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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Going In Their Door

by Joseph W. Koterski, S.J.

As the Fellowship convenes for its 2009 conference on the theology of Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI, it seems fitting to devote this column to that subject. To my mind, one of the most intriguing aspects of his thought is the prominence of ecology in his vision. Do we simply have a “green” pope? What is the significance of his emphasis on environmentalism?

The habitual tendency of the news media to pluck statements supportive of certain ideological lines out of their contexts could obscure an unusual but recurrent linkage that Pope Benedict XVI makes between his ecological vision and the natural moral law. Now, if there is any theme in recent papal writings that gets shoved into oblivion, it is the reasoning that the Church employs to support her moral teachings. As John Paul II’s *Fides et ratio* reiterated, genuine Catholic thought necessarily relies on faith and reason as valid and indispensable sources of knowledge and wisdom. In the realm of moral theology there is no substitute for either revelation or for philosophy. Of special importance in the arena of moral thought are personalism and natural law theory.

Dignitas personae (“On the Dignity of the Human Person”), for instance, the 2008 instruction on bioethics, takes up the theme of the relationship between one’s moral stances on various advanced questions of bioethics and one’s grasp of the inviolable dignity of human persons. Like so many papal documents of recent years, including *Evangelium vitae* (“The Gospel of Life”), *Veritatis splendor* (“The Splendor of the Truth”), and *Humanae vitae* (“On Human Life”), this document rests its case for the Church’s moral teachings—in this case, opposition to such practices as cloning and embryonic stem-cell research that involves the destruction of embryos on the grounds—not only on personalism but also on the natural moral law. The category of “personhood” evokes in the contemporary mind a sense of the need for reverence and respect, but the establishment of just which beings are persons always requires an investigation into human nature and thus reference to the natural moral law.

What is perhaps surprising, however, is the way in which all of Pope Benedict’s statements on ecology inevitably depend on references to the inestimable dignity of human persons and the natural moral law. One might not know this from the way in which these statements get selectively quoted. What is the connection that he sees and wants to draw to the world’s attention?

I suspect that his strategy here is something akin to the strategy that led previous popes to add personalism to their natural law arguments on moral questions. Even though natural law theory makes a more philosophically solid argument to anyone willing to consider the matter, precisely because it argues on the basis of the metaphysical structure of human beings and not just on something that people are inclined to

recognize at the level of ordinary experience, natural law theory has been in disrepute sociologically ever since the revolt of dissident theologians against the Church's reiteration of opposition to contraception in *Humanae vitae*. Revisionist moral theologians conducted a campaign to make natural law theory sound outdated and tried to shunt it off to the theological repair shop.

Wisely, our recent popes in their joint roles as voices of the Magisterium and as moral theologians have taken up a number of new approaches to presenting Catholic teaching that give hopeful indications of garnering interest and assent. Personalism seemed at first to be something in the arsenal of those who dissented from the Magisterium, and yet over the past thirty years it has become clear that the deepest forms of personalism have actually provided new and compelling arguments in favor of the Church's position against contraception. The inseparability of the unitive and procreative meanings of marital intercourse that Pope John Paul II develops in his theology of the body as well as in prepapal books like *Love and Responsibility* is thoroughly based on personalism, and in fact on a form of personalism that is clearly grounded in natural law thinking.

So, when Pope Benedict made "If you want to cultivate peace, take care of creation" the theme of his message for the World Day of Peace, or when he had solar panels installed on the top of the Vatican's audience hall, it is actually a different shade of green than one finds as the standard issue for the ecology movement. In insisting on nature as the Book of Creation, Benedict is clearly claiming that only sound religious belief can promote respect for the environment without turning environmentalism itself into some sort of fetish. Where the methodological materialism of contemporary science perceives no special moral value in nature, and where pantheistic forms of ecology risk seeing nature as a kind of divinity (whether as a named earth-goddess like Gaia or in some unnamed but equally intolerant ideology), Benedict is championing a view of nature as a gift from the Creator that is always to be employed with reverence for the good of humanity, both those now alive and future generations.

His argumentative strategy thus looks something like this. If we agree on the moral need for ecological awareness and for responsible use of the environment, we should also agree on the need for absolute respect for every human being, regardless of age or condition of dependence, precisely because human life is a part of nature. We should not view nature as the result of mere chance or evolutionary determinism, but as the outcome of divine creation. Cultivating a balanced view about the natural world means learning to use it responsibly, and

neither abusing it nor making it an untouchable taboo (see, for instance, *Caritas in veritate* §51).

If the world is coming to see the need for certain limits on the size of one's carbon footprint, perhaps it can also come to recognize the need for respecting human life. If climate change and deforestation provide examples by which the modern world can see that the natural moral law is real, then they are suitable for use in making the case for the relevance of the natural moral law to other aspects of the human condition. It is a case, I think, of a wise teacher providing all the premises of the argument and letting others see the inescapable cogency of the conclusions. The moral teachings of the Church are not arbitrary rules that the Magisterium is imposing but universal truths grounded in human nature that all can recognize once they give the matter some consideration. This is, of course, the standard template of all natural law reasoning. In numerous speeches as well as in such documents as *Caritas in veritate* Pope Benedict shows us how to draw out the proper conclusions about human ecology from environmental ecology in general:

"If there is a lack of respect for the right to life and to a natural death, if human conception, gestation and birth are made artificial, if human embryos are sacrificed to research, the conscience of society ends up losing the concept of human ecology and, along with it, that of environmental ecology. It is contradictory to insist that future generations respect the natural environment when our educational systems and laws do not help them to respect themselves. The book of nature is one and indivisible: it takes in not only the environment but also life, sexuality, marriage, the family, social relations: in a word, integral human development. ... It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other." (§51)

Statements like this do not merely apply some thin veneer of environmentalism to ecclesial doctrines that really belong in the repair shop. Rather, they display a deeply Christian insight into the universal character of morality and to the perennial principles of morality. What the Church teaches about human life can be articulated not only on the basis of revelation about the unique status of human persons as the only creatures made in God's image but also on the basis of natural law reasoning about the place of human nature within its natural environment, and more specifically by considering implications of ecology and environmentalism beyond the range to which many of their adherents have yet taken them. It is thus a case of going in their door and coming out our own. ❧

Terrence Tilley's Christological Impasses

The Demise of the Doctrine of the Incarnation

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In June of this year the Catholic Theological Society of America met in Halifax for its annual convention. The theme of its gathering was “Impasse...and Beyond.” At the conclusion of the convention Professor Terrence W. Tilley, Chairman of the Department of Theology at Fordham University, presented his Presidential Address entitled: “Three Impasses in Christology.” I was present for this address and found it quite troublesome on a couple of levels. First, while one would expect a presidential address to a scholarly society to be itself a work of substantial scholarship, this was not the case. Much of its theological argumentation was superficial and fallacious. Second, while this was an address of the President of a theological society that calls itself Catholic, much of the address’s Christological content and many of its suggested proposals contain doctrinal ambiguities and even errors.

Rhetorically, Tilley’s address was a *tour de force*, moving the hearts and minds of many, if not most, of his CTSA listeners, which was not hard to do given the content of the talk and the theological and ecclesial sympathies of many in the audience. Undoubtedly, many who now read the published version will likewise be enthusiastic by its stump rhetoric and pulpit rousing style (published in *Origins*, June 25, 2009, Vol. 39/7, pp. 98–105). However, it is the rhetoric that hides Tilley’s superficial scholarship, and thereby camouflages the address’s theological ambiguities and doctrinal errors. In this essay, I will examine Tilley’s address in order to demonstrate the validity of my above observations. In the course of this essay, I will allow Tilley to speak for himself, so as to ensure that the reader will hear him and not my summary.

Tilley states at the onset of his address that “[i]mpasses are serious.” If impasses of consequence, including ecclesial and theological impasses, are not adequately resolved, they become stalemates. “A stalemate

is the result of playing a game to the point that neither side can win.” Within the academy, stalemates “are resolved more by attrition than intellection, theories go out of style.” According to Tilley, what resolves various conflicting claims, the stalemate, is not in determining their respective truth or falsity, but rather, depending on the intellectual temper of the time, one or both “go out of style.” It is this “what is in style” or “what is out of style,” a form of historical relativism, that underlies many of Tilley’s negative critiques of the Church’s doctrinal Christological tradition—it has gone “out of style.” And, it is Tilley’s historical relativism that allows him then to advance his own positive Christological proposals—his “in-style” solutions that will go “beyond” the Christological impasses.

Tilley’s three Christological impasses concern 1) method, 2) salvation, and 3) the person of Christ. Methodology “has to do with the starting point of Christology.” “Does one begin with Scripture and tradition or does one begin with the current situation?” While Tilley admits that such a dichotomy may be questionable, he believes it useful since the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has criticized Roger Haight, SJ, and Joseph Sobrino, SJ, for not adequately adhering to Scripture and to the Christological tradition. Instead, they have methodologically founded their respective Christologies on the contemporary situation, what Tilley terms “presentism.” Haight founds his Christology within a post-modern culture and Sobrino within the context of the church of the poor.

Tilley criticizes the CDF and defends Haight and Sobrino. First, Tilley points out that the New Testament itself professes a variety of Christologies. John 1 speaks of “God becoming man,” which the CDF endorses. “However, [in criticizing Haight] the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith seems to neglect another pattern, that ‘God made a human God’s Son,’ as in Romans 1:4, Acts 2:22–24, 36 and even John 20:31, among other places. Both patterns are clearly discernable in the New Testament but not in the classic dogmas nor in the congregation’s notification.” Second, Tilley notes that the CDF believes that Sobrino has undermined the classic Christological tradition by holding that the classic doc-

trines capitulated to the culture of the time. In response, the CDF argues that patristic Christology and the early Councils transformed Greek words and concepts so as to articulate the truth of the Gospel in their day. In the light of CDF's critique of Haight and Sobrino, Tilley, in keeping with John Paul II's insistence that the faith must be inculturated, asks rhetorically: "Isn't that what Sobrino and others are trying to do today? If it was the right approach to inculturate the Gospel message in the fourth and fifth century, why not in the 20th and 21st?"

We are now, for Tilley, at a methodological impasse. "To express the faith in the present we must use terms appropriate to the present while the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith demands in effect Christology [that] must be represented in the terms used to inculturate the faith in cultures that exist no longer, terms like *hypostasis*, *physis*, *prosopon*, *persona*, *substantia* or modern transliterations. Adhering to the Greek and Latin terms of late antiquity runs the real risk of distorting the meaning of the faith for people today, yet they are alleged to be the right terms to use. Impasse!"

I will take up later the issue of whether Patristic concepts and terminology could actually "distort the meaning of the faith for people today." At present, I will make three comments. First, while many scripture scholars do emphasize the varieties of Christology contained within the New Testament, these variations, despite what some scripture scholars maintain, do not contradict one another. It is not as if the Prologue of John's espousal of an incarnational Christology from above contradicts Paul's and Acts' profession of an adoptionist Christology from below. The whole of the New Testament professes that Jesus is the eternal Son of God incarnate and lived an authentic human life of humble obedience even to death on the cross. Because of this the Father raised him up bodily in glory and in so doing manifested that Jesus is truly the divine Son of God now reigning as man as the risen Lord and Christ. The resurrection of Jesus is not then, as Tilley would have it, God making a human his divine Son, but rather the confirming demonstration that Jesus is indeed the eternal divine Son of the Father. Such an interpretation of the various texts was common within the patristic Church and has continued through the centuries down to the present day. In attempting to revive and authorize a form of adoptionism (which the Church condemned as heretical very early on), Tilley has merely raised the red-herring that the New Testament itself offers a variety of competing and even conflicting Christologies from which to choose. In so doing he has,

nonetheless, laid the groundwork for conclusions that he wishes to draw as his address progresses.

Second, in keeping with a variety of competing New Testament Christologies, the specter of relativism has again raised its head. Having endorsed the methodology of the Fathers, that is, that they faithfully expressed the Gospel within a Greek and Latin culture, Tilley simply and uncritically presumes that this is what Haight and Sobrino have done or are attempting to do. They may have rejected as "out of style" the incarnational model contained within the New Testament and endorsed by the early Church, but their respective Christologies equally illustrate the New Testament principle that multiple Christological interpretations are available, and such interpretations, such as their own, may now be "in style." Absent within Tilley's proposal is any Christological norm, other than the relative cultural and historical *zeitgeist*, by which one is able to evaluate objectively their Christologies or anyone else's. As we will see, this is a consistent problem throughout Tilley's address.

Third, to inculturate the Gospel is the necessary Spirit-filled task of the Church in every age and within every culture. However, there is a difference between inculturating the Gospel so as to allow it to be heard and accepted and in so doing Christianizing the culture, and culturally de-Christianizing the Gospel whereby the culture transforms the Gospel into something other than what it authentically is. Tilley does not address this serious and delicate issue. Because he does not hold for any doctrinal norm that transcends history and culture, Tilley implicitly holds that the present culture always trumps the content and so controls the expression of the Gospel as in the cases of Haight and Sobrino. While Tilley lauds the Fathers for inculturating the Gospel in their day and insists that Haight and Sobrino are heroically doing the same today, what the latter are actually attempting to do is exactly the opposite of what the former did.

"The second Christological impasse is how to account for God's salvific will being effective beyond the community of the baptized." Tilley rightly perceives that this impasse is particularly acute with regard to the Jews and the enduring nature of their covenants. However, in the course of his presentation, Tilley does not offer any new creative insights on how to move beyond these inter-religious impasses other than the need for continual dialogue. Because there is nothing substantially new here, I will not discuss this second Christological impasse.

The third Christological impasse is “an ancient one: How could Jesus Christ be both divine and human?” Tilley argues that today theologians regard the Creed of the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) “as a timely resolution of the historic Christological impasse, but no longer take it as a timeless archetype to which all theology must conform...” Actually, Tilley believes that “Chalcedon’s ‘solution’ was hardly a solution.” Here we find an error and an irony, and ones, as we will see, that re-surface throughout his talk. The error consists in viewing the doctrinal teaching of the Council of Chalcedon as merely a “timely resolution” to an historic issue that has long since passed and so no longer “a timeless archetype.” Rather, the Council of Chalcedon defined the ontological nature of the incarnational mystery, that the eternal Son of God exists as man, and, as such, Christians, of every age, are bound to assent to the doctrinal content of that definition. The irony is that, on the one hand Tilley argued earlier that the Fathers and Councils provided an adequate expression of the Gospel within a Greek and Latin culture and insisted that Haight and Sobrino are admirably attempting to do the same today and yet, on the other hand, he now argues that the Fathers and Councils were a complete failure. For Tilley, it is not consistency of argumentation that is important but rhetorical sound bites. This is further exemplified in what immediately follows.

One of the reasons, according to Tilley, for Chalcedon’s failure is in the unethical and unscrupulous ecclesial politics of the time including, quoting G. Hall, the “rigged councils, banished bishops, imprisonments, ecclesiastical witch hunts and even physical fights.” The aftermath of the Council of Chalcedon was no better. In the midst of political force and imposition, the Church became splintered into warring theological factions. The “political response to the impasse was to resort to force or divorce—the impasse became a stalemate.”

It is important to ask: What is the purpose of the above highly rhetorical historical narrative? It would appear that by detailing all of the political and ecclesial shenanigans, some of which, but not all, are no doubt true, one is able to contaminate the doctrinal content of the Councils (Nicea [325 AD], Constantinople [381 AD], Ephesus [431 AD], and Chalcedon [451 AD]) all of which took place within such a political corrupt and ecclesial power-hungry environment. For Tilley, it is simply guilt by association. Good doctrine cannot possibly associate with such reprehensible company and because, historically, it did have such nefarious friends, it cannot possibly be good either. What Tilley does not

address is the most important issue of all: Was what the Councils taught in accordance with revelation and so true? In the end, Tilley’s historical narrative is merely a rhetorical ploy used to subvert and relativize the teaching of the Councils.

More substantially, Tilley states that the Council of Chalcedon simply restated the Christological problem without offering a satisfactory solution as to how one person could be both God and man. This is exemplified particularly in attempting to predicate divine and human attributes to Jesus. “The problem of how a *person* could have both divine and human *properties* was not resolved.” For Tilley, Chalcedon actually exacerbated the problem. “The theological effect of the Chalcedonian strategy of attributing properties to the two natures rather than to the person of Christ basically left the impasse intact.”

Two comments are in order here. The first is that Tilley, in the above, reveals that he is simply not adequately acquainted with the Creed of the Council of Chalcedon. Chalcedon did not endorse the notion that the divine attributes are to be predicated of the *human nature* and that the human attributes are to be predicated of the *divine nature*. Chalcedon did endorse the Alexandrian Christological tradition of Athanasius and Cyril, both of whom stressed that the divine and human attributes be predicated precisely of *one and the same person* of the Son. Because Chalcedon declared that one and the same Son existed “in two natures,” that is, as God and as man, it is one and the same person of the Son who did not suffer as God and it is one and the same person of the Son who did suffer as man. The Second and Third Councils of Constantinople (553 AD and 680-681 AD) were held not to re-interpret or even to clarify the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon, but to ensure that it be understood precisely in this manner for this was the original mind of Chalcedon itself.

Secondly, in criticizing Chalcedon for merely restating the impasse of how Jesus can be both God and man rather than finding a satisfactory resolution to the issues, Tilley manifests that he does not understand the true nature of the theological enterprise. The task of theology and the defining of doctrine are not to solve theological problems but to clarify exactly what the mysteries of the faith are. Heresy always solves what is considered to be a theological problem and in so doing renders the mystery of faith completely comprehensible and so depriving it of its very mystery. Arius, a priest from Alexandria, for example, concluded in 318 AD that there is no possible way for both God to be one

and for the Son to be God. This, for him, was a theological problem—an impasse. He resolved the impasse by denying that the Son was truly God. Granted that this resolution may be easier to comprehend, but it also destroyed the Christian mystery that God is one and that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are that one God. The Council of Nicea, which responded to Arius's heretical position, did not attempt, as he did, to solve a theological problem. Rather, the Council clarified the exact nature of the Christian mystery. The one God is not simply the Father, as Arius maintained; rather the one God is the Father begetting the Son and thus the Son possesses the same divine nature as the Father. The begetting of the Son by the Father is proper to the very nature of the one God. Granted that the Council of Nicea did not make the mystery of the Trinity comprehensible, but it did clarify what exactly the mystery is. The Council of Chalcedon did the same with regard to the Incarnation. It stated clearly that Jesus is one and the same person of the Son of God who exists in two natures, both as God and as man, and thus the attributes of each manner of existence can rightly be predicated of that same Son. Tilley, it would appear, is into solving theological problems as a way of overcoming theological impasses, rather than clarifying the exact nature of the Christian mysteries and in so doing allowing these mysteries to shine with even greater splendor.

Tilley once more faults the CDF for demanding that theologians employ Chalcedonian concepts and language rather than use contemporary concepts—"just what the fathers did." He sees in such insistence "another instance of a political imposition." For Tilley, the key failed tactic in attempting to overcome impasses "is stopping the dialogue, often done by silencing theologians." While "notifications and instructions of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith can be and are often helpful theologically and pedagogically," yet "when the congregation resorts to star-chamber tactics and political sanctions—some direct, some indirect—the Congregation of the Faith may recapitulate the vicious politics of the early Church." Such unseemly tactics only leads to stalemate. The way through an impasse and so to avoid a stalemate is "to stay at the table no matter what until we can find a way together around the impasse." Again, for Tilley, "[s]topping the dialogue by silencing theologians does not resolve the impasse. You can kill theologians, but you cannot silence them—short of gagging their mouths and tying their hands behind them. The *habitus* of their vocation is too strong to be stopped by human authorities. As I said yesterday,

you can't shut us up." Tilley argues that "[g]ood theological ideas live despite official authoritarian repression because these ideas capture the old creeds in the new world, using a new idiom for giving voice to new ways in which the old faith can live on in a new context." While theologians who "stubbornly maintain their positions" and are not willing to rethink them—"not necessarily to change them"—do not help in advancing the process, "[t]he guardians of orthodoxy who mobilize the legionaries of repression do little to resolve theological impasses." Once more Tilley insists that "we must stay at the table of dialogue until we can hear the Spirit, who gets us through the impasse as the impasse moves through and in us. Patience with each other is key."

A few comments are again in order. First, as he has done previously, Tilley pleads that the CDF simply permit theologians today to do what the Fathers did in the past even though he finds that what they did utterly inadequate, for they created and sanctioned a Christological impasse, and, moreover, their political and ecclesial behavior was utterly reprehensible.

Second, what Tilley says about the CDF is completely inappropriate especially within, what is expected to be, a scholarly and objective context. Such language hardly exemplifies respectful table manners nor is it conducive to honest and forthright dialogue, the very thing Tilley insists is the proper way to overcome impasses. While the CDF does indeed criticize and condemn particular theological opinions, it always does so in a scholarly, respectful and professional manner.

Third, though Tilley rightly speaks of good theological ideas living on and thus speaking the old creed to a new world, he does not offer any criteria by which to judge whether a theological idea is good and so does in fact capture the old creed for a new world. He is incapable of offering any theological or doctrinal criteria, for, in criticizing the workings of the CDF, Tilley clearly reveals, yet again, that he espouses a theological relativism—that there is no objective standard of orthodoxy, no authentic rule of faith, by which theological opinion can be judged to be true or false, clear or ambiguous. The CDF, then, possesses no doctrinal base for discerning the adequacy of theological opinion other than "star-chamber tactics." Nor does it possess any rightful divine magisterial authority to make doctrinal judgments. It simply possesses "human authority" that it autocratically exercises with an authoritarian and repressive will. This theological relativism becomes eminently clear as Tilley moves to the conclusion of his address.

Fourth, Tilley gives the impression that the theolog-

ical academy and the Church's magisterium are equal partners around the table of dialogue. This is obviously not the case, but if one holds that the Church no longer possesses divine authority to defend and proclaim the truth of revelation, one is then able, as Tilley does, to pretend that some dialogical compromise is the only proper way forward within a theological environment that professes that all truth is culturally relative. Moreover, Tilley gives the impression that the entire Catholic theological academy is at an impasse with an intransigent and repressive magisterium. He fails to recognize that not all Catholic theologians agree with his or with the CTSA's theological and ecclesial agenda, and thus he fails to acknowledge that he does not speak on their behalf. Many, if not most, of the creative and scholarly Catholic theologians today are fully in accord with the Church's doctrinal Christological tradition and so would find Tilley's own positions less than adequate.

Nonetheless, how then does one progress beyond the present Christological impasses? For Tilley, not only is dialogue essential—the staying at the table—but important also is shared ascetic practices, especially “shared prayer.” Thus, “[d]emanding theological conformity in a time of impasse is a divisive practice.” It must be remembered that “[p]ractice, not theory, is the heart of Christian life together; to insist on ideological identity—one way, one model, one language, especially in a time of impasse—is destructive and, as I said yesterday, idolatrous.”

Tilley is correct that shared prayer is important. However, the depth of shared prayer depends on the unity of faith that both parties share. A group of Catholics, who share the same authentic faith of the Church, are able to participate in a depth of shared prayer, such as the Eucharist, that a mixed group of Catholic and Protestants could not possibly achieve. This has further consequences that bear upon Tilley's argument. Tilley is correct that to demand “theological conformity” is a “divisive practice.” For the CDF to demand, for example, that every theologian conform to the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar would be divisive. However, to demand doctrinal orthodoxy—what has been revealed in scripture and authentically taught within the Church's magisterial tradition through the centuries—is to promote, protect and defend the very mysteries of the Catholic faith upon which the unity of the Church, as the body of Christ, is founded. Neither the Church nor the CDF in particular is demanding an “ideological identity” or championing a “theory,” for the Gospel is neither an ideology nor a theory. What the Church

is demanding and what the CDF is furthering and guarding is that the complete faith of the Church is to be believed, professed and lived, for it is this faith, in its entirety, that is fully salvific. This doctrinal unity is the life-giving source of the Church's corporate prayer and common life. To endorse and promote erroneous conceptions and faulty expressions of this faith—these actions are the “destructive” ideologies and “idolatrous” theories that divisively undermine “shared prayer.”

In resolving the impasse over Christological method, Tilley insists that we must “begin where we are.” We are not above “in heaven” nor are we in the past or the future. Yet, Tilley admits that “many of us cannot but tell a story that begins in heaven: God made the Word flesh.” Nonetheless, “[f]or many of us, we cannot but tell a story that begins on earth: God made a human, Mary's child, God's Son.” Both, according to Tilley, are found in the New Testament. Tilley proceeds to argue as he has done so often in his presentation. While Nicea's *homoousios*, that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, may have worked in the fourth century, it will not work in the present. “The world has changed, and those ancient words and concepts can no longer express the same meaning as they once did. We need to experiment with multiple models and concepts and may wind up with a host of models for communicating the mystery.”

So, the methodological impasse is resolved in that some are permitted to tell the old incarnational story, even though these people are not above “in heaven” where one would seem to need to be, according to Tilley, in order for such a story to make sense. Moreover, this model employs words that are ancient and so no longer express what they once did. Thus, these people presently think that they believe what the Fathers taught and the Councils declared, but, in fact, they do not because the words that they are employing to express their faith no longer bear the same meanings that they did when the Fathers and Councils first used them. Yet it must be asked: If the meaning of the ancient words no longer bear their original meanings, how would we know this given that the only meaning we now know is their contemporary meaning? Tilley appears to be in a singular enlightened position in that he must know what these ancient words originally meant in the past, if he is now able to discern that they no longer bear their original meanings in the present and so to employ them now would be to misrepresent the faith. The point of my critique is simply to manifest the incongruity of the entire argument. Tilley never

provides a reason as to why these ancient concepts and words have altered their meaning and so are made ineffectual in communicating the faith today other than that they originated in a culture other than our own. But different historical cultures are not self-contained units; rather they form the continuum of history. Cultures may vary over the course of history, but they bring with them into the present the truths (and falsities) they contain—this is what the growth in knowledge is all about. If Tilley were correct, there would no point in studying Aristotle, Plato, Dante, or Shakespeare, all of whom lived in cultures other than our own. However, any normal intelligent person can learn to read the Fathers with understanding and can grasp the doctrines proclaimed in the ancient creeds—this is the point of catechesis. Because he ultimately holds that the doctrine of the Incarnation, as defined by the ancient councils, is no longer believable, Tilley rhetorically attempts simply again to destabilize its credibility.

Allowing for a “host of models” is the way, for Tilley, to resolve the impasse concerning the relationship between the divinity and humanity in Christ. For Tilley the success of these models “begins by realizing that *success in accuracy of representation is dependent on success in the practice of communication, not vice versa.*” One begins, it would appear according to Tilley, not with accuracy in conceiving and expressing the mystery of the Incarnation with the presumption that such accuracy will allow one to communicate clearly and unambiguously the faith. Rather, one attempts to communicate the faith and, if such is achieved, then one knows that one has expressed it accurately. This is almost a parody of modern subjectivism. How can one attempt to communicate something if one is not reasonably confident that one is communicating it accurately? Moreover, how can a person who has little or no understanding of the mystery of the Incarnation be the judge of whether or not the person who is attempting to communicate such knowledge has done so accurately? In this situation the hearer makes a subjective judgment, founded upon no objective criteria, on what he or she would like to believe and in so doing validates it.

The heart of the problem is that, for Tilley, Christological models, including the ancient “incarnational model,” do not conceive and express the ontological or metaphysical reality of the mystery of the Incarnation. Models are simply phenomenological approximate expressions of the mystery, but since we do not know the metaphysical reality of the mystery, we are unable to judge which models are closer approximate expressions

and which are not. The acceptance or non-acceptance of a model depends again on the subjective judgment of the person—“what speaks to me”—what is “in style.” Tilley, I feel confident, would find no problem with this. This is what he has been arguing for throughout his presentation—in his critique of the traditional expression of the Incarnation and in his proposal for the need for “a host” of other “models.” This “host” is necessary in order to accommodate everyone’s personal preference. Of course, there is no longer any objective revelational content to be known and believed, nor then is there any unity and communion of faith. The Church, as the one body of Christ, becomes so fragmented that it ceases to serve any divine purpose.

Tilley fails to recognize and to acknowledge that the Trinitarian and Christological doctrines of the early councils and creeds, as well as the authoritative doctrinal teaching of the Church today, are not models in the sense of approximate expressions of the mysteries. While these doctrines do not make the mysteries entirely comprehensible or offer a complete description of the mysteries, they do provide a true ontological account of the mystery, one that can be known and believed. To say that Jesus *is* the divine Son of the Father existing as man, for example, is to define the ontological nature of the mystery of the Incarnation. This is not one model among many other possible models. All else that is or could be said concerning Jesus must conform to the metaphysical truth of this doctrinally defined incarnational mystery. It is the ontological nature of the mysteries of faith and their ability to be known and articulated, and so be doctrinally defined, that Tilley ultimately denies.

To be fair, Tilley does offer a test. The test cannot be whether or not a specific model conforms to the ancient creeds. “Rather, we shall know relatively adequate models by their practical fruits.” These fruits are working “for justice within the church and society,” seeking “reconciliation in a world desperate for healing” and keeping “at the table of dialogue so as to keep impasse from degenerating into a deadly stalemate.” The fruit of an adequate model is in feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, scattering the proud, etc. Of course, all of these fruits were already present when the old “incarnational model” was revered, venerated and believed. Nonetheless, Tilley has a point: Good doctrine does bear the fruit of a good moral life. However, his own criteria undercut his whole theological proposal. Those who argue in a manner similar to Tilley with regard to what is to be the content of faith also often espouse

contraception, abortion, fornication, adultery, divorce and remarriage, masturbation, homosexual activity, same-sex marriage, euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research, etc. Tilley himself states in a footnote: “Laity seem to have been disaffected by the bishops’ preaching about sexual morality that is increasingly incredible.” While Tilley is not specific, one can presume that he would include at least some of the above list. However, the above enumeration is hardly the fruits of a holy life founded upon the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

While my response to Professor Tilley may be perceived as extraordinarily negative, and for me it was not fun to write, I hope that I have demonstrated the

truth of my original concerns—Tilley’s lack of scholarship, his doctrinal ambiguity and error, and his misuse of rhetoric. I hope that I have equally shown that it is of the utmost importance that we know who Jesus is, that is, that we know metaphysically the mystery of the Incarnation—Jesus *is* the eternal Son of the Father existing as a man; once in humility and now as the glorious Lord and risen Christ.

The thoughts expressed in this article are those of the author alone and do not necessarily reflect any position of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops regarding the matters discussed herein.

The Cultural and Ecclesial Situation 1964 to 1967: Paving the Way for Dissent from Church Teaching on Contraception

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I will first briefly summarize the cultural situation in the United States that paved the way for acceptance of contraception and then offer a much more substantive account of the ecclesial situation that did so.

The Cultural Situation in the United States

In his essay of almost 100 pages, “The Bitter Pill the Catholic Community Swallowed,”¹ Msgr. George A. Kelly did a splendid job of summarizing the cultural situation in the United States regarding contraception from 1934—when Margaret Sanger, noted as a pioneer of contraception for eugenic purposes, wrote an article for *The American Weekly* in which she proposed an “American Baby Code”—until

publication of Pope Paul VI’s *Humanae Vitae* in 1968. I will use Kelly’s work, focusing on what he has to say about the situation from 1963 to 1967, while noting some events from 1959 on. I will also note some developments in secular culture that Kelly does not comment on.

Kelly pointed out that in 1959 President Dwight Eisenhower buried a report by William H. Draper, a Planned Parenthood activist, calling for government-financed and managed-population programs. Eisenhower did more than that; he also banned all government involvement in family planning for the duration of his term in office (it would end in early 1960) (pp. 21–22). Eisenhower’s opposition spurred champions of contraception to curry the favor of other politicians, including Catholics. Planned Parenthood held a World Population Emergency Conference in 1960, persuading the National Council of Churches to take a stance favorable to contraception and sterilization. Planned Parenthood also enlisted the support of prominent public figures such as former Secretary of State Christian Herter (pp. 22–23). Moreover, by 1961 John D. Rockefeller III, a firm supporter of government supported contraceptive programs, used his considerable

wealth to achieve this goal.²

In 1962 and following years Planned Parenthood sought to enlist support of Catholics who seemed sympathetic to their ideas. Cass Canfield, chairman of the editorial board of Harper and Brother Publishers (one of the country's most prestigious at the time) and a dedicated supporter of Planned Parenthood, made overtures to some Catholic organizations. But Canfield was subtle and did not show all his cards. One major one he was counting on was a book in the works in 1962 and published in 1963 by John Rock, M.D., called *The Time Has Come: A Catholic Doctor's Proposal to End the Battle Over Birth Control*. Alfred A. Knopf and Company published the book, endorsed by Herter and others, and the author was praised as a "dedicated Roman Catholic." Rock's Catholicism was questionable, to say the least, since he had for thirty years been a dedicated member and advocate of Planned Parenthood. In his book Rock endorsed abortion as well as contraception (pp. 25-27).

Partially as a result of all this propaganda Lyndon Johnson, on becoming President of the US after the assassination of John F. Kennedy, endorsed government sponsored programs of contraception in January, 1965 (p. 37). This act, coupled with the sexual revolution associated with the 1960s, the widespread use of contraception made possible in large part by the anovulant Pill, and the Supreme Court's decision in *Griswold v. Connecticut* in 1965 (all of which Kelly did not consider) brought it about that by the middle of the decade American secular culture had warmly embraced contraception as a way of life. *Griswold v. Connecticut* discovered in the U.S. Constitution a so-called "right to privacy" that led the Court to strike down as unconstitutional a Connecticut state law (passed principally by Protestant legislators in earlier years) forbidding the distribution of contraceptives. It was to the same alleged "right to privacy" to which the Burger-Blackman Court would appeal in 1973 in its infamous *Roe v. Wade* decision, invalidating state laws against abortion.

The Ecclesial Situation

Until 1964 no Catholic theologian had ever said that contraception could possibly be morally permissible. Until then, Catholic theologians unanimously accepted this teaching of the Church. What is more, so did *educated Catholic laymen and women*, as a sociological study in the early 60s by Andrew Greeley (who later dissented

from Church teaching and is still bitterly opposed to it) clearly showed.³ One of the reasons why these men and women gladly embraced Catholic teaching on the subject was that during the fifties Catholic colleges and universities, and among them a great many operated by Jesuits, were proud of their Catholic faith and loyal to the Magisterium. This was also true of Catholic high schools, at that time most of them being for either boys or girls, with those for boys under the direction of Jesuits, Christian Brothers, Brothers of Mary, Benedictines and other religious congregations for men and those for girls under the supervision of the Sisters of St. Joseph, various Franciscan communities, Dominicans, Visitation nuns, Loretta nuns, and others.

1964 marks a turning point. One great book, by Germain Grisez, then professor of philosophy at Georgetown University was published that year to support the teaching that contraception is always gravely immoral. It was called *Contraception and the Natural Law*.⁴ In his book Grisez severely criticized inadequate arguments against contraception rooted in what he called the "conventional natural law theory" based on a Suarezian understanding of natural law and developed a new argument rooted in St. Thomas's understanding of natural law. But that year also witnessed the publication of several books and articles advocating contraception. Among the books were Louis Dupré's *Contraception and Catholics*, Dorothy Dunbar Bromley's *The Experience of Marriage*, and two collections of essays that I will examine here insofar as I consider them typical of the arguments given and influential because of the prominence of their authors among intellectually elite Catholics. The first, entitled *Contraception and Holiness*,⁵ carried an introduction by retired Jesuit Archbishop Thomas Roberts, and included essays by Justus George Lawler, Rosemary Ruether, Julian Pleasants, and others. William Birmingham, who with Joseph Cunneen was co-editor of the highly regarded journal *Cross Currents*, edited another, called *What Modern Catholics Believe About Birth Control*.⁶ It included one essay defending the Church's teaching by Vernon Bourke, professor of philosophy at St. Louis University, but all other essays in the book championed contraception, and among their authors were Birmingham himself and his wife Mary Louise, Michael Novak, James Finn, Sally Sullivan, Sidney Callahan and others. In addition to the book already noted, Dupré, at that time Grisez's colleague at Georgetown University, wrote an influential pro-contraception essay called "Toward a Re-examination of the Catholic Position on Birth Control" for *Cross Currents*, an essay that I

think merits careful examination.

In 1965 John T. Noonan very influential work, *Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by Catholic Theologians and Canonists*, was published by the prestigious Belknap Press of Harvard University. In his Introduction Noonan wrote as follows:

The propositions constituting a condemnation of contraception are...recurrent. Since the first clear mention of contraception by a Christian theologian, when a harsh third-century moralist [falsely] accused a pope of encouraging it, the articulated judgment has been the same. In the world of the late Empire known to St. Jerome and St. Augustine, in the Ostrogothic Arles of Bishop Caesarius and the Suevian Braga of Bishop Martin, in the Paris of St. Albert and St. Thomas, in the Renaissance Rome of Sixtus V and the Renaissance Milan of St. Charles Borromeo, in the Naples of St. Alphonsus Ligouri and the Liège of Charles Billuart, in the Philadelphia of Bishop Kenrick and in the Bombay of Cardinal Gracias, the teachers of the Church have taught without hesitation or variation that certain acts preventing conception are gravely sinful. No Catholic theologian has ever taught, "Contraception is a good act." The teaching on contraception is clear and apparently fixed forever (p. 6).

But he ended by claiming that new conditions and the spirit of Vatican II would lead the way to change Church teaching on this point.

In addition, in the summer of 1965, before *Griswold v. Connecticut*, Richard Cardinal Cushing, commenting on a proposal in the Massachusetts State Legislature to repeal the state's birth control law banning the use of contraceptives, gives us an example of one who "is personally opposed but..." Cushing noted that previously Catholic leaders had opposed any effort to alter laws prohibiting contraception. "But my thinking has changed on that matter," he reported, "for the simple reason that I do not see where I have an obligation to impose my religious beliefs on people who just do not accept the same faith as I do." I have added emphasis to show how Cushing reduces the Catholic position to a matter of purely sectarian belief—as if it would be impossible for a non-Catholic to support the purpose of the Birth Control law. Cushing ended by giving Catholic members of the Massachusetts legislature this advice: "If your constituents want this legislation, vote for it. You represent them. You don't represent the Catholic Church."⁷ Cushing's message did not go unheard.

Although Kelly did not refer to Cushing's remarks, he nonetheless showed, in the essay noted earlier, how Catholic legislators quickly caved in and endorsed laws encouraging contraceptive use.

Reasons Advanced Between 1964-1967 To Justify Contraception

I will now look more closely at the *reasons given* to support contraception by influential Catholic authors between 1964 and 1967, the year before the publication of *Humanae Vitae*. I will examine the 1964 essays by Rosemary Ruether, Michael Novak, and Louis Dupré because they both they illustrate the kinds of arguments used to justify contraception and foreshadow the more systematic arguments developed by the so-called "Majority" of the Papal Commission on Population, the Family, and Natality and the anthropological and moral presuppositions underlying those arguments. I will then examine in more depth the arguments of the "Majority," which were written in 1966 and released to the public in 1967.

1. Rosemary Ruether

In her essay, "Birth Control and the Ideals of Marital Sexuality,"⁸ Ruether (1) denies that there is any moral difference between contraception and use of the rhythm method; (2) offers an analysis of the levels of meaning in the marital act; and (3) proposes the "best" way for helping married couples strive for the ideals of marital union, which includes procreation.

Ruether first attacks what she considers the Church's inconsistency. The Church condemns all forms of "artificial" contraception, but it advocates the "rhythm" method. This method, Ruether claims, is also contraceptive. She thinks it ludicrous to say that an act of intercourse, deliberately chosen during a time when the wife is thought to be infertile, could possibly be "procreative." "Hence, sexual acts which are calculated to function only during the times of sterility are sterilizing the act just as much as any other means of rendering the act infertile. It is difficult to see why there should be such an absolute moral difference between creating a spatial barrier to procreation and creating a temporal barrier to procreation" (p. 74). In short, couples who practice periodic continence by using the rhythm method are adopting by choice

a proposal to place a temporal barrier between sperm and ovum; just as couples who use diaphragms or condoms are placing spatial barriers between them. Why is there a moral difference between the two? Later in her essay Ruether returns to rhythm and attacks it as a most “unnatural” way to solve the problems married people face.

She then analyzes the sexual act. She says that at its biological level it has as its purposive goal the generation of a new human being. But as an act of love, it expresses the interpersonal union between the spouses. Ideally, the sexual act should take place when all these purposes are realizable. But unfortunately that is not possible, especially in our fallen world. For one thing, one can never be sure when the act will in fact be procreative. Moreover, one is able to say “yes” to procreation only if one is able to say “no,” and in order to say “no” he must have an effective means of birth control, to prevent “accidents” from occurring. In addition, “the demands of living in the sexual union are real and meaningful demands which impose a far more frequent use of the sexual act for its relational function than could ever be brought into harmony with procreation itself....the sexual act as a relational act is [moreover] a genuinely purposeful act, and not mere play or unleashing of passion. Since this is the case, the couple cannot well dispense with the act and yet continue to live in a sexual relationship without doing extensive emotional damage to the basic stability of their marriage” (p. 79).

From this it follows that couples have no real choice “but to find some method of birth control which allows [them] to continue to use the sexual act for its relational purpose and to do this under as ideal emotional circumstances as possible” (p. 80). Ruether repudiates periodic continence as an unrealistic, inhumane option. She thinks periodic abstinence is psychologically unbearable as well as ineffective, and it is also dehumanizing (pp. 81, 83, 91). She is not too happy over barrier methods for aesthetic, not moral, reasons, and concludes that the best way to solve the problem is to use the oral-steroid pills (p. 83).

In short, Ruether holds that the Church’s position, championed by clerical celibates who simply cannot appreciate the realities of married life, is dehumanizing and unnatural. The biological needs of procreation can be satisfied by a relatively few marital acts; the psychological needs of intercourse for relational, personal reasons demand regular marital intercourse, unhampered by the psychological duress imposed by the ineffective

method of rhythm, which, after all, is just as contraceptive and other forms of birth control.

Comment

Ruether, with other advocates of contraception, sees no moral difference between contraception and use of fertility awareness or natural family planning as ways of regulating conception. This, of course, is nonsense as the following analysis shows. Ruether and others reason as follows: Contraception prevents conception. “Rhythm” (fertility awareness or natural family planning) prevents conception. Therefore “rhythm” is contraception. That is like arguing: Crows are birds. Eagles are birds. Therefore eagles are crows. Obviously the reasoning here is fallacious. Moreover, no one uses “rhythm” in order to become pregnant, whereas couples seeking to conceive frequently do so in order to engage in the conjugal act at a time when the wife is ovulating. Ruether’s claim that those who practice “rhythm” are placing temporal barriers between sperm and ovum is ludicrous. That is simply not what they are “doing,” i.e., choosing to do here and now.⁹

Note too that Ruether sharply distinguishes between the “biological” level of an act of intercourse and its level as “an act of love,” its “relational” or “interpersonal” level. This dualistic understanding of human sexuality (and the human person) will be developed more fully in the Majority papers. Ruether also uses a form of consequentialist reasoning, claiming that contraception is needed if couples are to avoid serious problems. This is not true, as there are other ways of avoiding the problems that could arise. As we will see the “Majority” papers develop in detail much of Ruether’s reasoning.

2. Michael Novak

(NB. Novak later changed his mind and repudiated contraception and embraced Church teaching)

Novak’s essay “Toward a Positive Sexual Ethic,”¹⁰ has some interesting features. I will focus on the “argument” he mounts to justify the practice of contraception by married couples because of the anthropology and moral theory it presupposes.

Early in the essay he says that marriage and the marital act are ordered to the good of the species, not of individuals (p. 110). He stresses that in recent years people have begun to discover the close relationship between sexuality and personality (p.111), and elaborates on what

he terms the “totality principle.” He sees two levels of moral imperatives in the sexual act: “the first level is the biological, and its end is the preservation of the species; its imperative is ‘do not allow the species to become extinct.’ The second level is psychological: its end is the harmony and development of the human psyche, intelligence, will, emotions, and sentiments. Its imperative is ‘act toward one another as person to person; do not treat the other as an object or a means’” (p. 112).

In Novak’s view, today the “biological imperatives of the [natural] law are receding,” while the “psychological imperatives” are becoming more and more insistent (p. 112). He then writes: “The crux of this newly understood moral imperative...is whether it can be obeyed without at the same time obeying the biological imperative” (p. 113). He admits that we must obey the biological imperative, but holds that the moral (psychological) imperative is “even more demanding” (p. 114). He wants to get away from a negative criterion, “don’t use contraceptives,” because he deems it “inadequate” (p. 115), as it surely is. He thinks that Catholics have been conditioned to regard contraception with revulsion (p. 117), that they have overly spiritualized the marital relationship or reduced the conjugal act merely to rendering a debt, etc. He recognizes that the sexual impulse must be regulated and ordered. Nonetheless, he believes that the absolute condemnation of contraception is inadequate and the reasons for it weak.

He says that “the standard Catholic objection to my argument will be that I am dividing the sexual act between its biological and psychological imperatives. I will be told that these imperatives form a unity, indeed a ‘dynamic’ unity. One cannot do anything to interfere with the biological mechanism of the act in order to exercise only the psychological upper reaches of the act. I am also aware that many persons who use contraceptives or anovulants do so selfishly. My answer to the second objection would be that neither the use of contraceptives nor the nonuse of contraceptives guarantees the authenticity of the love between the couple.... My answer to the first objection would be that the fundamental issue is how to define the marriage act” (p. 121). He opines that “sexuality and fertility seem to be two separate orders” and that the conjugal act receives its nature from what it “symbolizes, and its morality is governed by the conformity of its performance to its intention: the outward expression of an inner, permanent bond” (p. 121). Since procreation includes education and since the exercise of marital sexuality is good for its own sake, he then concludes that “in the total

good of marriage [the totality principle] anovulants or contraceptives seem at times to be the lesser of two evils” (p. 123).

Moreover, he contends that “if the couple has no control over pregnancy, intercourse may create anxieties that make marital love both a torture and a lie.... Unless, therefore, one is ready to argue that continence is a universal ideal, of itself and without reference to the natural expressiveness of marital love, one must admit that at times and in the total context of a married life continence can be an evil. For at times either the biological or else the psychological imperatives of married love must be violated. In actual experience there simply are some situations in which it is imperative ‘not to have children ‘and yet to express one’s love according to its natural sign’” (p. 126).

Comment

It seems clear from what Novak writes here that he does indeed distinguish sharply between the “biological” meaning and the “psychological” or “personal” meaning of the conjugal act and that he regards the latter as more imperative and of higher value. This is a clue to his dualism that distinguishes between the “personal” as experiencing subject and his or her biological fertility that is in some way under the dominion of the personal subject. He also invokes the so-called principle of totality to claim that at times contraception is necessary to foster the education of children and also to avoid some bad consequences for the couple, their marriage, and their children. Like Ruether, he adopts a consequentialist kind of moral methodology, justifying contraception because it allegedly helps couples avoid serious problems. All these ideas, as we will see, are more ambitiously developed by the “Majority” theologians.

3. Louis Dupré

In the introduction to his essay, “Toward a Re-examination of the Catholic Position on Birth Control,”¹¹ Dupré says that he will not present any conclusions. He nonetheless clearly calls for the acceptance of the contraception of individual acts within marriage when necessary to achieve the ends of marriage (procreation and fostering of love) within the whole of marriage. Much that Dupré says is similar to what Ruether and Novak say. However he introduces new considerations. Of these, one of the most important is advanced in *Part 1*

of his paper.

There Dupré advances the view that the Church's teaching on the intrinsic malice of contraception has *not* been proposed infallibly, either by solemn definition by council or *ex cathedra* pronouncements of the pope nor by the ordinary and universal exercise of the Magisterium (pp. 63–64). In *Part 2*, on natural end and natural law, he seems to me to articulate some of Grisez's arguments against the conventional natural law argument against contraception—that it prevents the act of coition from attaining its natural biological end. But in his discussion of human nature he distinguishes between unchangeable aspects of human nature and aspects subject to somewhat radical change. He questions whether the norm against contraception involves violation of primary natural law precepts or secondary precepts, which he holds (and claims, falsely, that he has the support of St. Thomas) are not universally binding (pp. 66–72). He holds that the norm against contraception involves violation of a secondary, not primary precept, of natural law.

In *Part 3* he asks when artificial interference with the functioning of nature (the procreative aspect of marital coition) becomes arbitrary and therefore evil (p. 77). He then asks: “are the two ends of marriage [for him these were (1) the procreation and education of children, and (2) mutual aid of spouses] so independent as to allow the dilemma that one cannot be abandoned without seriously harming basic human values and the other cannot be pursued without compromising equally essential values? We do not think that the two ends must be thus separated.” He then continues as follows: “Since the primary end of marriage is not simply procreation (as is the ‘natural’ end of the *act* of marriage) but the procreation *and* raising to adulthood of the offspring, it would seem that, *at least in those cases where continence creates a tension between the parents which seriously harms the education of the children, the pursuit of the secondary end itself is essential for the full accomplishment of the primary end* (p. 77, emphasis added).

In *Part 4* Dupré considers the argument [he refers to it as a “psychological” argument] advanced by people like the Jesuit Paul Quay, who had argued in 1961, as John Paul II was later on to argue, that contraception is immoral because it violates the meaning of the conjugal or marital act as an act of spousal “self-giving.” According to this argument against contraception, husbands and wives, by contracepting, fail to “give themselves” unreservedly and thus violate the marital act as a true act of love. They in effect “hold back something of

themselves, namely, their procreativity.” He thinks this argument provocative, but not compelling because “for two marriage partners who have repeatedly proven their intention of complete surrender in creative acts of love, to exclude occasionally the fertility of their love when circumstances prevent them from taking proper care of new offspring, does not necessarily contradict the objective meaning of the marital act.” Continuing, he says, “*it would seem to me that the full meaning of these occasional acts can be grasped only by connecting them with the totality of all the others....*” (p. 81; emphasis added).

Comment

First, I should note that Dupré, writing before Vatican Council II, retained the distinction that had become common between the “primary” and “secondary” ends of marriage. Second, and more important, he introduces two new arguments to justify contraception. The first is his claim that Church teaching against contraception has not been *infallibly* proposed by the Magisterium of the Church either by *solemn definition* or *through its ordinary and universal exercise*. The second is his assertion that for St. Thomas secondary precepts of natural law do not bind absolutely and universally but only for the “most part” and admit of exceptions, and that the norm against contraception is a norm of this kind.

These claims must be challenged. Regarding the first, a very substantive argument can be—and has been—made that the Church's teaching on the grave immorality of contraception has been proposed infallibly by the ordinary and universal Magisterium of the Church according to the criteria set forth in *Lumen Gentium*, 25.¹²

Regarding the second, Dupré appeals to a text of St. Thomas in *Summa theologiae* 1–2, q. 94, a. 5 in which he says that the natural law in its secondary precepts which are conclusions from its primary precepts, while unchangeable for “for the most part” (*non immutatur ut in pluribus*), can be changed “in some particular case” (*potest immutari in aliquo particulari*). Dupré, with many dissenting theologians/philosophers (e.g., Charles E. Curran, Richard McCormick, Franz Scholz), gravely misinterprets this passage. St. Thomas did not say that *all* specific secondary precepts of natural law can be changed in some particular cases. In fact, he clearly held that many specific secondary precepts are *absolutely immutable and admit of no exceptions whatsoever* (e.g., the intentional killing of the innocent—see *Summa theologiae*, 2–2, 64, 5).¹³ Moreover, with respect to contraception Aquinas considered this to be a crime

analogous to murder, more serious than fornication.¹⁴

I think the dualistic view of the human person (anthropology) and consequentialistic moral reasoning (morality) employed by Dupré is evident since in positively justifying contraception he offers the same kind of reasoning as that given by Ruether and Novak and later by the Majority theologians.

4. *Majority Papers*

Before taking up the so-called Majority Papers and the reasoning employed in them to justify contraception, I want to say a few things about this commission, the thesis of the “majority” and its tremendous impact on Catholics. The story of the Commission and its work has been told very sympathetically by the journalist Robert McClory in his book *Turning Point*. The subtitle of this book, published in 1995,¹⁵ is most revealing: *The Inside Story of the Papal Birth Commission and How Humanae Vitae Changed the Life of Patty Crowley and the Future of the Church*. In it McClory shows how Patty Crowley and her husband Patrick, who were the president couple of the US Catholic Family Movement and whom Paul VI had appointed to the Commission, persuaded the majority by the massive evidence they provided that showed that a great number of Catholic Couples who practiced “rhythm” nonetheless conceived children when they had hoped that conception would not take place, were bitterly angry and wholeheartedly resented the teaching of the Magisterium. Their eloquent plea that the Church accept contraception persuaded the majority to argue for its acceptance. The papers produced by the “majority,” written in 1966, were published in 1967 in France in *Le Monde* and in the U.S. in the *National Catholic Reporter* to put public pressure on Paul VI to accept contraception. When he rejected the arguments of the “majority” in publishing *Humanae Vitae*, the objection was raised that he simply ignored their advice (he did not). Patty Crowley and her husband were especially upset and continued their advocacy of contraception and dissent from Church teaching. Patrick Crowley died in 1974 but Patty lived until November 2005 and McClory wrote her obituary in the December 9, 2005 issue of *National Catholic Reporter*, still a champion of contraception. In his obituary McClory praises Patty Crowley as deeply involved in the Call to Action group, a group that vehemently repudiates the teaching of the Magisterium on moral and faith issues.¹⁶

Now to the papers of the “Majority.”

The Papal Commission prepared four papers. One, known as the “Minority Report,” defended the Church’s teaching and argued that it could not be changed. It also argued that the reasoning used by the authors of the “Majority papers” to justify contraception were not good and would, if true, lead to the rejection of other firm teachings of the Magisterium. There were three “Majority papers”: (1) the *Documentum Syntheticum* or “Rebuttal”—translated in the Hoyt edition used here¹⁷ as “The Question Is Not Closed: The Liberals Reply”; this was prepared by Josef Fuchs, S.J., Canon Philippe Delhaye, Raymond Sigmond, O.P.; (2) the *Schema Documenti de Responsabili Paternitate* or “Majority Report,” translated as “On Responsible Parenthood: The Final Report;” this was prepared by Fuchs, Sigmond, Alfons Auer, S.J., Paul Anciaux, M. Ladourdet, and Pierre de Loch; and (3) a French text, *Indications pastorales*, “Pastoral Approaches.” I have not included this third text here because it adds nothing to the first two.

With respect to the first two texts I intend to focus on the following issues, central to the claim made in both that married couples can rightly choose, in given circumstances, to practice contraception, namely, (1) man’s dominion over nature; (2) the criteria for determining the moral meaning of human acts; and (3) the meaning of marriage and of marital acts as a “totality.” I omit discussion of other elements in their presentation, e.g., their understanding of the competence and extent of the ecclesial Magisterium in moral questions. In presenting the thought of the “majority” of the Commission on these issues I will draw from material in both the first and the second of the reports identified above.

1. *Man’s dominion over nature*

A key idea in the defense of contraception mounted by the “Majority” is that man’s dominion over physical nature, willed by God, justifies the use of contraceptives by married couples to prevent pregnancies that would be irresponsible. In “The Question Is Not Closed” they note that, “in the matter at hand,” namely,

contraception, there is a certain change in the mind of contemporary man. He feels that he is more conformed to his rational nature, created by God with liberty and responsibility, when he uses his skill to intervene in the biological processes of nature so that he can achieve the ends of the institution of matrimony in the conditions of actual life, than if he would abandon himself to chance (p. 69).

In “On Responsible Parenthood” they write as follows:

It is proper to man, created to the image of God, to use what is given in physical nature in a way that he may develop it to its full significance with a view to the good of the whole person (p. 87).

According to this idea, the *biological fertility* of human persons and the *biological processes* involved in the generation of human life are physical or biological “givens,” and as such need to be “assumed into the human sphere and be regulated within it” (“The Question Is Not Closed,” p. 70).

The person, according to this idea, is not to be the slave of his biology (moral rightness does not consist in conformity to biological or physical laws), to have his choices determined by the rules and conditions set in physiology. To the contrary, the biological givens confronting the person are to be controlled and regulated by the person’s intelligence and freedom. And this leads to the justification of the use of contraceptives.

With respect to all this, the following passage from “On Responsible Parenthood” is quite illuminating:

The true opposition is not to be sought between some material conformity to the physiological processes of nature and some artificial intervention. For it is natural to man to use his skill in order to put under human control what is given by physical nature. The opposition is to be sought really between one way of acting which is contraceptive and opposed to a prudent and generous fruitfulness, and another way which is in an ordered relationship to responsible fruitfulness and which has a concern for education and all the essential human and Christian values (pp. 90–91).

This passage is instructive because it distinguishes between the use of contraceptives to regulate nature and what it calls a “way of acting which is contraceptive and opposed to a prudent and generous fruitfulness.” In other words, contraception by married persons is morally bad only when motivated by selfish reasons. Otherwise, it simply reflects human intelligent control of “what is given in physical nature.”

Comment: The principal difficulty with this idea, however, is that it presupposes a dualistic understanding of the human person. According to it, the body becomes an instrument of the person. The procreative dimension of human sexuality (biological fertility, the

biological processes of human generation, etc.), according to this view, is *of itself* subpersonal and becomes personal only when “assumed into the human sphere and regulated within it.”

2. *The criteria for determining the moral meaning of human acts*

Here we come to the moral methodology advocated by the “Majority,” i.e., the criteria they propose for distinguishing between alternatives of choice that are morally good and alternatives of choice that are not morally good. This theme overlaps with considerations to be taken up below, on the “totality” of marriage and of marital acts, but it is somewhat broader in scope. A clue to the moral methodology adopted by the authors of “The Question Is Not Closed” is provided in the following passage:

To take his own or another’s life is a sin not because life is under the exclusive dominion of God but because it is contrary to right reason *unless there is question of a good of a higher order*. It is licit to sacrifice a life for the good of the community. It is licit to take a life in capital punishment for the sake of the community, and therefore from a motive of charity for others (p. 69).

I call this the “Caiaphas” principle. I prescind here from the question of capital punishment and its justification. I wish to draw attention to the general normative principle set forth in this passage. It is the following: one ought not to do take a human life *unless there is question of a good of a higher order*. This provides a built-in exception clause to a norm such as: one ought not to kill innocent human persons. The exception is, *unless there is question of a good of a higher order*. If such a good is present, then it follows that one can rightly kill innocent human persons. “It is licit to take another’s life if there is question of a good of a higher order.” And this would be true of *every* specific moral norm; i.e., every specific moral norm (called “concrete moral norms” in “On Responsible Parenthood,” p. 81) is open to exception; that is why they “must not be pushed to an extreme,” i.e., made absolute (*ibid.*).

In evaluating human acts, the authors suggest, one must take into account the *totality* of the act in question. They imply that one can make a moral judgment on an act only when it is seen in its “totality,” i.e., in relationship to the end for the sake of which it is chosen (cf. p. 72). This leads us to the third theme.

3. *The totality of marriage and of marital acts*

Here the basic idea underlying the “Majority” reports is set forth luminously in the following passage:

When man intervenes with the procreative purpose of individual acts by contracepting he does this with the intention of regulating and not excluding fertility. Then he unites the material finality toward fecundity which exists in intercourse with the formal finality of the person and renders the entire process human.... Conjugal acts which by intention are infertile [here the authors are referring to conjugal acts chosen during the infertile period of the woman; they see no moral difference between “artificial” and “natural” contraception] or which are rendered infertile [by the use of artificial contraceptives] are ordered to the expression of the union of love; that love, however, reaches its culmination in fertility responsibly accepted. For that reason other acts of union are in a certain sense incomplete and they receive their full moral quality with ordination toward the fertile act.... Infertile conjugal acts constitute a totality with fertile acts and have a single moral specification (p. 72).

This is a remarkable passage and sums up the basic argument used to justify contraception; it also illustrates the moral methodology of the authors. Note that they here claim that individual conjugal acts do not have a moral specification of their own. If they are contracepted marital acts, they are not specified precisely as acts of contraception. Rather, they receive their moral species from the whole ensemble of marital acts, and these, the authors maintain, must be ordained both to love and to a generous fecundity. Thus, we could say that the “single moral specification” of these individual acts is “the fostering of love responsibly toward a generous fecundity.” But this is obviously good, not bad; therefore the individual contracepted marital acts ought properly to be described not as “contraceptive” acts but as acts of fostering love responsibly toward a generous fecundity.

I believe that this is an accurate rendition of the central argument. The problem with it, however, is that it *re-describes* the action one chooses to do (namely, to contracept) in terms of the hoped for consequences of the act (namely, the fostering of love responsibly toward a generous fecundity). While it is true that one cannot judge an act to be morally *good* unless one takes it in its “totality,” including the end for the sake of which it is chosen—*bonum ex integra causa*—it is *not* true that one cannot judge an act to be morally *bad* unless one takes

it in its “totality”; one can judge an act to be morally bad if *any element* of the act is morally bad—*malum ex quocumque defectu*. Thus, if one knows that the object of choice is bad, then one can judge the whole act morally bad, even if the end for the sake of which the act is chosen is good and if the circumstances in which it is chosen are good.

The authors of the “Majority” Report claim that the object of choice is the whole ensemble of marital acts; the choice is to procreate responsibly within the marital covenant. They need to distinguish different kinds of choices. A couple can choose, in the sense of a commitment, to procreate responsibly within the marital covenant. But this commitment entails further choices, namely, *what to do in order to procreate responsibly within the marital covenant*. Those who contracept choose to contracept; one can hardly deny this! Whether the choice to contracept is morally good or morally bad is another question. But one cannot justify the choice to contracept simply because it is the means adopted to carry out the commitment to procreate responsibly within the marital covenant. One can ask whether this means is indeed compatible with responsible procreation. I hope you see the point.

The authors of “The Question Is Not Closed” maintain that their standards are really strict and would in no way justify anal/oral sex, asserting that “in these acts there is preserved neither the dignity of love nor the dignity of the spouses as human persons...” (p. 76). But this is no explanation at all, since an act accords with human dignity in the morally relevant sense by being reasonable and right in accordance with the truth (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 14, where it is said that “human dignity itself involves that one glorify God in one’s body” by “not allowing it to serve the depraved inclinations of one’s heart” (Also cf. *ibid*, no. 16).

Conclusion

Unfortunately even today many Catholics reject the teaching of the Magisterium on contraception. But, as I hope I have shown, contraception, because of the dualistic anthropology at its heart and the consequentialist/proportionalist moral methodology that it uses, is at the root of the culture or death. Moreover, today social scientists such as W. Bradford Wilcox of the University of Virginia, and economists are amassing evidence that supports the teaching of Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae*. Let those who have ears to ear, listen.¹⁸ ✠

ENDNOTES

- 1 Msgr. George A. Kelly, "The Bitter Pill the Catholic Community Swallowed," in *Human Sexuality in Our Time: What the Church Teaches*, ed. George A. Kelly (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1979), pp. 13–101. He also discusses the ecclesial situation but does so in a quite different way that I will do.
- 2 I want to point out that in the late 50s and 60s both the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations were ardent supporters of contraception and Planned Parenthood. Kelly does not note this.
- 3 Andrew Greeley, "Family Planning Among American Catholics," *Chicago Studies* (Spring, 1963). On the basis of these sociological studies Greeley concluded that "the success of the Church's efforts to induce the younger generation of Catholic couples to adopt approved methods [contradicts] assertions occasionally made that Catholics are increasingly adopting appliance [contraceptive] methods," and that "the more education, the more income, the higher the occupational category, the more likely Catholics are to keep the Church's law and the more likely they are to have or to want larger families."
- 4 Milwaukee, WI. The Bruce Publishing Company.
- 5 New York: Herder & Herder.
- 6 New York: Signet Books.
- 7 For Cushing's talk see Diogenes, "Personally Opposed, but..." *Catholic World Report*, December, 2003.
- 8 In *Contraception and Holiness*, introduced by Archbishop Thomas Roberts, S.J. (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964), pp. 72–91.
- 9 For a thorough discussion of what couples are "doing" when they rightly practice periodic continence in order to avoid causing a pregnancy when it would not be prudent to cause one, see Germain Grisez, Joseph Boyle, John Finnis, and William E. May, "'Every Marital Act Must Be Open to New Life': Toward a Clearer Understanding," *The Thomist* 52 (1988), 399–408.
- 10 In *What Modern Catholics Think About Birth Control*, ed. William Birmingham (New York: Signet Books, 1964). pp. 109–128.
- 11 In *Cross Currents* 14 (Winter, 1964) 66–73.
- 12 John C. Ford, S.J., and Germain Grisez, "Contraception and the Infallibility of the Ordinary Magisterium," *Theological Studies* 39.2 (June, 1978) 258–312.
- 13 For a superb study of St. Thomas's teaching on the absolute immutability of the precepts of the second tablet of the Decalogue, for example, see Patrick Lee, "The Permanence of the Ten Commandments: St. Thomas as His Modern Commentators," *Theological Studies* 42.3 (September 1981) 422–43; see also John Finnis, *Moral Absolutes: Tradition, Revision, and Truth* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), Chapter 3, where he takes up in depth St. Thomas's thought and show how utterly false to Aquinas is the interpretation given by authors like Dupré.
- 14 See *Summa contra gentiles*, Book 3, chapter 122. There St. Thomas says that if one deliberately impedes procreation (contracepts), one does something akin to homicide. By homicide "a human nature already in existence is destroyed." He then says that this type of sin (contraception) "appears to take next place, for by it the generation of human nature is precluded." One can see how badly Dupré has used Aquinas.
- 15 New York: Crossroad.
- 16 For McClory's obituary see: http://ncronline.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2005d/120905/1209050.php, accessed July 17, 2008.
- 17 See *The Birth-Control Debate: Interim History from the Pages of the National Catholic Reporter*, ed. Robert Hoyt (Kansas City, MO: The National Catholic Reporter, 1969).
- 18 I have summarized the evidence marshaled by Wilcox and others in my recent essay, "Humanae Vitae at Forty," *Catholic World Report*, July, 2008.

Catholic Feminist Ethics and the Culture of Death: *The Case of Sister Margaret Farley*

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In *A Just and True Love*, a recent collection of essays honoring Sister Margaret Farley, Maura Ryan asserts that in the last forty years Catholic feminists have challenged the traditional sexual ethics of the Catholic Church by insisting on "the significance of woman's experience as a source for interpreting moral value." Their strategy has been to give "priority" to woman's experience, with the "underlying assumption" that this experience is "revelatory of the divine."¹ Sister Margaret Farley has led the way in claiming that "women's lived experience—that is, knowledge gained from living as women—provides a perspective upon human reality which is itself a source of moral truth." By this rule, Farley has turned woman's experience into

a "crucial resource for feminist ethics"² and a "radical challenge to Catholic ethics."³ The Church claims that men and women share a human nature that provides the ground for objective moral standards. However, Farley denies that there is such a shared nature. She contends that the "official" moral teaching of the Church is based only on men's experience, so is not universal. She asks that the special experiences of women now be the "starting point" for new ethical reflections.

Jesuit Brian Linnane agrees with Farley and calls it a "scandal" that the Church will not "dialogue" with Catholic feminists on matters like abortion, for besides being "particularly attentive to the role of experience," these feminists are correct, he thinks, when they call the Church's teachings "experience-laden," rather than universal. For Linnane and Farley, Catholic morality is a masculine construct limited to the cultural plane.

This is why Linnane can praise Farley for creating an alternative sexual ethic without the Church's emphasis on "abstinence."⁵

Margaret Farley blazed the trail for many other Catholic feminists, such as Jean Molesky-Poz, a former Franciscan nun who urges women to trust their "experiences" rather than the Church and to "begin with the local narrative . . . as a challenge to hegemonic power relations parading as universals."⁶ Lisa Sowle Cahill hails Farley as "a leader in the development of feminist theology" because she was the first to apply the feminist motto, "the personal is political," to the Catholic Church and subject the Vatican to a "critique from the perspective of gender equality."⁷ According to Cahill, Farley's emphasis on the "value of freedom" aligns her with the transcendental Thomists Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan, who both "challenged traditional theologies that either overemphasized the captivity of the human person by sin, or made individual conscience unduly subordinate to ecclesiastical authorities and norms." Cahill contends that, like Rahner, Farley sees freedom as a "primary concept to define agency," and like Lonergan, she is interested in the "internal structure of freedom."⁸ She has said that rules cannot be imposed on women by "juridical power," but that women may be invited to give their "consent."⁹ Yet she herself rarely gives her consent and for years—Charles Curran notes approvingly—has opposed "papal teachings on contraception, sterilization, divorce, homosexuality, and direct abortion."¹⁰

She has even criticized such papal encyclicals as John Paul II's *Familiaris consortio* for not giving "due weight" to women's experience.¹ Farley has erected so-called "women's experience" into a Trojan Horse full of armed amazons that can penetrate, she hopes, the very gates of Rome.

According to Mary Henold's recent history of the movement, a large number of Catholic feminists were fellow-travelers of the Culture of Death from the early seventies. They were "oddly silent on the abortion issue" in 1973, when debate raged across the nation, but Henold discovered from interviews and their correspondence that even then "a majority" favored abortion-rights.² In 1974, Farley published a subtle defense of abortion entitled "Liberation, Abortion and Responsibility," in which she placed the Culture of Life and the Culture of Death on the same plane as "different experiences of moral obligation" and presented the raging controversy as between the rights of "mothers or fetuses," never once using the word *child*

or *baby*. Although she said that both sides had "an unconditional claim" on "conscience," she found "ambiguity" only on one side—regarding the nature of the "fetus." Then she ended with a wild utopian flourish, advising Catholic pro-lifers to change the "centuries-laden structures of oppression" that allegedly made abortion necessary.³

Soon after, in 1982, the Sisters of Mercy sent a letter to all Mercy hospitals recommending that tubal ligations be done. Since it violated the Church's teaching against sterilization, this directive was opposed by Pope John Paul II, who gave the Mercy sisters an ultimatum and caused them to withdraw the letter. Margaret Farley justified their "capitulation" on the ground that "material cooperation in evil for the sake of a 'proportionate good'" is morally permissible. Here she claimed that obeying the Pope was complicity *in evil* and excused her sisters' obedience only because it prevented "greater harm, namely the loss of the institutions that expressed the Mercy ministry."⁴ This contempt for papal authority followed from Farley's basic contention that "women's experience, if taken seriously, would alter the very moral norms that are being brought to bear in particular judgments. Women's experience brings into view a dimension of personhood which the theological tradition has ignored, distorted, or falsely characterized in its construal of the normatively human."⁵ Thus she made so-called women's experience the ultimate measure of good and evil in the Church. I say *so-called* because though she pretends to speak for all women, Farley speaks for a radical minority of women, and though she uses the word *experience*, she means an ideology-driven experience.

Another major confrontation occurred soon after when the Vatican responded to a *New York Times* advertisement published on October 7, 1984, and paid for by Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC). The ad consisted of a statement (composed in 1983 by Daniel and Marjorie Maguire and Frances Kissling) entitled, "A Diversity of Opinions Regarding Abortion Exists among Committed Catholics," and it was signed by ninety-seven Catholics, including two priests, two brothers, and twenty-six nuns from fourteen communities. Among the signers was Margaret Farley.⁶

She waited until her presidential address to the Catholic Theological Society of America in 2000 to attack the Vatican's "overwhelming preoccupation" with abortion and its attempt "to control internal debate."⁷ In her speech entitled "The Church in the Public Forum: Scandal or Prophetic Witness?" she

called the Church's defense of the Culture of Life "scandalous" and asked for an end to the Vatican's "opposition to abortion" until the "the credibility gap regarding women and the church" had been closed. She also demanded "a reasonable degree of tolerance for theological diversity." Despite Farley's contumacy toward her spiritual superiors, Sister Anne Patrick calls her "thoroughly Catholic" and echoes her view that the Vatican must listen to "the wide range of church members' experiences before teaching on controversial issues."⁸ This "wide range" of experiences includes having had abortions and practicing lesbianism, but not repenting from these grave sins. It is tragic to contemplate the effect of such an ideology on educated Catholic women. Once caught in its spider web, they seem unable to break out of it. Take for example Janet Kalven of Grailville, born in 1913, received into the Church in 1937, and converted to feminism in 1969. Kalven writes, "On the sexuality issues—contraception, divorce and remarriage, ordination of women, mandatory priestly celibacy, homosexuality, abortion—both my studies and my experience led me to part company with the current teachings of the Church."⁹ As a result Kalven, now in her nineties, sees Christianity as one "myth" among others and clings desperately to the ideology of an aging feminist minority.

Since the eighties, Farley and her fellow Catholic feminists have defended the Culture of Death by claiming that the Church's teaching is too *narrow* for them. They are entirely mistaken, since the Church's teaching on sexual morality has the breadth of metaphysics and Natural Law, as well as the heights and depths of Revelation itself, whereas their new sexual morality stands on the narrow base of postmodern Western feminism. Yet Farley boldly criticizes the Church for the "narrow scope" of her "discourse" on abortion and asks that the debate be widened to encompass the "social and relational context," "the ambiguity of fetal status," and "the complex and intimate nature of women's experience of pregnancy." She hopes that by endlessly complicating the issue of abortion, a new moral teaching will emerge.⁹ Following lockstep behind Farley, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend uses terms like *broad* for the permissive morality of feminists and *narrow* for the Church's teaching.¹ But when we look at the stories told by Catholic feminists about how they came to promote abortion-rights, we find that their base is truly *narrow*, not *broad*. They usually trace their pro-abortion advocacy back to a single

"experience" that triggered an impulsive choice.

A good example of this can be found in the story of two nuns who never regretted signing the CFFC *New York Times* ad in 1984. In 1990 they published *No Turning Back*, in which each defended her pro-abortion stand by citing a personal experience as her moment of illumination. For Sister Patricia Hussey it happened in 1969 when a friend told her she had aborted a child and wasn't sorry about it. Sister Pat reflected that Millie could not have been "wrong" in her choice because she was "a good and tender-hearted woman," so at that instant Catholic teaching "began to fall apart" before her eyes, and she decided without further reflection that abortion was not "a case of right and wrong." Similarly, Sister Barbara Ferraro in 1971 encountered Anna, a mother who had aborted her child and been told in confession not to receive the Eucharist till she repented, but who now wanted to receive with her son at his First Communion. Barbara reflected that Anna was "a good woman," so even if the Church was "rigid" on abortion there was "no easy answer." On the spur of the moment, she told Anna to go ahead and receive Communion, assuring herself, "I could not believe that the God I was coming to know would say anything different." What god was Barbara "coming to know"? It wasn't the Most Holy Trinity, because she and Pat had been sitting in feminist circles discussing works like Mary Daly's "After the Death of God the Father."² The god they were "coming to know" was Margaret Farley's idol of "woman's experience," now their ultimate source of truth.

Soon the personal became the political. In 1982 and 1983 Pat and Barbara testified in the West Virginia legislature against a parental notification bill.³ Then in 1984 they sided with Democrat Geraldine Ferraro when she ran for Vice President, because they were pleased that she supported "freedom of choice" as a "matter of conscience." It was to help her campaign that they signed the CFFC *New York Times* ad printed on October 7, 1984. Ferraro claimed that her woman's "experience" in the district attorney's office had led her "to disagree with the official church," but she still considered herself a Catholic, and she even invited the other Catholics in Congress to a CFFC breakfast where she informed them that the "Catholic position on abortion" was not "monolithic."⁴ Like Ferraro, Pat and Barbara were now unabashedly public as Catholics supporting the Culture of Death: they spoke out for abortion-rights at a NOW rally in Washington,

D.C., on March 9, 1986, and, after resigning from their religious order in 1988, they helped to found West Virginia Catholics for Choice and West Virginia Clergy and Laity for Reproductive Rights.⁵ This is where Farley's idol of woman's experience led them, straight to the altar of abortion, the altar of Moloch, to whom ancient Canaanites sacrificed their babies.

Here are two more examples of feminists who have made a single narrow experience their reason for opposing the Church on sexual ethics. Sister Laurie Brink, O.P., who teaches biblical studies at Catholic Theological Union, tells of a girl named Olive who came to her some years ago in Jamaica to request money for an abortion. The two of them went to the principal, who told Olive to come back with her mother. The girl never returned, and ever since then Brink has felt that she let Olive down. And so, she has committed herself "to a path because of that experience, for the sake of Olive and every single Olive I meet." Brink's disaffection from the Church is profound, but she stays in place hoping that Catholic teaching will "change."⁶ This is an oft-repeated pattern—Catholic feminists retain a position within the Church from which they have mentally excommunicated the Magisterium. As Mary Henold points out, when Catholic feminists say they are committed to "the church," they mean "the people (not the structures and hierarchy)," because their "understanding" of Catholicism is not "contingent on institutional affiliation."⁷ Yet they are glad to have the security, prestige, and power that come from having a role in the institution.

A second example of building on a narrow experience is Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, who tells of writing a paper in college in 1974 to justify her friend's abortion: "I undertook the project so I would have time to think of her, our friendship, and what our public policy should be." Before she wrote that paper, she had already decided that her friend was a "good person" whose "experience" was a matter of "conscience" and that the Catholic Church was "adamant, unforgiving, un-nuanced" in its perennial teaching on abortion.⁸ So the paper was the rationalization of her emotional leap. In 1986, Townsend ran for Congress on a platform of abortion-rights, and when her Catholic identity was questioned by proliferators, she retorted that she was indeed a Catholic: "Yes, I disagreed with the Church on abortion rights," but "The idea that each soul was precious, that every person was indispensable in the sight of God, stood at

the heart of everything I tried to do." Note that she applied her maxim, *each soul is precious*, so narrowly that it excluded all babies in the womb. Townsend ends by advising the Vatican to concede that abortion is a "deeply complicated and difficult issue" on which "good Catholics" can disagree. Otherwise, she warns, Catholic women will ignore the Church's teaching on abortion as they have on contraception. After all, she adds with palpable contempt, rules made by "celibate" men who have not known "the joy of sex" and merely want to protect their "power" are irrelevant to Catholic women liberated by "sexual revolutions."⁹

Many feminists join Townsend in scoffing at *celibate* men in the Vatican who lack personal experience of sex. They might as well scoff at the Virgin Mary and our Lord Jesus Christ. For example, Jane Zeni warns that the "limitations" of a Church authority wielded "exclusively by celibate males" must be taken into account when the issue is abortion or some sexual matter on which they lack "subjective experience."¹⁰ She is echoed by Brian Linnane, S.J., who observes that "the traditional Catholic sexual ethic may be deficient insofar as it has been formulated largely by celibate, male religious professionals."¹¹ Susan Secker remarks that feminists want the Church to adjust its concept of the "normatively human" because it was "formed by Western, celibate, highly educated and affluent men on the basis of men's experience."¹² Thus, the ideologically-driven experience of a radical minority of women is supposed to trump the wisdom of the ages. Catholic feminists are grandiose enough to imagine that their so-called experience is a battering ram that can knock down the gates of Rome.

Another theme that recurs in Catholic feminist writing is the claim that abortion is a very "complex" issue. Kerry Kennedy complains that the Church's teaching is too *simple*: "the public generally only hears the simple answers to complex questions,"¹³ while Patricia Hussey and Barbara Ferraro declare that after attending a Women-Church conference in 1983, they realized that the "ambiguities" surrounding abortion are "infinite."¹⁴ Margaret Farley faults the Church for its failure to take into account the full "complexity of experience,"¹⁵ and Charles Curran blames the Vatican for not sifting in "great detail" the "complex human reality before coming to an answer to a complex moral question." Curran agrees with Farley that the "hierarchical magisterium" should not grasp at "certitude" in sexual ethics, but rather embrace "self-doubt" as the basis for "discernment."¹⁶ In short, feminists can parade

as infallible in their pronouncements, but the pope when he speaks about morality must wrap himself in complexity, ambiguity, and doubt.

Farley has long taught that women's experience has an "authoritative function in interpreting biblical and theological sources."⁷ Little wonder that in chapter 5 of her recent book, *Just Love: a Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics*, where she discusses the four sources of a new framework for sexual ethics—Scripture, Tradition, secular disciplines, and contemporary experience—she makes experience the most authoritative source of all. First, she dismisses Scripture as "sparse and often confusing" on sexual ethics, and then finds Tradition so "confusing," that its "practices and beliefs" will now have to "be challenged" and "replaced." She regards her third source—disciplines like biology, sociology, and history—not usable without "discernment," yet providing access to "reality," something she never credits Scripture or Tradition with doing.⁸ In discussing her final source "contemporary experience," Farley laments that some sexual activity has been experienced as "evil" or "deviant" only because it has been *constructed* that way by religion and society. But today such constructions can be "overturned," and "experience" can now "assert an authority that modifies prior norms that would order it." She gives so much "authority" to feminist experience in this section that it alone can serve as the "measure against which the other sources are tested."⁹ Indeed, she contends that so-called women's experience outweighs Scripture, Tradition and secular disciplines combined. She might as well call it a new revelation. In her seminal essay on Margaret Farley, Susan Secker correctly sums up her view in this way: ethical appeals that violate a woman's experience cannot be "legitimately claimed to have authority, even if such appeals are grounded in Scripture or theological tradition."¹⁰

In chapter 6 of *Just Love*, Farley speaks of "mutuality" as a norm for her new sexual ethics, but she notes that mutuality differs "in kind and degree" in a one-night stand, a short fling, or a love with commitment. Her new ethical approach does not allow her to say that sex outside of marriage is sinful. She even refuses to say that "hooking up," which she defines as "sex without any relationship," is gravely immoral. All her warnings are in the opposite direction—against a return to what she scorns as "sexual taboo morality." She worries that if teenagers are rebuked for hooking up, they might end up with a sense of "shame and guilt." She says we already know the "dangers" and "inef-

fectiveness of moralism," of "pinch-faced virtue," and of "narrowly construed moral systems."¹¹ She doesn't explain, however, what "dangers" follow from Catholic morality. Thus Farley repeatedly depicts Church teaching as spiteful and narrow, rather than as lofty and universal. In another work, where she defends the use of condoms in Africa because of the AIDS crisis, she once again condemns "taboo morality" and the "reiteration of long-standing sexual rules" because this perpetuates "fear and shame," prevents "change" in "traditional beliefs," and fails to respond to "present experiences."¹² She never considers that *present experiences* could be tokens of a licentious age.

In *Just Love* Farley defends masturbation—which the *General Catechism* of the Catholic Church calls "gravely disordered" (#2352)—as the "great good" of "self-pleasuring," and then defends pornography—which that *Catechism* calls a "grave offense" (#2354)—as not necessarily "harmful" when it does not distort "gender relations" or eroticize "sexual violence."¹³ She has an entire chapter in her book justifying homosexual activity on the basis of same-sex "experience." Here we see the spreading tentacles of the Culture of Death: hardly any form of impurity fails to be legitimized in Farley's new sexual ethics for Christians.

Today Catholic feminists quietly await the Church's capitulation. Mary Henold points out that many of them are ensconced in departments of theology and in parishes in the roles of "pastoral associates, pastoral administrators, theologians, liturgists, directors of religious education, and seminary instructors," and in these positions they claim to have the "right" to "define what it means to be Catholic."¹⁴ An example of a feminist defining *Catholic* for herself could be seen in Milwaukee in 1991, when Theresa Delgadillo, a self-declared Latino lesbian feminist, became part of a "human barricade" in support of abortion-rights against Operation Rescue. Delgadillo became angry when she saw "a Latino man wielding a banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe." Why? Because, she said, "his version of Guadalupe was not mine."¹⁵ In other words, she had the right to claim that Our Lady of Guadalupe, in her untainted purity, was on the side of active lesbianism and abortion-rights. Well, why not, if a Catholic feminist like Sister Margaret Farley, from her endowed chair at Yale, has taught for decades, and with impunity, that her ideology of "women's experience" outweighs Scripture, Tradition, academic disciplines, and plain common sense? ✠

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ENDNOTES

¹ "Introduction," in Maura A. Ryan and Bryan F. Linnane, S. J., *A Just and True Love: Feminism at the Frontiers of Theological Ethics: Essays in Honor of Margaret A. Farley* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 2-6.

² Anne E. Patrick, S.N.J.M., "Framework for Love" Toward a Renewed Understanding of Christian Vocation," in *A Just and True Love*, 325.

³ Susan L. Secker, "Human Experience and Women's Experience: Resources for Catholic Ethics," in *Dialogue about Catholic Sexual Teaching*, in Readings in Moral Theology No. 8, edited by Charles I. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, S.J. (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1993), 590. This article first appeared in *The Annual*, Society of Christian Ethics, 1991.

⁴ "The Sexual Abuse Scandal in the Catholic Church: Implications for Sexual Ethics," *Just and True Love*, 282, 278.

⁵ Jan Molesky-Poz, "The Form that Didn't Fit: Charting New Maps, Illuminating New Spaces," *Reconciling Catholicism and Feminism? Personal Reflections on Tradition and Change*, edited by Sally Barr Ebest and Ron Ebest (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 21, 23.

⁶ "Feminist Theology and Sexual Ethics," *Just and True Love*, 20-21.

⁷ Cahill states, on p 44 n16, that Farley defends her view of freedom by citing Rahner's "The Dignity and Freedom of Man," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 2 (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), 235-64; and Lonergan's *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958). She cites them in her "Freedom and Desire," *The Papers of the Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology*, vol. 3, ed. Matthew Zyniewicz (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 71n1.

⁸ Anne E. Patrick, S.N.J.M., "Framework for Love," 323. The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), the national organization of elected leaders of women's communities, had a convention in New Orleans in September 1985. There Margaret Farley, as the plenary speaker, declared that the "'authority' to teach is the power to evoke consent," not "extrinsic imposition, in the form of juridical power."

⁹ Charles E. Curran, "John Paul II's Understanding of the Church as Teacher of the Truth about Humankind," in *Just and True Love*, 430.

¹⁰ Secker, "Human Experience," 584.

¹¹ Mary J. Henold, *Catholic and Feminist: The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 88, 132, 220-25.

¹² Farley's article appeared originally in *Reflection* 71 (May 1974), 9-13, and was reprinted in *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics*, edited Stephen Lammers and Allen Verhey (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987), 434, 435, 437.

¹³ "Framework for Love" Toward a Renewed Understanding of Christian Vocation," in *Just and True Love*, 316-17, 328.

¹⁴ Secker "Human Experience," 587, paraphrasing Farley's "Moral Imperatives for the Ordination of Women," in *Women and Catholic Priesthood: An Expanded Vision*, edited Anne Marie Gardiner (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 42.

¹⁵ There were 75 more priests, religious and theologians who signed the ad, but who asked for their names to be withheld because they feared to lose their Church-related jobs. Barbara Ferraro and Patricia Hussey, with Jan O'Reilly, *No Turning Back: Two Nuns Battle with the Vatican over Women's Right to Choose* (New York, London: Poseidon Press, 1990), 220.

¹⁶ Presidential Address, *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 55 (June 2000), 87-101. See her note on it in Margaret A. Farley, *Compassionate Respect: A Feminist Approach to Medical Ethics and Other Questions*, Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality (New York and Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2002), 98.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 324-25.

¹⁸ "Feminism and Catholicism," *Reconciling*, 40.

¹⁹ Secker, "Human Experience," 583, note 16

²⁰ *Failing America's Faithful: How Today's Churches Are Mixing God with Politics and Losing Their Way* (New York, Boston: Warner Books, 2007), 20, 130, 185.

²¹ *No Turning Back*, 67-71, 99-100, 98.

²² *Ibid.*, 206.

²³ *Ibid.*, 217-18.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 261, 325.

²⁵ Kerry Kennedy, *Being Catholic Now: [37] Prominent Americans Talk about Change in the Church and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2008), 133-34.

²⁶ *Catholic and Feminist*, 7.

²⁷ *Failing America's Faithful*, 59.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 145-46, 62.

²⁹ "Journey from/to Catholicism," in *Reconciling*, 196-97.

³⁰ "The Sexual Abuse Scandal," *Just and True Love*, 282.

³¹ Secker, "Human Experience," 581.

³² Kerry Kennedy, "Preface," *Being Catholic Now*, xxxi.

³³ *No Turning Back*, 214. "Women-Church groups" is defined on p. 213 as "feminist base communities, small circles of women who share their stories and their faith, help each other to live in solidarity, and try to create rituals."

³⁴ Secker, "Human Experience," 583. She is paraphrasing Farley's "An Ethic for Same-Sex Relations," in *A Challenge to Love: Gay and Lesbian Catholics in the Church*, edited Robert Nugent (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 99; and Farley, *Personal Commitments*, 82.

³⁵ "John Paul II's Understanding of the Church," *Just and True Love*, 450.

³⁶ Secker, "Human Experience," 588. Secker is paraphrasing Farley's "An Ethic for Same-Sex Relations," 97-98.

³⁷ Margaret A. Farley, *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York, London: Continuum, 2007), 182-89.

³⁸ *Just Love*, 190-96.

³⁹ Secker, "Human Experience," 587-8. She is drawing this from Farley's "Feminist Consciousness and Scripture," in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, edited Letty M. Russell (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 42-43.

⁴⁰ *Just Love*, 233-35, 243.

⁴¹ *Compassionate Respect*, 12.

⁴² *Just Love*, 235-40.

⁴³ *Catholic and Feminist*, 242-3.

⁴⁴ Theresa Delgadillo, "Race, Sex, and Spirit: Chicana Negotiations of Catholicism," in *Reconciling*, 247

Reflections of Fifty Years of Writing

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Presented at the "Old Docs" Lecture Series
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I.

The Catholic University of America Press published in November a collection of twenty-two academic essays of mine under the somewhat provocative title, *The Mind That Is Catholic: Philosophical and Political Essays*. The first of these essays appeared in 1957 and the last in 2008. Such an occasion is an appropriate one for looking back over one's publications to wonder what they were in fact about. Looking forward from 1957, one hardly suspects what will follow. Looking back from 2009, one wonders if it was not all there from the beginning. Not a few of the things I have written, or better spoken, have appeared in *Vital Speeches*.

Regularly, I do classes on Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, or Aquinas. At some point, after having read together a particularly moving or insightful passage in any of these authors, I turn to the class and say: "Isn't it simply remarkable that we, in the year of Our Lord, 2009, can read something written some twenty-four hundred, or sixteen hundred, or eight hundred years ago, and still find it is the best thing we have read?" I know about things like translations, deconstruction, cultural relativism, and diverse interpretations. Still such classic authors usually guide us better than anyone else about the things that are important, the things *that are*.

We have been reading the *City of God* in class. I came to the following passage in Book Eight (c. 6). In considering the closeness of Plato to Christianity, Augustine writes of the Platonist conception of God: "All these (finite beings) alike could come into being only through him who simply *is*. For him existence is not something different from life, as if he could exist without living; nor is life something other than intelligence, as if he could live without understanding; nor understanding something other than happiness, as if he could understand without being happy. For him, to exist is the same as to live, to understand, to be happy."

When I re-read this passage preparing for class one day, I said to myself: "This too is the Catholic Mind at work." "*Intelligere intelligentibus est esse et vivere*," as I wrote someplace ("For intelligent beings, to understand is to be and to live"). The Catholic Mind is the mind that is open to everything but what is not true, and even of that, it knows it in the truth of its untruth. "*Omne ens est verum*" ("Every being is true") remains the very spirit of mind as such. Augustine was particularly concerned, not with the fables, but with those philosophers who came closest to what is found in Christianity.

Benedict XVI, in his "Regensburg Lecture," remarked that Christianity, from its beginning, was not so much concerned with the pagan religions as with the philosophers. Anyone concerned with the Catholic Mind must, I think, begin here, with the why of this initial concern with the philosophers, with the reason for Paul's going to Macedonia rather than elsewhere. The eventual link to the rest of the world would pass through the minds of men, not their religions, or better, religions would have to stand the test of mind, real mind.

To this list of classical authors, of course, I would add Scripture, both testaments. And when revelation is added to reason as such, nothing alien appears, only more mind to our mind. Writing, and reading whatever is written, consciously quoting it, as Msgr. Sokolowski teach us, bring us to the very "edge" of things, to a place where we ourselves suspect, in our own souls, that the famous definition of mind that Aristotle gave us, that power that is *capax omnium*, that is capable of all things, is indeed true, even of ourselves. This inner coherence is the source both of our contentment and of our abiding restlessness. What is not ourselves is not to pass unnoticed and un-affirmed. It too is to be consciously placed in the order of things, even by ourselves who did not create the initial order.

II.

Over the years, I have often cited the well-known passage of Leo Strauss who said that we are lucky if one or two of the greatest minds that ever lived are still

alive while we are alive. We need to add that, even if they are alive in our time, it will be highly unlikely that we will recognize them as such, even if we come across them. Strauss's conclusion to this premise was simply that, if we are going to encounter the minds not alive in our time, we have carefully to read them. When we do this, of course, all time becomes our time. The old refrain of Rudy Vallee is true—"Your time is my time." And if we write, our time can become someone else's time beyond the limited time that we are given in this passing world.

As I think about these things, I am reminded of several seminal passages that have made their mark on what I do. On reading it again each semester, I repeat to myself those famous words with which Cicero began the third part of his great treatise, *De Officiis* ("On Duties"): "Publius Cornelius Scipio, the first of that family to be called Africanus, used to remark that he was never less idle than when he had nothing to do, and never less lonely than when he was by himself." I always have a student stand up in class and read these penetrating words if for no other reason so that I can hear them again myself. Ultimately, this contemplative activity is both the source and the end of all practical action.

Yet, I do not read these lines of Cicero in the post-Aristotelian sense that man is to withdraw from a troubled world into his Garden or into himself in some Epicurean or Stoic sense. Following Augustine's comment, we are most alive when we actually are in the act of knowing *what is*. We are most what we are intended to be when we are conversing in our leisure about what is true, preferably, as Leon Kass said, in his marvelous book, *The Hungry Soul: Eating and the Perfection of Our Nature*, while dining together. Truth exists primarily in conversation. I believe it was Cicero, in his *Old Age* treatise, who said that the Roman word living together and conversing together was better than the corresponding Greek word, "drinking together," though there is something to be said for the Greeks also, as Socrates showed us.

Sometimes bemused friends hint that Schall may have contracted what is otherwise known as the supposed "Andrew Greeley Syndrome," that of never having an unpublished thought. I deny it, of course. Sometimes I claim to be a follower of Plato who, though he wrote an incredible amount of wonderful things, said in the end that he never wrote down the things that he really held. Words are so fleeting. Plato's dialogues are said to be the closest things to living

conversations that we can have while using the written word alone.

In this matter, I am more a follower of Aquinas, who taught us to state openly, frankly, and, yes, briefly, what we held to be true and why we held it. God is light, not obscurity. I think this shift of emphasis from mystery as yet unexpressed, to truth clearly set forth in written word and active speech is Christian, though it has a paradoxical basis in Socrates' claim that all that he knew is what he did not know. Socrates was not, however, a skeptic. He hated sophists. He was not paid for what he spoke, yet the young potential philosophers, with some fascination, listened to him.

Aquinas always made sure, even after he had stated clearly and precisely what is true, that infinitely more was left to be said of that which was in fact real and beautiful. This abundance in being existed because one source of all finite things was the Creator Himself, while its other "source" was, as Josef Pieper said, in the "nothingness" from which all things arose and to which they return when left to themselves alone. Aquinas's "negative" theology was always at the service of *what is*.

Over the years, I have kept an up-to-date bibliography of what I have written. In the middle of 2008, this collection of titles of essays, chapters in books, books, letters to editors, sundry regular columns over the years, book reviews, lectures, and on-line publications came to one hundred pages. Several years ago, with the financial help of some generous friends, I collected copies of all this material. The collection is now housed in the Special Collections Section of Georgetown University's Lauinger Library. In the end, all writing is simply "thrown" out there. No author ever knows whether what he says will be read or by whom. That itself is something of an adventure, the wonder if words have responses.

The written form of these preserved materials may in fact become exceptional in years to come. Book and print libraries may become mere depositories. Most of the things that I have written in recent years have all been first on line, even when later published in print form. One wonders about the future of these on-line materials whose continued existence depends on their being kept up-to-date on ever new technology. There is not only a world of things, and a world of print, but also a world of ethereal words in "blip-form" that constantly are spoken by our kind and put on-line every day.

III.

My approach to *The Mind That Is Catholic* passes through a citation from Frederick Wilhelmsen, a passage cited in the beginning of my book, *At the Limits of Political Philosophy*. The passage reads: “Every professor of philosophy who is worth his salt writes his own text, a text which is his course, whether he publishes it or not. The text exists in his notes or in his head. If he does not ‘write’ this text down in one way or another, he is not a professor because he has nothing personal to say about his subject” (*Modern Age*, Spring, 1972). So that is what *The Mind That Is Catholic* is about, namely, what is it that Schall personally has had to say on the subject matter that has most concerned him.

This particular book is a selection of what I call “academic” essays, as opposed to more informal essays. I am not sure there is not more truth in “informal” essays, though the design of academic essays is also on discerning precisely “the truth of the matter.” I must confess that my favorite form of writing, which does not mean that I dislike the others, is the short essay. My books, *Idylls and Rambles*, *Schall on Chesterton*, *The Praise of “Sons of Bitches,”* and *Another Sort of Learning*, are collections of short essays. Yet, more sustained arguments are certainly essential to the intellectual enterprise. One of the Psalms says that we are given “seventy years, eighty if we are strong.” I suppose that Schall could conclude, on that basis alone, among “Old Docs,” that he has been “strong.” *Ex esse sequitur posse* (“From ‘to be’ ‘can be’ follows”).

So it seemed worthwhile to look back on what I have written and “select” several essays that seemed most to state the essence of what I have been seeking to say, in one form or another, all my life. I read somewhere that seldom do thinkers have more than a few seminal ideas to which they keep coming back in all their works. I have, much to my surprise, found this view to be true. One does know more when he is older, but he still remembers the intensity and astonishment of the first truths he encountered as true. In this collection, I included an essay that I had originally published in 1957 in *The Thomist*, an essay that I had substantially written in 1955, entitled “The Totality of Society: From Justice to Friendship.” On rereading this early essay, I realized that almost everything I have thought about since found its seeds in this original essay. My first book, *Redeeming the Time* (1968), I think,

spelled out many of these themes.

In the present book, the following chapter from *Redeeming the Time* is included: “The Trinity: God Is Not Alone.” This is the greatest reach of the original essay about what the “totality” of society means. The chapter entitled, “Aristotle on Friendship,” originally in the *Classical Bulletin*, is the direct link between the issue of friendship in God and man, as it was Aristotle who worried about God being alone. This Aristotelian “worry” is one of the principal links between reason and revelation.

From my early teaching experiences at Georgetown, I have noticed that the one topic that never ceases to fascinate twenty year old students is that of friendship. It certainly fascinated me at the same age. Each semester, as I read the *Ethics* again with a new class of a hundred students or so, it never fails to move me to see the “hush” that comes on a class when students, probably for the first time in their lives, formally consider this topic that already drives their young souls to distraction.

But why this issue has been of particular import to me is that it completes an earlier concern that arose in political philosophy, namely, the reason why politics is the highest of the practical sciences but not the highest science as such, to use Aristotle’s terms. I had written my doctoral dissertation at Georgetown in 1960 under Heinrich Rommen. It was entitled, “Immortality and the Foundations of Political Philosophy,” a revised version was published by Louisiana State University Press under the title *Reason, Revelation, and the Foundations of Political Philosophy*, in 1987. In the meantime, I had been ordained and had taught in Rome for a number of years.

The issue in my mind in the thesis was that of the effect of the immortality of the soul, the Socratic principle, on our understanding of political things. Namely, politics and other “societies” were not “beings,” not “substances,” to use Aristotle’s term. I had published an essay in the Italian journal, *Divus Thomas*, in 1980, entitled, “The Reality of Society in St. Thomas.” The point of this essay, as my early mentor, Clifford Kossel, S. J., had shown, was in the category of “relation,” not substance. Human beings, not politics, were in the category of substance. Hence only human beings were the proper subject of happiness and of reaching the object that defined it and to which we tended in our every act.

IV.

By the time I came to do the Louisiana State Press book, I had encountered Strauss and Voegelin and the issues of modernity with its relation to the classical authors. In the Spring of 1975, I had written an essay in *Modern Age* entitled “On the Teaching of Ancient and Medieval Political Theory.” At that time, I was curious about the almost deliberate failure of most political science courses to take the Middle Ages and Christianity into account as central to the very meaning of political philosophy in particular.

I came to realize that there was a reason for this lack of attention that was not just accidental. Strauss had made his famous distinction between Jerusalem and Athens in a way that left out Rome. This combination of a modernity without a medieval past and a critique of modernity that bypassed what was between ancient thought and modernity was the direct purpose of the Louisiana State book. Basically, the issue was whether revelation itself was addressed to reason in such a way that reason could not be itself without considering how it was addressed.

The key to my thinking was provided by Ralph McInerny’s book on the *Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*. Strauss had implied that reason and revelation stood incapable of eliminating each other. One had to be either a rabbi or a philosopher. Strauss himself, in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, in a passage that also prophetically, as we see it now, includes Islam, had noted the centrality of doctrine, and hence, philosophy, in precisely Catholic seminary education. Catholicism is founded on the principle of Aquinas that reason and revelation come from the same source and that they are not and cannot be contradictory to each other. It is not sufficient to say that they cannot refute each other. The issue is whether they are addressed to each other.

McInerny, in speaking to this issue, had noted that the texts of revelation, while containing things that, though they were not “against” reason, could not be proved by unaided human reason. The principle teachings that could not be “proved” by reason were, the Trinity, the internal life of the Godhead, and the Incarnation.

However, Scripture, for its part, also contained things that could be reached by reason, such as the existence of God and the validity of a moral life, things also found in Scripture. What this coincidence implied was

that there was an indirect link between reason and revelation that, in my view, bypasses the Straussian problem and, at the same time, prevented reason from itself claiming a divine power, such that, by itself, it could know the things of God directly. If it could do this, the human reason already would be divine.

This meant, as I saw it, that certain truths found in revelation, when spelled out, did address themselves to reason, when spelled out. As I like to say, faith is directed to reason and reason seeks answers to what it knows that it does not know. Thus, when reason is most thinking what it can know, that is, if it is true to its vocation to be open to all things, it cannot avoid being open to all “answers” to its legitimate questions no matter what their source. Much modern rationalism, under the guise of method, wants to limit reason to what is now called “scientific” reasoning. This step narrows the meaning of reason and excludes large portions of reality that the method cannot touch because it limits itself to the measurable in terms of quantity. If God and the soul are not “quantities,” this method cannot deal with them.

But now it is clear that philosophy cannot but be struck that whatever else it is, revelation does have intelligible answers to certain of philosophy’s own unanswered questions as asked. It may or may not want to accept them, but it cannot be denied that the “answer” to the question of whether God is lonely, as Aristotle implied, lies in the full meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity, “God is not alone.” That is to say, contained within revelation is a feasible answer to a problem that arose in philosophy. Whatever one thinks of it, it is an answer to the question as asked. This coherence, I think, is more than accidental.

Likewise, in the case of our friends, the object of friendship is the good of the other *qua* other. We do not want them to be otherwise than they are, “gods,” for instance, as Aristotle says. The only real answer to the issue of the lastingness of friendship as posed in experience is the resurrection of the body, an issue that I will conclude with from another angle. Most of these reflections were written before I encountered Msgr. Sokolowski, about whose insightful book, *Christian Faith & Human Understanding*, I have devoted a chapter in *The Mind That Is Catholic*.

But, as a long-time reader of Chesterton, I have often been struck, as he was, by the “logic” of heresies. One chapter in the *Mind That Is Catholic* is called “Chesterton: The ‘Real’ Heretic.” His heresy was, in fact, “orthodoxy,” which made him the most counter-cultural figure in the modern world. Chesterton tells us

that he owes his conversion, not to reading the Christians authors, whom he avoided, but to reading to the heretics. And when he did this, he discovered that they contradicted themselves and kept coming back to the fact that their real enemy was, in fact, Christianity as such. He concluded that anything that was rejected for the exact opposite reasons must be pretty close to the center, to the truth of things.

Sokolowski's essay on the Eucharist, in his *Christian Faith & Human Understanding*, traces the valiant efforts of philosophers and theologians to deny the real meaning of the Incarnation and in the Eucharist. This strenuous effort of the human mind to deny, not the truth of God's existence, but that of the Incarnation of the Son, has been an indirect proof to me of the validity of revelation itself as addressed to reason. The Incarnation and the resurrection of the body, those two "foolish" Christian doctrines, bring us back to the normalcy of the world in which we carry out our lives.

What I mean by this normalcy is that we must take away from politics certain temptations to become a metaphysics itself. I learned this mostly from Charles N. R. McCoy, himself one of the great minds in this field. The reverse side of this issue is that what is at stake in the study of the relation of reason and revelation is the allowing of politics to be politics and not, to recall Ronald Knox's phrase, some "enthusiastic," some movement to solve all the world's problems by human means. The very heart of such a movement is what Strauss himself called "the modern project," the self-redemption of man by man.

V.

I am something of a late-comer to Plato. The best essay in *The Mind That Is Catholic* is probably the one entitled "The Death of Plato," which was published in the *American Scholar* in 1996. McCoy was, with good reason, harsh on Plato. Aristotle's criticisms are still normative. It can well be argued that much of the disorder in the modern world has been spurred on by efforts to establish the Kingdom of God on earth by our own powers, usually political, scientific, or economic powers. This can be an interpretation of the fifth book of the *Republic*, adapted to our times. In 1971, I published a book entitled *Human Dignity & Human Numbers*. Already at that time, it was clear to me that the "genetic side" of the fifth book of the *Republic* was becoming evident. Cloning, selective breed-

ing, scientific ruling of children were already evident, as they were in Chesterton's 1922 book, *Eugenics and Other Evils* and Huxley's *Brave New World*. These were proposed as means to make men perfect, by their own science.

All of this was to be the background of Benedict XVI's great Encyclical, *Spe Salvi*. I bring Benedict up here both because I have now written a good deal about him and because he has understood the modern mind as itself precisely an eschatological politics, an effort to solve the four last things—death, heaven, hell, purgatory—by human means. Voegelin had characterized the modern world as an effort to "immanentize the eschaton." That is, it sought solutions to man's problems in means other than those of virtue and faith proposed by reason and revelation.

Behind the modern mind is a driving effort to make men happy in this world and, therefore, an implicit denial of transcendence. David Walsh, in his new book, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution*, has argued that modern philosophy is really at bottom a search for being, a search whose dynamism is the rejection of ideological solutions in this world, a practical thing.

In 1976, I wrote an essay in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*, entitled "Apocalypse as a Secular Enterprise." The Apocalypse, of course, is about the last things and how to achieve them. It had been clear to me that politics had become something more than politics. The reading of Aristotle's *Politics* does not presuppose modern science to understand what is going on in the public order.

But to understand modern studies in politics, to understand politics as claims to achieve man's happiness in this world, does require that theology understand what Augustine called *superbia*. The great crimes do not come from brutal tyrants but from sophisticated thinkers, philosopher-politicians, trying to solve ultimate issues within the confines of this world. Men will be like gods, defining good and evil, passing beyond good and evil, to use Nietzsche's famous phrase.

The defense of Plato does pass through Augustine. The *Republic* and the *City of God* are, in a sense, the same book. In *At the Limits of Political Philosophy*, as in my earlier *Politics of Heaven and Hell*, there is a chapter on "The Death of Socrates and the Death of Christ." Here is the question of why the best man is killed in the best existing city, and whether it will always be so? Behind these questions, lies the proper location of the happiness of man. Is it in this world? The chapter in *The Mind That Is Catholic* on "Transcendence and Political

Philosophy” deals with this issue.

Politics is the public life of mortals while they are mortal. It does not seek to make them immortal, though it knows enough about Socrates last speech to know that the question of immortality is a legitimate one. Ultimately, the defense of politics involves a clear understanding that man’s ultimate destiny is not in this world. The purpose of politics is that there might be something beyond politics. And this is why the understanding of the individual’s transcendent destiny, death, immortality, and resurrection, are so fundamental. My book, *The Order of Things*, was designed to put these issues in place.

VI.

I wish to conclude with a remark of Benedict XVI that is pertinent to what I have been arguing. I did a short book on *The Regensburg Lecture* (2007). It is clear from that book, I think, that what goes on in the modern political mind, including the mind of Islam, is a reflection to our intellectual understanding of ourselves. I have long been enamored with the question of Aquinas in the *Summa* about whether the world was made in justice or mercy (I, 21, 4). Of course, it was made in mercy, not justice. I have long called justice “The Most Terrible Virtue” (*Markets & Morals*, 2004). Justice as such is not, like friendship, interested in the person in the relation, only that the relation itself be fair.

The polity was established that justice could be the foundation of a common good. As I have often argued, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, a Greek doctrine, is not complete. Aristotle himself indicates that human happiness includes all of what he is, the whole, body and soul. Aristotle, if you will, was a tacit incarnationalist. There is a chapter in *At the Limits of Political Philosophy* on the relation of hell to political philosophy. This is an issue that is already present in book ten of the *Republic*, again indicating a curious relation of reason and revelation. It has always seemed to me that if we deny the existence of hell, we trivialize human life. If there is no accounting for evils or rewards for good done through our free agency, what difference does it make how we live? The defense of hell, in this sense, is the defense of human freedom and worth.

In his encyclical on hope, Benedict makes a remarkable observation which, in my mind, serves to encourage us to take a second look at the relation of

mercy and justice. God does not have to create the world, but once He does, the orders of creation within it follow their own natures and logic. Man is promised eternal life as his final happiness. Nothing less will do. All the efforts to locate this happiness in this world fail. This is what modern times are about. Indeed, these efforts uncannily produce something ever worse, the worst probably being the scientific proposals now more and more coming into vogue in which the whole of human corporal nature is being “refashioned.”

The “resurrection of the body,” as I have said, seems to be one of the “reasons” addressed to human reason by revelation. States are not substances. Their “immortality” presupposes the passing of the individuals within them. This means they die. The mortals who compose actual polities do die. What has driven modern thinkers to distraction is the effort to refashion man by political, scientific, or economic means so that we would get rid of all of his evils without the necessity of his personal participation. Yet, we know terrible evils do occur that are not punished in this world. They are often, the worst ones, committed by political figures, through laws they enact for our “improvement.”

In this context, Benedict makes the following statement that “justice” is the best argument for the resurrection of the body. He tells us that he finds this statement in the Marxist philosopher Theodor Adorno. He has just cited the Creed that Christ will come to “judge the living and the dead.” Benedict maintains that neither the world nor our own lives is complete unless this judgment is pronounced. This goes back to Plato’s concern that the world is not made in justice. And the city in speech, though vital, is not sufficient. It is only if there is an actual resurrection of the body of those who did good or evil that ultimate justice can exist in the universe.

Thus, I conclude these reflections on *The Mind That Is Catholic* by saying that this is exactly as we should expect. If our minds have really taken our questions to their ultimate principle, if we are open to what revelation addresses to reason, we will see that things cohere. The problem is not “faith against reason,” or “reason against revelation.” The problem is that they do cohere. The mystery of evil is not that there is nothing to see, including the relation of all things to their end, but that, as one of the chapters in the book argues, that we can choose *not* to see. But since we can also choose to see, we realize that nothing is complete if it does not include this freedom with which we are endowed from the beginning. ✠

A Catholic Factor in an Inter-Orthodox Controversy

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After the ninth session (2006, Belgrade) and during the tenth session (2007, Ravenna) of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches, the head of the Moscow Patriarchate's delegation, Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev, raised the sensitive and divisive issue (among some Orthodox) of the authority exercised by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople within the Orthodox Communion of Churches.¹

Diaspora

The controversy centers on an alleged unjustified exercise of a universal or quasi-universal jurisdiction by the ecumenical patriarch over Orthodox Churches particularly in the so-called diaspora, that is, in territories outside the canonical boundaries of their mother Churches. For example, Orthodox Churches in Western Europe, the Americas and Eastern Europe, regardless of their ethnic origin from a particular church in Eastern Europe or the Middle East, would come under the jurisdiction of Constantinople, which alone would have authority to grant them autonomy (self-governance) or autocephaly (complete independence).²

Other Orthodox local Churches, such as the Russian, dispute this and other claims of Constantinople that turn it into, they maintain, a kind of Eastern papacy.³ The most critical issue at present concerns the diaspora, especially in the Americas.⁴ Several Orthodox jurisdictions in the USA-Canada, for example, have for decades urged a united synod of Orthodox bishops to form one Orthodox Church in America. When the Moscow Patriarchate granted (1970) autocephaly to its daughter church—the former Russian Orthodox-Greek Catholic Metropolia in America—to form the Orthodox Church in America, Constantinople and some other local Orthodox Churches rejected this

action as invalid. Thus to this day the OCA does not receive invitations to pan-Orthodox consultations called by Constantinople. The Phanar (Constantinople) speaks of fourteen autocephalous churches; Moscow speaks of fifteen—including, of course, the OCA.

Canon 28

Constantinople, in justifying its primacy in the diaspora, relies principally on Canon 28 of the general or ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, held in 451 A.D. (The word *ecumenical* signifies the territory of the old Roman Empire.) This canon passed at the very end of that Council, with less than half of the original bishops still in attendance, confirmed the precedence of Constantinople “after Rome”—first granted by the Council of Constantinople, 381, an earlier ecumenical council—because that city had become the new imperial capital; and, further—this is important—Chalcedon granted to the Archbishop of Constantinople the right to ordain the metropolitans of the civil dioceses (large imperial regions) of Thrace, Asia Minor and Pontus and to have oversight of the churches of the “barbarians” in those lands. Constantinople today interprets this canon as giving it authority over Orthodox in all lands not part of the other Eastern patriarchal territories (Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem) or of the other autocephalous local Churches. Some Orthodox local Churches, mainly Slavic, dispute this interpretation.⁵

Bishop Paschasius of Lilybaeum, Bishop Lucentius of Ascoli and the priest Boniface, legates of the Bishop of Rome, Pope Leo I (the Great), at Chalcedon, vigorously opposed passage of Canon 28 by the Council because they had no instructions from Pope Leo and because the canon violated the order of precedence (Rome, Alexandria, Antioch) set down by the Council of Nicaea in 325. But they failed to influence the vote. Subsequently the Council itself, the Eastern Emperor, Marcian, at Constantinople and Archbishop Anatolius of that city wrote letters to Pope

Leo dutifully and urgently requesting his approval of the Council's decrees. The Pope did not respond immediately but on March 21, 453 confirmed only the dogmatic decrees, not the disciplinary ones (including Canon 28). In an earlier letter, May 22, 452, to the Empress Pulcheria he specifically and categorically declared null and void ("by the authority Peter, the blessed Apostle") Canon 28 and any other canon that derogated from the canons of Nicaea (325).⁶

Valid?

Thus Canon 28 never, even subsequently, received the approval of the Roman bishop which was considered by all – the council itself, the Emperor, and the Archbishop of Constantinople – as necessary for its validity. The Quinisext Synod (692), called by Emperor Justinian II to furnish disciplinary decrees for the 5th and 6th Ecumenical Councils—Constantinople II (553) and III (680–81), which had dealt with doctrine and in which only Eastern bishops took part – passed 102 canons, including a reassertion of Chalcedon's Canon 28 (Canon 36). But despite the Emperor's appeal to Pope Sergius, the latter and his successors refused to validate the canons, especially any in conflict with the decisions of the Roman Church.

Later councils [such as IV Lateran (1215) and Florence-Ferrara (1439–44)] confirmed in general, the privileges of the Eastern Patriarchs (in 1215 these were Latin Patriarchs) but with no mention of Canon 28. One could not reasonably think that they approved in their time what Leo I had definitively rejected in 453.

How do these facts affect the inter-Orthodox controversy over the interpretation of Canon 28? This is a speculative question, but it should be of interest to Catholic and Orthodox theologians and historians. We can ask the question: What does the Magisterium of the Catholic Church say about the status of this canon, regardless of how its provision regarding the "barbarians" is to be interpreted? For the Churches, Eastern or Western, in communion with the Roman See, is the canon in force? If not, in what sense or by what criteria can it be valid for the Orthodox Churches? Do the Orthodox authorities just reject the judgment of Pope Leo I in this matter? Apparently so, as Canon 36 of the Quinisext Synod would imply.

Meaning

Only the Magisterium can answer the first question authoritatively. To the second, a Catholic could hold that this canon, though null and void for the Catholic Church, was *de facto* accepted by the (Eastern) Orthodox Churches at the time, who simply disregarded the judgment of Pope Leo I, reasserted the Canon in the Quinisext Synod and, following the separation that began in the 11th century, as Churches no longer in full communion with the Apostolic See, came to be governed by their own statutes, including Canon 28 of Chalcedon. They interpret the Canon now according to their own principles, criteria and decision-making process; and the Catholic Church will not intrude itself into this process.

Recently the ecumenical patriarch convened a conference (Oct.2008) at the Phanar (and has scheduled another in the coming months for Cyprus) of heads of the autocephalous churches recognized as such but not any below that rank, thus excluding, for example, the Orthodox Church in America, the two entirely autonomous Churches in Estonia (one under Moscow and the other under Constantinople) and the autonomous, self-governing Antiochian Archdiocese in the United States. This conference will discuss the issue of the diaspora, and make additional preparations for Orthodoxy's Great and Holy Council, projected since 1961. Positive results from this conference, respecting the diaspora and a common Orthodox understanding of the Patriarch of Constantinople's primacy, will be key factors in insuring progress for the dialogue in the Joint International Communion, the next meeting of which is scheduled also for Cyprus in October 2009.⁷ ✠

ENDNOTES

1. See "Bishop Hilarion Voices his Protest to Cardinal Kasper Against Procedures at the Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue," *Europaica Bulletin* 106 (Oct.4, 2006) at <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/14/106.aspx#3>, Also Cardinal Kasper's comment <http://zenit.org/article-1708;?1=english>
2. For examples of this controversy over the last several decades, see Hyanthe Destiville, *Chronique des chrétiens de l'Est depuis la chute du Mur de Berlin (1989-2009)*, III, B, pp.85–91, in *Istina*, 2009, No.1, Janvier-Mars; and Hilarion Alfeyev, *Primauté et conciliarité dans la tradition orthodoxe*, *Istina*, *ibid.*, pp.29–36. See also, the comments of Metropolitan Methodios of Boston, in the *Orthodox Observer*, May–June 2009, Vol.74, No.1249, p.9.
3. See John Meyendorff, "The Council of 381 and the Primacy of Constantinople" in Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church*, New York, St.Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983, Chapter VIII, pp.121–142. Also see note 5.

4. For a candid discussion of Orthodox disunity, especially in North America, by an Orthodox official, see Ajalat, Charles “Regarding Orthodox Unity,” Part I in *The Word*, Vol. 52, No. 3, March 2008, pp.4-9, and Part II, “Orthodox Unity in America,” Vol. 52, No.4, April, 2008, pp.4-9.
5. Representative, opposed interpretations of Canon 28 are given by Metropolitan Philip Saliba of the Antiochian (USA) Christian Self-Governing Archdiocese: “Canon 28 of the 4th Ecumenical Council—Relevant or Irrelevant Today?,” in *The Word*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Jan.2009, pp.4-9; also in the address by Archimandrite Elpidophore Lambryniadis, *Les défis lancés à l’orthodoxie en Amérique et le rôle du Patriarcat oecuménique*, in *Episkopis*, No.698, pp.16-24, but especially pp.22-24. See, also “The Leadership of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Significance of Canon 28 of Chalcedon: A Statement by the Faculty of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology,” Brookline, MA, April 30, 2009. (<http://holymitynet.net/LinkClick.aspx?link=updates%2FacultyStatementOnLeadership.pdf>)
6. The relevant portions of these letters are printed in *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority*, A.D. 96-454, ed. By E. Giles, London, SPCK, 1952, pp. 517-530.
7. At the October 10-12, 2008 Synaxis or Assembly of the Heads of the Fourteen Autocephalous Orthodox Churches and an additional fifty bishops in Istanbul (Constantinople, the Phanar), Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I who presided at the meeting was at pains to lament disputes that had marked the relationship of some of the autocephalous Churches in recent decades and to reject the image of Orthodoxy as a federation or confederation of churches rather than a strict unity. He particularly urged the activation of a consultation established in 1993 for settling the problem of the relationship of the various daughter churches in the diaspora and a moving ahead with plans for the Great and Holy Council first announced fifty years ago. See *Orthodox Observer*, Nov.2008, Vol. 73, No.1244, pp. 1, 4, and Vol. 74, No.1249, p.9.

BOOK REVIEWS

Men and Women: Diversity and Mutual Complementarity: Study Seminar Vatican City, 30-31 January 2004.

Pontificium Concilium Pro Laicis.
Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006, 226 pp.

Reviewed by William E. May, emeritus Michael J. McGivney Professor at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at The Catholic University of America and Senior Fellow in Ethics at the Culture of Life Foundation.

Introduction

This very important and helpful book contains the papers given at the Seminar noted in the title. After a Preface by Archbishop Stanislaw Rylko, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, it is divided into 4 parts: I: The Identity of Man and Woman (pp. 1-61); II: Dignity, Participation, Equality: International Strategies (pp. 63-98); III: Similarities, Differences, and Mutual Relations: The Church’s Teaching (pp. 99-147); and IV: Pastoral Perspectives (pp. 149-204); and an Appendix, “Letter to the bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of men and women in the Church and in the World” (pp. 205-226) from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, May 31, 2004 signed by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, President of the Congregation.

Part I contains: Lucetta Scaraffia, “Socio-cultural changes in women’s

lives” (15-22); Vincent Aucante, “Fatherhood” (23-36); Karna Swanson, “The feminist ideologies of today: is it possible to speak of a post-feminism?” (37-46); and Manfred Lutz, “Changes and crises in the relationship between man and woman” (47-62). In Part II we find: Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, “Activities of the Holy See: Contributions, judgments, prospects” (65-72); Marguerite A. Peeters, “Current proposals and the state of the debate” (73-98). Two are found in Part III: Maria Teresa Garutti Bellenzier, “The identity of women and men according to the teaching of the Church” (101-129); Most Rev. Carlo Caffarra (then Archbishop of Genoa and now Cardinal Archbishop of Genoa), “Benchmarks, problem areas and issues for debate” (131-147). Part IV: Guila Paola di Nicola and Attilio Danese, “The horizon of reciprocity in the family” (151-173); a two-part essay: 1. Maria Eugenia Diaz Pfennich, “Participation and collaboration in the life of the Church” (175-180) and 2. Guzman Carriquiry, “Participation and collaboration in the life of the Church” (181-190); and Fr. Denis Biju-Duval, “The cultural issue: proposals for a dialogue” (191-204).

In this review I summarize the essays of (1) Scaraffia, (2) Aucante, (3) Swanson, and (4) Lutz in Part I; (5) Archbishop Martin, and (6) Peeters in Part II; (7) Garutti Bellenzier and (8) Archbishop (Cardinal) Caffarra in Part III, and (9) Father Biju-Duval in Part IV.

Part I. The Identity of Man and Woman: The Present Situation and Current Trends

(1) In her thoughtful and thought-provoking essay *Scaraffia*¹ points out that in the 1970s for the first time feminists openly proclaimed the right to personal self-fulfillment and that underlying birth control was only an individual selfish desire. She declares: “The linkage between women’s emancipation and the spread of birth control—the only condition for enabling women to liberate themselves from their biological destiny without having to embrace chastity—demonstrates that feminism cannot be considered to be just one more movement among many, a mere process of enlarging democracy. Woman’s emancipation presupposes controlling life (which obviously involves controlling death) and therefore forces us to address issues that have always been considered as falling into the realm of religion” (21). Although having a baby is still considered vital to civilization, birth control is nonetheless now regarded as the basic condition for implementing women’s emancipation and equality with men and an undisputed achievement of Western culture (21). Today, however, many women are beginning to realize that contraceptive birth control is not the panacea it was proclaimed and are now rediscovering the value of motherhood. They thus contradict “the dogma of individual self-fulfillment, of happiness

as the fulfillment of one's own desires. Motherhood... teaches us that human beings are not called merely to achieve the gratification of personal desires but to reach out to what is new, to accept the unexpected, and to be repaid in ways that cannot even be imagined," and thus the time has come to think of why the Church condemns birth control (22).

(2) *Aucante's* essay begins by citing Tony Anatrella who declared: "May 1968 marked the death of the father," a tendency that has become more complex with the new reproductive technologies. Indeed "one can well imagine that it will not be long before the father's genetic contribution will no longer be necessary to produce children" (25). *Aucante's* aim is to examine fatherhood from a phenomenological perspective with the aim of identifying the place of the father in fatherhood in order to discover whether the father-child relationship is or is not a natural disposition (25). He considers fatherhood in (i) generation, (ii) birth, (iii) "filiality," and (iv) during infancy. Considering (i) he notes two specific features of fatherhood. First, the roles of mother and father are such that fatherhood is correlative to motherhood in a paradoxical way since only the mother can bear the child within her body whereas fatherhood can only be considered in terms of the relationship that unites a man and a woman. Second, the father awaits his child and looks forward to it. This gives us "a first key to interpreting fatherhood: once conception has occurred, fatherhood consists of silently expecting and waiting for the secret of a life that is developing" (27-28).

Birth (ii) places the child in the arms of its father and from the first months a deep and intimate bond develops between them little by little. But "the father must receive the child... not only in the sense in which a child is always received...but because he has to take in a being which is alien to him in so many respects." While the child is always naturally born of its mother, it remains a child of a father who is unknown. Adoption, *Aucante* holds, is similar in that the adoptive father waits in anticipation for the adopted child (29).

(iii) Fatherhood and "filiality" develops the idea that "the child does not cling to its father as immediately as it does to its mother... So long as the child is safe within its mother, the father remains something of an outsider, which does not mean that he must be absent, or that he will remain a stranger to his child after birth. For the fatherhood which then unites the child to its father remains intimately linked to motherhood, while not confusing them... One can... talk of 'maternal fatherhood,' that is., fatherhood intimately linked to motherhood" (31). Fatherhood is inseparable from a deep and true love that requires him to wait again, "entering into a state of asceticism which we believe to be one of the secrets for an understanding of the role of the father in the education of his children, [an asceticism]... accepting a relationship that is not yet complete, and keeping a reserve which is not possible except in loving dialogue with mother and child" (31-32).

(iv) Fatherhood during infancy develops the idea that the father, as representing "otherness," is born into fatherhood by heeding the call of his child, who first calls on his father to initiate what we can call "paternal fatherhood." The father must take in his child by listening to him and exercising a paternal authority that helps his child to mature (33-34). Throughout *Aucante* is heavily in debt to Gabriel Marcel's profound and beautiful reflections on fatherhood, developed further by Jean-Luc Marion.

(3) *Swanson*,³ answering the question "What Is Feminism?" begins by citing the *New Oxford Dictionary's* definition of feminism as simply "the advocacy of woman's rights or the equality of the sexes," summing its first two waves. The first, initiated by Olympe de Gouges in 1791, blossomed in the 18th and 19th centuries with the suffragist movement under Mary Wollstonecraft and others. This feminism was accepted widely in the US and Europe because it responded to their desire to be active and equal participants in society. The second, launched in the 1960s by Betty Friedan, Germaine Greer, Gloria Steinem and such organizations as the National Organization for Women, was much more radical, characterized by

radical political activism, contraception, abortion, the right to choose to be a lesbian etc. (38-39).

A feminism of Marxist variety, championed by Shulamith Firestone and others, more revolutionary in demanding changes in the economic area but, like that espoused by NOW, Friedan, Greer et al., opposes any "patriarchal" system and denounces marriage as a form of slavery (39).

After describing variants of these liberal and radical feminisms *Swanson* takes up *post-modern feminism* and *post-feminism*. The first has taken root in academia and understands "masculinity and femininity to be cultural categories (or social constructions) that are subject to interrogation and change." It is based on some modern philosophies that reject objective realities that it sees as pure social constructs always changing because of new social conditions. "This brand of feminism denies that the concept of the feminine actually exists" (42-43).

Swanson thinks that the liberal, radical feminism of the 60s "sold" the women then and for most of the balance of the 20th century because it gave them independence, sexual freedom, divorce, access to higher education and better paying jobs, "self-fulfillment" on their own terms. She thinks that women "are now reconsidering what they bought... they are paying the price in instability in relationships, more work, depression, and frustration," with the result that "feminism simply no longer sells" (43).

We have thus entered the era of "post feminism." There are the "libertarian feminists," exemplified by such writers as Danielle Crittenden (*What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us*) and Wendy Shallit (*A Return to Modesty*) and organizations such as the Susan B. Anthony Foundation, who defend marriage and traditional feminine roles. And finally, there are "Catholic feminists," who find the teaching of John Paul in *Familiaris Consortio* inspiring. Among their leaders are Mary Ann Glendon and Helen Alvare (45-46).

(4) *Lutz's*⁴ insightful essay begins by noting that the man-woman relationship has been expressed in different ways in different cultures and is always undergoing change. Nonetheless, "Bio-

logical differences have been the main decisive factors in this relationship: pregnancy, childbirth, breast-feeding and bringing up the children have directed the attention of women into the family, while such features as greater physical strength have given men the role of 'representative' of the family outside it" (47). We now take it for granted that women have the right to vote, full equality in marriage, access to all occupations--but these rights were acquired only recently (47-48).

He then emphasizes that Pope John Paul II acknowledged these rights, especially in his *Letter to Women*, no. 6. "What is provocative in John Paul II's statements [in that document] is the fact that, firstly, he refutes the hackneyed charge that the Catholic Church is misogynistic and, secondly, he points out that feminism varies very widely and is far more complex than might seem at first sight" (49).

Lutz shows that the domination of men over women was the end-product in the nineteenth of both the Calvinism of the Pilgrim Fathers and the economic system inaugurated by the industrial revolution in Western culture. Access to employment was a male prerogative; a woman's place was in the home where she was deemed "only" a housewife. Women naturally found this situation unjust and rebelled against it. The situation, Lutz shows, was far different in the Catholic world, which was more agrarian than industrial and where roles of men and women were not so rigidly separated as both worked in the fields and both were present in the home. Today even some feminists recognize that "the Catholic Church was the only area where women of every condition could break out of the patriarchal society" (50-51; in note 4, p. 51 Lutz refers as a source H. Schenk's *Die feministische Herausforderung*). He then gives examples of important positions women religious held, often outside the jurisdiction of local bishops, and he quotes St. Teresa of Avila who said one reason she became a nun was to avoid "being dominated by a stupid man" (51).

The victorious progress of Calvinism and the industrial revolution in the 19th century brought about men's thirst for more and more power over women in the 20th and led toward the end of

the century to the "extremist and simplistic variation of the feminist movement; in the name of some 'unisex ideology, it not only rejected unilateral power relations, but went so far as to deny even the 'natural' role differences, considered to be 'biologicistic'....Any talk about sex differences was taboo" (52-53).

A major concern of women then became unwanted pregnancies, leading to a decisive victory of the new feminism by the legalization of abortion, opening the door to other feminist demands. The legalization of abortion "is at the root of the modern historical successes of feminism and is in a sense what constituted, and still constitutes the founding myth of the new feminist movement" (53-54). [Here I differ from Lutz since I think that contraception is that founding myth and is indeed the "gateway" to abortion and other feminist "successes."]

The tragedy is that the legislation of many countries faces "a serious moral dilemma: should the ultimate freedom for women be the freedom to kill in the mother's womb?" the idea that a person exists in the mother's womb has been rejected and euphemistic and false linguistic conventions "have been found to downplay the horrific reality of abortion." But, Lutz observes. "The real basis of all morality is faith in God," and his authority is no longer recognized (55).

Lutz had earlier (53) pointed out that John Paul II had emphasized that men bear a major responsibility for abortion's legalization by shirking their responsibilities (see *Letter to Women*, no. 5).

Lutz thinks that many women are now beginning to question radical feminism and the legalization of abortion. Their views on sex and marriage are beginning to find Catholic teaching on these issues true because of its "holistic view of the human person which links the sex drive, personal love, and readiness to accept the gift of children" (57).

Although the current situation is "depressing," there are hopeful signs for the future. Lutz refers then to Jurg Willy's book *Was Hilt Paare Zusammen?* (What keeps couples together?) who sums up his years of experience as family therapist by developing concepts that are in many ways compatible with

and reminiscent of Catholic teaching on marriage and the family (59).

He ends with an encomium to the great work of Pope John Paul II on marriage and the family and the man-woman relationship. He showed that Catholic teaching leads to true happiness (60-61).

Part II: Dignity, Participation, Equality: International Strategies

(5) *Archbishop Diarmuid Martin*⁵ reviews "Activities of the Holy See: Contributions, judgments, prospects." He had attended the 4th UN World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995) and its Conference on Population and Development (Cairo 1994). At both the focus was on woman's education and empowerment, and he summarizes their history and impact. These Conferences advocated an "ethics" strongly influenced by feminism, by US policy under the Democratic pro-abortion regime of Clinton (which repudiated Reagan's Mexico City policy of 1984 that denied abortion advocates access to the family planning fund), and by a secularized Western Europe that repudiated its Christian origins (65-67). A result of this process was reflected in language, especially the English language, now the common language for international exchange, resulting in a masculinization of female culture so that "empowerment" came to mean not the "enhancement" of women but rather their acquiring "power and exercising it" (68).

"Gender" became a flexible term whose meaning became arbitrary, allowing individuals to adapt their sexual identity to their own desires. The Holy See vigorously rejected this view, circulating a note to UN members affirming that there are only 2 genders, male and female. Similarly, in the Western world the term "family" came to identify as licit various forms, rejecting the notion that the family rooted in marriage is the basic form of the family. During this time various powerful non-governmental organizations, many of them violently opposed to the Church exerted tremendous influence. Thus the International Planned Parenthood Federation received 95 percent of its funds from governments pushing

contraception and abortion, aided and abetted by such groups as Catholics for a Free Choice (69–70). Islamic nations, on the other hand, opposed these trends so popular in secularized Western culture and formed, as it were, an alliance with the Holy See (70). As a result of this conflict between Western culture and the Islamic/Vatican position, the 1994 Cairo conference did not use the expressions “birth control” or “population explosion,” with the former becoming “family planning” and the latter “individual reproductive rights.” Even “violence” took on a new meaning, with pro-abortionists calling the infant in an unwilling mother’s womb an “aggressor” against whom she had the right to kill in self-defense (71).

The Archbishop ends by saying: “Our challenge is to discern the new concepts that are being put forward today, and to voice our dissent without eschewing debate, while making sure that we are capable of shedding light on the essentials of the issues under debate.... [This] is essential if we are to make the voice of the Church heard in a pluralistic and secularized world” (72).

(6) Peeters’s “Current proposals and the state of the debate” begins by tracing quickly the development of feminism from Margaret Sanger and Simone de Beauvoir to the present. At first a Western phenomenon, it quickly became worldwide aided by UN Conferences, the enlargement of the European Union, and organizations such as International Planned Parenthood. Peeters believes that the movement has already achieved its objectives, even in Africa. Among those objectives are to deconstruct the structure of the human person, making the *raison d’être* of life the “maximum prosperity and quality of life in a culture of tolerance” (73–76). Her aim is to “heighten an awareness of the breadth and depth of the global feminist revolution, in its most radical aspects,” and to extract from radicalism what “can be used for building up a genuinely human and moral international order” (76).

She points out that as a result of feminism, new language was born (embodied in UN documents) in which the main concepts are freedom of choice, equality, and the empowerment of women, and absent are terms such as “husband, spouse, love, virginity, fam-

ily, mother, father, complementarity” etc., and these concepts are presented as “global moral norms, admitting of no possible alternatives...to be imposed on governments.” “These terms are above all processes of cultural change without any real substance,” and all this is a work of deconstruction, constructing a “pseudo-reality” (77–78).

This is illustrated by the new meaning assigned to “gender,” which in the newly reconstructed world separates the unchangeable features of men and women from socially constructed roles constantly changing with trends, personal preferences etc. This particularly affects motherhood reducing theirs and fathers’ roles to ever-changing functions; it repudiates reproduction and makes male–female roles interchangeable (79–80), viewing monotheistic religions as hostile to women and marriage as a form of slavery.

Peeters makes similar observations regarding the way feminism, which is either atheistic or deeply indebted to atheistic existentialism, equates “equality” with the quest for giving women equal “power” with men, and understanding “empowerment” not as service but as giving women control over their own lives and those of others (82–85).

She (85–97) sketches the main developments in the tremendous influence feminism has exerted over the policies of the United Nations and its member states—by 2000 one hundred and ninety-one governments had adopted the “Millennium Declaration” proposed at a summit meeting at that time. This proposed 8 goals, among them “gender equality and the empowerment of women,” a goal including contraception/abortion as necessary and promoted by numerous UN agencies—whose power increased greatly during the Clinton administration—and by Kofi Annan as General Secretary of the UN. This goal also put power into the hands of “experts” (e.g. those of the UN’s Division for the Advancement of Women) enabling them to execute policies extending to women control over their own lives by modern means—contraception and abortion among them.

In her conclusion (97–98) she writes: “This process of worldwide cultural transformation is not yet over. When it is, humanity will find itself faced with a fundamental choice: to enable

God to resume all things in Christ through the Holy Spirit, or to decide to become part of a diabolical project designed to take Christ out of society and creation.... A Christian reading of the status of women in the world today reveals...the inequalities and the situations that need to be changed... But the Church also knows how to discern the work of the Holy Spirit within local traditions and does not reject everything out of hand, as the agents of radical feminism do. For the latter annihilate not only the religious but also the human values which the Church, in her evangelizing mission, intends to reawaken and enhance.”

Part III: Similarities, Differences and Mutual Relations: The Church’s Teaching

(7) *Garutti Bellenzier*⁷ shows how the Church’s teaching on the identity of women and men has developed. She considers their identity in God’s plan for creation, the “traditional interpretation,” “John Paul II’s catechesis,” and “the current teaching.” All these interpretations are rooted in the “creation narratives” of chapters 1–3 of Genesis (chs. 1 and 2 different accounts of the creation of man and woman; chapter 3 on their “fall”). All the “traditional interpretations” until Augustine also were based on Paul’s interpretation of them.

Discussing the “traditional interpretation” (103–106). *Garutti–Bellenzier* points out that the second account of creation (Gen: 2.7, 15–24) influenced the formation of the theological anthropology in the Church’s teaching. In 1 Cor (11.7–10) Paul “explicitly states that man is made in the image and for the glory of God, while the woman is made in the image of man, coming from him and being created for him.” While some Fathers granted that woman was made in the image of God, they took this to refer to the rational and spiritual soul, ignoring the sexual–sexual differentiation was limited to the bodily sphere (103). Still the dominant idea was to deny the theomorphic nature of women, whom they also regarded as obliged to be subservient to her husband (cf. Eph 5.22–24; 1 Tim 2.11–15). Moreover, the Fathers saw

Eve as the prototype of female moral weakness and prone to seduction, while Adam was viewed as sinning to please her. The Fathers also held man's superiority over woman in procreation as its active agent, affirming that sin was transmitted to offspring through his seed. This patristic tradition was basically that of the Scholastics. Thus Thomas Aquinas said the only help woman gives man is to procreate; for all other needs another man is a better helper, although her end, like his, is union with God in the beatific vision (cf. *Summa theologiae*, 1, 92, 1 and 1, 98, 2) (104-106).

Garutti Bellenzier notes that this traditional interpretation was *not* expressed in the explicit declarations of the Magisterium but rather through the practice of the Church as a whole (105-106). She then shows how John Paul's Wednesday catecheses on the creation narratives in Genesis 1 and 2 (along with ch. 3 and the story of man's fall) (the "theology of the body") provide a far different interpretation of these texts than the "traditional."

He stresses the "theological" nature of the first (chronologically later) account according to which both man and woman were created in the image and likeness of God. He then focuses on the second account, which is above all subjective (i.e., about subjects or persons) and psychological. He argues that the solitude of man, a basic anthropological problem proceeding from man's very nature and the fact that *man's* loneliness testifies to his solitude before God, since alone of all material creatures he exists in a personal relationship to God himself. "He would emerge from his solitude with the creation of woman." John Paul II emphasized that "through God's creative initiative solitary *man* may emerge from it again in his double unity as male and female.... In this way the meaning of man's original unity, through masculinity and femininity, is expressed as an overcoming of the frontier of solitude and the discovery of an adequate relationship *to* the person and therefore as an opening and expectation of a *communion of persons*." It is in this communion "that man becomes the image of God." Thus this second narrative could be understood "as a preparation for understanding the Trinitarian

concept of the *image of God*." Because Adam recognized Eve "as bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh," their homogeneity as persons was emphasized, but this included the body and sexuality as integral aspects of their *being* as persons. Moreover, the fact that both the man and the woman experienced shame over their nakedness after the fall in place of their nakedness without shame prior to the fall shows that both, the man and the woman, were the cause of their fall and alienation from God and from one another (106-108).

With regard to man's dominion over creation (and woman) and her duty to submit to him John Paul II in *Mulieris Dignitatem* stresses that "both men and women are human beings to an equal degree, both are created in God's image"...and both are entrusted with dominion over the earth (*Mulieris*, no. 6.). They are both called to live in a communion of love, mirroring the communion of love that is in God, through which the Three Persons love each other in the mystery of divine life even though God is "wholly Other" (see *Mulieris*, nos. 7-8) (109).

She then considers "current teaching," emphasizing that this teaching, rooted in *Gaudium et spes* and John Paul II, is not an uncritical adjustment to contemporary culture but to "an absolute fidelity to Revelation, which is now more thoroughly understood because the Holy Spirit also reveals God's plans through human awareness and the events of history. Both man and woman are equally the responsible for the fall, and woman is fully man's equal, and both are to be submissive to one another" (110-111).

In a section on sexuality and marriage (112-118) she first uses texts from *Gaudium et spes* 49, John Paul II's teaching in "theology of the body," and documents such as the Congregation for Education's *Educational Guidance in Human Love* and the Pontifical Council for the Family's *Human Sexuality: Truth and Meaning* (112-114) to show how positively human sexuality is valued today as integral to the being of human persons. She shows how John Paul's teaching in *Familiaris consortio* 25-29 relates to the man-woman relationship, pointing out his insistence that "women's sensitivity for what is essentially human" is "characteristic of

their femininity" and how he appeals in *Familiaris* 24 for an awareness that in marriage there is a mutual "subjection of the spouses out of reverence for Christ, and not just that of the wife to the husband" (115-118).

Our author follows with a section on the presence and roles of women in the Church (118-129). In the early Church there was no problem with women cooperating with men in many ways (hospitality, ministering to the sick, participating in the liturgy and spreading the gospel). What is unusual is that only recently has this been re-discovered, "confirming that the Word of God must always be listened to and interpreted with the support of the ethical and spiritual awareness of any given moment in history" (119). Two phenomena in the early Church, in particular, are important for woman's identity in the Church: martyrdom and female monasticism (120-123).

On the question of ministries there is today a heated debate about the nature of the diaconate exercised by women in the early Church. However, only recently have some claimed that women can be validly ordained to the sacramental priesthood; the question was unthinkable for centuries, in part because of the "traditional understanding" of woman's identity previously described. However, the Magisterium, through documents published by Paul VI, John Paul II, and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith firmly taught that only men can be validly ordained to the sacramental priesthood, offering arguments to show why; the CDF declared that this teaching was infallibly proposed by the ordinary and universal exercise of infallibility by pope and bishops in union with him (123-125).

Garutti Bellenzier ends her long contribution by calling attention to recent documents (*Christifideles laici*, *Vatican II's Decree on the Lay apostolate*, etc), showing that in both theory and practice women have a necessary role to play in participating in the saving mission of the Church (126-129).

(8) Archbishop (now Cardinal) Carlo Caffarra's ⁸ essay follows (131-147). He considers benchmarks, problem areas, and issues for debate. In "benchmarks" he tries to identify "the main

benchmarks for guidance and criteria for making judgments within... a very complex subject area. These can be identified by carefully meditating on the history of women within the history of salvation. It is from this history that we can discover the truth about women—the original truth, the disfigured truth, the transfigured truth” (131).

He thinks that the *original truth* about women is found principally in the second creation account (Gen 2.16–25). Caffarra’s reading of the text is similar to that of John Paul II, although he does not refer to John Paul’s teaching in text or notes. His point is that the existence of woman “was necessary so that the humanity of the human person could attain the fullness of being...because only woman could make it possible to establish the communion of persons which would bring man out of his solitude. Woman’s creation made it possible to establish communion between persons.” This truth can be summed up in two fundamental statements: “the first is that the woman was a human person equal in dignity to the human person-man. The second is that the woman was a different person who differed from the man and it is because of this diversity that the man broke out of his solitude and the communion of persons was formed. ...humanity was created in two ways, each having equal dignity but differing in their internal configuration of masculinity and femininity.” He then emphasizes the free “gift of self” of the man to the woman and of the woman to the man, showing that the biblical text reveals man’s [male and female alike] vocation is self-giving love. Woman’s mystery is manifested and revealed through motherhood, cooperating “in a unique way in order to form a new human person” (132–135).

The *disfigured truth* is verified at two levels: the level of “permanent anthropological” structures and at the level of the historical and institutionalized forms the first disfigurements have brought about, particularly damaging to female identity. With respect to “permanent anthropological” structures Caffarra contrasts the authentic “personalistic” view of the person as a being in relationship with others and the “individualistic” view that has sup-

planted it. This anthropological disfigurement makes the woman’s body an object to be used and not integral to a person who is to be loved and the same is true of the man’s body. It also denigrates marriage, deeming cohabitation and same-sex unions as equally valid or even superior to marriage, disparaging motherhood and making sure that “no unwanted baby ought to be born” (135–139).

Citing Gal 4:4: “But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman,” Caffarra affirms: “The original truth about women is perfectly fulfilled and *transfigured* (emphasis added) in Christ. By taking flesh, the Word wished to have that unique, fundamental relationship that every human being has with women, the relationship between the child and its mother. Each one of us is molded by a woman and our humanity comes through her. This also applied to the Word: his humanity was molded by Mary, because he was procreated by her in our humanity. She is therefore, in every sense, ‘Theotokos,’ the Mother of God.” In fact, Caffarra is convinced that Mary “alone is capable of making women aware of their femininity and...is the key totally interpreting it” (139).

He prepares the way for giving his reasons for this conviction as follows. He summarizes the Patristic and medieval understanding of the relationship between Christ and the Church which compared this relationship to that between Adam and Eve. Their “bodily unity prefigured that unity of two in one flesh that defined the salvation event: the Church, which is the perfect fulfillment of what was prefigured at the origin of creation: Body and Head, Bride and Bridegroom, humanity made divine, and Christ.” It is no accident, Caffarra continues, that the Church “is ‘female,’ that ecclesiality is revealed in the form of femininity... [moreover] our ruin was brought about by cooperation between both Adam and Eve; Christ and Mary cooperate, albeit in an essentially different way, in bringing about our salvation.” Caffarra draws attention to a text of St. Thomas Aquinas, who said that when the Word became flesh in Mary’s womb it was like the celebration of marriage between humanity and the Word; her

consent “was in lieu of the entire human nature” (*Summa theologiae*, 3,30,1). (139–140).

Then, citing John Paul II’s *Mulieris Dignitatem*, he says that John Paul has taught us that the real “symbol of the whole body of the Church, women and men, is woman” Indeed, he teaches that, in the Church, “every human being—male and female—is the ‘Bride,’ in that he or she accepts the gift of the love of Christ the Redeemer, and seeks to respond to it with the gift of his or her person” (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, 12 and 25). Caffarra then shows how the gospels demonstrate Christ’s high esteem for women. In the eyes of his contemporaries Christ “became a promoter of women’s true dignity and of the vocation corresponding to this dignity.” Caffarra then focuses on Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman; “it was to her above all that Jesus revealed his identity as he had done to no one before, and she became the first person to proclaim the gospel” (see John 4:18–42). Even more significant was the fact that on Easter morning Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene who is the real symbol of the sinful humanity called to intimacy with the Bridegroom; “it was in this sinful woman, now called to union with the Lord in glory, that the most profound truth about woman was reaffirmed, and this reaffirmation signified humanity... Woman has thus been redeemed and transfigured. Redeemed from what had disfigured her original truth, transfigured, because He fully revealed the very essence of femininity in Mary his mother” (141–143). This is the reason why Caffarra is convinced that “Mary alone is capable of making women aware of their femininity and...is the key totally interpreting it.”

Caffarra then considers *problematic issues*. By these he has in mind the difficulties Christian thinking has today in envisioning woman’s true self-fulfillment. The first issue is methodological. Christian understanding of woman’s true self-fulfillment is not to tailor this understanding to “changed social conditions,” but rather to judge those conditions in light of the truth revealed about woman, starting with “the beginning,” i.e., God’s creation of man, male and female, and fully revealed and transfigured in Christ. The second concerns the basic anthropological struc-

ture of men, male and female, whose bodies are integral to their being as persons and not, as modern individualists hold, merely privileged instruments of the “person” who has dominion over his body and is free to make it what he wants it to be (143-144). A third problematic, closely linked to the second, is woman as mother and the one who welcomes new human life as a gift from God as opposed to the view that motherhood is optional and open only to the child who is “wanted” here and now to fulfill some desire (144-146).

He concludes with what he calls *open issues*. The first is to revive the true anthropological structure of the human person, the second is to recover the meaning of the human body as integral to this structure, and the third is the significance of procreation (146-147).

Part IV: Pastoral Perspectives

(9) *Fr. Denis Biju-Duval*,⁹ in offering proposals for dialogue on the cultural issue, begins by affirming that despite what the mass media may say, “the Church will only have a credible future as a partner in the contemporary cultural debate when able to discern the underlying dynamics [i.e., the aspirations and values, the sufferings and the bewilderment creating havoc in the world today regarding male and female identity and the difference between them]...and then to join in and be present” (191). Dialogue is necessary because, as John Paul II observed in *Redemptoris Missio*, nos. 52-54, discovering what one’s identity is before God is a slow, gradual, and difficult progress, frequently hampered, but it is the Church’s mission to help people understand their authentic identity and vocation; she can do so only by bearing witness to this truth in a way that contemporary men and women can understand. The dialogue can enrich both contemporary culture and the Church (192).

Biju-Duval points out that a major cultural component is the intellectual. This is manifested in debates over the man-woman relationship and in many ways sets the ethical agenda of many societies. Thus the radical feminist movement that ushered in contra-

ception, abortion, free sex, same-sex coupling, and the claim that sexual differences are not natural but cultural creations is one intellectual component that the Church was obliged to oppose decisively. But other trends have emerged as well. Some center on the originality and specificity of the female approach to the world, some on the difficulty men have in experiencing themselves as husbands and fathers, and others. When these trends emerge explicitly into the intellectual debates, it is not hard to see how they relate to many of the severe crises culture faces today in education, the break-up of couples and families, leading many couples to seek psychological help, etc. (194-195).

Biju-Duval next considers “key dimensions of the pastoral relationship of the Church to the cultural aspect of the [issues noted above].” The first is the “deconstruction” during the late 20th century in Western societies leading to the claims that sexual identity is purely a social construct constantly changing and to the denigration of marriage and the family. Since the emergence of these claims, the Church has had to promote a sound theology of marriage—and of the sacrament of Orders—and to elaborate in detail the authentic complementarity of man and woman. This work is unfinished but an auspicious beginning has been made. This crisis “has given the Church an opportunity to embark on a radical debate regarding the theology of the body and to spell out the ethical and spiritual [and anthropological] stakes in increasing rigorist terms, enabling the Church to supercede the materialistic and dualistic reductive positions [held by many]” (195-197).

A second key dimension is that globalization and migration are leading to an evolution in the cultural debate. “Western Christian-based societies are no longer only the places where there is a caricatured opposition between patriarchal clericalism and feminist anti-clericalism; we now have to deal with an encounter with cultures in which the status and dignity of women are by no means safeguarded. These are cultures and religions that admit polygyny or female genital mutilation, and which still keep women subjugated to male dominion. ... This situation

is leading to a return to the Christian roots of Western culture” (198). In a context of a Church now almost completely freed of a kind of patriarchy that did not properly grasp the equal dignity of women, the influence of a Church that, like Jesus and Paul, highly valued women and their unique gifts, and that values marriage rooted in the free and irrevocable self-giving of man and woman which makes them spouses and brings marriage into being, the Church’s influence and impact on culture will become greater and greater (198).

In his final pages (199-202) Biju-Duval considers developments in the psychological sciences and education. Regarding the first, he points out that these sciences have shown that the loss of benchmarks for sexual identity has increased the psychological suffering of both men and women and that many men in particular are in a crisis of self-identity and many women suffer from the use of contraceptives, abortion, etc. There is thus a need to integrate the psychological sciences into a solid theological and anthropological framework [This, I note, is precisely the purpose of the Institute for the Psychological Sciences in Arlington VA, under the deanship of Gladys Sweeney and sponsored by the Legionaries of Christ] (200).

With regard to education Biju-Duval shows that contemporary co-education, particularly at the high school level, has been disastrous in many ways for both girls and boys, but in particular, boys. He notes that the Church has had a rich experience in educating youth and that separate schools for girls and boys perform a very positive service that is helpful to both (201-202).

Concluding, Biju-Duval reiterates in many ways what he said at the beginning: the Church will be credible in the cultural dialogue only if it reflects what the Christian communities actually experience. He then notes trends in recent years showing that this is the case in some communities, among them the development of a genuine lay spousal spirituality, youth movements and the emergence of more and more schools for boys alone and girls alone, etc. Much work needs to be done, but a good start has been made (201-202).

Conclusion

Precisely because the essays in this volume are so insightful—with many providing us with valuable knowledge of the influence of Calvinism and the industrial revolution on the emergence of militant feminism in the twentieth century and new trends now making it more difficult to “sell” the radical feminist claims to women today—I have offered substantive summaries of 9 of the 12 essays found in it. All these essays are of great relevance to the cultural debate of our day on male-female identity, and provide sound arguments in any effort to make Church teaching on male-female complementarity, marriage, and the family credible to people today.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Scaraffia is Lecturer in contemporary history at “La Sapienza” University in Rome and a journalist and writer.
- 2 Vincent Aucante is director of “San Luigi dei Francesi” Cultural Center in Rome and advisor to the Embassy of France in Rome.
- 3 Karna Swanson is a journalist who helped establish the website www.mujiernueva.org, dedicated to the investigation of feminism.
- 4 Manfred Lutz is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist with a graduate degree in theology, author of several books and since 1996 a member of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.
- 5 Archbishop Diarmuid Martin Coadjutor Archbishop of Dublin, former Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations Office in Geneva.
- 6 Marguerite Peeters is a journalist, founder and director of the Institute for International Dialogue Dynamics(2II), Brussels, Belgium.
- 7 Maria Teresa Garutti Bellenzier is graduate in education and university assistant who has various local and national responsibilities in Catholic Action and currently heads the “Progetto Donna” cultural association.
- 8 Caffarra is Archbishop (now Cardinal) of Bologna, and was the first President of the Pope John Paul II Pontifical Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family in Rome at the Lateran University.
- 9 Father Biju-Duval is lecturer at the Pontifical Lateran University and dean of the Pontifical Institute “Redemptor Hominis” at the same University.

American Babylon: Notes of a Christian Exile. Richard John Neuhaus. New York: Basic Books, 2009, 270 pages, \$26.95.

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Richard John Neuhaus, who died in early January, 2009, was a man of many virtues and many accomplishments. He was every bit the public man, and one has the impression that he was such by deliberate choice, for though first and foremost a man of religion, for his entire adult life he was dedicated to living out and promoting the proposition that, because religion represents the very heart of culture, and because culture could not be divorced from politics, it was the duty of people of faith to become actively involved members of the body politic. A civil society that would separate itself from the true God, he believed, will soon enough find itself groveling before false ones. The name of the organization over which he presided for many years, the Institute on Religion and Public Life, gives clear announcement of the nature of his principal concerns. He had an excellent outlet for the expression his views in the periodical of which he was the founding editor, *First Things*, certainly one of the most distinguished journals to appear in this country in recent decades. Born and raised a Lutheran, Richard John Neuhaus became a convert to Catholicism, and was subsequently ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of New York.

American Babylon, Father Neuhaus’s last book, bears the subtitle, *Notes of a Christian Exile*. The volume may be described as a collection of essays, though it is by no means a disparate one, for all of its eight chapters are nicely woven together by the book’s twin themes, hope and exile. The title of the book might lead a reader to expect that he is going to be treated to something along the lines of a diatribe against the decadence of contemporary American culture. That is not what he would find. Though Father Neuhaus is as sensitive as anyone to the severe shortcomings of the present state of our society, he is not blind to his country’s virtues. In his 1984 landmark

book, *The Naked Public Square*, he had written: “On balance and considering the alternatives, the influence of the United States is a force for good in the world.” (72, emphasis in the original text) There is no reason to believe he changed his opinion on that matter. His patriotism is of the healthiest kind, because he views his country from the broadest possible perspective, *sub specie aeternitatis*.

As was the situation with the ancient Israelites in Babylon, so too with today’s Christians: we are in exile. And yet, also like the ancient Israelites, we are nonetheless, and in a not unimportant sense, at home. We have here a home away from home, as it were, or, to put it differently, we have a substitute and temporary home which is an anticipation of our true and permanent one. “So hope is the controlling argument,” he writes, “and exile in Babylon is the controlling metaphor.” (4) America is Babylon, then, in the same sense as is every place else on this earth. He goes on to explain that “the theme that underlies and weaves together the chapters of this book is that we human beings were made for community.” (6) If Christians are in exile, it is not as individuals, but as a body, an ecclesia. The very intelligibility of Christian hope is to be found in its decidedly otherworldly orientation, and yet—here we have the core of what we might call Father Neuhaus’s social philosophy—“other-worldly hope can intensify one’s engagement in the responsibilities for this world.” (14) It is only those who have their eyes fixed on the eternal who are able to do full justice to the temporal. It is not that the two, the eternal and the temporal, are completely antithetical to one another; they are in fact wonderfully intertwined. By way of emphasizing this point he cites the term *prolepsis*, “an act in which the hoped-for future is already present.” (14)

In the second chapter of the book, entitled “Meeting God as an American,” Father Neuhaus shows that to be, as he is, unabashedly and unapologetically devoted to his country, does not mean that he is uncritical of it. If my memory serves me correctly, Ralph Waldo Emerson was once asked why he criticized America so, to which he answered, “Because I love her so.” Both

men had their fingers on the pulse of their country, but Father Neuhaus was by far and away the better diagnostician. He was an astute and perspicacious analyst of the American scene, and I think that he deserves to be ranked among the keenest students of American culture that we have seen in a long time. In this chapter he gives further development to themes he first laid out in *The Naked Public Square*. The image borne by that title, he explains, is intended to convey his deep concern over “the enforced privatization of religion and religiously informed morality, resulting in the exclusion of both from the government....” (39) The chief problem we face today in civil society is Erastianism, which is to say, the tendency “in which the modern state, brooking no competition from other claims to sovereignty, has attempted to eliminate the ‘boundary disputes’ between temporal and spiritual authorities.” (35) The naked public square—the venue, as it were, of a polity which has lost touch with the transcendent—is, Father Neuhaus contends, neither desirable nor possible. It is not desirable for obvious reasons. It is not possible because the naked public square will not remain naked for long. There is no vacuum which cries louder to be filled than that created by the rejection of the transcendent. Among other things standing by to fill that vacuum, there is, Father Neuhaus tellingly observes, the American experience itself, which becomes a substitute church. And then, relatedly, there is “democracy’s idolotrous aspirations to finality.” (32) The state, as he had argued in *The Naked Public Square*, can become a *de facto* religion.

In a chapter devoted to the idea of moral progress, Father Neuhaus, building upon ideas articulated in Robert Nisbet’s *History of the Idea of Progress*, describes how that idea, once the darling of Western intellectuals, has now been pretty much abandoned by them. Are we to give any thought to progress? It all depends on what one means by the term. The idea of progress which has been unceremoniously abandoned by the intellectuals fully deserved to be abandoned. But there is another way of understanding progress, and we can ask if it is worth committing ourselves to according to that

understanding. “If, however, by progress we mean that human beings are free agents who are capable of participating in the transcendent purpose that, being immanent in history, holds the certain promise of vindicating all that is true, good, and beautiful, then the answer is certainly yes.” (75)

“Can an Atheist Be a Good Citizen?” is the arresting title of the book’s fourth chapter. It is a bold, straightforward question, and he gives it an answer in kind. “In such a nation [as conceived by the likes of Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Adams, and Lincoln], an atheist can be a citizen, but he cannot be a good citizen.” (116) We can see the logic of this position, in the light of his social philosophy. If, as he believes, religion is the heart of culture, and if it is culture that represents the proper vesture for the public square, then the atheist will be, in spite of himself, the odd man out, incapable of being properly integrated into the body politic. Conversely, “Those who adhere to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus turn out to be the best citizens.” (117) And they are so “not despite the fact that their loyalty to the polis is qualified by a higher authority, but because of it.” (117) On that score one is reminded of something he wrote in *The Naked Public Square*: “Loyalty to the civitas can be safely nurtured only if the civitas is not the object of highest loyalty.” (75)

Father Neuhaus devotes an entire chapter, the fifth, to an explication and analysis of the thought of the philosopher Richard Rorty, a task he found necessary to perform because he regarded the influence of this man’s thought to be as pervasive as it is deleterious. Rorty has to be dealt with because “contemporaries beyond numbering, most of whom have never heard of Richard Rorty, are living their lives in the mode of the liberal ironism he depicted with such rare and chilling candor.” (162) Rorty’s philosophy and Father Neuhaus’s are completely at odds with one another. In the following chapter, “Salvation is from the Jews,” he surveys the current state of affairs apropos of the relation between Christians and Jews, against the background of the whole sweep of salvation history. His thesis seems to be that both peoples are involved in a single grand

drama, though each, mysteriously, are called to play different and apparently permanent roles in it. Mutual respect between Christians and Jews is a *conditio sine qua non*, and the dialogue between the two peoples must be ongoing. But, he writes: “We cannot settle into the comfortable interreligious politeness of mutual respect for contradictory positions deemed equally true.” (175) Interestingly, in claiming that, “Christ and his Church do not supercede Judaism,” (175) he assumes a position that many a formidable theologian would regard as very much a *quaestio disputata*.

The book’s penultimate chapter is focused on the contemporary political scene in the United States. All in all, things do not, in his opinion, go especially well at the moment for the American body politic. Politics is in a conflicted state, not only here but around the globe, and that is explained by the simple fact that “the polis that is the city of man is not a true community.” (183) He recommends a “disciplined skepticism” (185) towards politics in general; such an attitude, he remarks, is not cynicism, but wisdom. He has pointed and pertinent things to say about the controversial field of bioethics; he makes a passing reference to the purely fictional but endlessly alluded to entity called “the international community”; and he brings telling analysis to bear on the tragic *Roe v Wade* decision of 1973. That decision was supposed to have “settled” the issue of abortion, but in fact, as he appositely notes, “it quickly became the most unsettled question in our public life.” (198) The final chapter, “Hope and Hopelessness,” gives special emphasis to one of the main themes of the book. For Father Neuhaus, as indeed it should be for all of us, “to live is to live in hope.” (250) As for the alternative, one which, it would seem, not a few of our contemporaries have been seduced by, it is simply, and literally, not a viable option. “To believe that we have no choice,” Father Neuhaus writes, “is to succumb to determinism, and determinism is itself a form of despair.” (217)

American Babylon, Father Neuhaus’s final book, does signal honor to its author. Its pages bear eloquent witness to his goodness and wisdom. The

book can serve as a useful guidebook for the pilgrim soul, for the Christian who knows that he does not have here a lasting city, but who also knows, or at least should know if he has caught the spirit of Father Richard John Neuhaus, that so long as he lives in this city he has the weighty duties of a citizen which he must conscientiously live up to.

A Guide to the Good Life; The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy. Irvine, William B. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. vii + 314 pp. Cloth, \$19.95.

Reviewed by Jude P. Dougherty
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In a largely autobiographical “Preface” to this work, Irvine, a philosophy professor at a midwestern university, provides an account of how in his fifties he accidentally discovered for the first time in his academic career the Stoics. At no point in his college or university training had anyone lectured about or encouraged him to read the Stoics. His first encounter came as a result of reading Tom Wolfe’s novel, *A Man in Full*, in which the fictional character Conrad Hensley, who is unjustly imprisoned, is mistakenly sent a book entitled simply *The Stoics*, but whose title page promises, “The complete writings of Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, G. Musonius Rufus, and Zeno.” As a result of reading the book, Conrad becomes convinced that with courage he can endure and overcome the inhuman conditions into which he has been thrust. Although cast among evil and dangerous men, he finds within himself the will and ability to surmount adversity. He discovers in the teaching of Epictetus a sense of his own worth, an awareness that he is not just an animal but a being who possesses within himself a “divine spark.” This realization is accompanied by the notion that he is not alone in his struggles. There is a higher being — Zeus — whose help is sought. With hope he seeks the aid of Zeus, not realizing that by invoking Zeus he is praying. Miraculously, Conrad is liberated from jail and subsequently finds a new life, looking back on his misfortune as a trial or test of his own mettle.

Fascinated by Tom Wolfe’s Epictetus, Irvine set about a systematic study of the 500-year period of Greco-Roman thought that we know as Stoicism. The result is a splendid little book that could be used to introduce students to the Stoics at the upper-division high school or at the college level. In fact, Irvine must have had that in mind for at the end of the book, he provides a helpful “Stoic Reading Program.”

Irvine confesses that his previous understanding of Stoicism was little more than a kind of dictionary definition that equated Stoicism with indifference in the face of adversity. Then by actually reading the Stoics he found that, “Rather than being passive individuals who were grimly on the receiving end of the world’s abuse and injustice, the Stoics were fully engaged in life and worked hard to make the world a better place.” After reviewing the history of Stoicism, Irvine devotes a large segment of the book to “Stoic psychological techniques” for self-mastery, for not only dealing with catastrophic events but for facing the trials and tribulations of everyday life. He follows that with Stoic advice on duties, to self and to others, on social relations, on “putting up with put downs,” and on grief, anger, and the pursuit of fame and the luxurious. Clearly the book lives up to its title—a guide to the good life.

Among Western philosophies Stoicism is easily the most influential school of thought in spite of its current eclipse. Regarded by many as the loftiest and most sublime of philosophies, it flourished for about 500 years from the time of Zeno of Citium (340–265 B.C.) to the death of the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 121–180). Paul the Apostle is thought to have employed Stoic themes in his letters and oral teaching. The Stoic outlook can be found in Boethius, Ambrose, Tertullian, and many of the early Church Fathers. During the Middle Ages, elements of Stoic moral philosophy were known and used in the formulation of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim theories of man and nature and of state and society. Thomas Aquinas is especially indebted to the greatest Stoic of them all, Cicero. In later centuries Francis Bacon, Thomas More, Erasmus, Melancthon, Montesquieu,

Spinoza, Descartes, and Pascal drew upon the Stoics. The Stoics were the well-loved companions of the American founders, notably Thomas Jefferson, John Marshall, and Daniel Webster, not to mention John Quincy Adams, who, while on duty abroad, felt ill at ease until his beloved books by Cicero arrived in France.

With Irvine, one can lament the fact that this period of Western culture—indeed classical learning in general—has been neglected or displaced in favor of whatever is trendy in the core curricula of even our most venerable institutions of higher learning. In recommending the pragmatic value of Stoicism, Irvine draws a somewhat enigmatic conclusion; “Practicing Stoicism doesn’t take much effort; indeed, it takes far less effort than the effort one is likely to waste in the absence of a philosophy of life.”

Christ In His Mysteries: A Benedictine And A Benedict. Blessed Columba Marmion

Reviewed by Marie P. Loehr.

Marie P. Loehr, an itinerant explicator, writes a monthly column on Scripture and doctrinal issues for “Los Pequeños Pepper.” Her articles explicating male Orders and spousal sacrament have appeared in “The Way of St. Francis,” “Homiletic and Pastoral Review,” and “The Wanderer.”

The most efficacious thing, in this as in every matter, the most decisive and triumphant thing, is to look as far as one can and habitually, on high. It is to consider God...
—Marmion, *Christ in His Mysteries*, p. 38

We have had many theologians of considerable stature in the last half of the twentieth century, and the beginning of the twenty-first. Fergus Kerr, O.P., presents some of the most influential in his survey, *Twentieth Century Theologians*. Some of these, like both Jean Paul II, and Benedict XVI, are also spiritual writers of power and depth. But not all of us are up to either academic theology or mystical spirituality much of the time. Even if we’re academics, we have busy schedules that demand atten-

tion, and families or communities who engage us.

For those who seek a happy medium between the mystical spirituality of Teresa of Avila or John of the Cross or even Pierre de Caussade, S.J., vs. the pabulum that too often passes for spirituality since Vatican II, Blessed Columba Marmion's *Christ in His Mysteries* is an excellent choice for reading, meditation, and spiritual exegesis. Marmion does indeed look up, considers God. The reality of the Father's expression in the Son, and their work in the Spirit, is central to his thought and his pastoral concern as abbot and spiritual director.

The most basic theme of this book is the reality that Christ put on our humanity, so that we could put on his divinity. Marmion stresses throughout that Christ, who was always in the "heart's-embrace of the Father," wants to enfold us in his heart's-embrace, that we may be one in him as he and the Father are one.

Although Marmion was Irish in origin, once he discerned his call to monastic life, he eventually ended up as the abbot of a Benedictine monastery in Belgium. His work in writing is based on his own practice in prayer, his religious vocation, and his counsels to his monks, and to those who wrote to him as his work became known in Europe and the U.S.

To read him is to find oneself in an intense, intimate conversation with this priest who radiates Christ in all his counsels. His tone is conversational, often lapsing into prayer, much as Teresa does in the course of her writing. Thus he draws his reader into prayer as well.

This is not merely a book for discursive reading, straight through. Arranged according to the life of Christ, his mysteries are the major feasts and liturgies of the Church in the course of the year. Thus the book lends itself to reading in order to appreciate a given feast and illuminate its riches at that particular festal and ritual moment.

Although Marmion is simple and direct in his use of Scripture and his explication of it, we might not grasp its depth at first. His style is that of an earlier, more leisurely age. It may appear superficially "pious" in the pejorative sense. It is not. It is an ongoing meditation on Christ—his nature, his will, his putting on our flesh so that we may

put on his. Does this give it a hint of Orthodox flavor, the Eastern mystical tradition and its sometimes repetitive phrasing and expansiveness?

No.

Marmion emphasizes certain themes in overlapping development, simply because Christ does so. Each mystery develops and illuminates the others in slow progression—in historical time, in liturgical practice, in personal spiritual growth. In the same way he uses the Old Testament to illuminate the New, and the New to explicate the Old.

If Marmion is a fine commentator and inspiration from the first half of the 20th century, Benedict XVI is the same for the early part of the 21st century. It is worth reading them side by side.

Marmion is focused on the liturgical feasts of the Church year as the remembrance of the major mysteries of Christ's actual life. Thus this book presents the major feasts of that life and the Church from Advent through Corpus Christi.

Benedict approaches the life of Christ from a somewhat different angle. A considerable theologian and scholar, as well as pope, Benedict presents a different view of the life of Christ. He is concerned with historical context, doctrinal essence, and a different set of Christ moments—the Sermon on the Mount, Cana, and so on. Yet his style, similar to Marmion's in its simplicity and lucidity, if more technical in terms of history and doctrine, presents Christ in his *Jesus of Nazareth* with equal immediacy and appeal to the heart as well as the head.

It develops a thought-provoking meditation to read Marmion in conjunction with Benedict.

Marmion is concerned with the spiritual implications of Christ and his presence among us, his presence in our hearts. Benedict is concerned with this, but his emphasis is more purely doctrinal and theological. He elucidates the intellectual implications of Christ's being and work. Marmion seeks to lead us to open our hearts to Christ, above all.

The Benedictine abbot and Benedict the pope converge in their portrait of Christ in their discussions of the Transfiguration.

For Marmion the Transfiguration

is a means to strengthen our faith, to reveal Christ's divinity shining through his humanity, to reveal the glory that is ours when we live in Christ, die in him and rise with him. It is an interior call and beacon for us. For Benedict it is set in a vivid historical context, its meaning is expanded by our knowledge of the Judaic background and foundation for it.

It takes place during the Feast of Tabernacles. It reveals the Word-made-flesh, who pitches the tent and tabernacle of his flesh among us, and the images of the Tent and tabernacle for the Ark in Sinai develop this context. The cloud from which the Father speaks and the glory shining forth from within Christ, through his flesh, are the *Shekinah*, the presence of God, who moved over the Tabernacle as pillar of cloud by day, pillar of fire by night, guiding his people through Sinai to the Promised Land. This is the reality that both Marmion and Benedict want to leave with us. Christ in the Transfiguration is the true Tabernacle and *Shekinah*, guiding his chosen apostles through the desert of Calvary to the Resurrection and Pentecost.

A further illumination and enrichment in this regard is to read Jean Danielou, S.J.'s explication of the Transfiguration in his seminal work, *The Bible and the Liturgy*.

Both Benedict and Danielou are more likely to cite scholarship contemporary to them, Marmion turns to the Fathers and Doctors of the Church to support his meditations. Where Benedict is determined to give us a deeper and richer doctrinal background, using both Jewish and Christian tradition to support his explication, and Danielou to develop the symbolical realities that Christ fulfills in himself, in Scripture and in liturgy, Marmion is entirely concerned with the interior life, and our personal intimacy with Christ, who is so intimate to us in his Person and his mysteries.

In any case, whoever is seeking an accessible guide to the interior life, and the richness of Christ—in his Person, in his mysteries, and in his Eucharistic presence—Marmion is a sure guide. Read in conjunction with Benedict, and Danielou if possible, this is a thoroughly enriching way to know God, to love him, and to act on that knowledge

and love in service.

It is appropriate that Marmion's first name, Columba, means "dove," the icon of the Spirit.

Marmion might well say, as he so often draws us into his prayer throughout this work: "Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, lead us deeper into your heart and your holiness, through your five wounds, the entrances—and exits—to this dovecote where the Spirit nests. Let us nestle there, under those wings of truth and love, and take wing from that Presence, to spread the good news of your mysteries to others, in spite of our sins, because of our sins, now and forever. Amen."

Reference Resources:

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Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Doubleday: NY, 2007.

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The Death of a Pope. Piers Paul Read, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009, 215 pp. Cloth/\$21.95

*Reviewed by Alfred Hanley
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Catholic author, Piers Paul Read—best known for his documentary, *Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors*, which sold five million copies—has written prolifically in various genres including the essay, biography (Alec Guinness), history, and mostly fiction. His latest and fifteenth novel, *The Death of a Pope*, is a fast-paced mystery of intrigue and romance, set against the background of the death of Pope John Paul II and the election of his successor, Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI. This momentarily historical context serves as more than dramatic backdrop, for the story deals thematically, pointedly and meaningfully so, with the question of the Catholic Church's very function and mission. Specifically, the narrative

defly portrays and probes the conflict between an ecclesiology which considers the Church's purpose to be essentially the alleviation of human suffering and the establishment of social justice in the here and now world of inequality and travail, by any human means; and a divinely founded Church whose inherent purpose is to minister Christ's redemption of fallen eternal souls, by supernatural means. The novel is not, to be sure, a treatise but a moral tale, and an excellent one. If a couple of useful cliches might here be indulged, the book is a true page turner, a really good read—but at the same time a salient challenge to the Catholic understanding of the Kingdom of God.

The story opens with the criminal trial of accused terrorist Juan Uriarte in London's Old Baily. Uriarte is a middle aged, ex-Jesuit priest, a magnetic and manly, smart and charming veteran of the El Salvador guerilla wars against oppressive injustice waged in the name of a kerygma fused of Marxism and a radically social gospel known as Liberation Theology. Uriarte now works in Africa as a leader in Misericordia International, a "Catholic" agency dedicated to the aid and relief of the desperately poor suffering from disease, oppression, and deprivation in third world regions. He is acquitted of the charge that he has sought to acquire the deadly nerve gas, Sarin, to destroy human life on a massive scale because it could not be proven that he would have used the potent poison against humans had he acquired it. Repudiating the trial's premise that he was a Basque separatist-terrorist whose purpose it was to deploy the nerve gas as a "weapon of mass destruction" in order to force the establishment of an independent Basque state free of Spanish rule, Juan's successful if specious defense is to argue that he had planned to use the toxin in Darfur to scare and deter Arab-Islamic persecutors of the Sudanese poor by killing their camels. (Ironically, the ethnicity of Uriarte is the same as that of the Basque founder of the Society of Jesus, St. Ignatius of Loyola.)

An attractive thirty-something journalist and professed ex-Catholic covering Uriarte's trial, Kate Ramsay, taken by what she perceives to be Uriarte's idealism, courage, and cool

self-possession, decides after his acquittal to do a feature story on his work with Misericordia in Africa. When she approaches Uriarte about this, she immediately comes under his spell and accepts his offer to come to Africa and see first hand what Misericordia, and he, are about. From there, the action accelerates and the character interaction intensifies—most gratifyingly for the reader. Gradually, it becomes apparent that Uriarte continues his search for Sarin, and that he has no compunction about manipulating and using Kate—whose emotional and physical affections, and whose judgment as well, he quickly appropriates—to accomplish his goal, the horrific nature of which remains suspensefully unclear at this point in the narrative. He avers to Kate that the effete and soulless old prelates who control the Church to their own benefit perpetrate untold suffering by their refusal, for instance, to allow the use of condoms to retard the global AIDS pandemic while doing nothing to alleviate its ravaging consequences. He projects for Kate the vision of a Church free of patriarchal tyranny, self interest, and indifference to the suffering of the human family; and she embraces ardently that ideal as she accepts utterly his characterization of the institutional Church as inhumane and terminally corrupt. And so Kate naively surrenders her very body and soul to Uriarte's noble cause, as he has insidiously intended she would, even to personal risk. Uriarte's church, however, glibly eschews family values and traditional morality, and knows nothing of a personal Savior—of grace, of sacrament, of the mystical, of the supernatural, of the eternal—but only of the temporal, of the "collective," and of the militantly expedient; although he speaks much of "God's will" for the advancement of his social-political utopia.

Every work of fiction is, of course, contrived; but the trick is to make it seem authentic, believable. This Mr. Read manages, by and large, to do, creating abundantly detailed and credible scenarios of British jurisprudence and espionage, Vatican affairs, and counter-Church culture; and he convincingly and engagingly depicts various technological and geographical phenomena, for instance, with authoritative knowl-

edge. Aristotle considered a play's plot as paramount and observed that in the best dramas of ancient Greece a unified and economical action achieved a singularly concentrated impact. Allowing for the difference between a play and a novel, I would suggest that there are times when such copious descriptions of context and process, as Mr. Read employs with virtuosity, somewhat impede the novel's strong narrative flow, relax its trenchant tensions, and blur its keen focus. But such descriptive amplitude characterizes much of contemporary fiction, let it be acknowledged, and surely abounds in such landmark works as *Oliver Twist* (which I am presently reading). Might such intricate detail serve to gratify the particular interests of some readers and thereby provide a secondary enjoyment along the way without necessarily bogging down the plot? One man's mire might be another man's mead.

Other important and interesting characters are artfully folded into the narrative:

David Kotovski is a British Security Service agent, young but canny and principled, who poses as a journalist covering Uriarte's trial, who becomes acquainted with and then enamored of Kate, and who then works to save the ingenuous young lady from the diabolical machinations of Uriarte—the nature of which he alone, it seems, rightly intuits.

Fr. Luke Scott, Kate's Uncle Lolo, is a retired, traditional Catholic priest, positively faithful to the Bishop of Rome, who loves her as a father, who speaks with a kind of respectful restraint but apparent ineffectuality to her lost faith. Just as Kotovski, he pursues her to Africa to protect her from Uriarte—and who with Kotovski figures prominently in the novel's climax.

Cardinal Doornik, Dutch Prefect for the Congregation for Catholic Culture (a fabricated Vatican entity), is a liberal prelate who favors continued Church dialogue about artificial contraception, ordination of women, homosexual union, papal authority, and the like, who thinks the Church needs a progressive Pope unlike John Paul II and like himself, who has a skeleton in his closet, and who is thereby coerced by Uriarte, whom he uneasily admires, to compromise for a "higher" end his

oath as an elector/candidate for the new papacy.

Monsignor Perez is Cardinal Doornik's young Secretary, although a strict traditionalist, whose orthodoxy is most manifest in his rigid adherence to ecclesiastical form, rule, and accouterment, and who is, as is his Cardinal superior (and paradoxically for similar reasons) impelled toward violating the fidelity and trust of his position.

As any secondary character in any novel, none of these minor players is fully drawn; but they all seem more flat and fabricated than they might be. As such, they take on identities a bit more allegorical than realistic, which, while somewhat incongruent with the realistic thrust of this fine novel, does not essentially compromise either the story's narrative or thematic integrity. For example, David Kotovski's suddenly fervent devotion to Kate half way through the novel, necessary as it might be for the advancement of the plot, is inadequately founded and developed in his few superficial interactions with Kate earlier in the story and so seems artificial and false when it does emerge so galvanically to motivate his gallant efforts on her behalf. Similarly, Fr. Scott's mild passivity early in the novel seems not to square credibly with his avowed dedication to the Church's Magisterium, although we might encounter in actual life an ambivalence of personality as curious. But when Uncle Lolo rather abruptly transforms toward the novel's end from an attitude of permissive resignation toward his niece to one of energetic intervention, there is insufficient character construction to make readily believable this transition—although, here too, it works thematically.

This issue of character development is more critical with Kate Ramsay. Mr. Read has said, "I'm very fond of my heroine, Kate, even though she's fallen away from the faith and had some values I wouldn't share. I'm fond of the young heroine."¹ If Kate is the novel's heroine, its protagonist—and I think she is as the story's thematic core inheres in her, and she is also depicted as capable of fundamental change—she, too, is less convincingly, less roundly drawn and developed than she might be. This is especially true at the novel's end when she undergoes a kind of

metanoia, which is neither adequately demonstrated nor fully justified narratively. Compounding the question of Kate's aptitude as the novel's heroine is the proposition that she is less interesting, if far less pernicious, than the darkly dynamic Juan Uriarte, who—unchanging and unregenerate, and therefore no protagonist—is a very formidable and compelling antagonist and a more powerful presence in the story.

Some readers of *The Death of a Pope* see Uriarte as, if not its protagonist, a positive character understandably driven to dire action, to holy rage, by the shameful plight of the downtrodden against the perverse indifference of the privileged Church of the "first world"; other readers who may acknowledge his conduct as misguided still find Uriarte worthy of admiration. While Mr. Read himself affirms that he did not want to create Uriarte as a pasteboard, one-dimensional character, a caricatured monster without human complexity, and that he did want objectively to represent the evils which outraged Uriarte; neither, I think, did he intend to draw him as an essentially decent figure who might win our moral or affective sympathies. As Read himself put it: "I certainly want to create credible characters and I want to leave it to the reader to decide which side they're on. I don't think a novel is a very good novel if they're [sic] just propaganda for one particular point-of-view."² Read's objectively balanced depiction of character, however, does not imply a moral indifference to their actions nor preempt his ideological disposition toward the good and evil he portrays in his fiction, as evidenced by this comment to his publisher, Ignatius Press: "When I was young I was a zealous exponent of Liberation Theology. As I grew older I like to think I grew wiser and came to see how 'social' Catholicism, however superficially appealing in the face of the suffering caused by poverty and injustice, in fact falsifies the teaching of the Gospels. This is particularly true when it condones or even advocates the use of violence: as Pope Benedict XVI puts it in his encyclical *Spe Salvi*, 'Jesus was not Spartacus, he was not engaged in a fight for political liberation.'³ Like Satan in *Paradise Lost*, Uriarte com-

mands our attention, for he is a forceful character of considerable magnitude. And as with Satan, we might mourn the corruption by sin of a once luminous soul and his fall from grace; but we refrain from naming heroic either Milton's Satan in his refractory delusion that God is an unjust tyrant, or Uriarte in his perverse delusion that the Church of Jesus Christ is the malignant cause of man's ills. We are not seduced, as were some of the Romanics of old, into confusing rebellious evil as good.

I read Uriarte as an engagingly complex and plausible but, I must say, a decidedly detestable character, however actual the terrible conditions he purports to eliminate. This suggests no failure of the novel to frame a believably conflicted character; but rather it suggests that Uriarte is an apt and valid representation of an ungodly and possible hypocrisy so possessed of evil as to distort and debase the holy for nefarious ends. Were this book a satire—which it could be according to its ancient usage by Juvenal as an exposition of the abhorrent without comic intent—Uriarte would work well as a ridiculous grotesque, hideously laughable in his twistedness.

Despite what I judge to be its less than fully developed characters, *The Death of a Pope* is none-the-less a remarkable and very significant work of fiction. It is written in a bright, urbane, and disciplined style reminiscent of the consummate prose of the great British novelists of the early and mid twentieth century. Evelyn Waugh comes to mind. More importantly, it addresses, or rather dramatizes, a most crucial issue of our time, not just for Catholics but for humankind. For the nature and action of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, through which Jesus

Christ mediates His salvation for all of humanity, is ultimately of global and transcendent, not just parochial and temporal, consequence. Mr. Read in this excellent novel poignantly raises the question of the Church's role, masterfully demonstrates its complex implications, and, I think, forthrightly answers it by exposing the moral depravity, spiritual destitution, and mortal barrenness of a monolithic and militant material gospel, while pointing prophetically to the Church's Divine character, mystical domain, and eternal destiny . . . all while telling a gripping story.

Some leading modern authors who are known as Catholics have shunned the appellation, "Catholic author," as has Graham Greene, preferring instead to be regarded as a Catholic who happens to write fiction which may happen to deal, without bias of course, with the Catholic experience. Mr. Read, while avoiding proselytization, does not shy away from being known as a Catholic novelist who does write of Catholic ideas and experience—and from the point of view of a Catholic faithful to the Church and its inspired magisterial wisdom.

Novels should be neither homilies nor apologetics: the author's faith, and the grace he has received, will become apparent in his work even if it does not have Catholic characters or a Catholic theme. . . . But it is important for the Catholic writer to demonstrate that he is fully human; that he does not flee from evil but confronts it and disarms it in his imagination with the help of that holy wisdom that comes from faith in Christ.⁴

The Death of a Pope, however, does have Catholic characters and a Catholic theme, which makes Mr. Read's above-stated orientation particularly

significant for present purposes. For in a more expressly Catholic novel, while the artistic posture need not be at all propagandistic, it may—and should—post an attitude on matters of Faith. Just as the grand old stories, which are always religious, always enunciate a creed: Virgil extols the divine destiny of Augustinian Rome. Dante projects the cosmic scheme of God's redemptive plan. Milton justifies the ways of God to man. Hawthorne and Dostoyevski testify to the triumph of forgiveness and Agape love. And such testament as these and Mr. Read's book give has a more proper and salutary claim on the attention of readers, Catholic or not, than do the many current novels that scrupulously avoid (or distort) representation of religious belief while pretending to be religiously neutral yet surreptitiously promoting an irreligious ethos.

Mr. Read in *The Death of a Pope* advances and unabashedly lights the way for a Catholic fiction that unambiguously reveals with a master storyteller's skill what supernally matters for all the world. May we have more of the same—from Piers Paul Read and others.

Endnotes

- 1 Catholic Spotlight, 25 May 2009, "Transcript of CS#102: Piers Paul Read *The Death of a Pope*," available from <http://catholicspotlight.com/293/transcript-of-cs102-piers-paul-read-the-death-of-a-pope/>; Internet; accessed 9 September 2009.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 Piers Paul Read: *The Death of a Pope*, undated, "An Interview with Piers Paul Read," available from <http://www.ignatius.com/death-of-a-pope-book/interview-with-piers-paul-read.htm>; Internet; accessed 9 September 2009.
- 4 *Ibid.*

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You have completed one phase of your education and are about to enter another. The world you are entering is not the world I entered at your age. Yours is a far more destabilized world where few of the permanent things can be taken for granted. Confronted as you are with the intellectual and moral disarray of our secularized culture, the maintenance of your personal identity in an alien world may be one of your greatest challenges.

Your generation for the first time in history is experiencing a unity of mankind such that nothing essential can happen anywhere that does not concern all. The Stoic understanding of the unity of mankind, the framework of the *polis*, has been expanded to include the whole of mankind. The growing interdependence among nations has ended the days of absolute national sovereignty. Almost imperceptibly, a new attitude has emerged, so much so that a United States of Europe is regarded as an imminent possibility. As Europeans debate their collective future, the loss of national sovereignty looms, with unacknowledged consequences. Even more significant is Europe's loss of the spiritual resources which animated its past. In a memorable passage written in the first decade of the twentieth century, the Spanish-born, Harvard University professor, George Santayana expressed it this way:

The present age is a critical one and interesting to live in. The civilization characteristic of Christendom has not yet disappeared, yet another civilization has begun to take its place. We still understand the value of religious faith. . . . On the other hand the shell of Christendom is broken. The unconquerable mind of the East, the pagan past, the industrialist socialist future, confront it with equal authority. On the whole life and mind is saturated with the slow upward filtration of a new spirit . . . that of an emancipated, atheistic, international democracy.

Santayana was not alone in his assessment. Philosophers and theologians as diverse as Nietzsche and Leo XIII addressed the situation. If one is not willing to have his identity absorbed by a faceless international or multicultural cosmopolitan culture, one has to know who one is.

Personal identity is bound in part to national identity, defined as cultural identity. Most of us have been born in the West, in what used to be called "Christendom." It is not by accident that you are graduating today from Christendom College. Over the past four years you have worked within a curriculum that reflects a distinctive culture, one that finds its roots in Jerusalem, Athens, and medieval Paris. Now you are called upon to develop your understanding of that tradition and to courageously defend it where necessary. Whatever vocation you choose—doctor, lawyer, or military chief—an intellectual life still beckons. Call it an interior life or a spiritual life, if

you will; indeed, it not only beckons but is mandatory if you are to maintain your identity in the midst of an alien culture. It sometimes takes uncommon learning to defend the obvious. In promoting what he called the intellectual life, the French Dominican, A. G. Sertillanges assured his reader, "You don't have to be a genius to pursue a life of the mind; average superiority will do." A German colleague cautioned me, "Dougherty, do you know what Sertillanges means by 'average superiority'? That simply means being French."

The interior life is not to be confused with introspection or a kind of psychological migration, an inner exile that John Paul II warned his countrymen to avoid when they were faced with Soviet domination. The interior life for the Catholic is the life of the mind in contact with classical sources of Western culture, buttressed by divine revelation and centuries of ecclesial teaching. Benedict XVI is the model here. He opens his recent book on the apostolic fathers, with a meditation on what we know of the teaching of St. Clement, Bishop of Rome, the third successor of St. Peter, after Linus and Anacletus. But Benedict's real passion is the Fathers of the Church who followed. He presents them as a lively bunch of intellectuals as they grapple with the truths presented in the "Memories of the Apostles," as the Gospels were first called. It is clear that Athens prepared the way for the intellectual reception of the teachings of Christ. It is with warrant that we say, "Christ came in the fullness of time when the intellect of the West was prepared to receive the truths

of the Gospel.” The Fathers, Benedict reminds us, were not a homogeneous lot. Justin and Clement, who studied in Athens, as did many others, will use the tools of philosophy to explicate the new religion and defend it against the pagans and the Jews. Tertullian, taking a different tack, will ask, “What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?” St. John Chrysostom, eschewing apologetics altogether, favored teaching the faith pure and simple, allowing that teaching to convince whomever it may. I have a grudging respect for St. John Chrysostom even though he did not have much use for philosophy. When he sought a convincing proof for the existence of God, he found it in the beauty of the Church itself. The evidence that he found compelling came from the fact that the Church through its teaching, a teaching that reached all levels of society, rich and poor, learned and not, in the brief period of less than four centuries, had transformed not only the lives of countless individuals but of nations as well. Given the splendor of the Church, Chrysostom reasoned, only God could be its source; purely human activity could not account for it. We normally do not think of the Church as evidence for the existence of God, but if we are attentive and distinguish between the Church and her sometimes frail personnel, we may come to the same conclusion as St. John.

The extant writings of the Fathers are of major importance not only for an understanding of the faith and the history of the Church but for an understanding of Western culture itself. Once exposed to them, they are likely to become intellectual companions

for life. Some you may like better than others. Benedict clearly loves Augustine, but he has an affection too for the “hot head” Jerome, who fled to the desert to avoid the temptations of the city. In the desert he acquired a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, and later when called to Rome as secretary to Pope Damascus, he embarked on a new translation of the biblical texts. The result we know as the Latin Vulgate, the official biblical text of the Latin Church, recognized as such by the Council of Trent, which even today after recent revisions remains the official text of the Church. To read the Fathers with full appreciation is to master the sources upon which they drew. And that takes us back to Athens and Rome. Wherever Catholicism prevails, the classics are read. It is to be remembered that the pagans did not reject Christ; they simply did not know Christ. Modernity has known Christ, but has rejected Christ. The first intellectuals to receive the message of the Gospels regarded that teaching as a complement to and expansion of what they already knew.

As the name of this ceremony implies, the past four years have prepared you, the graduate, for a new beginning. What you make of it is within your province. Parents should not expect too much too soon. Outcome assessment is not instantaneous, although some schools may immediately demand it of their graduating seniors. Not long ago I was an external examiner, asked to review the work of the Rome campus of an American university. The last item on the check list was something called “outcomes assessment,” whereby the graduating senior was asked to

evaluate his education. At the end of that review, an Italian professor came to me with an incredulous look and asked, “What is this outcomes assessment?” Flustered, all I could say at that moment was, “It’s an American invention.” “Absurd,” came the reply. Absurd or not, I am reminding you that what you carry with you begs to be augmented. You will not remember what has been said here, anymore than I can remember a commencement address by President Eisenhower. But what you have gained here, properly augmented, will sustain you through life.

What you will retain is a set of habits, habits developed within a venerable intellectual tradition, and, I may note, a tradition that you share with others not of the Catholic faith. It is a very complex tradition, spanning two thousand years of history, 2,300 years if you include those grandfathers of the church, Plato and Aristotle. For that tradition to become alive, one need only to enter the Basilica of St. Ambrose in Milan where the past is dramatically asserted. There under the high altar lie the remains of Ambrose who died in 397, accompanied by the remains of Saints Gervase and Protase, both first-century martyrs. That physical proximity is a visible reminder of an intellectual inheritance that dates to the Fathers and to the ancients upon whom they drew. Ambrose, steeped in the Hellenic culture of his day, taught Augustine, and Augustine taught the West. The Fathers of the Church, no less than the Greeks and Romans whom they studied, put a premium on what we today call a liberal education. From Augustine’s *De Magistro* to Newman’s *Idea of*

a *University*, one can find dozens of books, some of them Christian and literary classics, that speak to the aims of education. In common they recognize that the end of life is contemplation, that the road to the Beatific Vision requires a kind of interiority, available even in the midst of the crassest temporal pursuits.

The interior life is the life of the mind in the context of divine revelation, buttressed by centuries of ecclesiastical teaching. That life of the mind is object-directed even in the depths of its interiority. It seeks, as Socrates taught, a tripartite wisdom, knowledge of one's self, in the light of self, in the light of nature, and in the light of God. It proceeds with confidence that there is objective knowledge about human nature, about the material order, and about God. To know who one is, is in some sense to differentiate oneself from the other. One cannot be a citizen of a cosmopolitan multicultural world order. Culture, as well as national identity, is specific. Identity is local. As Paul Valéry reminds us, it is the characteristic of a people who have inhabited a land over a period of time, who have developed certain collective habits, evident in their manners, their dress, their religious bonds, the feasts they collectively enjoy, the premium they put on education, and their attention to

detail and precision. These are not universal traits but are rooted in centuries past and depend upon a historical consciousness, an attention to the deeds of ancestors past. Even the universal habits of the mind, philosophy and science, are subject to the hidden influence of race and local milieu. A travel brochure that I recently encountered makes the point. It tells us that the Greek island, Santorini was shaped by natural cataclysms, but its villages and landscapes seem chiseled by the island's stark light. Out of that light came not only the great statues of ancient Greece and the long lines of the Parthenon but the precise vocabulary for the ideas that gave birth to Western philosophy. Those of you who are fresh from a logic course may miss a middle term connecting land, sky, and philosophy and yet may be willing to acknowledge that elements such as land, water, sky, and prevailing winds do have subtle effects on manners, ideals, and politics. Bavaria is not Sicily.

In common with George Santayana, Husserl and Heidegger saw that with the eclipse of Christianity, Europe had not only lost its identity as Christendom but even its understanding of the sources of its Western culture. All three philosophers, each in his own way, called for a renewed study of classical literature, the realism of ancient

Greece, as an antidote to the nihilism they feared was endangering the cultural fabric of Europe. From antiquity, philosophers have recognized that a certain unity of outlook within the *polis* is a condition for good government. Nearly all cultural historians agree that a political creed or allegiance to a constitution is not enough. The late Samuel P. Huntington, addressing the cultural situation in the United States in a book he published shortly before his death last year, pointedly asked, "Who are we?" He acknowledges that the Anglo-Protestant culture that gave birth to the nation no longer prevails, and although he laments the loss of what he calls "our Protestant soul," he finds that we remain a religious people. He looks to the revival of that religious spirit as the only available source of national unity.

At the beginning of this address I noted that personal identity is to some extent linked to national identity. That remains true, but these reflections have led us to a deeper insight. Given the disintegration of traditional Western culture, those of you who are steeped in the faith will find your primary identity not as citizens of a cosmopolitan West but as sons and daughters of a Church whose history, out of a sense of piety toward the inherited, you are obliged to master. ✠

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Liberal Education and Ignorance of One's Mother Tongue

Let us think about a remarkable situation in many universities. Not a few students are more or less illiterate. They don't really know their own mother tongue, even if they can send text messages without looking at their phones, while appearing to be paying attention to what is being said in class. More specifically, they have difficulty with the structure of sentences and paragraphs and use miserable diction, especially in papers in which they are trying to sound educated. One of my liberally educated colleagues, a 1963 Holy Cross graduate, retired because he could not stand one more year of reading student papers and blue books. He was especially upset by the constant misuse of "in which" in their papers. The disappearance of Latin and English grammar, the failure to read enough good literature in high school, and insufficient instruction in writing throughout primary and secondary school are probably the leading causes of student illiteracy.

Even with good books, professors cannot do much with students who don't grasp what they are reading, not because they lack intelligence, but because their language ability is so deficient. Why high schools and universities don't do more about this situation is somewhat puzzling. Love of our students requires that we tell them the truth about their situation.

In preparation for giving a talk on liberal education, I read through a book to which I was introduced in my college years, *On the Future of our Educational Institutions* by Friedrich Nietzsche. This book, written in dialogue form, contains five lectures that Nietzsche delivered at the University of Basel early in 1872. The philosopher in the dialogue converses with a former student who has just retired from a teaching position. He asks the philosopher if there is any hope to reform the Gymnasium, the academic secondary institution German students attend before entering the university. The philosopher begins his response by emphasizing the importance of learning one's mother tongue. Let us listen to his words: "By nature every human being speaks and writes now so badly and commonly their German language as is only possible in an age of newspaper German: therefore, the growing up, noble gifted youth must be put with force under the glass bell of good taste and rigorous linguistic discipline."¹ The Gymnasiums, he continues, treat German as though it "were only a necessary evil or a dead body."² "In sum: the Gymnasium neglects up till now the object that is first of all and most near, in which true education begins, the mother tongue." Knowledge of one's mother tongue is "the natural fruitful

soil for all further educational exertions."³

As we know, Nietzsche got many important things wrong, but he was right on target regarding the importance of knowing one's mother tongue in order to have the possibility of receiving a liberal education. He was also right about the importance of studying Greek and Latin to acquire respect for language. Nietzsche's philosopher says, "The most salutary thing which the present-day institution of the Gymnasium contains within itself lies in any case in the seriousness with which the Latin and Greek languages are treated through a whole series of years: here one learns respect for a regularly fixed language, for grammar and lexicon. Here one still knows what an error is" Despite this salutary practice of teaching the classical languages, the good effect is muted by two things. Nietzsche's philosopher explains. "If only this respect for language did not remain hanging thus in the air, as a theoretical burden, so to speak, from which one again immediately unburdens oneself with respect to one's mother tongue."⁴ In other words, students and teachers don't let the discipline of studying and teaching the classical languages make them more careful and exact in the study of their mother tongue. They confine the rigorous discipline to the classical languages, as though it has nothing to do with the rest of their education. Secondly, "one contents oneself to know the foreign classical languages; one disdains to be proficient in them."⁵

Over the years I have noticed that the very few students who have seriously studied Latin in high school understand the structure of language and are able to read books with more insight. Unfortunately, Latin is hardly required anywhere. Even many Jesuit Prep schools, including prestigious Regis High School in NYC, have made the study of Latin optional. Many good public schools do make the study of Latin available, but most high school students will not realize that the study of the classical languages would be good for them. How could they possibly know that! ❧

ENDNOTES

- 1 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2004), 44.
- 2 Nietzsche, 50.
- 3 Nietzsche, 52.
- 4 Nietzsche, 57.
- 5 Nietzsche, 57.

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