical matter and so does God. Physical matter and the spirit are both good.

This Incarnational Principle at work in the Church and in creation corresponds to our nature. It is how Jesus established the sacraments, which give us spiritual gifts through physical signs. It is why our church architecture, church music, and sacred art, etc. should be beautiful, not simply pragmatic or functional. It is why we pray and worship with body and soul. It influences why we do things like genuflecting, folding our hands, making the Sign of the Cross, using holy water, bowing, etc. That is, what one does with his body can and very often does affect the state of his soul.

Many heresies have fallen under the general category of "body bad, spirit good" (the genus here is "dualism," the individual species are legion). This dualistic mentality is not Christian and certainly not Catholic-Christian.

One of Jesus' signs noted in Scripture that is both interesting and sacramental, as well as Incarnational, is the manner in which Christ restores the eyesight of the

man born blind. In working this miracle, Christ spits into dirt, thereby making mud. Then he rubs the mud on the man's eyes and he is made to see (cf. Jn 9). Did Jesus have to work this miracle in this manner? Certainly he did not. He chose to do it this way, I think, because he is intending to show us something of the sacraments, i.e. invisible graces given through physical signs. He is working out a healing, both physical and spiritual, through material means. He knows that this sacramentality is helpful to us. It is helpful to us because it corresponds to our human nature.

For the same reason, I think that burial of the dead and reverence for the body, even after death, are important. Both correspond well with a sacramental way of looking at things—of looking at life and of looking at death. Belief in the resurrection of the body teaches us not to be dismayed by the deaths of those who became blind, lame, and possibly even disfigured either early or later in life. The body will be restored in all its magnificence.

Reverence for the body, including the burial of the dead, shows that no matter what, the body in union with the soul was and is always a gift. I think this was one of the great lessons that Pope John Paul II taught us in his teaching on the *Theology of the Body*, and through his own example as a "suffering servant" in his latter years. There are many others, perhaps people we know personally, who teach us this as well.

I think that reverence for the body after death helps family and friends to pray for the deceased. I think it also helps remind people to pray for themselves and their family members who are still alive. And finally, the reverence and burial of the body can help to pave the way for the fervent hope that when God raises our bodies, they will be glorious and beautiful beyond belief, that they will have power, given by Christ, beyond our wildest imaginings. And that when this happens, God's definitive victory over death will be consummated and *God will be all, in all* (1 Cor. 15:28)!

Same-Sex Marriage and Religious Liberty

Same-Sex Marriage and Religious Liberty: Emerging Conflicts, edited by Douglas Laycock, Anthony R. Picarello, Jr., and Robin Fretwell Wilson. Washington, D.C.: The Becket Fund and Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008, xi-xiv+ 327pp.

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In 2005 the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty sponsored a workshop of legal scholars—Douglas Laycock, Anthony R. Picarello, Jr., Robin Fretwell Wilson, Marc Stern, Jonathan Turley, Douglas Kmiec, Chai R. Feldblum, and Charles R. Reid, Jr.—to discuss the impact that legalizing same-sex marriage might have on the exercise of religious liberty. The present volume contains the studies produced by this group of scholars. Editor Picarello contributes an “Introduction,” editor Laycock an “Afterword,” and editor Wilson one of the six intervening chapters authored by the other scholars who participated. It is an exceptionally important work demanding careful study, analysis, critique, and commentary.

Here I first provide a “summary overview” of the volume, and follow this with an analysis and critique of the chapters contributed by Wilson, Feldman, Reid and of Laycock’s “Afterword,” insofar as I consider them more in need of further study than the other contributions. Stern’s chapter is of great importance, but in the “summary overview” I consider it and its significance in some depth. “Concluding Reflections” bring this review essay to an end.

A Summary Overview

Editor Picarello offers a summary of the book’s contents in his helpful “Introduction” (xi-xiv). I here make use of his summaries but expand

them with texts from individual authors and comments of my own.

Marc Stern (“Same-Sex Marriage and the Churches,” 1-57) identifies potential church-state conflicts if same-sex marriage is legalized, including “restrictions on speech against same-sex marriage in public employment and educational contexts, and elsewhere in the public square, the withholding of licenses and accreditations from professionals and institutions that oppose same-sex marriage, and civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and education” (Picarello, p. xii). Stern reviews 5 potential problem areas: I. The freedom to preach in the church, public schools, elsewhere in the public square (pp. 2-19); II. Licensing and registration of entities opposed to same-sex marriage (pp. 19-24); III. Eligibility for and conditions attached to government funding of institutions so opposed (pp. 24-25); IV. Expansion of existing civil rights laws regarding employment, housing, access to public property, etc. (pp. 25-56); and V. Whether the Religious Freedom Restoration Act or Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment will insulate individuals objecting to application of civil rights laws in ways that burden religious exercise (p. 56). In conclusion he notes that the conflicts he explored “unfolded in a world without same-sex marriage,” and adds “its legalization would represent the triumph of an egalitarian-based ethic over a faith-based one, and not just legally. The question is whether champions of tolerance are prepared to tolerate proponents of a different ethical vision. I think the answer will be no” (pp. 56-57). Stern’s chapter, the longest in the book, is very valuable but needs no further analysis. He clearly worries that legalizing same-sex marriage will severely restrict the free exercise of religion. It seems to me that subsequent contributions fully warrant Stern’s worries, particularly today in the changed political climate brought about by the 2008 presidential and congressional elections.

Jonathan Turley (“An Unholy Union: Same-Sex Marriage and Use of Governmental Programs to Penalize Religious Groups with Unpopular Practices,” pp. 59-76) focuses on government denial of tax exemption to religious organizations and barring unpopular groups from publicly funded charity sites. He argues that the Supreme Court, whose reasoning up to now

is muddled, should “resolve ambiguities arising from legalizing same-sex marriage strongly in favor of the freedoms of expressive association and religious exercise, in part to assure a genuine diversity in civil society of competing views on controverted questions” (Picarello, p. xii). Turley, a strong supporter of gay rights and same-sex marriage, nonetheless believes “strongly that the government should not use tax policy or charity funds to discriminate against groups on the basis of their religious views or practices” (p. 60). He thinks that cultural changes caused by same-sex marriage “will depend on greater, not lesser, protection of speech and association on both sides of the same-sex marriage debate” (p.76).

Robin Fretwell *Wilson* (“Matters of Conscience: Lessons for Same-Sex Marriage from the Healthcare Context,” pp. 77–102) “draws on an analogous experience from the healthcare context...to predict the kinds of religious liberty conflicts that will arise out of same-sex marriage...and to offer some constructive potential solutions to those conflicts.” Focusing on limits to conscience in healthcare sparked by refusals to dispense emergency contraceptives, Wilson thinks that history “suggests that proponents of same-sex marriage may seek to harness the power of state and federal governments to withhold funding streams and tax exemptions....[and thus] transform a negative right to be free from government interference in the controverted activity...into a positive right to support for that activity. That history also suggests that ‘conscience clauses’ and other legislative and regulatory exemptions can go a long way toward reducing the number and severity of conflicts between same-sex marriage and religious liberty” (Picarello, pp. xii–xiii). Wilson admits that legalizing same-sex marriage leaves policy makers “with the...thorny task of weighing two sets of interests: the dignitary interests of same-sex couples and the moral and religious convictions of potential objectors.” After suggesting compromising policies not likely to be accepted by either side, she notes that States could take (a) a win-lose approach elevating the interests of one or the other side or (b) a do nothing policy. Deeming (b) the worst option, she indicates that if the action taken against Catholic Charities in Massachusetts after mandating adoption for gay couples is any indication, “policy makers will opt for a winning solution for same-sex couples and a losing one for those who oppose such unions on moral and religious grounds” (pp. 101–102). This important paper verifies Stern’s fears, suggests some constructive ways to protect religious liberty, and merits further study that will follow below.

Douglas *Kmiec* (“Same-Sex Marriage and the Coming Antidiscrimination Campaigns Against Religion, 103–121) identifies “some considerations that could conceivably enable religious institutions to prevail in those conflicts, whether politically or judicially,” but admits the job will be difficult. If “jurisdictions begin to follow the California Supreme Court’s finding that sexual orientation is a highly protected classification, Kmiec predicts that state-level tax exemptions will be particularly vulnerable to attack” (Picarello, p. xiii). Kmiec’s contribution is very narrow in scope: exemption from tax exemption for churches opposing same-sex marriage. He stresses that any right to same-sex marriage assumes one answer to a disputed question, namely that same-sex marriage is equivalent to traditional marriage (pp. 103–121). I think there is growing evidence, despite the 2008 referendum in California, that soon this equivalence will be legally mandated. It should be noted that the liberal Federal District Court 9 has agreed to consider that referendum to determine whether or not it violates the California Constitution. Kmiec’s paper is narrow in scope and does not address several major possible conflicts identified by Stern.

Chai R. *Feldblum* (“Moral Conflict and Conflicting Liberties,” 123–156) focuses on the kind of constitutional analysis that should be used in adjudicating potential conflicts. Although liberty interests on both sides of the debate are genuine, she holds that “one of the interests must ultimately prevail at the expense of the other.” A strong supporter of sexual liberty and same-sex marriage, she argues that on her preferred analysis “claims of freedom to observe religious beliefs should not be treated any differently than those based on analogous secular beliefs and should rarely, if ever, prevail over claims of sexual liberty” (Picarello, pp. xiii–xiv). Her contention that the liberty to practice religious and secular identity beliefs must yield to protecting the liberty of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual persons (LGBT) needs to be challenged. She clearly thinks that the liberty of churches and church members publicly to express opposition to same-sex unions must be denied, although she thinks that some scope for “limited exceptions” to this denial can possibly be carved out (pp. 123–156). Her paper requires further study and critique.

Charles J. *Reid, Jr.* (“Marriage: Its Relationship to Religion, Law, and the State,” 157–188) “critically examines a proposed solution to some of these conflicts, which is to disjoin legal and religious marriage.... The history [of the institution of marriage in Anglo-American culture] suggests that any attempt at separating

them completely would create an extreme discontinuity... Reid argues that... disjoining legal and religious marriage appears undesirable and unworkable, if not simply incoherent” (Picarello, p. xiv). Reid’s important essay “serves two essential purposes. First it provides a historical context to contemporary debates decoupling the legal regulation of marriage from its roots in a Christian order.... Second [it] seeks to demonstrate the ultimate unworkability of a radical separation of religion and law on the subject of marriage” (157). Reid shows that from the 12th century on marriage was defined in Anglo-American culture in legal categories shaped by Christian theological insight. His review of the Christian sources of American law on marriage reveals a consistency from the 12th century to the last 2 or 3 decades of the twentieth (150-176). His conclusion is that the separation of marriage from religion is far more difficult than might appear. He argues that “all marriage has a religious dimension that is probably unavoidable” and is recognized in some way in practically all societies throughout the world. “Marriage is a commitment that embraces not only the good of the parties but points to... society’s sense of the ultimate” and law itself has both an educational and religious dimension (p. 187). His essay is another meriting closer examination and analysis.

Laycock’s “Afterword” (pp. 188-207) divides “the conflicts between religious and sexual liberty into the avoidable... and the unavoidable. He evaluates the contrasting approaches for resolving these conflicts offered by Feldblum (sexual liberty almost always prevails) and Wilson (religious liberty prevails if the same-sex couple can obtain services elsewhere), ultimately aligning with Wilson. He also critiques Reid’s opposition to the separation of legal and religious marriage.... and concludes that the separation is not only possible but desirable” (Picarello, p. xiv). I found his critique of Reid challenging, especially his statement, “The state has no business imposing a single answer to that question [the nature of marriage]” (p. 207). His essay demands further study.

Analysis and Critique of the Contributions of Wilson, Feldblum, Reid, and Laycock.

Wilson (“Matters of Conscience: Lessons for Same-Sex Marriage from the Healthcare Context,” 77-102) explores dilemmas facing churches, clergy, state officials, and private individuals

who in conscience can neither *support* nor *participate* in same-sex marriages (80). An advocate of such unions, Wilson believes that demand for them will trigger a “torrent of litigation” that legislatures should deflect with accommodations as they did after *Roe* with respect to abortion with health care services (80). Note her narrow focus: *support of and participation in same-sex unions*. Because of this narrow focus Wilson ignores most of the serious threats to the exercise of religious liberty that Stern had identified in his opening essay, e.g., the right to *preach, teach* and *publish articles* that same-sex unions are invalid and illicit.

She thinks “the possibility of a church (as opposed to a religious organization) losing its federal tax exempt status may be remote *in the current political climate* [emphasis added],” but admits that churches “are not wholly exempt from the IRS reach....” This possibility in fact “cannot be ignored.... Churches and religious groups have reason to worry” (89). Even at the time Wilson wrote, what she had to say was not too encouraging for the protection of some First Amendment rights. Moreover, the “political climate” during the Obama administration is certain to worsen in this area. I will consider the significance of this below.

Wilson thinks that lessons from the healthcare conscience clauses [e.g., the protections afforded health care persons, including nurses, doctors, medical schools by the Church and Weldon amendments of 1973 and 2001 respectively after *Roe*; see 85-86] *can* help avoid clashes over refusal to support or participate in same-sex unions *if* state legislatures act to protect the right to refuse on the part of churches, clergy, state officials [justices of the peace], and even private individuals [florists who might refuse to supply flowers for same-sex unions] (94-99). If a state official asked to solemnize a same-sex marriage refuses, “states may conclude that if there is another celebrant in a specified time period or geographical area who will marry the couple, the objecting celebrant should be allowed to refuse.” If not, “the denial is tantamount to a denial of access to marriage” and states might then be forced to choose between barring conscientious refusals entirely or providing a hardship exception for the objecting clerk. Wilson suggests ways that states might provide such an exception (99-100). Nonetheless, she admits that if the action taken against Catholic Charities in Massachusetts after mandating adoption for gay couples is any indication “policy makers will opt for a winning solution for same-sex couples and a losing one for those who oppose such unions on moral and religious grounds” (101-102).

This hardly bodes well for respecting the First Amendment rights of opponents of same-sex marriage.

But what about the “political atmosphere?” It has been dramatically changed by the recent election. Obama seeks to remove the protection of the conscience of healthcare personnel who regard abortion as morally repugnant, thus forcing such personnel to act in violation of their own conscientious objections. He is also prepared to sign the badly named “Freedom of Conscience Act” (FOCA) that would eliminate every restriction on abortion democratically enacted since *Roe v. Wade*. It thus seems to me that the Church and Weldon Amendments to which Wilson appeals to protect the “conscience rights” of medical personnel, including medical schools, to refuse participation in abortion (see below) will be of little avail in the years ahead. I likewise think that Wilson’s suggestions for protecting the right of conscientious objection to abortion and to same-sex marriage, even given her extremely narrow focus, will not be adopted so long as Obama is president and legislators favorably disposed to the “liberties” of domestic partners and same-sex couples are dominating forces in Congress and the various states. An administration staffed with personnel so dedicated and a Congress poised to pass the FOCA act will surely not respect the consciences of those opposed to abortion or same-sex marriage.

In fact, recently a former student’s husband, who is an army surgeon with the rank of major, consulted me with a serious moral problem he is facing. He says that one of Obama’s first acts as president will be to order army hospitals to perform abortions—at present by presidential order they are not so permitted. He told me that he thought he would in conscience have to resign his commission if this occurred, and it is most likely that it will, and passage of FOCA would coerce him and other medical personnel (and hospitals, including Catholic hospitals) to perform abortions or go out of business so that he could not be given an exemption from the executive order in face of FOCA.

Feldblum (“Moral Conflict and Conflicting Liberties,” 123-156) distinguishes between an “identity liberty,” (e.g., the liberty of a gay couple to have sex and to marry), and a “belief liberty,” (e.g., the liberty of a Christian couple to refuse to rent rooms either to cohabiting unmarried heterosexual couples or to cohabiting homosexual couples) (123-124)—and whether a belief liberty stems from a religious or secular source is irrelevant (129-130). She thinks a “serious conflict exists between laws intended to protect the [“identity”]

liberty of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people so that they may live lives of dignity and integrity and the religious beliefs [a “belief” liberty] of some individuals whose conduct is regulated by such laws” (124-126).

She believes, correctly in my judgment, that we must admit that *moral assessments* underlie civil rights laws. She thinks false the claim that it is not for the government to decide moral issues, like same-sex marriage and LGBT sexual activity. Passage of a law based on a moral assessment different from one’s own can impose a burden on a person’s “belief identity” if this law requires “that an individual *act*, or *refrain from acting*, in a manner that the individual can credibly claim undermines his or her core beliefs and sense of self” (130-135).

Feldblum acknowledges that “belief liberty” “could be assumed under identity liberty,” and is often conflated with rights protected by the First Amendment (140). But she thinks that analyzing “belief liberty” and “identity liberty” under the Due Process clause of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments—as Justice Souter did in *Washington v. Glucksburg*—rather than under the First Amendment allows us to order our priorities and that if we do so we will discover that “identity liberty” trumps “belief liberty.” Using this approach she claims that “If the ‘justifying principle’ of the legislation is to protect the liberty [=identity liberty] of LGBT people to live freely and safely in all parts of society, *it is perfectly reasonable* for a legislature not to provide any exemption [based on a “belief liberty”] that will cordon off a significant segment of society from the nondiscrimination prohibition” (emphasis added) (149-150). Exemptions for business owners, service providers, employers, etc. would leave LGBT people “vulnerable to surprise discrimination” (153). Thus “society must come down on the side of protecting the identity liberty of LGBT people,” and the reasons given by the state for doing so must reflect the public good. She claims that “ensuring that members of the public who have a morally neutral characteristic will be able to live without fear of or vulnerability to discrimination based on that characteristic certainly seems to be a reason that reflects the public good” (152-153).

However, and this I think somewhat remarkable, Feldblum thinks some “limited exceptions” are possible. The first concerns “enterprises engaged in by belief communities...specifically designed to inculcate values in the next generation (schools, day care centers etc).” She thinks that a subset of such enterprises should be exempted if they meet the following criteria: “the

enterprise must present itself clearly and explicitly as designed to inculcate a set of beliefs; the beliefs must be clearly set forth as being inconsistent with a belief that homosexuality is morally neutral, and the enterprise *must seek to enroll only individuals who wish to be inculcated with such beliefs*" (154; emphasis added). The second concerns *leadership* positions in such enterprises, especially those religiously affiliated, e.g. hospitals, adoption agencies etc. "Such leaders must be able to articulate the enterprises' beliefs and values" (155). While it is "essential that we not privilege moral beliefs that are religiously based over other sincerely held core beliefs.... we should do the best we can...to protect both identity liberty and belief liberty to the greatest extent possible" (156).

Feldblum's essay rests on the assumption that LGBT people have a right to marry equal to that of heterosexual couples and that their sexual activity ought not only to be decriminalized but also acknowledged as just as morally good as heterosexual marital acts. It also assumes that legally acknowledging this and protecting the "identity liberty" of LGBT people by simultaneously restricting the "belief liberty" of those opposing same-sex marriage serves the public good. Note that her "exemption" for religious schools (and this embraces grade and high schools, colleges and universities) requires that "only individuals who wish to be inculcated with such beliefs be enrolled," and this is surely *not* true of Catholic institutions of this kind today—many non-Catholics want to attend these Catholic educational institutions because they are much better at educating their students than are many public school systems. A critical analysis of her essay, in my judgment, ought to invoke the difference between a "liberty right" and a "right in the strict sense," a critically important distinction well described by John Finnis in his discussion of "Hohfeldian" rights in his *Natural Law and Natural Rights*.

Finally, the "limited exceptions" Feldblum defends may well be most difficult to carve out in the new "political climate." Reid ("Marriage: Its Relationship to Religion, Law, and the State," 157-188) is very important. I summarized pp. 157-176 above; in them he showed that traditionally in Western civilization and particularly in Anglo-American history marriage was regarded as "a divine institution." Here I focus on the section "Marriage and the State" (176-187) and on his "Conclusion" (187-188).

In "Marriage and the State" Reid argues (1) that marriage is inherently religious, (2) that law teaches

values, and (3) that law has a religious dimension. Regarding (1) he reviews the work of the agnostic anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski whose studies clearly demonstrated the centrality of religious belief for human society and its transcendent significance. According to Malinowski "marriage in all human societies is regarded as a sacrament" in the sense that all human societies have attached symbolic significance to the act of joining persons in marriage. He warned against the danger inherent in completely secularizing marriage, a trend he noted in the early 1950s and seemingly coming to pass today (176-179).

With respect to (2) Reid calls attention to Mary Ann Glendon's book on *Rights Talk* in which she severely criticizes those lawyers and jurists who have miseducated the American people by failing to inform them of law's intrinsic duty to teach values and uphold those moral norms whose observance is necessary for protecting the common good. Her methodology, applied to marriage, shows us "the primacy of marriage in the ordering of society. Marriage was so important that it was consistently explained and justified by reference to the ultimate and the divine....part of the divine plan for the world...supremely important to social well being" (180-181). Marriage was never regarded as a creation of the state because its existence predated the state and was "something that state authorities were charged with conserving" (182). This is in stark contrast to the claim Massachusetts' legislators made when they sanctioned same-sex marriage by asserting that the state "creates" marriage. (182-183).

To support (3) Reid cites the work of legal scholars Harold Berman and John Noonan. Berman noted that "religion is not only a set of doctrines and exercises; it is people manifesting a collective concern for the ultimate meaning and purpose of life...a shared intuition of and commitment to transcendent values" (183). If viewed in purely secular terms, as a utilitarian or instrumentalist product, law fails to conform to human nature and gains its force only through the threat and use of coercive force, not by virtue of its intrinsic truth and reasonableness. Reid thinks this view of law "will ultimately prove unworkable because so conceived law does not command respect and allegiance" (184-185). He believes that the "not-so-hidden danger in these claims [justifying same-sex marriage] is precisely...the replacement of norms that reflect deeply held convictions of right and wrong with a series of second-order instrumentalist claims" (186). Moreover, as John Noonan emphasized, a believer who relies on religious

belief to reach a particular public policy position “does nothing different from any conscientious citizen or politician who consults the source of truth he holds in highest regard” (186).

Reid concludes that all marriage has a religious dimension that is probably unavoidable; moreover, the truths or lessons that law teaches and that lawgivers seek to inculcate must, if they are to be respected, appeal to a substantive vision of the good, a transcendent understanding of right and wrong (187–188). From this it follows that separating legal marriage from religious marriage is undesirable and unworkable if not utterly incoherent. I think that from this it also follows that it is a tragic error to sanction same-sex unions as marriage.

In his *Afterword, 189–207*, Douglas Laycock stresses that the six contributors to the volume (Stern, Turley, Kmiec, Wilson, Feldblum, Reid), although on different sides of the debate, agree that same-sex marriage threatens religious liberty. By doing so they are, he thinks, both wrong because both religious minorities (who oppose same-sex marriage) and sexual minorities (who clamor for it) “need space in order to live their own lives according to their own beliefs, values, and identity.” His major claim is that they can. A model for letting them do so is the Equal Access Act that guarantees the right of student clubs such as gay rights clubs and evangelical religious clubs to meet in the country’s secondary schools (189). Laycock thinks we should enact gay rights laws and religious exemptions so that champions of religious liberty can continue to express *their* disapproval of, and opposition to, such laws but nonetheless cannot stop gay activists from exercising *their* right to marry (190).

He distinguishes between “avoidable conflict” (192–194) and “unavoidable conflict” (193–197). He is convinced that “in principle we can create private spaces in which each side can live its own values. Such a commitment to live and let live is the essence of civil liberty” (192). He thinks that *if* same-sex marriage were legalized and *if* each side would refrain from seeking to prevent the other from all forms of opposition, then “large bodies of litigation would disappear” and major conflicts would be avoidable (194).

There will inevitably be conflicts in issuing licenses, conducting weddings, which involve printers, caterers, photographers, lodging for honeymoons, etc. Same-sex couples will meet reluctance or refusal to serve their needs from small businesses, individual officials, and others. Then “either the same-sex couple must find

another merchant or another landlord or the traditionally religious merchant or landlord must violate deeply felt moral obligations. These conflicts are thus unavoidable” (196). But Laycock thinks them “manageable.” He firmly insists that same-sex unions be legally recognized, and he advises their religious opponents to enlist the help of “liberal” religionists who support gay rights in order to preserve peace on the larger issues and work out compromises where possible (197). I think it unlikely that this advice will be welcomed by those who oppose same-sex marriage on “religious” grounds.

In attempting to “balance interests” (197–201) Laycock basically follows Wilson’s solution. In communities where many merchants refuse to serve same-sex couples a public notice requirement is necessary to avoid the burden imposed on such couples in searching for a merchant who will serve them. But even with such notice, if the burden becomes severe, merchants should be compelled to serve despite their convictions. Their “right to moral integrity is outweighed by the same-sex couple’s right to live in the community with their *moral* commitments” (199).

Churches have no reason to worry. Let them marry only according to their own understanding of marriage (Catholic, Baptist, etc.). But individuals who refuse cooperation with same-sex couples because it violates their conscience can do so *only* when refusal does not matter because someone else will perform the desired service. Religious dissenters can live *their* own values, they have no right to prevent same-sex couples from living *theirs* (200).

Laycock rejects Reid’s view. He insists that we separate “civil”—or better “legal”—marriage and “religious” marriage and that doing so will allow members of both sides to live and let live. In fact, he thinks we should drop the term “marriage” when referring to legal unions (such as those of same-sex couples) and call them “civil unions” (203). For him the state creates marriage and makes it mean what it means.

It is highly ironic, and will not, I am confident, please ardent advocates of same-sex marriage, that Laycock prefers to call them “unions” and not “marriages.” He assumes and never shows why society must legally recognize such “unions” or “marriages.” But he argues that if they are recognized legally as they should be individuals who repudiate them because they violate their consciences ought under certain conditions to be compelled to “serve” the needs of same-sex couples. He notes that in the past and at present civil laws have declared marriages of heterosexual couples null if they

have never been consummated (202). but says nothing regarding the “consummation” of same-sex unions. The reason is that there is no specific act by which they could do so (on this see, e.g., John Finnis, “Law, Morality, and ‘Sexual Orientation,’” *Notre Dame Law Review* 69 [1997] 97–134; Patrick Lee and Robert P. George, “What Sex Can Be: Self-Alienation, Illusion, or One-Flesh Union,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 42 [1997] 135–158).

Laycock in no way answers the *arguments* Reid marshaled to show the religious significance of marriage and its relationship to the law. He simply dismisses this view. Perhaps today, however, when many people think that consent to marry is consent to live as a married couple so long as each is satisfied in doing so but not when one or the other is no longer satisfied, Laycock is on to something. The Catholic Church does not and cannot regard as valid “marriages” based on that kind of commitment no more than it does or can regard same-sex unions as “marriages.” It is instructive here, I believe, to consult Jessie Bernard’s *The Future of Marriage*, originally published in 1972 and revised in 1982. In one of its key chapters Bernard said that central to a marriage is the kind of commitment made by the man and the woman, and she described in some detail such contemporary commitments as the “commitment to help each other grow, even if this means that they grow apart,” a commitment quite different from that commitment to have and to hold, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.”

Concluding Comments

Of the six contributors to this volume three—Turley, Wilson, and Feldblum—and editor Laycock are ardent champions of same-sex marriage and in certain circumstances want to deny or curtail the liberty of individuals (and for some, even that of religious organizations) to refuse to participate in or facilitate such unions. Two contributors—Stern and Reid—are clearly opposed both to legalizing same-sex unions and to depriving persons or religious entities

of First Amendment rights for opposing such unions. Kmiec seems ambiguous on this matter but emphasizes that whether same-sex persons can marry is a disputed question.

One of the most glaring failures of same-sex marriage enthusiasts is their refusal to recognize the absolutely indispensable contribution heterosexual couples make to the common good, especially if in getting married they consent to a life-long union for better or worse, etc. until death should them part. They do so because our society or any society cannot long endure unless a new generation succeeds the old and is prepared to care for those who have given them life. And this generation comes into being by being “begotten” in a bodily act open both to the gift of human life and to the deepening of a unique kind of love, marital love.

Recent studies show in great detail that children—and the future of our society—thrive when they live in a home headed by a man and a woman who have committed themselves to one another in a life-long union open to the gift of children whom they will welcome lovingly, nourish humanely, and educate in the love and service of God and neighbor. Among such studies are the following: W. Bradford Wilcox, “Social Science and the Vindication of Catholic Moral Teaching,” in *The Church, Marriage, & the Family: Proceedings from the 27th Annual Convention of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, September 24–26, 2004, Pittsburgh, PA*, ed. Kenneth Whitehead (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 2007), pp. 330–340. Wilcox summarized the principal findings he reported in that paper and updated them in “The Facts of Life & Marriage: *Social Science & the Vindication of Christian Moral Teaching*,” *Touchstone* (February, 2005); Elizabeth Marquart, *Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce* (New York: Crown Books, 2006); *Why Marriage Matters, Second Edition: Twenty-Six Conclusions from the Social Sciences*. New York: Institute for American Values. The study was done under the chairmanship of W. Bradford Wilcox of the University of Virginia, William Doherty of the University of Minnesota, Norval Glenn of the University of Texas, and Linda White of the University of Chicago. ✠

The Pope, the Rabbi, and the Antichrist: *The Sermon on the Mount as a Hidden Christology*

Edmund J. Mazza, PhD

“For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles...” (1 Cor 1:23)

Among secular observers of religion, *Time* magazine was as taken aback as any when Pope Benedict XVI in his new book, *Jesus of Nazareth*, devoted a full twenty pages to a *Rabbi Talks with Jesus* by Jacob Nuesner. In his 1993 work, Rabbi Neusner quite literally placed himself at the foot of the Sermon on the Mount as recounted in St. Mathew’s Gospel. After listening attentively alongside his first-century co-religionists and questioning the Master on his novel interpretations of the Torah, Neusner respectfully agreed to disagree with the founder of Christianity. As *Time* correspondent David Van Biema observes: “In his 14-years-delayed response, [Pope] Benedict not only compliments Neusner as a ‘great Jewish scholar’ but also recapitulates the thesis of *A Rabbi Talks* and spends a third of one of his 10 chapters answering it.”¹ Actually, the Roman Pontiff’s scholarly dialogue with an American rabbi should come as a shock to no one who has “ears to hear,” nor, for that matter, was Benedict’s reply more than a decade late-incoming.

In his 1994 book, *Evangelium—Katachese—Katechismus*, then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger quotes the following passage from *A Rabbi Talks*: “When I accept the yoke of the commandments of the Torah and do them, I accept God’s rule. I live in the kingdom of God, which is to say, in the dominion of Heaven, here on earth. To lead a holy life means to live here and now according to God’s will.”² Ratzinger immediately comments:

The Christian can agree entirely with Neusner; he need only replace the word “Torah” with another word—the name “Jesus.” Instead of saying, “when I accept the yoke of the commandments of the Torah and do them...I am in the kingdom of God.” the Christian will say, “when I am in communion with Jesus, I live in the kingdom of God.” Jesus is the Torah in person. This substitution of

the name Jesus for the word Torah is Paul’s “gospel”.... Implicit in Paul’s teaching is the revolution of Christianity, inasmuch as it effectively universalizes the people of God.

The notion that Jesus is the embodiment of the Law of Israel and not its abolishment has been the position of the Church since its founder first said as much (Mt 5:17). It is a stance which Pope Benedict takes up again in *Jesus of Nazareth*, a stance which, as we shall see in this article, Rabbi Neusner recognizes, but cannot accede to; it is also a position recognized by another author whom Benedict quotes, one, who, as we shall also see, not only identifies Jesus with Judaism, but also wantonly seeks the abolishment of both—Friedrich Nietzsche.

Just before he recapitulates Neusner’s arguments, Pope Benedict quotes Jesus’ declaration: “Think not that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished ...” (Mt 5: 17–19). The pope adds: “The intention is not to abolish, but to fulfill...”³ This sentiment is repeated throughout Benedict’s book, but perhaps most pointedly in his consideration of the Gospel of St. John:

John stands squarely on the foundation of the Old Testament. “Moses...wrote of me” (Jn 5:46), Jesus says to his adversaries. But already at the beginning—when John recounts the calling of the disciples—Philip had said to Nathanael: “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote” (Jn 1:45). Providing an explanation and a basis for this claim is ultimately the aim of Jesus’ discourses. He does not break the Torah, but brings its whole meaning to light and wholly fulfills it.⁴

But what proofs does Benedict adduce in support of this argument? Besides referencing Old Testament predictions, the Holy Father cites the New Testament parables of Jesus, for instance, the famous story of “the Good Samaritan.” In the Gospel of St. Luke, Jesus is approached by a Jewish lawyer who asks him what he

must do to inherit eternal life. The Pope points out that Jesus refers the scholar back to the Torah. So the scholar combines Deuteronomy 6: 5 and Leviticus 19: 18 and offers the following reply: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” (Lk 10:7). The fact that Jesus tells him he has answered correctly leads Benedict to conclude: “Jesus’ teaching on this question is no different from that of the Torah, the entire meaning of which is contained in this double commandment.”⁵

Rabbi Neusner wonders aloud, however, whether Jesus’ teaching is identical with the Torah or whether (as Benedict also affirms) he is identifying himself as *the* Torah. If the latter is true, Neusner cannot become a disciple, for it would mean the dissolution of all he holds sacred. Take for example, Jesus’ reinterpretation of the third commandment regarding keeping holy the Sabbath. In just one case among many which could be cited from the Gospel, the Pharisees criticize Jesus and his disciples for plucking heads of grain to eat on the Sabbath. According to Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus reminds these strictly observant Jews of precedents already set by King David and by the temple priests with regard to labor and consumption on the Sabbath. One might—as Pope Benedict does—argue that here again Jesus introduces no novelty; that again he sends his interlocutors back to the Hebrew Scriptures themselves. Indeed, if this were all that was at stake, a liberal or strict interpretation of the requirements of the Torah, Neusner would have no problem with Christ: “What troubles me... is not that the disciples do not obey one of the rules of the Sabbath. That is trivial and beside the point.”⁶ What bothers Neusner is Jesus’ concluding remark: “I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice’ (cf. Hos 6:6; 1 Sam 15:22), you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is lord of the Sabbath” (Mt 12:8).

One may rightly ask what it means to be “Lord of the Sabbath”? To understand this, Pope Benedict holds that we must first understand what the significance of the Sabbath is in the first place.

Rabbi Neusner argues that for observant Jews, the Sabbath is no mere individual respite; it is the central axis about which the people of Israel subsist: *it* “makes eternal Israel what it is, the people that, like God in creating the world, rest from creation on the Seventh Day.”⁷ Or as he says elsewhere: “Not working on the Sabbath stands for more than nitpicking ritual. It is a

way of imitating God.”⁸ The distinctively Jewish way of imitating God (by resting on his Sabbath) is what is at stake here. For as Benedict and Neusner both contend, Jesus, himself, now claims to be both Temple and Sabbath! “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mt 11:28–30). Neusner interprets Christ’s words in this way: “My yoke is easy, I give you rest, the son of man is lord of the Sabbath indeed, because the son of man is now Israel’s Sabbath: how we act like God.”⁹ Or as he also writes: “Christ now stands on the mountain, he now takes the place of the Torah.”¹⁰ The substitution of Jesus for the Temple, for the Sabbath, for the Torah, can only mean one thing for Neusner, the abolition of everything distinctly Jewish. As Benedict writes:

What disturbs Rabbi Neusner about Jesus’ message concerning the Sabbath is not just the centrality of Jesus himself... Rather he is concerned with the consequence of Jesus’ centrality for Israel’s daily life: The Sabbath loses its great social function. The Sabbath is one of the essential elements that hold Israel together. Centering upon Jesus breaks open this sacred structure and imperils an essential element that cements the unity of the People of God.¹¹

Similarly with the fourth commandment, Jesus’ teaching would again seemingly imperil Jewish identity itself. In that same chapter in Matthew, Jesus, the busy rabbi, is informed that his mother and his kin are outside anxiously awaiting him. Jesus says: “Who is my mother and who are my brothers?” He then stretches out his hand toward his disciples and says: “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Mt 12:46–50). A seemingly innocuous remark to twenty-first century ears is anathema to first-century—and twenty-first century—Jewish sensibilities. If Jesus is to be taken at his word, then the bonds of Jewish family kinship no longer pull rank; all that matters is that the individual does the will of God—in communion with Jesus and his disciples. “Honor your father and mother,” takes on a distinctly un-Jewish meaning. As Benedict writes, “According to Neusner, it is the family of Israel that is threatened by Jesus’ message, and the foundations of Israel are thrust aside by the primacy of his person.”¹² The pontiff goes on to quote Neusner directly: “We

pray to the God we know, to begin with, through the testimony of our family, to the God of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah and Rachel. So to explain who we are, eternal Israel, sages appeal to the metaphor of genealogy...to the fleshly connection, the family, as the rationale for Israel's social existence"¹³ For Neusner, Jesus is uprooting the third and fourth commandments and along with them, the whole Jewish social order. Ultimately he concludes: "I now realize, only God can demand of me what Jesus is asking."¹⁴ Pope Benedict's ultimate reply to Neusner is a resounding "Yes." "Yes, it *is* God who is demanding this of you." Not only because the pope affirms Christ's divinity, but because the Old Testament itself repeatedly confirms that the nation of Israel does not ultimately exist for the benefit of its own members, but like its Messiah, it exists to sacrifice itself for the salvation of the world:

It is our Jewish interlocutors who, quite rightly, ask again and again: So what has your "Messiah" Jesus actually brought? He has not brought world peace, and he has not conquered the world's misery.... Yes, what has Jesus brought? We have already encountered this question and we know the answer. He has brought the God of Israel to the nations, so that all the nations now pray to him and recognize Israel's Scriptures as his word, the word of the living God. ... The Torah did indeed have the task of giving a concrete juridical and social order to this particular people, Israel. But while Israel is on the one hand a definite nation, whose members are bound together by birth and the succession of generations, on the other hand it has been from the beginning and is by its very nature the bearer of a universal promise.¹⁵

Though he does not quote Genesis explicitly, Pope Benedict is of course thinking of God's own sworn oath to Abraham after he demonstrated his faith in the Almighty by being willing to sacrifice his son Isaac:

"I swear by myself," says the Lord, "Since you have done this and have not withheld your only son, I will indeed bless you, and will surely multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, as the sands of the seashore. Your descendants shall possess the gates of the cities of their enemies. *In your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed*, because you have obeyed me" (Gen 22: 16-18) (emphasis mine).

The conclusion is clear. It is in Jesus, the descendant of Abraham, that all the nations of the earth are now blessed. The catalyst for this event was Jesus bearing the

wood of the Cross, prefigured in Isaac who carried the wood for his own sacrifice. But while God spared Abraham's only (legitimate) son, God "the Father" so loved the world as to offer *his* only Son, so that *whoever* believes in him might not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:16) (emphasis mine). For Benedict, "the vehicle of this universalization [of the faith of Abraham]," the point of entry into this "blessedness," is now acceptance into Jesus' new family, "the Church." Needless to say, the "individual juridical and social regulations" of the Torah could hardly "apply universally in their literal historical form" when it came to opening "the family"¹⁶ up to the Gentiles. According to Benedict, St. Paul was right not to impose circumcision, for example, on Gentile converts to Christianity: "A literal application of Israel's social order to the people of all the nations would have been tantamount to a denial of the universality of the growing community of God. Paul saw this with perfect clarity. The Torah of the Messiah could not be like that. Nor is it, as the Sermon on the Mount shows—and likewise the whole dialogue with Rabbi Neusner...."¹⁷

The good rabbi, however, is not the only witness "hostile" to the implications of Jesus' teaching on that mount in Galilee. For very different reasons, the nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche could not embrace the radical teachings of Christ. What is interesting for our contemporary discussion is that Nietzsche rejected Jesus of Nazareth precisely because, unlike Rabbi Neusner, he believed that Jesus *did* bring "the God of Israel to the nations, so that all the nations now pray to him and recognize Israel's Scriptures as his word...."

Which of them has won for the present, Rome or Judea? But there can be no doubt: consider to whom one bows down in Rome itself today, as if they were the epitome of all the highest values—and not only in Rome but over almost half the earth, everywhere that man has become tame or desires to become tame: three Jews as is known, and one Jewess (Jesus of Nazareth, the fisherman Peter, the rug weaver Paul, and the mother of the aforementioned Jesus, named Mary). This is very remarkable: Rome has been defeated beyond all doubt.¹⁸

So Friedrich Nietzsche lamented the state of the world in his day. He decried the fact that *Jewishness* had become all-pervasive in Western culture, that a *Jewish* morality of "good and evil," had for nearly two millennia, successfully overcome a Greco-Roman morality of "good and bad":

Let us conclude. The two *opposing* values “good and bad,” “good and evil” have been engaged in a fearful struggle on earth for thousands of years; and though the latter value has certainly been on top for a long time, there are still places where the struggle is as yet undecided.... The symbol of this struggle, inscribed in letters legible across all human history, is “Rome against Judea, Judea against Rome”:—there has hitherto been no greater event than *this* struggle, *this* question, *this* deadly contradiction....¹⁹

In Nietzsche’s view of history, there was a time when “good and bad” differentiated not the saint and the sinner, but the warrior and the cripple, the aristocrat and the beggar. Nietzsche’s Homeric heroes were “good,” precisely because they were powerful enough to take what they pleased. The vulgar masses were “bad,” precisely because they lacked the power to resist the strong. In order to “avenge” themselves against their rivals, Nietzsche hypothesizes, the priestly caste, epitomized by the Jews, turned the tables on their Greco-Roman conquerors by proclaiming: “The Lord hears the cry of the poor” (Ex 22:20-22).

For this alone was appropriate to a priestly people, the people embodying the most deeply repressed priestly vengefulness. It was the Jews who, with awe-inspiring consistency, dared to invert the aristocratic value-equation (good=noble=powerful=beautiful=happy=beloved of God) and to hang on this inversion with their teeth, the teeth of the most abysmal hatred (the hatred of impotence), saying “the wretched alone are the good; the poor; impotent, lowly alone are blessed by God, blessedness is for them alone—and you, the powerful and noble, are on the contrary the evil, the cruel, the lustful, the insatiable, the godless to all eternity; and you shall be in all eternity the unblessed, accursed, and damned!”...One knows who inherited this Jewish revaluation...²⁰

Nietzsche rages because the pagan races “inherited” the Jewish notions of “good and evil,” instead of their own valuation system “good and bad.” And who is most to blame for the new “Jewish Beatitudes”? The author of the Sermon on the Mount:

This Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate gospel of love, this “Redeemer” who brought blessedness and victory to the poor, the sick, and the sinners—was he not this seduction in its most uncanny form, a seduction and bypath to precisely those *Jewish* values and new ideals? Did Israel not attain the ultimate goal of its sublime vengefulness

precisely through the bypath of this “Redeemer,” this ostensible opponent and disintegrator of Israel?²¹

For Nietzsche, Jesus is only the “ostensible” disintegrator of Israel, for in truth, he is really *the* bypath to world-wide Jewish morality—the morality revealed in the “Beatitudes.” In *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict considers Nietzsche’s criticism:

Is the direction the Lord shows us in the Beatitudes and in the corresponding warnings actually the right one? Is it really such a bad thing to be rich, to eat one’s fill, to laugh, to be praised? Friedrich Nietzsche trained his angry critique precisely on this aspect of Christianity. It is not Christian doctrine that needs to be critiqued, he says, it is Christian morality that needs to be exposed as a “capital crime against life.” And by “Christian morality,” Nietzsche means precisely the direction indicated by the Sermon on the Mount.... Nietzsche sees the vision of the Sermon on the Mount as a religion of resentment, as the envy of the cowardly and incompetent, who are unequal to life’s demands and try to avenge themselves by blessing their failure and cursing the strong, the successful, and the happy. Jesus’ wide perspective is countered with a narrow this-worldliness—with the will to get the most out of the world and what life has to offer now, to seek heaven here, and to be uninhibited by any scruples while doing so.²²

Pope Benedict acknowledges Nietzsche’s attack on Christian values, but fails to make explicit that they are attacked precisely for being *Jewish* values, a fact which undoubtedly bolsters his position in the exchange with Rabbi Neusner. Imagine, the Church’s sworn enemy actually agrees with the pontiff’s central thesis, the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount *is* the embodiment of the Torah, and hence, what it is to be Jewish. But a more important opportunity for answering both Neusner and Nietzsche presents itself at this juncture and though it is intimately bound up with the primary thesis of *Jesus of Nazareth*, the Holy Father seems to have overlooked it too. For Nietzsche, the springboard for Jewish “revaluation of all...nobler ideals” is none other than the Cross of Christ:

Was it not part of the secret black art of truly grand politics of revenge, of a farseeing, a subterranean, slowly advancing, and premeditated revenge, that Israel must itself deny the real instrument of its revenge before all the world as a mortal enemy and nail it to the cross, so that “all the world,” namely all the opponents of Israel, could

unhesitatingly swallow just this bait? And could spiritual subtlety imagine any *more dangerous* bait than this? Anything to equal the enticing, intoxicating, overwhelming, and undermining power of that symbol of the “holy cross,” that ghastly paradox of a “God on the cross,” that mystery of an unimaginable ultimate cruelty and self-crucifixion of God *for the salvation of man*?

What is certain, at least, is that *sub hoc signo* Israel, with its vengefulness and revaluation of all values, has hitherto triumphed over all other ideals, over all nobler ideals.²³

Nietzsche grieves because “‘all the world,’ namely all the opponents of Israel,” took the Jewish “bait,” the “holy cross” of Christ. But without realizing it, Nietzsche is validating a *four thousand year-old* Jewish prophecy, that is, God’s sworn testimony to the Patriarch Abraham: “*In your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed me*” (emphasis mine). According to Nietzsche this is precisely what has happened; though for him (as befits a self-professed “antichrist”) everything is “inverted.” The glorious blessing which Jesus, the descendant of Abraham, has brought to “all the world/all the nations” is for him, “secret black art,” “undermining,” and dripping with Jewish “vengefulness.” But the more loudly Nietzsche protests, the more strenuously he confirms Christian biblical eschatology. His solemn affirmation “*sub hoc signo* Israel, with its vengefulness and revaluation of all values, has hitherto triumphed over all other ideals,” is an allusion to the Emperor Constantine’s miraculous victory over his pagan rival Maxentius under the Sign of the Cross at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. His triumph in AD 312 and subsequent legalization of Christianity in AD 313, laid the foundations of Christendom and spelled the end of the classical world. But is this not also the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham? “Since you have done this and have not withheld your only son. . . . *Your descendants shall possess the gates of the cities of their enemies.*” If the Arch of Titus demonstrated Rome’s victory over Judea, the Arch of Constantine symbolizes Judea’s triumph over Rome. Again, as Nietzsche himself laments:

Which of them has won for the present, Rome or Judea? But there can be no doubt: consider to whom one bows down in Rome itself today, as if they were the epitome of all the highest values—and not only in Rome but over almost half the earth, everywhere that man has become tame or desires to become tame: three Jews as is known, and one Jewess (Jesus of Nazareth, the fisherman

Peter, the rugweaver Paul, and the mother of the aforementioned Jesus, named Mary). This is very remarkable: Rome has been defeated beyond all doubt.²⁴

In the end, the venom of Nietzsche’s pen might be the mightiest weapon in Pope Benedict’s rhetorical arsenal in his “knockdown debate”²⁵ with Rabbi Neusner (though one should hardly characterize their respectful exchange in such terms). Neusner cannot embrace Christ precisely because he sees him as the disintegrator of Israel. But as Pope Benedict argues (and Nietzsche proves): for eternal Israel to gain its life, it must (seemingly) lose its life. This is the “ghastly paradox of the cross” of Christ, the hidden Christology behind the Sermon on the Mount: only by the sacrifice of self can one achieve self-fulfillment. This is Benedict’s prescription as much for Neusner, as for Nietzsche:

We have seen that the Sermon on the Mount is a hidden Christology. Behind the Sermon on the Mount stands the figure of Christ, the man who is God, but who, precisely because he is God, descends, empties himself, all the way to death on the Cross. The saints, from Paul through Francis of Assisi down to Mother Teresa, have lived out this option and have thereby shown us the correct image of man and his happiness. In a word, the true morality of Christianity is love. And love does admittedly run counter to self-seeking—it is an exodus out of oneself, and yet this is precisely the way in which man comes to himself. Compared with Nietzsche’s image of man, this way seems at first wretched and thoroughly unreasonable. But it is the real high road of life; it is only on the way of love, whose paths are described in the Sermon on the Mount, that the richness of life and the greatness of man’s calling are opened up.²⁶

The Christian answer to the world is Love, the love preached by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount and more explicitly in the “sermon” on Mount Calvary, “the School of Love.” The essence of Benedict’s *Jesus of Nazareth* is the age-old refrain from the Apostle Paul: “...Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles...” (1 Cor 1:23).

Endnotes

- 1 David Van Biema, “The Pope’s Favorite Rabbi,” *Time* (24 May 2007).
- 2 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Gospel, Catechesis, Catechism: Sidelights on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 54.
- 3 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 102.
- 4 Ratzinger, *Jesus*, 235.

- 5 Ibid, 195.
- 6 Ibid, 107, cf Jacob Neusner, *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 83.
- 7 Neusner, 74.
- 8 Ibid 75.
- 9 Ibid, 86.
- 10 Ibid, 87.
- 11 Ratzinger, *Jesus*, 111.
- 12 Ratzinger 113.
- 13 Neusner, 58.
- 14 Ibid, 68.
- 15 Ratzinger, *Jesus*, 116, 117.

- 16 Ratzinger, 118.
- 17 Ibid, 118.
- 18 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York:Vintage, 1969), 53.
- 19 Nietzsche, 52.
- 20 Ibid, 34.
- 21 Ibid, 35.
- 22 Ratzinger, 97.
- 23 Nietzsche, 35.
- 24 Cf note 18.
- 25 Van Biema
- 26 Ratzinger, 99.

REPORT

The Nassau Community College Center for Catholic Studies: History, Purpose, Activities, Future*

By Joseph A. Varacalli, Ph.D.

(*Address given to the Long Island Chapter of *Legatus*, Wednesday, February 4, 2009, at Molloy College, Rockville Centre, New York)

Let me first start off by thanking Father John J. McCartney, Mr. Paul Durnan, and the Long Island Chapter of Legatus for giving me the opportunity this evening to say a few words about the history, purpose, activities, and future of the Center for Catholic Studies at Nassau Community College which I founded in the year 2000 and have since directed. I am delighted by the invitation, not only because it is an honor to address your group but also because it has forced me to take the time to put pen to paper in order to record some of the history and accomplishments of the Center to date, and to speculate on what its future may hold. (Someday, God willing, the topic might warrant a much more detailed account.) My brief presentation this evening may be of some interest to you as a group of dedicated Catholic professionals who share with me membership in both the Diocese of Rockville Centre and Long Island cultural and educational life.

Two facts about the Center for Catholic Studies should be pointed out at the outset. The first is that the activities of the Center are academic and intellectual and are not to be confused with the religious activities of a campus ministry or of catechetical instruction. The

second is that the Center has raised its own funds to pay for its speakers and for the food and drink it regularly provides at its functions held at Nassau Community College. Thus far, over the first eight and one-half years of its existence, the supporting community has donated just short of \$80,000 to the Center for Catholic Studies sub-account of its funding entity, the Nassau Foundation.

History and Purpose

Among the many related factors that must be included in a full accounting of the founding of the Center for Catholic Studies here at the College, three stand out. The first was the encouragement of the administration to develop various “centers” at the college which allow a talented faculty to pursue their more advanced and specialized work without violating the foundational mission of a community college to offer basic introductory coursework. (In this regard, I had co-founded in 1994, with Dr. Salvatore LaGumina, the first center at the College, the Center for Italian American Studies. Under the auspices of the Center for Italian American studies, Dr. LaGumina and I, with two other colleagues, Dr. Salvatore Primeggia of Adelphi University and Dr. Frank Cavaoli of SUNY-Farmingdale, co-edited the first encyclopedia on Italian Americans, *The Italian American Experience: An Encyclopedia*, Garland, 1999.) In many respects, the Center for Italian American Studies

served as an early prototype and model for the various centers that would emerge later at N.C.C., including the Center for Catholic Studies.) The second factor was N.C.C.'s commitment to the concept of multiculturalism and to the idea of providing a forum for intellectual and educational worldviews and traditions hitherto unrecognized either by the civilization at large or by the academy. A third pivotal development was the immediately previous founding of the Jewish Studies Project at Nassau Community College, which crossed another barrier to a fuller inclusion under the academic umbrella of "multiculturalism," i.e., the issue of the potential academic and cultural contributions of *religious* traditions to the academic life of the institution.

It is important to underscore the potentially revolutionary character of the creation of a Catholic Studies Center at a public institution of higher education. To my knowledge, at the time of its founding, the Center for Catholic Studies was only one of two such existing animals, the other founded around the same time at the University of Illinois, Chicago campus. Why this indifference toward, at best, and animus against, at worst, religion, especially Catholicism, in the academy? One need not be an historian to realize that the Enlightenment was recognized by many to represent a fundamental break with religious authority, especially Catholic religious authority, in European society. While there are many other reasons for the animus directed against traditional religion and, especially, Catholicism (e.g. the dominance of liberal Protestantism in America, progressive interpretations of the separation of church and state, the influence of secularism in American education through John Dewey and others of like mind), the primary opposition to religiously based education in higher education (in my opinion) derives from the typical American academic's rejection of religious authority that posits any "top down" approach to culture and morality. Put another way, most academics in the humanities and social sciences promote and defend what comes close to the (illusory) idea of an unfettered or autonomous individualism in thought and action and to the idea that reality is merely a "social construction of reality," one that rejects the possibility of any transcendent, supernatural reality. Given this, it is not surprising that there was some very real opposition to the founding of the Center for Catholic Studies at N.C.C., an opposition that continues to this day, mostly *sotto voce*. However, there was (and is) sufficient recognition at the College that the intellectual, social, and moral contributions of the Catholic heritage should

be allowed to contribute, albeit it in a relatively minor way, to college and society wide intellectual and social policy debates and discussions. The Center is a bit more firmly situated within the College at the moment, in part, because of its record of successful programs that consistently have attracted large audiences, especially from the outside community.

The existence of the Center for Catholic Studies also makes a modest contribution to keeping the Catholic intellectual, moral, and social policy traditions alive given the pervasive secularization that is occurring within certain sectors of American society. The first is in America's public sphere institutions of government, the corporations, and the mass media. The second is within Catholic higher education, characterized by a slightly more subtle form of internal secularization or what sociologists call a "secularization from within." (For a discussion of the latter, see my books, *The Catholic Experience in America*, www.greenwood.com and *Bright Promise, Failed Community: Catholics and the American Public Order*, www.lexingtonbooks.com)

Activities

The activities of the N.C.C. Center for Catholic Studies over its first eight and half years of existence (2000-9) have involved conferences (ranging from one to three days in length), lectures, seminars, debates, "club hour" talks, well over 100 recorded and aired radio shows (the "Catholic Alternative" on WHPC 90.3), non-credit Continuing Education courses, the awarding of student scholarships to graduating N.C.C. students who intend to pursue Catholic Studies at some recognized four year institution of higher education, and other miscellaneous endeavors (the *Catholic Update Newsletter*; now entering its ninth year, with a mailing list of 2,000; community meetings; hosting receptions like that for Dr. Julie Byrne, the Monsignor Hartmann Chair of Catholic Studies at Hofstra University (3/7/07); serving as a clearing house of information and advice for individual citizens and local, state, and national Catholic groups, etc.). Of possible interest to this group is that radio interview number 44 hosted a talk by Mr. Gregory Floyd, then the Northeast East Regional Director of Legatus on the purpose and history of the group.

The Center has co-sponsored many activities with both national and regional groups and associations. Nationally, the Center has worked with the following individuals or organizations: Office of the Supreme

Knight of the Knights of Columbus (New Haven, Ct) for a major conference honoring the “The Contributions to Church and Society of Bishop James T. McHugh” (The deceased Bishop of Rockville Centre. Principal speaker, Richard Doerflinger of the U.S. Bishops Conference, 12/7/01); the Provost’s Office of Adelphi University; the Center for Italian Studies at Stony Brook University; and the Order, Sons of Italy, for an unprecedented three day, three institution conference titled “Models and Images of Catholicism in Italian Americana” (10/4–6/02) that brought in national scholars from the U.S. and Canada and led to the publication of one of my co-edited volumes of same name; Dr. William Donohue and the national office of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights for a discussion of Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* (4/16/04); Father Joseph D. Fessio, S.J. and the Provost’s Office of Ave Maria University in Naples, Florida with lectures on “Pope Benedict XVI and Liturgical Renewal” and “Building a New Catholic University” (4/8/06); George Weigel and the Washington, D.C. based Ethics and Public Policy Center with a lecture on “The Secularization of European Society” (3/31/07); the Society of Catholic Social Scientists in coordinating the 15th Annual Conference of the S.C.S.S. at the St. John’s School of Law (Conference Co-Chair, David L. Gregory, Esq., Dorothy Day Professor of Law) that attracted approximately 400 scholars and other registered participants in addition to upwards of a hundred college and high school students who attended as guests (10/26–7/07).

Regionally, the Center has worked consistently over the years with such groups as the Long Island Chapter of University Faculty for Life (based at Molloy College and led by Dr. Jane Gilroy) and the local New York Metropolitan Chapter of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists, first led by the now deceased Professor of Political Science at Molloy College, Dr. Donald Doyle, and now by Monsignor George P. Graham, Ph.D., J.C.D., Pastor Emeritus of St. Bernard’s Parish in Hicksville, Long Island. The Center co-sponsored a debate on school choice (4/4/02) with the New York affiliate of the American Family Association (with the assistance of President Frank J. Russo, Jr.) and the Nassau Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (with the assistance of A.C.L.U. Nassau Chapter President, Barbara Bernstein). There was a “Catholic Promotion of the Culture of Life” conference consisting of four presentations and headlined by Mother Mary Agnes Donovan, S.V., Ph.D., of the Bronx, New York-based

Sisters of Life, 10/13/04. The Hispanic Ministry of the Diocese of Rockville Centre co-sponsored a lecture by Oswald Sobrino from Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Michigan on the topic of “Hispanics and the Future of the Catholic Church in the U.S.” (6/25/07). In the Spring of 2008 (3/15/08), the Center sponsored a conference with the local C.S. Lewis Society from Douglaston, New York, with lectures on 1) “The Nature of Evil As Depicted in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Return of the King* (Part Three of *The Lord of the Rings*) and in Georges Bernanos’s *The Diary of a Country Priest*” by Dr. J. Brian Benestad of the University of Scranton and 2) “Dealing with the Devil: C.S. Lewis and *The Screwtape Letters*” by Dr. James T. Como of York College of the City University of New York.

The Center has also worked internally with other Nassau Community College organizations. The Center has co-sponsored two projects with the N.C.C. Jewish Studies Project. One event focused on the topic of Johannes Reichlin and the burning of Jewish books during the Middle Ages (11/6/02)—the main speaker was Mr. Peter Wortsman with Discussants Father Joseph Koterski, S.J., of the Fordham University Philosophy Department and Monsignor Daniel Hamilton, former Editor of the *Long Island Catholic* (11/6/02). The second was a lecture by Bob Keeler of *Newsday* on his co-authored book—*Days of Intense Emotion: Praying with John Paul II in the Holy Land*-- with fellow journalist, Paul Moses, on Pope John Paul II’s visit to Israel (11/9/05). There were also cooperative efforts with the N.C.C. Center for Italian American Studies (regarding the three day conference previously mentioned and on a book by Dr. Salvatore LaGumina, *The Humble and the Heroic: Italian Americans During World War II* (4/20/07) and with the N.C.C. Respect Life Group (headed by Florence Scarinci), on a lecture by Martin Luther King’s niece, Dr. Alveda King, who made the case that the civil rights and pro-life movements are inextricably linked (10/10/06).

Other major events sponsored by the Center include the following: “Religious Discrimination as a Social Problem in Society, the Academy, and within Scholarly Disciplines” with Dr. William Donohue and then S.U.N.Y. Board member, Dr. Candace de Russy, among others (4/22/01); “Catholic Social Thought, Social Science, and Social Policy: I” (54 academic presentations plus plenary talks by Gerard V. Bradley of the University of Notre Dame Law School and Bishop William Murphy of the Diocese of Rockville Centre 3/28–29/03); “The Crisis in the Catholic Church: the

Anatomy of the Sexual Scandal” (principal speaker, the late Father Richard J. Neuhaus, editor of *First Things* Magazine (5/9/03); “The Intra-Catholic Debate on the American Invasion of Iraq,” with Russell Shaw, former official spokesman for the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference (9/9/03); “The Life You Save May Be Your Own” by Paul Elie (on his book on Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day, Walker Percy, and Flannery O’Connor, 10/7/03); “The Prudential Application of Catholic Social Thought,” with Rick Hinshaw, then columnist of *The Long Island Catholic* (11/7/03); “Catholic Social Thought, Social Science, and Social Policy: II” (27 academic presentations plus plenary talks by Paul Vitz (then Professor of Psychology at New York University now at the Institute for the Psychological Sciences at Arlington, VA) on the topic of the relationship between Catholicism and psychology and Father Kenneth Baker, S.J., (Editor of the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*) on the desirability of linking social scientific activity to the social doctrine of the Church, (6/11–12/04); “The Saints throughout World Culture” (with 13 presentations including those by Patricia Mulrooney, N.C.C. Trustee and Mr. John Mulrooney, of the Advisory Board of the N.C.C. Foundation, 10/12/04); “Catholic K–12 Education: Problems and Prospects” (Father Philip Eichner, S.M., President of Kellenberg Memorial High School; Sister Joanne Callahan, Superintendent for Schools for the Diocese of Rockville Centre; Joseph Geoghan, head of the Bishop’s Diocesan Education Commission; and Frank J. Russo, Jr., of the American Family Association (4/18/05); a lecture, “The Facts of Life and Marriage: Social Science and the Vindication of Christian Moral Teaching” by W. Bradford Wilcox of the University of Virginia Sociology Department, 4/22/05); a lecture, “How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization” by Thomas Woods, then Professor of History at Suffolk Community College–S.U.N.Y., (10/2/05); “Staying the Course with Benedict XVI in a Post-John Paul II Church” (principal speakers, the late Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., the McGinley Chair of Religion and Society at Fordham University and Kenneth Whitehead, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education under President Ronald Reagan, 10/22/05); “The President’s Council on Bioethics” (presentation by Dr. Robert P. George, Esq., the McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence and Director of the James Madison Program for American Ideals at Princeton University, 6/19/06); “The Obligations of the Catholic Politician” (lecture, Denis Dillon, former District Attorney of Nassau County, 10/28/06); “Introducing the Encyclo-

pedia of Catholic Social Thought, Social Science, and Social Policy,” talks by Stephen M. Krason of Franciscan University, Richard Myers of Ave Maria School of Law, and Michael Coulter of Grove City College (10/25/07); “Valiant Women of Faith and Action: A Study of Catholic Female Leadership in Nineteenth Century America,” with Dr. Marynita Anderson of Nassau Community College, (4/26/08); “Communicating the Truth About the Perils and Promises of the Contemporary Bio Tech Revolution,” with Rick Hinshaw, Editor of the *Long Island Catholic* as the principal speaker, (6/21/08); “Nothing to Hide: Secrecy, Communication, and Communion in the Catholic Church” by Russell Shaw, (10/11/08), and “Liturgical Reform: Pluses and Minuses,” with Monsignor George P. Graham, Ph.D. (11/3/08).

Scheduled for the Spring and Summer of 2009 are the following events: “Catholicism and Economics: Democratic Socialist, Democratic Capitalist, and Distributist Options” with speakers Dr. Charles M.A. Clark of St. John’s University, Michael Novak of the American Enterprise Institute, Thomas Storck of the Society for Distributism and a member of the Editorial Board of Seton Hall University’s *The Chesterton Review*, and Dr. Stephen M. Krason, Esq., of Franciscan University (4/4/09); “Christianity and Modernity Meet: Pascal’s *Pensees* by Boston College Professor of Philosophy, Peter Kreeft, 5/2/09); and a conference, “Youth and the Future of the Pro-Life Movement” featuring more than a dozen presentations by college and high school students with ensuing discussions led by those from the ranks of the professoriate and leadership ranks of Catholic pro-life organizations (5/30/09). Other future possibilities include lectures on Catholic–Anglican relations; the Catholic response to the devastating December 28th, 1908 earthquake that struck the Messina Straits, in Sicily; and the future of Catholic higher education.

Mention should additionally be made of two other significant activities of the Center. The first was a fall, 2001 Seminar that included nine consecutive Friday afternoon presentations by different scholars, including ones by the late Father Francis Canavan, S.J., Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Fordham University and Dr. John Rao of St. John’s University. The second was a series of “club hour” talks specifically geared to students given by the various distinguished members of the N.C.C. Catholic Studies Faculty Advisory Board during the spring, 2002 semester. Philosopher Mark Halfon spoke on “Religious Fundamentalism,” Historian Marynita Anderson on “Ireland’s Holy War,” Ro-

sanne Scarpelli on “Fearing Death,” Biologist Maureen Daddona on “Stem Cell Research,” Criminologist and Sociologist Robert Costello on “School Voucher Programs,” and I spoke on one of my books, *Bright Promise, Failed Community: Catholics and the American Public Order*.

Many other members of the Nassau Community College administration, faculty and staff have participated in, and contributed to, the activities of the Center over its existence. These include former College Trustee, Mr. William Schroeder, Professor Catherine Vanek of Student Personnel Services, Dr. Richard Renoff of the Sociology Department, Dr. Hugh O’Rourke of the Criminal Justice Department; and Rev. Deacon Nicholas Daddona of the Reading Department. The Center has also been assisted by many local and regional Catholic educators and elites including the late Monsignor George A. Kelly of St. John’s University, Dr. Salvatore Primeggia of Adelphi University, Dr. Anthony DiPerna of Molloy College, Dr. Anthony Haynor of Seton Hall University, Dr. James R. Kelly of Fordham University; Dr. Donald J. D’Elia of S.U.N.Y.-New Paltz; Professor Peter Amato of St. Francis College; private scholars Dr. Frederick Marks and Adrian Calderone, columnists John Metzler and Pete Sheehan, William Devlin of the local Long Island “Faith on Tap” initiative, Alex LaPerchia, a Queens based author and play-writer; high school teachers Brother Lawrence Syriac, S.M. of Chaminade High School and James Krug of Kellenberg High School, among numerous others.

The crowning accomplishment of the Center for Catholic Studies, to date, has been the publications of the *Encyclopedia of Catholic Social Thought, Social Science, and Social Policy* (2 Volumes), Scarecrow Press, 2007, www.scarecrowpress.com (850 entries and 300 contributors). Well over one hundred of the 850 entries published in the encyclopedia were presented at one academic event or another sponsored and held at the Nassau Community College Center for Catholic Studies. There is a possibility of the development of a Volume Three, Supplement One for the encyclopedia project.

The Future

The future of the Nassau Community College Center for Catholic Studies is very open and “up in the air.” On the one hand, there are certain favorable signals pointing to possible continued success. For one thing, the Center

has succeeded, to a surprising degree, in making itself known nationally. Secondly, the Center has also become something of a local staple, at least for the serious Catholic community of Long Island. Thirdly, my recent appointment by the State University of New York Board of Trustees as a “Distinguished Service Professor”—a promotion based, in part, on my founding and directing the Center—is indicative that is now a recognized entity (although still with low visibility) within the S.U.N.Y. system of higher education.

On the other hand, there are many questions and concerns that must be addressed satisfactorily if the Center is to institutionalize itself over time and increase significantly its educational impact. For one thing, the Center has yet to offer credit-bearing courses at the College. Having drawn sufficient attention to its activities over its first years of existence, the Center must soon rectify this omission. Another issue that must be confronted soon is to devise a mechanism to better systematize the Center’s fund-raising efforts which, while sufficient to date, are too incremental and *ad hoc* in nature to allow long-term planning, development, and expansion. This is an especially daunting task in light of the nation’s and region’s recent economic downturn.

Tied into these issues is the need to attract to the Nassau Community College faculty who are simultaneously 1) serious scholars, 2) committed Catholics, and 3) trained experts in the area of introducing Catholic perspectives across the educational curriculum. The College has enough of the first, some of the second, but very little of the third. The insufficient pool of trained and motivated scholars in the Catholic tradition is tied intimately to the College’s hiring practices. Like most mainstream colleges, public or otherwise, the prevailing interpretation of the hiring principle of “affirmative action” at Nassau Community College is not one conducive to creating a pool of talent that could be utilized by the Center. Theoretically at least, it is possible to conceive of the College allowing some future faculty hiring along the lines of specifically looking for experts both trained in and committed to the authentic Catholic intellectual, moral, and social policy traditions. That likelihood, however, would be significantly increased (although not certainly guaranteed) if the Center demonstrated the ability to raise funds through government and philanthropic agencies as well as through Catholic organizations devoted to the idea that public institutions of higher education should be truly, and in an inclusive sense, “multicultural,” incorporating for discussion, reflection, and debate the fruits of Catholic in-

formed scholarship. (I use as a proto-type regarding the related issue of including ethnicity under the umbrella of multiculturalism another example drawn from the State University of New York. I refer to the enormously successful institutionalization of the Center for Italian Studies at Stony Brook University, under the direction of Dr. Mario Mignone, who has demonstrated an impressive ability to put together a sound curriculum, attract important scholars in the field, publish books and a journal, and draw support for his program from the local Italian American population as well as from regional political elites. It is, of course, the case that ethnicity is not the “hot button” item that religion, especially Catholicism, represents.)

Related to all of these problematic concerns, the Center must address the crucial issue of a second generation of leadership. Too much of what the Center has accomplished over the course of its history has relied on one person. Simply put, I am all too aware that I

will not be around on this side of the great divide forever. When the call from above comes in, what happens then? All that I can promise is that I will attempt to address the issues concerning the future of the NCC Center for Catholic Studies as best as I can, given both the limits of my situation and my limited abilities. After that, may the will of God be done.

(Joseph A. Varacalli, Ph.D., is State University of New York Distinguished Service Professor.

Individuals interested in making a tax deductible contribution to promote the future activities of the Center can write a check made out to: “Center for Catholic Studies-Nassau Foundation” and send it to Vice-President Joseph Buckheit, Nassau Foundation, Nassau Community College, 1 Education Drive, Garden City, New York, 11530. The Foundation will send you back a letter acknowledging your donation for your tax records.)

BOOK REVIEWS

The Person and the Polis: Faith and Values within the Secular State, edited by Craig Steven Titus, Vol. 1 of the John Henry Cardinal Newman Lectures. (Arlington VA: The Institute for the Psychological Sciences Press, 2006). 187 pp., \$29.95, pb. ***On Wings of Faith and Reason: The Christian Difference in Culture and Science***, edited by Craig Steven Titus, vol. 2 of the John Henry Cardinal Newman Lectures (Arlington VA: The Institute for the Psychological Sciences Press, 2008). 155 pp., \$24.95, pb.

*Reviewed by Joseph W. Koterski, S.J.,
Fordham University*

The Institute for the Psychological Sciences (Arlington VA) was founded in 1997 to sponsor a graduate program for mental health professionals and to provide support for the development of approaches to psychology that are consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church. In addition, the Institute has sponsored a series of lectures in honor of John Henry Cardinal New-

man and has now generated two fine volumes of these addresses.

In concert with the Institute’s broad-ranging concern for Catholic intellectual life, the essays in these volumes come not only from professional psychologists but also from theologians, philosophers, and specialists in other disciplines. The editor has provided a lengthy introduction for each volume that goes beyond the usual charge of summarizing the contents of the essays to providing a substantive essay of his own on the themes indicated in the titles of these books, and the essay by Romanus Cessario, O.P. at the end of the first volume (“Moral Realism and Christian Values”) synthesizes the contents of the first volume brilliantly.

The inaugural volume concerns the relations between personhood and the political community. The essay by Paul Vitz (“From the Modern Individual to the Transmodern Person”) is representative of the high quality of these essays. After distinguishing between the approaches within modern and postmodern psychology that con-

sider personhood primarily in terms of relationships to others (parents, siblings, etc.) from those approaches that tend to ignore relationship in the effort to promote individuation, Vitz analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches and then outlines what psychology lost as it grew increasingly secular and what it needs to recover from the Christian understanding of person and individual.

The essay by Kenneth Schmitz is a splendid synthesis of what Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II contributed to the understanding of personhood, especially by way of the philosophy of action articulated in his dense and difficult *The Acting Person*. Schmitz not only contrasts this view with that offered by Kant and Scheler but also shows the fundamental continuity between this approach and traditional Thomism. In this article Schmitz demonstrates yet again his ability to take extremely complex notions and present them with precisely the clarity and accessibility needed for interdisciplinary projects like this one.

The essays by Daniel Robinson

(“In Defense of Moral Realism”) and Robert P. George (“The Concept of Public Morality”) are invaluable for making clear some of the most important issues in contemporary debates about morality. Robinson analyzes the forms of argumentation that tend to reduce moral opinions to feelings and sentiments. Like John Rist’s magnificent exposé of the incoherence of moral arguments that do not have a transcendental ground (*Real Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 2002), this essay is a *tour de force* that will be of particular help in exposing the inconsistencies of much of what passes for serious academic argument about ethics despite question-begging assumptions. Similarly, George provides a hard-hitting review of a number of the strategies frequently employed by modern liberalism in the effort to disenfranchise any religious position from participating in moral discussions in the public forum.

The final two essays in the first volume bring a political perspective to bear. Michael Novak recounts the prescient insights of Alexis de Tocqueville on the place of religion, and especially Catholicism, in American democracy. The essay by Hadley Arkes (“The Maladies of the Political Class: When Reasons Cease to Matter”) is an invaluable historical witness to the development of the strategy of gradualism that has been successfully employed by the pro-life movement, for instance, in opposing partial-birth abortions as a way of planting principles within the law that may eventually prove useful in undermining the entirety of *Roe v. Wade*. This article also provides a highly insightful lesson in the area of political philosophy by its more general reflections on the significant changes within a polity when “reasons cease to matter.”

The title of the second volume alludes to John Paul II’s *Fides et Ratio*, and its contents are much in the spirit of that encyclical. Both Jude Dougherty’s essay (“Wretched Aristotle”) and that of Richard John Neuhaus (“Newman’s Second Spring—Once Again”) have a rhetorical flair that make for delightful reading. They stress the evangelization of culture,

including intellectual culture, that was always a crucial part of John Paul II’s program for the “new evangelization.” Edmund Pellegrino, M.D., who is clearly the dean of Catholic scholars in the area of bioethics, also makes use of Newman in his account of the prospects for Catholic medical education (“Medicine and Medical Education in Newman’s University”).

Two of the essays in this volume are of a more technical philosophical nature, but happily they are written with a more broadly educated audience in mind. Kevin Flannery, S.J., elucidates John Paul II’s case for the interdependence of philosophy and theology by explaining Aquinas’s way of handling a problem in regard to the philosophy of Aristotle that was just being recovered in his day. The issue was how to handle Aristotle’s position on the eternity of the world when contrasted with belief in divine creation of the world that is part of Christian faith. Flannery traces the distinctions that Aquinas offered between philosophical and theological method to discern the strengths and the limits to philosophical argumentation and to appreciate what it is that revelation adds to what can be known by natural reason.

The essay entitled “The Christian Difference in Personal Relationships” applies one of the signature concepts of Msgr. Robert Sokolowski to the issue of personhood. In many a previous volume Sokolowski has worked to articulate just what the distinctive difference is between a Christian viewpoint and that of some pagan or secular philosophy, and he finds the difference often to reside in Christianity’s insistence that God is not just the highest being within the universe but truly transcendent. Once this difference is clear, its significance for any number of questions can be made apparent. By a careful review of the logic of personal terms and then a phenomenological analysis of intersubjectivity, Sokolowski turns to the significance of the Christian claim that God has made personal love and friendship with Himself possible to human beings, a development utterly beyond anything conceivable in an-

cient philosophy and typically ignored in modern thought.

The final pair of essays in this volume have a refreshingly evangelical outlook. In “Christ, the Redeemer of Culture,” John Haas, the president of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, considers various practical ways to promote John Paul II’s theme of the evangelization of cultures. And with his characteristic wit and wisdom, Peter Kreeft treats the Beatitudes to show how utterly different and infinitely more profound Jesus’ concept of happiness is than any secular substitute notion.

Like the interdisciplinary efforts of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, these two volumes from the Institute of the Psychological Sciences Press present fine scholarship in an explicitly Catholic mode. They much deserve a careful reading.

An Ethical Analysis of the Portrayal of Abortion in American Fiction: Dreiser, Hemingway, Faulkner, Dos Passos, Brautigan, and Irving by Jeff Koloze (Lewiston ME: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005. Pp. 412).

*Reviewed by Joseph W. Koterski, S.J.,
Fordham University.*

The campaign to legalize abortion in state legislatures during the 1960s and early 1970s is relatively well known. That there were allies in the literary establishment should not be surprising, but the phenomenon is less well studied. The analysis offered here by Jeff Koloze is a significant contribution to our understanding of the events and trends that contributed to the change.

Lawyers, philosophers, and theologians tend to argue about such questions straight on, but writers of imaginative literature are generally inclined to a different approach. They often prefer to hold up a mirror to the age. Yet in doing so, these authors can still be trying to shape perceptions by the way in which they angle that mirror. The evidence for the deliber-

ate efforts to alter American perceptions about abortion is presented here through a study of some of the masters of American fiction in the two generations prior to *Roe v. Wade*.

William Faulkner's *Wild Palms*, for instance, has an abortion plot. Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" presents a dialogue between lovers about a prospective abortion. Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* uses abortion to resolve certain "problems." Koloze's study does not merely note the fact that there are references to abortion in the works of classic American writers of the first half of the twentieth century, nor merely observe that there are more such uses of abortion that one might at first suspect, but takes note of the way in which abortions are mentioned and used in literature.

Merely for an abortion to be discussed or to take place is not yet to know the stance or the agenda of an author. In fact, literary criticism is explicitly mindful of the dangers of what is called the "dramatic fallacy." That a character says or does something is no guarantee about the views of the author. We would not, for instance, hold Shakespeare to down for what Lady Macbeth has to say. It might simply be a matter of ensuring that a *persona* acts and speaks in character.

But when one is properly guarded against the dangers of reading some position into a text, there are ways to ascertain the intention of an author, such as by noting the ridicule or satire that an author uses against a point of view, or appreciating the sympathy with which a character or an action is painted. There are also the approaches that make use of comments by the author in venues other than the fiction itself.

Koloze's study is a fine effort at scholarly and well-disciplined investigation of a topic that has been addressed with surprising frequency in American literature and yet one that has seldom been examined by literary critics. The authors that he has chosen constitute a highly representative set from the period selected. He finds them almost universally to have

ignored the traditional religious viewpoint on ethical problems with abortion. Instead, they tended to portray the situation in ways that supported the perception of a need for a change in American law and *mores* so as to do away with the moral taboo.

Koloze also performs an analysis on these authors and their abortion writings from the point of view of *catharsis*, the crucial element in classical drama that has often found its way into the modern novel. In ancient tragedy, Aristotle assures us, the dramatist worked to obtain a *catharsis*, a purification of the emotions, through pity and fear. The *catharsis* usually operates for the characters, and often enough for the audience as well. Many scholars have urged that something similar can often be discovered in the novel, and that this has been one of their great sources of attraction in the modern age.

But, regrettably, few such opportunities for *catharsis* surround the abortions that occur in the fiction under study, whether through anxiety, hate, loneliness, love, or the classical pair of pity and fear. Instead, the emphasis is often upon presenting the irrationality of laws that restrained recreational sex or affairs outside of marriage. What Koloze can display as the result of his analysis is, not surprisingly in light of the cultural shift that this country has witnessed, that the authors regarded as particularly prominent in that age frequently used their creations as a vehicle for advocating social change in that direction.

By way of example, consider Theodore Dreiser's 1925 *An American Tragedy*. The book recurrently offers a kind of commentary on religious fundamentalism and an examination of "excessive" moral scrupulosity. The thought of how "helpful" abortion might have been to prevent a "tragedy" turns out to be at the center of an important crime that is depicted in those pages. Clyde Griffiths is unable to kill the child he fathered out of wedlock, and so he resolves to kill Roberta Alden, and thus rid himself not only of the unborn child but also of the woman he no longer loves.

Ernest Hemingway's 1927 "Hills

Like White Elephants" is a short story that had enormous popularity in the 1920s. It originally appeared in a collection suggestively labeled *Men Without Women* and was frequently anthologized. Without ever mentioning the word "abortion" it tells an elaborate story about abortion in the course of recounting a fixed boxing match, a homosexual proposal, and a contract killer. With every page it serves to challenge the *mores* of mainstream public opinion. As we know from elsewhere with Hemingway, there were to be no forbidden subjects.

The encyclopedic trilogy of John Dos Passos, *U.S.A.* (1938) presents an amount of plot information on American life and culture that would rival a Russian novel. Yet recurrent in the course of the book, Koloze shows, is the presence of an author lobbying for the relaxation of abortion laws, especially by the way in which he presents certain characters sympathetically who would find that they could resolve their problems if only the law were different.

In addition to surveying the major figures of American fiction from before the 1973 court decision, Koloze also offers a somewhat briefer treatment of some representative writers who took up the issue after the Court decision. His section on John Irving's 1985 *The Cider House Rules* is particularly well done.

An astute observer of the American scene might well have predicted that the literary intelligentsia would have taken such a position as this. But with Koloze's study we have displayed the evidence, presented in a measured and temperate way with the scholarly resources of literary criticism brought to bear. It is volume worth knowing about for those troubled about the degradation of morals in this country, especially for its excellence at bringing scholarship to bear on this topic.

Embryo: A Defense of Human Life

by Robert P. George and Christopher Tollefsen (Doubleday Publishing, 2008, 256 pp., \$23.95).

*Reviewed by Dr. Greg F. Burke, MD, FACP
Department of General Internal Medicine,
Geisinger Medical Center, Danville, Penn-
sylvania*

The intellectual force of arguments in defense of human life has been well articulated in many venues over the last 40 years. It has always been apparent to this author that the reasons to protect unborn human life are beyond dispute even without any reference to religion or divine revelation. As the pro-life civil rights movement continues to engage opposing political ideologies and slogans of choice, it now has a new weapon in the debate. Robert P. George and Christopher Tollefsen's book, *Embryo: A Defense of Human Life*, should be seen as a primer in the rhetorical library of every pro-life apologist. Without any timidity, the authors explain and defend our absolute responsibility to protect every human embryo and simultaneously disarm all of their opponents' counter-philosophical arguments.

The authors start their work with the emotional telling of the media-worthy tale of the rescue of a frozen embryo in the midst of hurricane-ravaged New Orleans. This frozen embryo later implanted becomes known by the postpartum name of Noah. As the authors state, "Noah would have perished" if not saved by 7 Illinois conservation police officers. Who in all honesty could not see the fluidity of life as represented by Noah—from frozen limbo in a canister to the reality of human infancy? From this starting point, the book systematically begins the defense of human life, the human life of embryos. Abortion proponents will have great difficulty with this for if a human embryo is truly human life, then its destruction is an act of homicide, without any judgment of intent or necessity required. In today's common language—it is what it is.

As a biology major in college and active physician now, I especially ap-

preciated the introductory chapters explaining the science of embryology. Physicians and scientists will resonate with the description of mitosis, meiosis, and the complex biological processes of fertilization. There is no reference to the Bible, a catechism, or even classic philosophical texts, but simply to the standard reference works of embryology. Although a bit dry, this section of the book is absolutely necessary as a foundational element of the authors' arguments. Embryos are human persons in the earliest biological stages. That is a blunt and truthful scientific fact. It is true that some scientists and philosophers will distort the language and reality of these processes, but the undeniable truth of the unique genetic character and potential of ongoing human development remains.

Following the introductory review of embryology, the authors enter into the realm of philosophy and, in particular, the philosophy of the human person. The first order of business is to intellectually deconstruct the "mind-body" and "soul-body" dualism. To make their points the authors pay close attention to writings of Plato, Descartes, Locke, and Aquinas. George and Tollefsen develop a framework which leads one to the inescapable conclusion that in the natural order, human animals live personal lives and are therefore persons. Moreover, if human beings are deliberately destroyed in the zygotic, embryonic, or fetal stage of development, it is surely a wrong committed against their being.

Despite their solid moral arguments, the authors recognize that serious doubts will remain about the protection of embryonic life. The mid-portion of their book will address a multitude of objections to the defense of early human life. Common objections based on utilitarianism, consequentialism, and moral dualism are dealt with head-on. Professor George's colleague at Princeton, Peter Singer, and bioethicist, Ronald Green, who share a similar (attribution) view of human dignity with Singer are engaged in the debate. Other voices which propose that human persons come into being with the develop-

ment of their brains are addressed as well. The authors rightly point out that such attribution arguments are in their own words "fatally flawed." They are quick to point out that the controversial theological concept of "ensoulment" is not necessary to protect embryos from destruction. Religious arguments are not required to appeal for such protection. The moral debate stands alone outside of religious conviction. To quote John Rawls, we can agree to use "our common human reason" as we struggle through these profound questions of human rights.

Newer objections to embryonic rights are addressed in sequential fashion. These objections vary from the preeminent role of sentience in the definition of true human life to arguments about the unity of the early human embryo. To put it in other words, does the early embryo operate in a way characteristic of a single whole organism? The text is somewhat complex and technical in this area, but nonetheless competently shows the biological unity of embryonic human life and the utter weakness of the "sentience" argument that dehumanizes embryos, fetuses, and early infants.

Finally, George and Tollefsen take on new and future challenges to the moral protection of embryos. The cloning debate is touched upon through discussion of Dr. Paul McHugh's assertion that embryos derived by somatic cell nuclear transfer (ie. cloning) do not create a being worthy of moral respect. The "clonote" (McHugh's term for such embryos) is of a different "kind" in comparison to embryos engendered through sexual procreation or even in vitro fertilization. McHugh lays stress on the ontological differences between a clonote and embryo. The authors rightly show that the argument fails: "If a clonote is not an embryonic member of the species of the animal from which it is cloned, then even in the adult stage, the clonal entity cannot be a member of the species." Despite ongoing objections, the authors' final conclusions are clear—human beings (embryos) have a moral right not to be intentionally killed to benefit others (ie.

by embryonic-destructive stem cell research). As creatures with a rational nature, human beings are entitled to basic human rights. The authors are right on with their contribution to this debate and do it without arguments based on emotion, religion, or political calculation.

Finally, the book's last chapter proposes a number of political and cultural approaches that will help defend embryos from destruction. Such proposals include increased funding for adult stem cell research, alternatives to somatic cell cloning, and limitations on in vitro fertilization procedures (of note, the book was released prior to the media's fascination with a woman's use of IVF to become pregnant with 8 fetuses—all which thankfully came to birth). The authors also suggest greater availability of adoption services for discarded IVF-engendered embryos. Recent Vatican teaching as defined in *Dignitas Personae*, however, is less than enthusiastic about such adoption procedures.

Today's political climate is not very receptive to the assertions made by the authors of this book. For those engaged in the current intellectual battles and the defense of human life at all stages, this work is a necessary part of the armamentarium. Readers will appreciate the cogent and logical style of the authors as well as the comprehensive nature of their rhetorical approach. I believe their reasoned arguments will win the day if the opposition ever recognizes the language used by George and Tollefsen is true to reality. No argument based on misused terms such as "choice," "freedom," and "privacy" should be allowed a privileged place on the table. If we talk in terms of biology, reasoning, and human rights, we have the greatest hope for transforming the hearts and minds of those who currently do not defend embryonic human life. My deep gratitude is extended to both George and Tollefsen for their contribution to our shared humanity, and in a particular way to our brothers and sisters who now exist as embryos.

The Vision of Gabriel Marcel: Epistemology, Human Person, the Transcendent by Brendan Sweetman. New York: Rodopi Books, 2008, 179 pages.

Reviewed by Tim Weldon, Professor of Philosophy, University of St. Francis, Joliet, Illinois

Brendan Sweetman's *The Vision of Gabriel Marcel*, provides the reader with the most incisive commentary on Marcel's thought in recent memory. The serious student of Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973) knows that this is no mean feat. As elusive as he was profound, Marcel's philosophy still today defies a definitive label (existentialist or phenomenologist or both?). There is more than one reason for this: Marcel's approach to philosophy was unsystematic, his philosophy is also found in multiple venues (dramatic plays, essays, books, music) and his subject matter, the human person, implicitly withstands the quantifying limits of a label.

Sweetman's sustained focus and very capable scholarship highlight with conciseness the philosophical essence of this great twentieth century thinker without betraying any of Marcel's stylistic difficulty. Sweetman's scholarship is also unique. In his introduction, the author informs us—and rightly—that “this book is a little different from other books on Marcel because it does not attempt a systematic presentation of his work as a whole.” Sweetman's uniqueness is found in his in-depth portrayal of Marcel's most salient themes: the human being-in-a-situation or “situated involvement,” Marcel's critiques of skepticism, the objectivity of knowledge, secondary reflection, ethics, the Transcendent, religious experience, the affirmation of God and his skillful placement of Marcel's philosophy alongside the thought of Descartes, Heidegger, Maritain, and Buber. This many-hued contrast serves to enlighten the reader not only as to Marcel's profundity but also to the thematic direction—however flawed—of Western philosophy from modernity to the present.

For Marcel, modern philosophy is

deficient and even stifling in its erroneous epistemology. This is most conspicuous in the crucial areas of the origin and nature of knowledge. The problem begins with Descartes. The “Cartesian view is not a presentation of how the self actually is,” Sweetman notes, for the self, “according to the Cartesian view, regards itself as a self contemplating a world of objects.” How limiting—epistemologically and ontologically—is the Cartesian worldview as it reduces the very essence of human being and his experiences to an atomizing exercise of thinking. We learn as much from Descartes's *cogito*, wherein the self is understood as disembodied thinker—severed from the greater reality of experience. “The subject of the *cogito* is the epistemological subject,” Sweetman quotes Marcel.

Marcel's understanding of the self—as an embodied human—allows for our necessary ontological foundation, being understood in its totality. “Being-in-a-situation,” is Marcel's term. Against the Cartesian worldview, Sweetman presents the fullness of Marcel's understanding of human experience:

In the realm of experience, we are in a kind of existential contact with reality, and are not primarily mediating reality by means of clear and distinct ideas. That is to say, the world is not primordially mediated through concepts (or, in more contemporary philosophical language, through theories). Rather, “our fundamental situation” in the world will define our “ideas” for Marcel, and any analysis or description of our ideas must involve a reference to a particular human body, and to its particular place or “situation” in existence.

Situated as such, the entirety of our involvement goes well beyond the purely conceptual disposition of Descartes or the phenomenology of Heidegger (which, as Sweetman notes, lacked a phenomenology of the body). For Marcel, the human person is knower and lover. Marcel's theory of situational involvement expands our experiential and epistemological horizon because it includes our exercise of the theological virtues

(few philosophers—if any— achieved his eloquence and insights on hope), and our relationships with others and God. This inclusion brings to the forefront Marcel's idea of the realm of mystery.

Perhaps Marcel's best known philosophical theme, mystery, connotes little of its vernacular meaning. Marcel understands mystery to be beyond the problematic, the solvable, scientific and calculable issues before us. Rather, it is an ontological mystery: the wholly participative nexus wherein my relationships with others and God unfolds—the same nexus that reveals the totality of being. “If he had done nothing else, his (Marcel's) success in this matter would constitute a major contribution to philosophy,” Sweetman quotes Ralph McInerney. Throughout the book, Sweetman rightly uses mystery as a foundation when examining Marcel's groundbreaking epistemology, ethical theory, religious and theological understanding, modern skepticism, and traditional philosophical problems. Mystery is also the necessary pivot of Sweetman's comparison of Marcel's thought with philosophical luminaries such as Jacques Maritain (the discussion of Marcel and Maritain on non-conceptual knowledge is especially helpful).

In all, *The Vision of Gabriel Marcel*, is a significant contribution to understanding modern and contemporary philosophy. “This book is a must read for persons seriously interested in modern philosophy,” writes Katherine Ross Hanley in her foreword. Readers will agree wholeheartedly.

The Blood-Red Crescent by Henry Garnett, Manchester NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2007, 170 pages, paperback, \$14.95.

Reviewed by Sister Mary Jeremiah, OP, Monastery of the Infant Jesus, Lufkin TX.

The *Blood-Red Crescent* by Henry Garnett was originally published in 1960. It now appears with some slight grammati-

cal corrections reprinted by Sophia Institute Press. This Catholic publisher has gained a reputation for producing fine books for pilgrims on their way through this world to the Heavenly Kingdom. And they have done it again!

For the past 15 years or so, especially since 9/11, the legendary Battle of Lepanto has raised interest among the general Catholic public. Usually the emphasis that I have seen has been on the importance of the “rosary prayer crusade” called for by Pope Pius V to intercede for a Christian victory for Europe.

The Blood-Red Crescent is a short historical novel about that ferocious five-hour naval battle which left tens of thousands of sailors and soldiers dead. The plot follows a young Venetian boy, Guido Callatta, in the years 1570-1571, who wants to join Don Juan of Austria and the Holy League to fight the Moslems led by the Ottoman Sultan. The European and Turkish armadas clash off the western shore of Greece in the Gulf of Patras. The Battle of Lepanto was the last, and decisive, battle saving Europe from total Moslem domination.

This is an interesting and thrilling read presenting many aspects of the historical times, culture, travel, means of fighting and the naval build-up for the battle. The book contains adventure, humor, romance, drama, suspense, religion, and of course, history.

There are also numerous moral lessons depicted for leading a virtuous life. We read of obedience, familial piety, devotion, sacrifice, loyalty, etc.

The writing flows well and the descriptions are accurate without being overly grotesque. One example is in the Chapter entitled, “Village of Desolation.” Guido and his companions are searching for his younger sister who has been kidnapped. They have been separated and Guido stumbles upon a Turk whose split head is covered with swarming flies. As Guido retraces his steps, his deep faith turns him from the brutal to the beautiful.

“With a heave of his shoulders, he set the crucifix, in its ruined shrine, upright again and gave a minute to gathering a few spring flowers from a

trampled garden to lay at the feet of the twice-martyred Christ. The arrows were too deeply embedded for him to remove. He said a brief prayer for the souls of all the dead about him and, in that moment, understood the mysterious force that had driven him from Genazzano and sustained him for many weary miles” (p. 80).

The Blood-Red Crescent seems to be particularly suited for young adults, but will prove to be enjoyable for readers of all ages. *The Blood-Red Crescent* is an excellent and wholesome book, and I highly recommend it for a touch of leisure and a lot of history.

The Tripods Attack. The Young Chesterton Chronicles. I, John McNichol, Sophia Institute Press, Manchester, NH. 2008.

Reviewed by: John Gavin, S.J.
Pontifical Biblical Institute

In recent years we have witnessed a resurgence of creativity in literature for children and young adults. Books by J. K. Rowling, Philip Pullman, Stephenie Meyer, Anthony Horowitz and Eoin Colfer have dominated even the adult bestseller lists and have successfully drawn millions of children away from the X-Box and Nintendo. Reading has actually become a cool thing!

But is this resurgence entirely healthy? The world of Harry Potter, unlike that of Narnia or Middle-Earth, clearly emerges from a post-Christian culture with many questionable moral lessons. (And Rowling's recent “outing” of one of the main characters during a Q and A with young fans should make parents reconsider if they want these books on their shelves.) Philip Pullman explicitly attacks Christianity in his *His Dark Materials* trilogy, and the *Twilight* novels portray a heroine who considers eternity with vampires a viable option. Not all of these bestsellers offer solid moral formation for the next generation.

Sophia Institute Press has responded to the authentic need for good young adult literature through its new line, Imagio Catholic Fiction, and one of its

first offerings is *The Tripods Attack*:

The Young Chesterton Chronicles I by John McNichol. McNichol finds the inspiration for his novel in the “alternate histories” of Philip K. Dick, Harry Turtledove, and Tim Powers. He re-envisioned the Edwardian age as a world of high-tech steam driven machines (“steam-punk” as the science fiction aficionados like to call it), where fictional characters such as Lewis’ Dr. Ransom and Chesterton’s own Fr. Brown walk among such real personalities as Thomas Edison and H. G. Wells. The United States has become fragmented after the North lost the civil war, and England rules the planet as a technologically superior empire.

In this bizarre world the young G. K. C. is actually an American, who, through a series of circumstances, finds himself slaving away in a punch-card factory in London. He doesn’t, however, remain in this dead-end job for long and soon becomes a reporter sent to investigate a mysterious meteorite that crashed outside of the city. Accompanied by another young journalist named Herbert Wells, a certain Fr. Brown, and a strange figure known only as the Doctor, Chesterton confronts an alien invasion that threatens the entire planet.

Most of all, however, the novel takes place in a moral universe inspired by Christian values. The book conveys its teachings without sounding preachy and without sacrificing a fast paced plot. Courage, respect for life, faith, and suffering for the truth allow the heroes to claim the day against impossible odds. Well, almost. The ending leaves many questions open and the reader will eagerly await the sequel.

My one complaint with McNichol’s novel, unfortunately, would be the character of G. K. C. himself: He hardly resembles the real Chesterton at all! In fact, though an inspiring character in the book, he never makes one think of his historical namesake. Making him an American (though — spoiler alert! — born of English parents) was a mistake, since so much of who the real G. K. C. was, was English. Perhaps McNichol, who was born in Canada but now lives in the States, wanted to endear his character more to the American market by por-

traying him as a plucky Midwesterner; but he loses something in the translation, namely the fine English formation that molded the man in his early years. Fortunately, every chapter boasts a quotation from the real Chesterton that will surely inspire the reader to delve into the original works.

Chesterton asks in *Orthodoxy*: “How can we contrive to be at once astonished at the world and yet at home in it?” A good novel can awaken our wonder in the world, while demonstrating the divine moral order that is our home. Give this book to your nearest twelve year old. It will occupy him for hours and keep him far away from the Nintendo for a few days.

Meet Mary: Getting to Know the Mother of God, by Mark Miravalle
Reviewed by Glenn Statile
St. John’s University

Upon stepping foot upon American soil for the start of his whirlwind cross-country lecture tour a little over a century ago the Irish playwright and deathbed Catholic Oscar Wilde is reputed to have boasted to both Customs officials and reporters alike that he had nothing to declare except his genius. I too have something to declare, namely that Mark Miravalle’s recent mariological work entitled *Meet Mary: Getting to Know the Mother of God*, published by Sophia Institute Press (2007), is altogether joyous, luminous, and glorious. If one however is looking for something a bit more sorrowful, or perhaps sensational, pertaining to our heavenly mother; then I would heartily recommend either an evening alone with Jacopone da Todi’s always soul-piercing *Stabat Mater*, or even an afternoon at the Tate Gallery in London meditating over Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s pre-Raphaelite portrayal of a frightened and bewildered teenage Mary suddenly startled out of sleep by the angel Gabriel. But for those looking to be both enlightened and entertained about the woman whom *Revelation 12:1* describes as “a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and

on her head a crown of twelve stars” this is the book for you.

Miravalle’s book is short, but that is an asset not a liability. It is a gem with many facets. Furthermore, the author resists all temptation to wear his vast erudition upon his scholarly sleeve. I have had the pleasure of hearing Mark Miravalle speak upon various mariological topics on EWTN over the years. His knowledge is encyclopedic, yet in this book one feels as if he or she is being gently tugged into the mysteries of Mary by one who cares more about you than he does about any reputation he might enhance as an expert in the field. In other words Miravalle honestly exhibits the kind of sincere humility called for when dealing with the guiltless and guileless mother of our Lord. After a brief introduction intended to remind us that Mary’s motherhood is universal, and not just the property of Catholics and Orthodox Christians, the book is divided into five carefully chosen chapters. The first chapter is primarily scriptural and lays out the references to Mary in the Old and New Testaments and in the life of the very early Church. Chapter two adds tradition to scripture and deals, both historically and theologically, with the four Marian dogmas (Mother of God, Perpetual Virginity, Immaculate Conception, Assumption). After having established the theological *bona fides* of Mary then Miravalle uses chapters three and four to explore the reciprocal relationship of Mary’s relation to us as a mother and our relationship to her as children, including various forms of Marian devotion like the Rosary. Chapter five includes a discussion of the always fascinating topic of private revelation in relation to the recent history of alleged and Church approved Marian apparitions. The Appendix, which includes a discussion of the structure of the Rosary and the text of various well known Marian prayers, is welcome and helpful. One might do worse than to head right for the prayer of total consecration to Jesus through Mary written by St. Louis de Montfort, a special favorite of none other than Pope John Paul II.

As I can only speak for myself,

please allow me to share with you a sampling of what I found especially enriching and valuable within the book.

Miravalle's handling of the relationship between dogmas and doctrines is especially well done. While all Marian dogmas are doctrines, the converse need not necessarily follow.

2. Most of us are probably accustomed to referring to Original Sin as a stain upon our spiritual constitution. Many of the Fathers of the Church, such as St. Ambrose for example, lead us in this direction. Miravalle writes: "Original Sin isn't something that was added to the human soul, the way a stain mars clean clothing. It's more like something that was *taken away*, something now lacking in the soul: namely, the grace that God originally intended for us to have within us." (pp. 29-30) Metaphysicians might find it an interesting exercise to compare this explanation of Original Sin with the Augustinian view of metaphysical evil as a privation.

3. In dealing with the issue of Mary's spiritual motherhood Miravalle points out the difficulty of simply trying to understand this concept via anal-

ogy with natural motherhood. This is because of the assault upon the concept of motherhood in recent times. Therefore a proper understanding of Mary's motherhood must involve a reconstruction of our understanding of natural motherhood.

4. Miravalle does a wonderful job in explaining the distinction between the two different meanings of devotion. *Latria* is the form of devotion which signifies adoration, which is due to God alone. *Dulia* is the form of devotion which involves a veneration or honoring of those who have excelled in their own proper devotion to God. While we do not adore Mary, as Catholics are often accused of doing, we do owe her the highest degree of veneration which is consistent with her status as God's greatest creation. Or as Dante puts it in Canto XXXIII of the *Paradiso*: "*umile e alta più che creatura* – more humble and sublime than any creature.)

5. In its assessment of the legitimacy of alleged Marian apparitions the Church investigates the nature of the ecstasy experienced by the mystic. What I did not know was that such testing now regularly includes vari-

ous modern means of medical testing such as EEG and EKG devices. Just in case he doesn't already know this already Professor Miravalle, as well as other *FCSQ* readers, might enjoy consulting the work of scientists such as Andrew Newberg and Mario Beauregard. Newberg, for example, regularly conducts research dealing with the relationship between brain function and mystical or religious experiences.

This book is neither a work of apologetics nor a biography of Mary as Miravalle informs us in the Introduction. What he has provided us with is a guidebook for those who both want to know about as well as to know Mary better. While treating Mary like a goddess, or as part of some Holy Quartet, is strictly forbidden by the Church, so "is ignoring her." For while Mary is not Jesus she is the flesh and blood Ark of the Covenant in whose womb the Lord of all Creation entered the world. She is both our mother and the *mediatrix* of all graces. We cannot do justice to the Fourth Commandment without properly honoring Mary. In keeping with the words of the *Magnificat* it is only fitting that all generations continue to call her blessed.

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

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

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 I 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.

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

Keepers of the Keys of Heaven: A History of the Papacy, Roger Collins, Basic Books: New York, NY, (2009), Hardcover. 565 pp.

Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration, Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI, Ignatius Press: San Francisco (2007) Paper. 384 pp. Additional Study Guide.

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

Christ in the Mysteries, Blessed Columba Marmion, Zaccheus Press: Bethesda, MD, (2008), Paper. 467 pp.

Introduction to Medieval Philosophy: Basic Concepts, Fr. Joseph Koterski, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009

Francis Thomson: A Reflection on the Poetic Vocation, Frank Morris, St. Paul, MN: Borromeo Books, 2009

John Paul II Confronting the Language Empowering the Culture of Death, William Brennan, Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2009

Pope Benedict XVI on the Way to Africa

During Pope Benedict's flight to Africa in March of 2009 a journalist reiterated a common complaint against the Church's position on AIDS: it is "not realistic and not efficacious." The pope responded, "I would say that the problem of AIDS cannot be overcome with advertising slogans. If the soul is lacking, if Africans do not help one another, the scourge cannot be resolved by distributing condoms; quite the contrary, we risk worsening the problem." Pope Benedict proposed, instead, a two-fold solution: "the humanization of sexuality" so that people treat each other with respect, and "friendship" with those suffering from the AIDS virus, including a willingness to make personal sacrifices on their behalf. The reaction to this statement was swift, intense and intolerant. One Belgian lawmaker said, "It is not up to the pope to cast doubt on the politics of public health, which are unanimously supported and save lives every day." The governments of Belgium, France, and Germany, as well as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the World Health Organization, the British medical journal, *Lancet*, et. al. all expressed their utter dismay and scorn for the pope's remarks.

Support for the pope's statement came from a seemingly unlikely source: the Center for Population and Development Studies at Harvard University. The Center's Edward C Green, the director of the AIDS Prevention Research Project, said, "We have found no consistent associations between condom use and lower HIV-infection rates, which 25 years into the pandemic, we should be seeing if this intervention was working." In fact, Green argues that the best studies indicate an association "between greater avail-

ability and use of condoms and higher (not lower) HIV-infection rates." These studies also show that the reduction of multiple and concurrent sexual partners is the most effective way to reduce the infection rate. Green believes that condoms may not be as effective as people expect because condom users are prone to take risks, believing they are protected.

Another way to appreciate the wisdom of the pope's remarks is to reflect on the alternatives of an HIV-infected husband who has no moral objections to the use of condoms. The most reasonable and loving thing to do would be to avoid conjugal relations with his wife in order to protect her from any chance of infection. Abstinence, not condoms, offer 100% protection against infection by HIV.

Pope Benedict's reasonable comments on condoms were not only roundly dismissed as wrongheaded and even immoral, but also condemned as an improper papal interference in the culture and politics of the world's nations. In other words, governments and NGOs are attempting to inhibit the religious freedom of the pope and the Catholic Church. They want to suppress the input of Catholics on matters pertaining to the common good of nations. Unfortunately, this is a trend that has been developing for some time now. Recently, even some Catholics are joining the secular movement to keep the Church out of the public square on the grounds that anything less is both a violation of the separation of the church from the state, and a distortion of genuine religion, which is falsely understood as a wholly private affair. ✠

J. Brian Benestad

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