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## ARTICLES

*John Grondelski*

The Identity of Catholic Theology Departments  
in Relation to Terminal Degrees . . . . . 3

*E.M. Macierowski*

1968: *Humanae vitae* and *National Security*  
*Study Memorandum 200*. . . . . 13

*Ryan T. Anderson*

Catholic Thought and the Challenges of Our Time. . . . . 29

## COLUMNS

*William L. Saunders*

Washington Insider: The March for Life, the President,  
and Executive Branch Developments. . . . . 43

*Joseph W. Koterski, S.J.*

From the Editor's Desk: Where There's Smoke, There's Fire. . . . . 53  
Reading the Letters of St. Paul. . . . . 67

## NOTICES

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Msgr. Charles M. Mangan*

Matthew Levering. *Mary's Bodily Assumption*. . . . . 89

*John Gavin, S.J.*  
Michael Pakaluk, translation with commentary. *The Memoirs of St. Peter: A New Translation of the Gospel according to Mark* . . . . . 91

*Stephen F. Miletic*  
Deacon James Keating. *Heart of the Diaconate: Communion with the Servant Mysteries of Christ*. . . . . 94

*Thao Nguyen*  
Fiorella Nash. *The Abolition of Woman: How Radical Feminism Is Betraying Women* . . . . . 100

Books Received. . . . . 107

Information about the Fellowship and the *Quarterly*. . . . . 109

# The Identity of Catholic Theology Departments in Relation to Terminal Degrees

*John M. Grondelski\**

ABSTRACT: The Holy See's focus on pontifical degrees for faculty members teaching theology, while juridically required in pontifical faculties, is essentially a dead letter in the vast majority of nonpontifical theology or religious studies departments at American Catholic colleges and universities today. Indeed, the latter's preoccupation with "academic standards" points to a concerning phenomenon, already well advanced in the theology and religious studies departments of institutions belonging to the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities: the majority of faculty hold terminal degrees from non-Catholic institutions. The author explores the causes and likely implications of this turn for teaching "Catholic" theology in Catholic higher education in the United States.

THE STRUGGLE OVER THE IDENTITY and integrity of Catholic theology within Catholic higher education, especially in the United States, has been ongoing for more than half a century. 2019 marks the fortieth anniversary of St. John Paul II's Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana*, on Catholic ecclesiastical universities. *Sapientia* established a number of principles for the composition and promotion of faculty in an ecclesiastical Catholic university, most of which revolve around pontifical degrees.

It will also be nearly thirty years since that pope issued the Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, on Catholic universities in general. *Ex corde* sets

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out a number of norms, for example, a canonical mandate to teach theology and a negative stipulation that non-Catholics should not outnumber Catholics in the “Institution,” which seem to have been honored more in the breach than in principle.

I would like to suggest that three to five decades is more than sufficient time to step back and discuss the problem of academic degrees as envisioned by these documents and as emerging in practice in theology departments of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. The problem has both theoretical and practical components.

It is perhaps time to ask some questions out loud about the Holy See’s focus on pontifical degrees. *Sapientia* envisions pontifical degrees as the normal academic qualification in a Catholic theology faculty. *What does that mean?*

In theory, it means that the theology faculty of a pontifical Catholic institution of higher education should be composed of faculty members who hold pontifical degrees. That directly affects a limited number of schools, more than half of which are seminaries or primarily tied up with training future clerics: The Catholic University of America, Mundelein Seminary, St. Mary’s University and Seminary Baltimore, the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, the Josephinum, the Marian Research Institute in Dayton, Boston College’s School of Theology and Ministry, and the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara. Six seminaries also confer pontifical degrees through affiliations with other institutions.

But it also means that the degree norms established in *Sapientia* do not directly apply to most Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. Now, some might want to raise the question of clericalism in regard to this issue, but the issue is complex. “Clericalism” is the bugaboo of many in the Catholic Church in the United States today. It is blamed for everything from (primarily homosexual) sexual abuse among the clergy to patterns of formation that some want to discard.

But the Vatican’s way of speaking about the degree norms applicable to Catholic theology is *very* clerical and, indeed, contributes to and reinforces a *clerical ghetto*. In truth, there is one set of Vatican-stipulated norms for a handful of institutions, primarily seminaries, and there is practically nothing for the vast majority of Catholic institutions of higher education in the United States that affect the vast majority of Catholic laity enrolled in higher education.

The current approach has generated a clerical ghetto by bifurcating academic theology as taught in the United States. There is one “style” of Catholic theology taught in Catholic seminaries, another in the typical Catholic college and university. The latter generally do not reckon with the former, the former are generally content in their self-contained circles, and bishops seem generally

content with the armistice. Is it wrong to suggest that the bishops (and Holy See) are perhaps content that they have had their way in seminaries (which produce future clerics) so as to leave Catholic colleges alone? Is *that* not clericalism? Has this standoff not in fact strengthened the ability of Catholic colleges and universities to distance themselves from Vatican norms?

The overwhelming majority of Catholic college students in the United States do not attend pontifical institutions. The theology taught in many of Catholic colleges and universities can often be argued to be tenuously Catholic. The overwhelming majority of Catholic college students in the United States have limited if no exposure to academic Catholic theology *as taught and understood by the Church*, and if they do, it is even less often taught sympathetically. They may receive that exposure voluntarily through involvement with campus ministry, the Newman Center, or the Fellowship of Catholic University Students, but it will not be formally academic, not credit-bearing, and likely not systematic. For Catholic college students attending Catholic institutions of higher education, most of which at least pay lip service to some “theology or religious studies” requirement in the core program for graduation, there seems to be no *de facto*, and certainly no *de jure*, Vatican norm about what kind of degree the faculty of those theology or religious studies faculties should hold.

The absence of such a norm is bizarre, precisely when the Church is hemorrhaging young people. Although we are prone to talk about “youth ministry” and outreach programs to young adults, the fact is that the typical young Catholic’s understanding of religious matters (much less their *theological* foundation) is typically deficient and often the result of a mind-numbing and anemic “catechesis-by-coloring” (to the degree they have had any exposure at all). But a young Catholic attending a Catholic college or university should be able to expect an education in Catholic theology commensurate with the sophistication of the rest of his intellectual worldview. Should we not expect crises of faith when we expose young people to a sophisticated understanding of the world in, say, science, mathematics, or business courses, and yet their theological understanding remains rudimentary and does not keep pace? A car with three wheels properly inflated and one under-inflated is an accident (or a tire change) waiting to happen. The same is true of the Catholic education on offer today in most institutions of higher learning. Theology does not serve as an illuminating and integrating worldview that connects all the pieces of one’s education; it is typically just another core requirement, and not necessarily even Catholic, to be checked off among graduation requirements. Given that perspective, the failure to set expectations about the kind of degree that the Church expects those teaching theology in a U.S. Catholic college or university to have is clerical negligence.

But does the Church really expect those faculty members at typical American

Catholic colleges and universities to hold pontifical degrees? Obviously not, if there is a miniscule number of faculties in the United States that can award them; if pursuit of those degrees would often involve study abroad (including Rome), with little to no ecclesiastical financial support for aspiring candidates; and when many of the granting institutions are clerically dominated, either in the preparation of future priests or of clerical leaders being groomed for ecclesiastical positions or for teaching other priests in clerically dominated institutions like seminaries.

So, perhaps, after forty-some years, we might expect the Holy See to write about what it expects of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States – the most numerous group of Catholic higher education institutions in any country (regardless of what one might think of the thinness of their Catholic identity at present) – and stop pretending that norms produced for a handful of cleric-producing seminaries are what are envisioned for those American schools.

This author would personally love to see the rigorous and global theological training represented by the licentiate and doctorate in sacred theology to be the norm for Catholic colleges and universities in the United States, but he labors under no illusion that, given current conditions, this is possible. [By reference to personal experience, when I pursued my own graduate studies in theology almost forty years ago (1981-85), my choice was an M.A/Ph.D. in a specific concentration area of theology, offered by Fordham University in New York, or an S.T.B./S.T.L./S.T.D. at The Catholic University of America in Washington. Fordham simply could not have been my *alma mater* but for the extremely generous support of the Jesuits of Fordham, Inc. I chose Fordham by comparison with the expenses of taking a pontifical degrees at CUA, whose costs were greater and whose assistance markedly lesser than what Fordham made available to me. College classmates who were seminarians were sent off by their dioceses to Rome to pursue pontifical degrees, an option that I, as a Catholic layperson, did not have].

So, if we are not likely to see pontifical degrees as typical for the teaching faculty in the average American Catholic college or university, what in fact do we see at present, and what can we reasonably expect in the future? That reality is even more concerning.

One would hope that faculty members of Catholic theology departments had degrees in Catholic theology from Catholic universities. That is increasingly not the case and not likely to be the case in the future.

I have examined the profiles of faculty in the theology/religious studies departments of various colleges and universities belonging to the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU). The AJCU is a professional grouping of twenty-eight American institutions of higher learning that are historically linked to the Society of Jesus. I chose that pool because they are generally leading

institutions among the 200-plus Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. Where AJCU institutions go, other Catholic schools generally follow.

When *Sapientia* was written, the theology faculties of most AJCU institutions were composed of faculty with degrees from Catholic institutions. Indeed, there was no dearth of canonical degrees, because if there was a Jesuit presence anywhere in an AJCU school, it was most likely to be in the theology or philosophy department. Of the 18 faculty members I recall when I matriculated in Fordham's Theology Department in 1981, the majority were priests (or ex-priests) with pontifical degrees. The majority were also Jesuits or ex-Jesuits. There is little reason to suspect that this phenomenon was not then commonplace among AJCU schools.

It is certainly not the case today. Indeed, what should be disturbing is that significant portions, if not outright majorities, of theology departments in Catholic AJCU colleges and universities do not even have terminal degrees *from Catholic institutions*.

Consider Fordham today. Counting its emeriti and lecturers, terminal degrees are held by a distinct minority: University of Notre Dame (3); The Catholic University of America (1); Duquesne University (1); University of Freiburg (1); and the Alphonsianum (1). Three of those seven are priests. The rest of the faculty earned terminal degrees from: Chicago (5); Yale (4); Harvard (3); Vanderbilt (2); Harvard Divinity (1); North Carolina (1); Oxford (1); Boston University (1); and Emory (1).

Fordham's profile is not unusual. At the University of San Francisco, the terminal degrees represent: University of California Berkeley (2); University of California Santa Barbara (2); University of Southern California (1); University of California Santa Cruz (1); Graduate Theological Union (1); Stellenbosch (South Africa, 1); Boston College (1); Leuven (1); Gregorian (1); and Virginia (1). The Gregorian graduate is a priest.

Religious Studies at Loyola New Orleans includes faculty with terminal degrees from Texas Christian (1), the University of Pennsylvania (1), Vanderbilt (1), Temple (1), London (1), Iowa (1), Northwestern (1), and Toronto (2).

Gonzaga: Virginia (1); Florida (1); University of California San Diego (1); Duke (1); Emory (1); Graduate Theological Union (1); Boston College (4); Notre Dame (1); Catholic (1); Loyola Chicago (1).

Rare is the school where the majority of faculty hold terminal degrees from Catholic universities (without further probing how authentically Catholic those Catholic theology departments may be). Examples of schools where the majority of faculty hold terminal degrees from Catholic universities include:

Creighton – I could identify the terminal degrees for nineteen of twenty faculty, which included fourteen from Catholic schools, such as Catholic (4);

Notre Dame (3); Fordham (2); Boston (2); Weston (1); St. Michael's Toronto (1); and Leuven (1);

St. Peter's – of the four full-time faculty, three had Catholic university terminal degrees: from Fordham; Notre Dame; and the Gregorian;

Marquette – twenty-six listed faculty included a number of emeriti and visiting faculty (a group that skewed the number of Catholics): Notre Dame (4); Marquette (4); Catholic (2); Boston (2); Toronto (2); Regensburg (1); Tübingen (1); and Centre Sèvres (Paris, 1). It should be noted that Marquette appears to be one of the few AJCU universities that hires its own graduates. Protestations of “academic inbreeding” notwithstanding, it is good to know some *almae matri* deem their own graduates good enough for themselves.

These profiles are not atypical of AJCU schools. They do pose two questions: If the majority of members of a Catholic theology department hold terminal degrees from non-Catholic institutions, should one expect that the theology taught in that department is Catholic? And how have we gotten to this situation?

As to the first question – we should not expect that theology taught in such departments is Catholic. But we should probably also ask the schools that traffic in Jesuit *cura personalis* to attract students, to tell Catholic parents making five-figure tuition payments under the illusion that their child will learn *Catholic* theology there, that this assumption is not guaranteed.

There is no basis for that assumption. *Sapientia* and *Ex corde* make certain assumptions about theology, that is, that theology is an ecclesial enterprise, conducted within and for the ecclesial community, exploring the Church's faith and its articulation. Why would theology, as taught in universities that were historically Protestant but long secularized (Harvard, Yale, Princeton), Methodist-related (Emory, Duke, Vanderbilt), public and thus secular (Florida, California, Virginia), or private and nondenominational (Chicago), reflect the Catholic vision of theology? Chicago may declare it offers “a university context where all ideas are subject to uncompromising standards of argument and evidence,” one engaged in “pursuit of new knowledge about the human phenomenon of religion.” But there is no guarantee the “standards of argument and evidence” are what a believing Catholic theologian would find convincing, especially when religion is deemed a “human phenomenon.” And while the publish-or-perish model of scholarship has become the model whereby universities, including Catholic ones, think they are advancing their disciplines, it does not automatically follow that Catholic theology is primarily about “the pursuit of new knowledge,” as if the theological enterprise is primarily pushed forward by multiplication of novel theories – especially ones that mirror the secular society's criteria of political correctness and relevance.

As to the second question – why are terminal degrees in theology from



Catholic universities disappearing – there are numerous factors.

One is a toxic blend of a post-John Tracy Ellis inferiority complex typical in Catholic institutions with the “solution” offered by Land O’Lakes. In the 1950s, Msgr. Ellis rightly criticized Catholic universities in the United States for going light on academic rigor and standards. In *American Catholics and the Intellectual Life* (Chicago: Heritage, 1956) Ellis argued that Catholic universities were not living up to the highest academic standards. He noted, for example, that some non-Catholic universities were doing better work in scholastic philosophy than were Catholic ones.

The university leaders gathered at Land O’Lakes in 1967 seemed enamored of secular universities and, in their declaration of independence from ecclesiastical control, sought to make Catholic universities into self-autonomous entities. They saw secular American universities as their model: they wanted to join the Ivy League (assuming that the latter’s cachet came from real academic prowess rather than the veneer generated from sustaining an elite class network). The proto-Ivy Envy that inspired that movement comes full circle in the makeup of today’s AJCU theology department: degrees from Harvard, Yale, Chicago, Vanderbilt, and the California schools are “in” but degrees from Fordham, Marquette, St. Louis, or the Roman universities are “out.” Chicago is “cultivat[ing] new knowledge through research” that is “deeply informed, rigorously critical, and honestly engaged” (whatever that means), while the *Sapientia* university presumably fails to do that because it reckons with the boundaries of ecclesial faith as normative for Catholic theology.

Graduates of Catholic graduate theology programs in the United States should be particularly wary. Except for Boston College and Notre Dame (whose theology departments seem oriented to transmit the revisionist theology prevalent in the United States since Vatican II), graduates of other programs appear far less competitive for full-time faculty vacancies at many AJCU schools. They might still find a position in other Catholic colleges or universities, which are not quite as *avant-garde*, but the writing is clearly on the wall.

And remember: those graduates have limited job prospects anyway. Few public universities offer religious studies programs at all, and those that do put little focus on mainstream Christianity, much less specifically on Catholicism. Anyone who doubts this should simply examine the usual job advertisements of these schools: specialists in any variation of Islam are in demand, usually followed by specialists in East Asian religions. It is nearly impossible to find a public university looking for a scholar in Roman Catholic or even mainstream Protestant studies.

Roman degree holders have disappeared from AJCU theology departments for various reasons. One is simply the vocations crisis: there are fewer priests and,

therefore, fewer priests in academe. The one factor that increases the presence of a Catholic theology degree (for example, a seminary degree) among AJCU theology department faculty today is the occasional presence of a priest, even if he earned his terminal degree at a non-Catholic institution.

The sheer decline in the number of priests has also affected the Jesuits, who were the usual source of clerical staffing in Jesuit colleges and universities. The continuing "social justice" focus of the Society that began with the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Congregation contributed to the trend: as I could see in the 1980s, Jesuits who would normally then have begun their academic careers were in south Bronx soup kitchens and other so-called relevant ministries. Without downplaying the significance of work with the poor, there is also significance in the creation of Catholic intellectual leadership, without which the Church and community are both poorer.

Jesuits, however, at least were traditionally associated with the academic vocation. Other sources of priests for Catholic universities are likely to be even drier. The Catholic bishops of the United States have been anti-intellectual, in deed if not in thought, for at least half a century. Rare is the diocesan bishop who would consider assigning a priest to university teaching (and almost never outside his diocese): most consider it a waste of their priestly resources. To the extent a bishop might send a priest for graduate studies, it is almost always in canon law, so he would be able to run the diocesan chancery and marriage tribunal. Theology, as such, is a luxury, primarily to be indulged in only if the bishop must fill a seminary position. (Just consider how many current diocesan ordinaries hold doctorates in canon law versus doctorates in sacred theology.)

Bishops have also shed responsibility for Catholic colleges and universities by allowing the bifurcation of theology in the United States into "what is taught at the typical Catholic college" versus "what is taught in the seminary I use." Most bishops have been content to consider only the latter, generally withdrawing from controversies about theology at their neighborhood Catholic colleges and content with the status quo. Only when the occasional controversy becomes so prominent as to gain its fifteen minutes of fame do we hear from a bishop. For example, when Holy Cross professor Tat Siong Liew – Ph.D., Vanderbilt – proposed in 2018 that Jesus may have had homosexual fantasies about his Father while being crucified, the local ordinary say he was "deeply troubled and concerned" about the faculty member's "highly offensive and blasphemous notions"; and while he opined that "[s]uch positions have no place in the biblical scholarship of a professor who teaches at a Catholic college," Liew continues this academic year to do just that. (Ten of the sixteen terminal degrees held by faculty in Holy Cross' Religious Studies Department come from non-Catholic institutions, including Brown, Chicago, Princeton, Santa Barbara, Virginia, and two from Vanderbilt).

I have not yet researched non-AJCU Catholic theology departments in depth, but my preliminary impressions are that while graduates of Catholic universities are somewhat more commonplace there, the general trajectory of an academic guild theology, credentialed by terminal degrees from non-Catholic institutions, is gaining ascendancy. This trend line is likely to reinforce the *de facto* division between the guild theology taught at Catholic colleges and universities and the ecclesial theology officially sanctioned and promoted by the Church (of which those colleges and universities are presumably members) but usually found primarily in seminaries. More worrisome, it is also likely to dilute rigorous academic Catholic theology, thereby reinforcing either a kind of Catholic-Lite revisionism from the ascendant Catholic universities or a “mere Christianity” (if that) from the secularized, nondenominational, and Protestant institutions. Neither augurs well as a future for the dense web of Catholic colleges and universities built up in service of the Church in the United States. It suggests that Rome perhaps ought to stop writing theoretical documents about pontifical universities and pontifical degrees for a handful of institutions in the United States (and a very light footprint worldwide) and start speaking to the real situation and trend lines on the ground. They are troubling.

*All views contained herein are the author's own.*



# 1968: *Humanae vitae* and *National Security Study Memorandum 200*

*E. M. Macierowski\**

ABSTRACT: 1968 was an *annus terribilis*. Riots on American and European university campuses provoked a jeremiad by the late Alan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*. Demonstrations against the Vietnam War and violence in the streets provided symptoms of cultural and moral apostasy. In this turbulent setting Pope Paul VI promulgated *Humanae vitae*, the focus of which is on the unitive and procreative role of human sexual activity at the heart of the family. In this paper I propose to consider not the infallible teaching of the document but some of the fallible predictions Pope Paul made about what would happen to human relations in the social and political setting if this teaching were neglected. I propose to show how these noninfallible predictions played out, with specific reference to the long-classified 1974 *Kissinger Report NSSM 200* on “the implications of worldwide population growth for U.S. security and overseas interests.”

IN THIS PAPER I propose to address not the infallible teaching of the 1968 Encyclical *Humanae vitae*, promulgated by Pope Paul VI, but to explore some of the noninfallible predictions he made regarding human relations in their social and political setting if this teaching were neglected or ignored. To help clarify the issues in an American context, I should like to use as a political yardstick a brief but well-known speech by President Abraham Lincoln. I will then consider the prognostications of Paul VI with specific reference to the American *National Security Study Memorandum 200* of 27 March 1972, a report that was declassified only seventeen years later, some nine years after its scheduled release. Let's begin part 1 with a question.

## *Are There Persons Too Small to Be Equal?*

American school children used to be required to memorize a short speech by President Abraham Lincoln given at Gettysburg on 19 November 1863.<sup>1</sup> Here let me quote and reflect upon just the first sentence. For this sentence tells us not only

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<sup>1</sup> The Gettysburg address was fewer than 300 words, given by President Abraham Lincoln on 19 November 1863. This speech, however, opens the way to understanding the key to American democracy in its purest form.

of Lincoln's own thought but also about the Americans in his audience: "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

This first sentence uses archaic English when it echoes the King James Version of the bible. A score is twenty years. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Psalm 90:10). This allusion to human mortality makes clear what President Lincoln was about: dedicating the military cemetery at Gettysburg. About a third of the armies of the Union and the Confederacy became casualties in a battle waged the previous summer. Most of those in Lincoln's audience were Christians, the majority by far being Protestants. Lincoln could count on them to catch, to hear, and to heed his biblical allusions.

The remainder of the sentence shifts focus from death to life. Lincoln again echoes Holy Scripture in speaking of "our fathers." Their procreative act was to bring forth "a new nation." The pilgrim character of these fathers is signified in the phrase "this continent," which contrasts America with the Europe that they had left. The "new nation" had and has two distinguishing features. First, it was "conceived in liberty"; unlike the slave girl Hagar, who conceived in slavery, Abraham's wife Sarah conceived in liberty and became the mother of the chosen people, who were "conceived in liberty." St. Paul, it will be recalled, uses the story of Hagar and Sarah as an allegory for the contrast between the Law and Grace (Gal 4:21-31). Second, the "new nation" has been "dedicated." In the Old Testament, a male child was to be "dedicated" to the Lord in the Temple at Jerusalem (Lev 12). This "new nation," however, has been "dedicated" to a "proposition," specifically, "the proposition that all men are created equal."

Now a proposition is a truth-claim. To appreciate the full force of Lincoln's claim, let's consider his starting point. He was speaking in 1863. The year that was eighty-seven years earlier than 1863 was 1776. Why would Lincoln have taken 1776, the year of the Declaration of Independence, as the true beginning of the United States of America, rather than the Constitution, which first took effect seventy-five years before his address? I believe it was because the Constitution compromised the principle of the equality of all persons by counting a slave as three-fifths of a person.<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that Lincoln is silent about the right of

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<sup>1</sup> Among the many political compromises that had to be agreed to in order to achieve political union, the most important is probably this: "Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and

revolution but stalwart about that to equality. The “proposition” or truth-claim that Lincoln focused on is this: “that all men are created equal.” Lincoln appeals to biblical language and softens the philosophical vocabulary of deism and the so-called Enlightenment when he describes this “new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” This is the true beginning of the American democracy, the true principle: that *all* men are created equal. Lincoln does not examine the foundations of this political liberty. Is it self-evident, as the writers of the Declaration aver? Is it based on a claim of a church or a biblical revelation?<sup>1</sup> Has it some source, like being or nature, explored by philosophers?<sup>2</sup> Whatever the philosophical or theological basis for the fact, it is a historical fact that the American founding is based upon the proposition that all men are created equal.

What is not obscure is the fact that each human person shares a created, and thereafter innate intrinsic dignity. In this respect every human person has been created equal. Let us consider the noble author of children’s literature, Theodore Geisel. Recovering from his hatred of the Japanese against whom he propagandized during World War II, Geisel, under the pen name Dr. Seuss, wrote a tale of an elephant who makes an important moral discovery: *Horton Hears a Who!*<sup>3</sup> In the face of hostile and incredulous kangaroos, and monkeys, and even “a blackbottomed eagle named Vlad Vlad-i-koff,” Horton persistently repeats the theme: “A person’s a person, no matter how small” – all the while protecting the invisible persons in his care. Let us close this section with our question: Are there

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excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons” (Article I, Section 2, paragraph 3). The language is delicate, a combination of legal jargon and euphemism. Explicitly “free Persons” include “those bound to Service for a Term of Years.” But who are “all” the “other Persons,” who are pro-rated at 60 percent of a person? The answer is mainly the black slaves. The words “slave” and “slavery,” however, are avoided. Lincoln skipped over this passage, where some persons were counted at three-fifths of others and went back to the original founding document.

<sup>1</sup> “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen 1:27).

<sup>2</sup> Consider Boethius’s famous definition of a person as *naturae rationabilis individua substantia*: an individual substance of a rational nature (*De persona et duabus naturis*, chap. 2).

<sup>3</sup> Though Horton’s eyes are unable to see what is on a tiny dust-speck “blowing past through the air,” nevertheless, having elephantine ears, he judges “there must/ be someone on top of that small speck of dust! / Some sort of creature of *very* small size, / Too small to be seen by an elephant’s eyes.” Geisel, who attended Central High School in Springfield, Massachusetts, worked as an American war propagandist with Frank Capra on films like *Your Job in Germany* and *Know Your Enemy – Japan*. The essays on Horton in *Dr. Seuss and Philosophy: Oh, the Things You Can Think!* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011) interpret the dictum “A person’s a person, no matter how small” along Kantian lines. But not every personalist need be a Kantian; see for example Karol Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*.

persons too small to be equal?

*National Security Study Memorandum NSSM 200: Implications of Worldwide Population Growth for U.S. Security and Overseas Interests (The Kissinger Report)*

By way of contrast, let us introduce a figure famous the world over in international banking. David Rockefeller is quoted in *Le Figaro Magazine* as maintaining a somewhat more lordly position: “The rights of man, yes; but commerce first.”<sup>1</sup> Let this brief but revealing statement of priorities serve as a motto for this section.

There may be something comical in bringing together the author of children’s books and a great banker who wields worldwide economic and political influence. Both started small. Both were born naked. Both are subject to mortality. One grew up to write children’s books; the other, to wield international financial power. But yet “a person’s a person, no matter how small.” Both are equal in their being. On the other hand, to be sure, the two do not command equal access to the White House or the Kremlin.<sup>2</sup>

The motto we have drawn from Rockefeller seems to offer an answer to an unasked question: Does the human person exist for the sake of the market, or does the market exist for the sake of the person? When Rockefeller says, “The rights of man, yes; but commerce first,” what does that mean in real life? Where two human persons are making an exchange in a market, there may well be a common good achieved: each gets something from the other that he needs and gets an equivalent value in return. Justice is a common good, whether it be commutative, distributive, or legal justice.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Le Figaro Magazine* (2 November 1985): 96-99, cited by Michel Schooyans, *The Totalitarian Trend of Liberalism* (St. Louis: Central Bureau, CCVA, 1997), 88 and 97 n. 7. The article, by Éric Laurent, has a headline in quotation marks spreading two pages over an interview with Rockefeller: “Les droits de l’homme d’accord, mais le commerce d’abord.” There being no context supplied in the article, let us treat it here as a sort of motto.

<sup>2</sup> These days armies of sociologists engage in sociometric analysis of popular opinion and advertisers are massaging messages to optimize the effect of mass media on target populations to win elections. Accordingly, even in cases where there is equality of persons, there may well be inequality of access to the truth, and some distortion of political equality through economic incentives or disincentives. In short, even where votes cannot be bought, sometimes some votes can be rented. Democratic elections, therefore, sometimes risk prostitution. So there can on occasion be a tension between equality of persons as human persons or equality of citizens before the law, and inequality of persons in other respects: property, knowledge, talent, or opportunity. It is hard to have a conversation where there is great inequality.

<sup>3</sup> Josef Pieper’s essay on justice is included in *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. The most



For commutative justice to be a common good, however, both persons must already be in a market. What about persons who do not yet have an organized market; what happens when someone else asks for their goods? Is there equality in the exchange? This question Mr. Rockefeller neither asked nor answered. But to achieve the common good of justice as a concrete reality, this question cannot be ignored. Before we can even get to the question of markets, however, we must have persons. There can be no market exchange without both goods and persons. Failure to recognize this fact can and does lead to unjust taking – through war, colonialism, expropriation, and other methods.

In fact, human persons do come first, along with their natural relations with each other in the family, and then in the village or the city, and larger centers of exchange, at least in the order of generation or development. I suspect that this is so also in the order of rank: markets and trade and commerce are found in cities. Human survival can occur outside of cities, but human flourishing seems to require cities. The good life seems somehow to be higher than mere survival. But even outside of cities, human beings remain human persons. The correct task of the statesman, then, is to foster the common good. One way to achieve this end is to encourage the development of human persons so that they can, as much as possible, share in human happiness. Commerce is one means to that end; therefore, commerce is at best second, not first, with respect to human happiness. Rockefeller's position, taken without qualification, is therefore in error. The market ought to serve man, not man the market.

Still, it is of more than theoretical importance to ask, "So what?" What if a country were to act as Rockefeller suggests? What difference would it make? For my part, I wonder whether, in the limiting case, it would make much difference whether the state owned the businesses or the businesses owned the state. Here injustice and war would kiss, and Marxism would lie down together with Capitalism.<sup>1</sup>

It is no secret that the promulgation of Pope Paul VI's Encyclical *Humanae vitae* on 29 July 1968 was controversial. Pope Paul seems to have thought, shockingly to some, that human genital activity has two functions: the union of persons and procreative openness to life. In this paper, however, I shall confine my discussion to the fallible level of political prudence.

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recent version of 2003 published by University of Notre Dame Press includes the notes that were missing from the earlier printing. There is an online transcription of the 1967 Notre Dame paperback edition (without the original notes) at <https://archive.org/details/fourcardinalvirt012953mbp>.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Psalm 85:11 and Isaiah 11:6.

Within a year of the papal encyclical came a statement of U.S. President Richard M. Nixon calling the growth of human population a “challenge.”<sup>1</sup> This statement stood at the head of the final report on 27 March 1972 by another member of the Rockefeller family, John D. Rockefeller III, who chaired the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, whose final goal is “enabling individuals to avoid unwanted fertility.”<sup>2</sup> In its first chapter, the Report recognizes “a diversity of views,” while admitting that “it is far easier to achieve agreement on abstract values<sup>3</sup> than on their meaning or on the strategy to achieve them.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “One of the most serious challenges to human destiny in the last third of this century will be the growth of the population. Whether man’s response to that challenge will be a cause for pride or for despair in the year 2000 will depend very much on what we do today. If we now begin our work in an appropriate manner, and if we continue to devote a considerable amount of attention and energy to this problem, then mankind will be able to surmount this challenge as it has surmounted so many during the long march of civilization” (18 July 1969).

<sup>2</sup> [www.population-security.org/rockefeller/002\\_population\\_growth.htm](http://www.population-security.org/rockefeller/002_population_growth.htm).

<sup>3</sup> Leo Strauss explicitly expresses his gratitude to the Rockefeller Foundation in his *Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1936), xiv. “An Epilogue” reprinted in his *Liberalism, Ancient and Modern* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 203-23, contrasts Aristotelian political science that “necessarily evaluates political things; the knowledge in which it culminates has the character of categorical advice and of exhortation,” in contrast with a “new political science” that “conceives of the principles of action as ‘values’ which are merely ‘subjective’; the knowledge of which it conveys has the character of prediction and only secondarily that of hypothetical advice” (207). He argues for the following evaluation: “The new political science puts a premium on observations which can be made with the utmost frequency, and therefore by people of the meanest capacities. It therefore frequently culminates in observations made by people who are not intelligent about people who are not intelligent. While the new political science becomes ever less able to see democracy or to hold a mirror to democracy, it ever more reflects the most dangerous proclivities of democracy. It even strengthens those proclivities. By teaching in effect the equality of literally all desires, it teaches in effect that there is nothing of which a man ought to be ashamed; by destroying the possibility of self-contempt, it destroys with the best of intentions the possibility of self-respect. By teaching the equality of all values, by denying that there are things which are intrinsically high and others which are intrinsically low as well as by denying that there is an essential difference between men and brutes, it unwittingly contributes to the victory of the gutter” (222).

<sup>4</sup> “Like the American people generally, this Commission has not been able to reach full agreement on the relative importance of different values or on the analysis of how the ‘population problem’ reflects other conditions and directions of American society” ([www.population-security.org/rockefeller/002\\_population\\_growth.htm](http://www.population-security.org/rockefeller/002_population_growth.htm)). Jacqueline Kasun, *The War against Population: The Economics and Ideology of Population Control* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 158 at nn. 8-10 calls attention to the influence of Herbert Spencer’s *Social Statics* and its doctrine of the “survival of the fittest” on John D. Rockefeller, Sr.

But, relegating other “views” to an appendix containing “separate statements,” the Commission expressly commits itself to only “[t]hree distinct though overlapping...views” in the body of the Report. Once euphemism is eliminated, here are the bare policy proposals: (1) anything favoring birth is to be eliminated; (2) “governmental steps” are required for “controlling” human “reproduction,” using (3) what it calls an “ecological” approach, where “man’s unity with nature” is defined in terms of “individual humanity.”<sup>1</sup> No clarification is made as to whose “individual humanity” is to define whose, nor what criteria will be used.<sup>2</sup>

At this point, let us remind ourselves of Lincoln’s Gettysburg address. In the first place, the policies advocated by the Commission would not allow the “new nation, conceived in liberty” to be born at all, let alone “to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced,” namely, “that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” In short, when carefully read, the “fundamental shift” the Rockefeller Commission called for “in operative values” is quite literally to abandon the principles of the American founding! The soft words of the Report speak seductively to all of us: who feels no pleasure in sexuality? But is pleasure the only important “value”?

It would appear that Pope Paul VI and President Lincoln both held “pronatalist” views, directly opposed to the Rockefeller Commission’s first policy, but neither the pope nor the president seems to have thought them unnatural or requiring any violence or pressure. Birth or nativity has been celebrated for millennia: where would any of us be without them? Indeed, the very word “nature” itself in its original Latin derives from a verb that means “I am being born [*gnascor*]”; nature is connected with the notion of birth and generation.<sup>3</sup> Suddenly, with no argument, with no justification, with no hint of a thought, birth

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<sup>1</sup> “Reproductive decisions should be freely made in a social context without pronatalist pressures.... The second view...stresses <that>.... Freedom is denied when governmental steps are not taken to assure the fullest possible access to methods of controlling reproduction.... The third position...calls for a far more fundamental shift in the operative values...nothing less than a basic recasting of American values..., a different set of values toward nature.... A new vision is needed – a vision that recognizes man’s unity with nature, ...that seeks to promote the realization of the highest potential of our individual humanity” (ibid.).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Jean-Jacques Rousseau: “The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into right, and obedience into duty” (*Social Contract*, I, 3; trans. G. D. H. Cole).

<sup>3</sup> *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W. Glare (1982) s.v. *nascor*, pp. 1156-57; s.v., *natura*, pp. 1158-59.

and even nature itself are simply repudiated. On this point, if one wants to get rid of the pope, one will have to eliminate Lincoln, too, and to try to change the meaning of birth, life, rights, and nature itself – in the name of what the Commission calls “American values”!

The next two steps of the Rockefeller Commission seem to have been anticipated in 1968 by Pope Paul VI. Their second step is to institute “governmental steps...to assure...controlling reproduction.” This looks to me like the political action predicted by Pope Paul VI in *Humanae vitae*.<sup>1</sup> As to the third proposal, that an “ecological” approach be taken to “individual humanity,” what is to keep the public authorities from treating the rest of the population as animals to be bred or castrated as they see fit? Again, this seems to be described in the very next sentence of *Humanae vitae*, 17.<sup>2</sup>

Somehow, the bare assurance that the Rockefeller Commission’s policies “all lead in right directions” leaves me, at least, unconvinced. Indeed, even in the statement of the Commission’s “immediate goal” I see no provision to protect against the tyrannical possibilities that Pope Paul VI was warning against: “In any case,” the Commission says soothingly, “no generation needs to know the ultimate goal or the final means, only the direction in which they will be found.”<sup>3</sup>

It is somehow charming to be told that we have no “need to know the ultimate goal or the final means.” I understand that string quartets helped reduce the anxiety of inmates at Auschwitz at the selection point. In more recent times, we see on television stripped Iraqi soldiers captured by their enemies and marched

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<sup>1</sup> *Humanae vitae*, 17: “Finally, careful consideration should be given to the danger of this power passing into the hands of those public authorities who care little for the precepts of the moral law. Who will blame a government which in its attempt to resolve the problems affecting an entire country resorts to the same measures as are regarded as lawful by married people in the solution of a particular family difficulty? Who will prevent public authorities from favoring those contraceptive methods which they consider more effective?”

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*: “Should they regard this as necessary, they may even impose their use on everyone. It could well happen, therefore, that when people, either individually or in family or social life, experience the inherent difficulties of the divine law and are determined to avoid them, they may give into the hands of public authorities the power to intervene in the most personal and intimate responsibility of husband and wife.”

<sup>3</sup> “The Immediate Goal ... Whatever the primary needs of our society, the policies recommended here all lead in right directions for this nation, and generally at low costs.... For our part, it is enough to make population, and all that it means, explicit on the national agenda, to signal its impact on our national life, to sort out the issues, and to propose how to start toward a better state of affairs. By its very nature, population is a continuing concern and should receive continuing attention. Later generations, and later commissions, will be able to see the right path further into the future. In any case, no generation needs to know the ultimate goal or the final means, only the direction in which they will be found” ([www.population-security.org/rockefeller/002\\_population\\_growth.htm](http://www.population-security.org/rockefeller/002_population_growth.htm)).

off at quick time knowing “only the direction in which they will be found.” Perhaps we here, too, are being lulled into becoming complicit in our own demise. The words of the Report are soft, but they open the path to deadly deeds. We should not forget that it was Margaret Sanger and an American eugenics<sup>1</sup> movement that was used as the model to justify the hideous work of National Socialist extermination.

Perhaps we are being alarmists. After all, the mass media in the United States are almost totally silent about the annual March for Life held every January in Washington, D.C. to commemorate those killed through abortion under cover of the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade*, and the news blackout<sup>2</sup> has lasted over the forty-plus years that the protests have been continuing. Might journalists who are paid to communicate important truths have noticed? A year and a half after the *Roe* decision, at an international level, in August 1974 the U.N. World Population Conference in Bucharest came up with a “World Plan of Action.”<sup>3</sup> Fast on its heels came a long-classified White House document entitled *National Security Study Memorandum NSSM 200: Implications of Worldwide*

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<sup>1</sup> The intellectual pedigree for the doctrine of evolution seems to go back to Presocratic philosophy, particularly Empedocles; Charles Darwin (1809-82) first employed the notion as a scientific hypothesis. His half-cousin Francis Galton (1822-1911) coined the term “eugenics,” in an apparent attempt to overcome natural selection in the human species. For a journalistic discussion of some dimensions of the American eugenics movement at the level of big business promoters, see Max Wallace, *The American Axis: Henry Ford, Charles Lindbergh, and the Rise of the Third Reich* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2003), 95-99; for a more comprehensive investigation, see Edwin Black, *War against the Weak: Eugenics and America’s Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003). For a brief but brilliant history of American Supreme Court decisions, including the infamous Oliver Wendell Holmes’s 1927 majority opinion in *Buck v. Bell*, upholding forced sterilization, see Stephen F. Brett, *The Law of Love: From Autonomy to Communion* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2010), chap. 3, “Autonomy Becomes *Privacy* in the Courts.” Fr. Brett was professionally trained as a lawyer and is a Josephite priest, whose mission is the spiritual care of black American Catholics. For a full-length study, see Paul A. Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Aside from silence, other techniques for obstructing access to the truth include disinformation. Eventually, however, the truth sometimes comes out. See the interesting interview “I grew up hating Pius XII, then learned this man was a hero,” with Gary Krupp, Jewish founder of Pave the Way Foundation, at <https://zenit.org/articles/i-grew-up-hating-pius-xii-then-learned-this-man-was-a-hero/>.

<sup>3</sup> The *World Population Plan of Action* advanced at the 1974 World Population Conference in Bucharest suggests that third parties could be actively pushing antifertility measures against the least developed countries; see <http://www.population-security.org/27-APP1.html>, especially paragraph 96: “To take action, Governments are urged to utilize fully the support of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.”

*Population Growth for U.S. Security and Overseas Interests (The Kissinger Report)* on December 10, 1974; it was to have been “automatically downgraded at two year intervals and declassified on December 31,1980.” The executive summary of proposed U.S. action in paragraph 31<sup>1</sup> reads as follows:

31. The World Population Plan of Action and the resolutions adopted by consensus by 137 nations at the August 1974 U.N. World Population Conference, though not ideal, provide an excellent framework for developing a worldwide system of population/ family planning programs. We should use them to generate U.N. agency and national leadership for an all-out effort to lower growth rates. Constructive action by the U.S. will further our objectives. To this end we should:

(a) Strongly support the World Population Plan of Action and the adoption of its appropriate provisions in national and other programs.

(b) Urge the adoption by national programs of specific population goals including replacement levels of fertility for DCs and LDCs by 2000.

(c) After suitable preparation in the U.S., announce a U.S. goal to maintain our present national average fertility no higher than replacement level and attain near stability by 2000.

(d) Initiate an international cooperative strategy of national research programs on human reproduction and fertility control covering biomedical and socio-economic factors, as proposed by the U.S. Delegation at Bucharest.

(e) Act on our offer at Bucharest to collaborate with other interested donors and U.N. agencies to aid selected countries to develop low cost preventive health and family planning services.

(f) Work directly with donor countries and through the U.N. Fund for Population Activities and the OECD/DAC to increase bilateral and multilateral assistance for population programs.

*NSSM 200* was advanced toward the action phase on 26 November 1975 under the authority of President Gerald Ford in National Security Decision Memorandum 314 but over the signature of his National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft.<sup>2</sup> Through the detective work of Michel Schooyans of the Catholic University of Louvain it has become possible to piece together some of the significance of these fast-moving events.<sup>3</sup> There are many varieties of liberty and of liberalism. But the

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<sup>1</sup> [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PCAAB500.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PCAAB500.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.population-security.org/12-CH4.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Several years ago I chanced upon a 1997 English translation of one of his books, *The Totalitarian Trend of Liberalism* and was surprised that an American university press had not published it. For he combines perspicacious insight into modern political thought, both liberal and Marxist, along with a thorough and well-documented survey of important public-policy statements on population policy influential in the United States and the United Nations. His essay “Ambiguïtés brésiliennes et manichéisme conquérant,” however, appears in a much more visible form: *Études offertes à Jacques Lambert* (Paris: Éditions

one notion involved here is “not simply an economic system or a sort of political regime. It is above all,” as Schooyans puts it, “a state of mind” that “inclines one to make individual liberty the be all and end all of man” and that “rests upon two axiomatic presuppositions curiously eluding criticism: *materialism* and *individualism*.”<sup>1</sup> In this understanding, liberalism would be the counter-concept of Marxism; both share in materialism, but the latter takes the path of collectivism. The special significance of *NSSM 200* is as a systematic program to export a well-funded and well-orchestrated policy from the United States to reduce the fertility of the rest of the world. This is important, because it indicates that a successor to the Anglo-American eugenics movement, under various disguises, is still active and still very powerful.

The Communists denied Karol Józef Wojtyła, the archbishop of Kraków, permission to leave Poland for Rome to participate personally at the discussions of the Papal Commission for the Study of Problems of the Family, Population, and Birth Rate, although there are reports that he indirectly offered constructive suggestions, not all of which were included in the text of *Humanae vitae*.<sup>2</sup> It would appear from the existence of *NSSM 200*, that on the Anglo-American side some were no less opposed than the Communists to a holistic teaching on human life.

Let’s look at some of the Policy Recommendations specified in part 2, “I. Introduction – A U.S. Global Population Strategy.... B. Key Country priorities in U.S. and Multilateral Population Assistance ... In addition, the U.S. strategy should support in these L<esser> D<eveloped> C<ountry> countries general activities (e.g., bio-medical research or fertility control methods) capable of achieving major breakthroughs in population growth.”

The next heading calls for a closer look: “C. Instruments and Modalities for Population Assistance.” “Bilateral population assistance,” they say, “is the largest and most invisible ‘instrument’ for carrying out U.S. policy in this area.” Why, we might ask, should *invisibility* be so important in the execution of the policy? To answer this question, it is useful to study carefully the final two paragraphs of section C; here, however, I can quote only its concluding sentence: “In these sensitive relationships, however, it is important in style as well as substance to avoid the appearance of coercion.”<sup>3</sup> I find the phrase “it is important in style as

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Cujas, 1975), 185-97. In it he traces the diffusion of geopolitical doctrine from the German to the Brazilian regime under General Golbery do Couto e Silva.

<sup>1</sup> Michel Schooyans, *The Totalitarian Trend of Liberalism*, trans. John H. Miller (St. Louis: Central Bureau, CCVA, 1997). French: *Le dérives totalitaire du libéralisme*, rev. ed. (Paris: Maison Mame, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> See George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 206-10.

<sup>3</sup> The full text is available at [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PCAAB500.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PCAAB500.pdf). See also

well as substance to avoid the appearance of coercion” to be Orwellian.<sup>1</sup> The authors add puffy words to disguise that they want “to avoid the appearance of coercion.” They are completely silent about the *actuality* of coercion.<sup>2</sup>

*What Is To Be Done? Caritas in veritate:*

*How to Get Population Issues in Proper Perspective*

In my view, the *NSSM 200* study and its attendant policy proposals are simplistic and unrealistic. If the Malthusian hypothesis about the collision between geometric growth of population with the merely arithmetic growth of food resources were in fact true, the human race should already have died of starvation generations ago. But we are still here and still growing. Further, tinkering with the demography of world population neglects the historical reality of war and disease. A top-down, technological approach to imposing a reduction in population would in fact involve killing innocent people; though drug and chemical companies may make lots of money doing so, it does not fundamentally turn an act of war – albeit covert – into real assistance to real people. One reason God may have had for creating the poor might be to give the rich an opportunity to exercise mercy. Even the rich can occupy only one house at a time, eat only one meal at a time, wear only one pair of shoes at a time.

Further, I wonder whether modern consumerism might not be forcing a novel but grotesque reinterpretation of Psalm 22:6: “I am a worm and not a man.” A worm consumes decaying matter and produces still lower byproducts. If it is a question of money exchange, the alpha worm will need enough beta worms to buy his products and to sustain the worm economy. Tampering with the natural

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the text of *NSSM 200* published as Appendix 2 to Stephen D. Mumford, *The Life and Death of NSSM 200: How the Destruction of Political Will Doomed a U.S. Population Policy* (Research Triangle, North Carolina: Center for Research on Population and Security, 1996), 504. Mumford attempts in this book to reduce the credibility of Paul VI by attacking the doctrine of “papal infallibility”; see its index for citations. The reader will note that my argument operates, so far, only at the political level, where the Church claims no infallibility; I argue, however, that what Paul VI saw as likely political threats have been and are being realized in fact. Accordingly, Paul’s truth claims have been verified, regardless of the degree of certainty involved.

<sup>1</sup> See George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language,” at <http://georgeorwell.com/essays/politics-and-the-english-language/>.

<sup>2</sup> One is somehow reminded of Leo Strauss’s description of Machiavelli as “a teacher of evil,” in *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1958), 9: “Indeed, what other description would fit a man who teaches lessons like these: ...one ought not to say to someone whom one wants to kill ‘Give me your gun, I want to kill you with it,’ but merely ‘Give me your gun,’ for once you have the gun in your hand, you can satisfy your desire.”



demographic pyramid can lead to a demographic crash<sup>1</sup> and the destruction of commerce itself, which had been alleged to come “first,” that is, ahead of “the rights of man.”

Many years ago I was walking through a railway station with a friend. A panhandler approached me and asked for money for a drink. I reached into my pocket and gave it to him. My friend, now a Jesuit priest, asked me, “Did you really help him?” This question also underlies Benedict XVI’s encyclical letter *Caritas in veritate*.<sup>2</sup>

In his prologue to the encyclical Pope Benedict cautions against a sentimentality not grounded in truth. Then he lays out six thoughtful chapters addressing the theme of human development. Good intentions are not enough. Are our proposed actions truly helpful? Without offering a technical solution, he lays down two “criteria that govern moral action”: justice and the common good. These provide the axes needed to orient any “technical solutions.” Here is how I would paraphrase the six main points.

First, echoing Pope Paul VI, he points to the intimate link between human life and social life articulated in the earlier encyclicals *Humanae vitae* and *Populorum progressio*. If “man is by nature a political animal,”<sup>3</sup> then the “war of every man against every man”<sup>4</sup> is an unnatural condition. But the pope goes beyond philosophy to find an integral humanism<sup>5</sup> in the Person of Christ, where both the

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Schooyans, *The Demographic Crash: From Fatalism to Hope* (St. Louis: Central Bureau, CCVA, 2001) provides illuminating “age pyramids” based on official sources (8-20), and ends with “A Pro-Life Action Plan” (105-14); the text was translated into English by Rev. John H. Miller, C.S.C., S.T.D., from *Le Crash Démographique* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Michel Schooyans’s book *The Gospel Confronting World Disorder* (St. Louis: Central Bureau, CCVA, 1999) begins with a preface by Joseph Ratzinger; it was translated by Rev. John H. Miller, C.S.C., S.T.D., from the French *L’Évangile face au désordre mondial* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1997). This extraordinarily well-documented text deserves to be much better known both to the educated public and to framers of national and international policy. Another of his books, written in collaboration with Anne-Marie Libert, has a preface by Cardinal López Trujillo, the president of the Pontifical Council for the Family: *Le terrorisme à visage humain* (Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, 2006); were it available in English, it should be entitled *Terrorism with a Human Face*. Matthew Connelly’s *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008) mentions neither Mumford 1996, nor Schooyans, nor *NSSM 200* in the index, but does cite *NSSM 200* on p. 470 n. 93 and offers a well-documented history; in my view, the author’s conclusions are much weaker than the evidence he presents warrants, even granting that all parties to the dispute are operating out of good intentions.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* 1.2.1253a2.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pt. 1, chap. 13 (1651).

<sup>5</sup> The phrase seems to echo Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism: Temporal and*

individual and social dimensions of human perfection are found.

Second, regarding human development, profit “without the common good as its ultimate end risks destroying wealth and creating poverty” (21). It is important for “multinational enterprises”<sup>1</sup> to “respect the rights of workers” and to be more generous with intellectual property especially in health care. The “primary capital ...is man, the human person.”

Third, echoing Pope St. John Paul II’s *Centesimus annus*, he recognizes a need for “a system with three subjects: the market, the State and civil society,” which includes “just laws” governing the market.

Fourth, on the development of people, rights and duties, and the environment, the pope cautions against efforts to make “rights and duties” contingent upon the decisions of political assemblies,<sup>2</sup> which would eliminate the “objectivity and ‘inviolability’ of rights” (43). This seems to argue that certain human rights are antecedent to the state, whether the regime is monarchical, oligarchical, or democratic. Tying “rights and duties” together lays open the possibility that if we neglect our duties we may come to deserve a very much worse regime than the kind we currently have.<sup>3</sup>

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*Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom* (New York: Scribner, 1968), translated by Joseph W. Evans from *Humanisme integral: problèmes temporels et spirituels d’une nouvelle chrétienté* (Paris: F. Aubier, 1936).

<sup>1</sup> The owners of some international corporations have established funds to advance what goes under the name of “the global family planning revolution.” For accounts of some of the more heavily funded efforts, see <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/How-We-Work/Quick-Links/Grants-Database#>; <http://rockefeller100.org/exhibits/show/health/family-planning>; <http://www.fordfoundation.org/grants/grantdetails?grantid=119072>; <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/01/27/us/macarthur-fund-gives-help-to-family-planning-groups.html>.

<sup>2</sup> For some American government programs on “family planning,” see <http://www.hhs.gov/opa/title-x-family-planning/index.html>. For some U.N. programs, see <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/theme/family-planning/index.shtml>. A colleague has pointed out that this enterprise is still continuing today in Kenya through the use of tainted or toxic tetanus vaccines; see <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/piadesolenni/did-the-kenyan-bishops-just-expose-who-unicef/>. For a recent case of forced sterilization in Namibia, see <http://www.news10.com/story/27190825/court-namibia-forcibly-sterilized-women-with-hiv>. For the World Bank’s “Reproductive Health Action Plan 2010-2015,” see <http://web.worldbank.org/wbsite/external/topics/exthealthnutritionandpopulation/extprh/0,,contentMDK:22519791%7EpagePK:210058%7EpiPK:210062%7EtheSitePK:376855,00.html>.

<sup>3</sup> The political ramifications of untrammled hedonism as a danger to the American Republic motivated Fr. John H. Miller to translate Schooyans’s book *Maîtrise de la vie – domination des hommes* (Paris: Édition Lethielleux, 1986) into English as *Power over Life Leads to Domination of Mankind* (St. Louis: Central Bureau, CCVA, 1996). In his foreword, Miller writes emphatically: “*Abortion gives the lie to our democratic pretense; we need to refund not our government, but our Republic!*” (italics in the original).

Fifth, Benedict argues that “the development of peoples depends...on a recognition that the human race is a single family,” which in turn requires “a place” for “God...in the public realm,” and warns against the twin dangers to fruitful dialogue between faith and reason when either “fundamentalism” or “secularism” is dominant. He calls for a strengthening of “intermediate bodies”<sup>1</sup> using the “principle of subsidiarity” so that the human person does not stand as a naked atom against the “all-encompassing welfare state.”

Sixth and finally, *Caritas in veritate* addresses the tension between the development of peoples and technology, calling special attention to “today’s struggle between the supremacy of technology and human responsibility” in “the field of bioethics,” and warning of a “systematic eugenic programming of births.”

Permit me to end with a personal remark. Truth involves telling it like it is. Is it a mere coincidence that the four-letter Hebrew word used to name God in the bible (YHWH) seems to have the same root as the Hebrew verb “is” (YHYH)? When the Voice came to Moses in Exodus 3:14 saying “I am who AM,” what if that Voice was telling it like it is? When Jesus was asked about his relation to Abraham, and said “Before Abraham came to be, I AM” (John 8:58), what if he was telling it like it is? If so, then let’s open our ears with Horton the elephant, stand up together, and say, “A person’s a person, no matter how small.”

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Schooyans rightly and prophetically cautions us against repeating the mistake of putting the technical development of nuclear weapons ahead of moral and political deliberations about the proper use of nuclear physics in the service of the good of man; we are getting hints that what was at stake then may call for even more deliberation and prudence in the new environment of “bacteriological warfare” (xi), whose possibilities are just becoming visible through the current incipient Ebola epidemic. Perhaps our reexamination of Lincoln may help bring us to a refounding of the Republic. Lest it be thought that Schooyans thinks that what he calls liberalism is confined to members of the Republican Party, his remarks about progressive Democrat Barack Obama in *Sur l’affaire de Recife et quelques autres . . . : Fausse compassion et vraie désinformation* (Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, 2010), 87-92 are instructive; and his critique of the editors of *L’Osservatore Romano* for not allowing the archbishop of Recife to defend himself against calumny for defending Church teaching against abortion.

<sup>1</sup> The pope calls for a “reform of the UN” as well as of “economic institutions and international finance.”



# Catholic Thought and the Challenges of Our Time

*Ryan T. Anderson\**

ABSTRACT: The tribulations that marked the twentieth century and continue into the twenty-first— totalitarianism, genocide, abortion, and the sexual ideology that has battered the family and redefined marriage – have sprung from a faulty humanism. These human tragedies shouldn't be each be equated with the others, but they all spring from faulty anthropology, a misunderstanding of the nature of man. This in turn gives rise to competing approaches to faith, reason, freedom, morality, and society. Recovering a sound conception of thought, including Catholic thought, is essential to meet the challenges of our time.

**T**HE 2000-YEAR STORY of the Catholic Church's cultural and intellectual growth is a story of challenges answered.

For the early Church, there were debates about who God is (and who is God). In response, the Church developed the wonderfully rich reflections of Trinitarian theology and Christology. In a sense, we have the early heresies to thank for this accomplishment. Arius's errors gave us Athanasius's refinements on Christology. Nestorius's blunders gave us Cyril's insights. In truth, of course, we have the Holy Spirit to thank for it all. He continually leads the Church to defend and deepen its understanding of the truth, against the peculiar errors of the age.

A thousand years later, with the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the Church saw renewed debates about salvation – debates that built on those Augustine had waged with Pelagius, no less. Whichever side you favor in the debates of the sixteenth century, they left the Church as a whole with a much richer theology of justification and sanctification, ecclesiology and soteriology.

Debates about the nature of God, of salvation, and of the Church never disappear, of course. But today, the most pressing heresies – the newest challenges for the Church's teaching and mission – center on the nature of man. The tribulations that marked the twentieth century and continue into the twenty-first

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– totalitarianism, genocide, abortion, and the sexual ideology that has battered the family and redefined marriage – have sprung from a faulty humanism. These human tragedies shouldn't be each be equated with the others, but they all spring from faulty anthropology, a misunderstanding of the nature of man.

If you want to classify eras of the Church and challenges to the truth, you could think of it in terms of three periods. The early Church saw challenges to truths about God, the Reformation-era Church saw challenges to truths about the Church herself, and today's Church is confronted by challenges to truths about man – the being made in the image and likeness of God whom the Church is tasked with protecting.

This insight about anthropology isn't unique to me. I learned it from Karol Wojtyła. Before he became a bishop, a cardinal, and eventually Pope John Paul II, Karol Wojtyła was an academic philosopher. He thought deeply about the crisis of culture then enveloping the West and determined its cause: a faulty understanding of the human person. Shortly after the Second World War, he wrote to a friend about his main intellectual project:

I devote my very rare free moments to a work that is close to my heart and devoted to the metaphysical sense and mystery of the person. It seems to me that the debate today is being played out on that level. The evil of our times consists in the first place in a kind of degradation, indeed in a pulverization, of the fundamental uniqueness of each human person. This evil is even more of the metaphysical order than of the moral order. To this disintegration planned at times by atheistic ideologies we must oppose, rather than sterile polemics, a kind of "recapitulation" of the inviolable mystery of the person.

John Paul diagnosed his culture's ills in terms of the mid-century political revolutions. If he were with us today, he'd undoubtedly extend that analysis – as he did with abortion – to apply it to the redefinition of marriage, transgender ideology, and various assaults on religious liberty. If we are seeing in our own time challenges to the truths that we are created male and female, and that male and female are created for each other in marriage, it is because we have lost sight of the true nature of man as the *imago Dei*. We must respond to false humanisms with a true humanism committed to the unique and irreplaceable value of each person.

The false humanism in John Paul II's time was on powerful display in the political order, where totalitarianism grew. Today, blindness to the truth about the human person has led to a crisis of family, community, and opportunity. But then as now, we see clearly the Church's latest intellectual and cultural challenge: not primarily the nature of God or redemption, but of man and human flourishing. Our task is to explain what human persons most fundamentally are, and how we are

to relate to one another within families and polities.

I have said the challenges are not primarily about God or the Church, and that they are primarily about man. But today's false humanism isn't unrelated to modern beliefs about God. The crises of the twentieth century – world wars, totalitarian regimes, genocides, and labor camps – and now of the twenty-first – not only the sexual revolution's continuing unfolding but also the political-economic thought that ping-pongs between atomistic individualism and centralized collectivism – are results of an atrophied rationality that itself is the result of man's closing himself off from the transcendent. No one better diagnosed this reality than the French theologian Henri de Lubac when he explained that "atheistic humanism," in its attempts to liberate man by abolishing God, resulted in chaining man to the whims of the powerful. The attempt to elevate man by ignoring God has led to man's degradation. And we see the results all around us.

In this essay, I reflect on various aspects of our nature as the *imago Dei* and how that anthropology helps us in responding to the challenges of our times.

### *Thought and Creation*

The first place to focus in an essay on "Catholic Thought and the Challenges of Our Time" is on that word "thought." Catholics take it seriously. Or, at least, we should. But increasingly we live in a thoughtless era. Of course, you need not be Catholic to take thought seriously. The ancient Greeks, after all, initiated the practice of disciplined thinking that has come to be called philosophy, the love of wisdom. Ancient Greeks could reason from and about the intelligibility they saw in the world.

But an oddity of our time is that so many modern thinkers have undercut the foundations of thought. The Church has become one of the primary defenders of human reason and our ability to know truth. The Greeks worked from the ground up. From the intelligibilities they saw in physical matter, for example, they could reason to the existence of immaterial forms. Taking further steps, they could reason to an unmoved mover, an uncaused cause. The starting point for them was the manifest intelligibility of nature, which inspired the pursuit of explanations.

Catholic thought has taken on this approach from Athens, but has added to it a perspective from Jerusalem. Indeed, Catholics – following the Jewish people—have an additional reason to embrace reason: It has been revealed to us that Creation is rational. Here's how Joseph Ratzinger put it in a lecture he delivered at the Sorbonne, later included as a chapter in his book *Truth and Tolerance*:

The question is whether reason, or rationality, stands at the beginning of all things and is grounded in the basis of all things or not. The question is whether reality

originated on the basis of chance and necessity (or, as Popper says, in agreement with Butler, on the basis of luck and cunning) and, thus, from what is irrational; that is, whether reason, being a chance by-product of irrationality and floating in an ocean of irrationality, is ultimately just as meaningless; or whether the principle that represents the fundamental conviction of Christian faith and of its philosophy remains true: “In principio erat Verbum” – at the beginning of all things stands the creative power of reason. Now as then, Christian faith represents the choice in favor of the priority of reason and of rationality.

Our faith commits us to the priority of reason and of rationality. It commits us to take thought seriously, to expect – and thus to seek – answers, reasons.

As a cultural matter, the revelation of the God of Genesis fundamentally reshaped the West, freeing it from superstition, determinism, and pagan religiosity. Prior to his lecture at the Sorbonne, in a series of homilies Cardinal Ratzinger delivered on the doctrine of creation, published as a slim but profound book, *In the Beginning*, he explained:

And in the face of any fear of these demonic forces we are told that God alone, who is the eternal Reason that is eternal love, created the world, and that it rests in his hands. Only with this in mind can we appreciate the dramatic confrontation implicit in this biblical text, in which all these confused myths were rejected and the world was given its origin in God’s Reason and in his Word. This could be shown almost word for word in the present text – as, for example, when the sun and the moon are referred to as lamps that God has hung in the sky for the measurement of time. To the people of that age it must have seemed a terrible sacrilege to designate the “great gods” sun and moon as lamps for measuring time. Here we see the audacity and the temperateness of the faith that, in confronting the pagan myths, made the light of truth appear by showing that the world was not a demonic contest but that it arose from God’s Reason and reposes on God’s Word.

Hence this creation account may be seen as the decisive “enlightenment” of history and as a breakthrough out of the fears that had oppressed humankind. It placed the world in the context of reason and recognized the world’s reasonableness and freedom. But it may also be seen as the true enlightenment from the fact that it put human reason firmly on the primordial basis of God’s creating Reason, in order to establish it in truth and in love, without which an “enlightenment” would be exorbitant and ultimately foolish.

As Ratzinger tells it, it was the Enlightenment brought about by God’s self-revelation that freed man from slavery to pagan gods and provided the ultimate foundations for both human reason and human freedom. Indeed, in a fascinating lecture delivered several years ago, John Finnis pointed out that on the



fundamental metaphysical truths that undergird the West, the Hebrews got there earlier – and with greater clarity – than did the Greeks. That is, Biblical revelation arrived at philosophical truths earlier and more accurately than philosophy itself.

This understanding of the world, nature, as fundamentally creation, a contingent reality flowing from the reasonable and free choice of God to create, and this understanding of man as *imago Dei*, a creature possessing God-like powers of reason and will – literally awe-some powers – fundamentally changed the course of history. It provided the metaphysical foundations for the West. And this commitment to thought, to reason, is sorely needed today.

### *Faith and Reason*

Belief in creation, by a God who is both *caritas* and *logos*, allows Catholic thought to be open to every discipline – every *scientia* – that can discover truth. For the Catholic has nothing to fear from science, or philosophy, or reason of any sort. In fact, the Catholic – like all people – needs reason in order to fully know truth. As John Paul put it in the opening lines to his masterful encyclical *Fides et ratio*:

Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth – in a word, to know himself – so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.

Right now, we need to use every discipline at our disposal to defend the truth about man. When it comes to debates about marriage, religious liberty, and transgender ideology, we need all hands on deck. In addition to John Paul's *Theology of the Body*, we need a philosophy of the body, and a psychology of the body, and a sociology of the body. We need philosophers and theologians. Psychiatrists and psychologists. Biologists and sociologists. And we need artists and saints, because our defense of the truth can never be a merely intellectual exercise.

In a world increasingly hostile to people of faith, people of faith will need to take reason all the more seriously, to be able to speak in terms and tones that our neighbors can understand. To help them see that there is no contradiction between reason rigorously applied, science properly conducted, and the revealed truths taught by the Church. To bad science, we need to respond with good science. To bad legal reasoning, we need to respond with better legal reasoning. To misguided philosophy, we need to respond with true philosophy. And then we need to build on good reason with authentic revelation, for grace perfects nature.

For even as we defend the lofty vocation of reason, being rational isn't

enough, for rationality itself points to the existence of truths that reason alone cannot grasp, truths that can only be known through God's revelation, accepted by faith. In other words, man needs to embrace reason without embracing rationalism.

When reason concludes that there are truths about God and the universe that reason itself cannot ascertain, that man's finite intellect cannot exhaust the infinite, this could open the door to legitimizing faith in anything – and everything. Which is why we must be wary of theistic thinkers who attempt to ground faith's legitimacy in what amounts to little more than blind leaps. Modern thinkers from Kant and Kierkegaard to certain strains of contemporary American Christianity attempt to inoculate faith by detaching it from reason, by making the choice for faith lack foundations.

In the media circus surrounding Pope Benedict's Regensburg address, few commentators took the time to note that the main thrust of his remarks was criticism of European, not Islamic, thought. Criticizing those rationalists who castrated reason's true scope, Benedict also challenged Christians to recover the traditions of philosophical theology, to reject the voluntarism that detached God from the rational order, and to see God as Logos. Our understanding of God should be informed as much by our reason as by our acceptance of God's communication by way of scripture, and that acceptance of revelation itself should be made for good reason, pointing to the reasonableness of the act of faith. In other words, man needs to embrace faith without embracing fideism.

Reason without rationalism. Faith without fideism.

### *Reason in Full*

It's not just that we need faith and reason. It's also that we need the right type of reason. In criticizing the modern thinkers who have castrated reason's true capacity, Benedict at Regensburg was continuing the critique John Paul offered in *Fides et ratio* that modern rationality was artificially constricted. Ironically, or perhaps I should say providentially, we're left in this cultural moment in which Catholics have greater confidence in the ability – and scope – of reason than secularists who have reduced reason to empiricism, scientism, pragmatism, and, ultimately, left us living in a technocracy. On the cultural and political implications of this, see Neil Postman's prophetic book *Technopoly*. Here, I want to focus on the intellectual implications.

While the scientific method has provided mankind with many indisputably helpful discoveries, to embrace the instrumental, technocratic rationality at the heart of the scientific process as if it were the entirety of rationality is to narrow the range of realities accessible to rational inquiry. While the scientific approach can discover truths about empirical physical realities, it can provide little help in

discussions of justice, love, and beauty – whether they be in earthly domains or transcendent ones. Only by broadening the conception of rationality beyond the empirically verifiable realm of the scientific can man arrive at the truths necessary to secure his full flourishing. In other words, man needs to embrace science without embracing scientism.

This was a key – and ignored – aspect of Benedict’s Regensburg lecture. Commenting on the reduction of human reason to science, and of science to empiricism and positivism, Benedict remarked:

If science as a whole is this and this alone, then it is man himself who ends up being reduced, for the specifically human questions about our origin and destiny, the questions raised by religion and ethics, then have no place within the purview of collective reason as defined by “science,” so understood, and must thus be relegated to the realm of the subjective. The subject then decides, on the basis of his experiences, what he considers tenable in matters of religion, and the subjective “conscience” becomes the sole arbiter of what is ethical. In this way, though, ethics and religion lose their power to create a community and become a completely personal matter. This is a dangerous state of affairs for humanity, as we see from the disturbing pathologies of religion and reason which necessarily erupt when reason is so reduced that questions of religion and ethics no longer concern it. Attempts to construct an ethic from the rules of evolution or from psychology and sociology end up being simply inadequate.

For John Paul, faith and reason were like two wings. For Benedict, Athens and Jerusalem were akin to a double helix. That’s the image Tracey Rowland, an Australian theologian who has written a wonderful book on Benedict’s thought, uses to describe Benedict’s genealogy of the formation and then corruption of thought in the West. She explains that corruption as one “in which the Hellenic component of the culture was severed from the Christian and in which the Christian component was fundamentally undermined by the mutation of the doctrine of creation.... When faith in creation is lost, Christian faith is transformed into gnosis, and when faith in reason is lost, wisdom is reduced to the empirically verifiable which cannot sustain a moral framework.”

So many of the Enlightenment’s political efforts were directed at securing man’s liberty, and yet the twentieth-century results yielded more bondage than ever. The gamble was on supposing that a “Dictatorship of Relativism” (as Ratzinger put it) provided a more secure ground for human liberty than the “Splendor of Truth” (as John Paul put it). Only if man is capable of knowing truth – including moral and spiritual truths – can he be capable of freely directing himself toward ends freely chosen, away from evil and toward goods that are to be pursued. If man is ultimately the measure of all things, if man purports to create

good and bad, right and wrong, rather than discern these naturally existing realities and respond accordingly, then what at first seemed like unlimited freedom results in stultifying nihilism. If whatever I decide upon is good, then the significance of the choice is eviscerated.

Freedom untethered to truth in the political realm truly does lead to dictatorship, either of the despot who gains power through force or of the majority that imposes its will without justifying reason. For if reason is unable to arrive at truth, what can a political community appeal to when organizing common life? Those who ground democracy on relativism undercut the very foundations that support democratic institutions in the first place: a proper concern for the authentic good of each member of the community and a respect for each member's ability to participate in this process of discernment. Indeed, even human rights become redefined according to majority preference.

Recovering the sapiential dimension of reason that considers the big questions regarding the meaning and destiny of human existence and the significance of human action is a key part of recapturing a more robust conception of human rationality. Reason can ascertain the existence of God and certain key aspects of his nature, and it can also discern objective standards of right and wrong, good and evil.

### *Freedom for Excellence*

The capacity to know right and wrong, good and evil, is key to recovering today a sound understanding of freedom. For the liberty on offer in many post-Christian liberal societies today is not the liberty of the ancient Greeks, Romans, or Christians. For them, the most important freedom was freedom from slavery to sin, freedom for self-mastery. Today we face two competing conceptions of freedom, in what the Belgian-born Dominican theologian Servais Pinckaers has termed a freedom of indifference and a freedom for excellence.

On the modern conception of freedom, freedom is indifferent to what is chosen. What matters is simply that I chose it. Whether I chose to degrade myself or to respect my dignity is ultimately irrelevant, provided that I freely choose either way.

The more traditional understanding of freedom flowed out of a different conception of human nature. If freedom is grounded in man's rational and animal nature, and in how such freedoms allow man to flourish given his nature, then freedom is directional – it has a purpose, an end, and thus has limits. It is not primarily a freedom from something, but a freedom for something. A freedom for excellence, a freedom for human flourishing.

The nineteenth-century Catholic thinker Lord Acton put it this way: "Freedom is having the right to do what we ought." Think of freedom in music.

All the rules, exercises, scales, and arpeggios can seem like barriers to our freedom. Yet, properly understood, these “rules” create the context in which we can exercise our freedom, make choices about melodic phrasing, articulation, rhythm, and so on. Just banging on the piano keyboard – “choosing whatever you want” – is not real freedom. It’s slavery in ignorance and inability. Fr. Pinckaers describes it thus:

Of course anyone is free to bang out notes haphazardly on the piano, as the fancy strikes him. But this is a rudimentary, savage sort of freedom. It cloaks an incapacity to play even the simplest pieces accurately and well. On the other hand, the person who really possesses the art of playing the piano has acquired a new freedom. He can play whatever he chooses, and also compose new pieces. His musical freedom could be described as the gradually acquired ability to execute works of his choice with perfection. It is based on natural dispositions and a talent developed and stabilized by means of regular, progressive exercises, or properly speaking, a habitus. Aristotle’s and St. Thomas’s prudent or good man in the moral sphere is like the good pianist in the artistic sphere; and is therefore the truly free man.

“Freedom for excellence” requires us to develop habits of virtue. We are created beings; as such, we have to operate within the truth of the created world in which we live. In doing so, we have to develop a love for living in the real world, a world in which we exercise our freedom to love. This involves education. We need educating as to what really is good. To a certain extent, our conscience knows this inherently. God has placed it in all of our human hearts. But, being fallen creatures, our conscience is less than perfect, and in need of formation.

In a homily John Paul delivered at Mount Sinai, he explained:

The Ten Commandments are not an arbitrary imposition of a tyrannical Lord. They were written in stone; but before that, they were written on the human heart as the universal moral law, valid in every time and place. Today as always, the Ten Words of the Law provide the only true basis for the lives of individuals, societies and nations. Today as always, they are the only future of the human family. They save man from the destructive force of egoism, hatred and falsehood. They point out all the false gods that draw him into slavery: the love of self to the exclusion of God, the greed for power and pleasure that overturns the order of justice and degrades our human dignity and that of our neighbor. If we turn from these false idols and follow the God who sets his people free and remains always with them, then we shall emerge like Moses, after forty days on the mountain, “shining with glory” (Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, II, 230), ablaze with the light of God! To keep the Commandments is to be faithful to God, but it is also to be faithful to ourselves, to our true nature and our deepest aspirations.

Later on in the homily, John Paul proposed a radical way of thinking about freedom: “The Ten Commandments are the law of freedom: not the freedom to follow our blind passions, but the freedom to love, to choose what is good in every situation.”

John Paul was developing a theme recently highlighted by Patrick Deneen in his book *Why Liberalism Failed*. It’s not just that we have two different conceptions of freedom, but these conceptions of freedom flow from competing anthropologies and thus give rise to different polities and cultures. John Paul stressed the need to be educated for freedom – where the Commandments serve as a pedagogical tool to authentic freedom. Deneen points out that for the state of nature liberal theorists, man is born free. A thinker like Rousseau would add that we’re born free and yet everywhere in chains – with law and culture inhibiting our freedom. That’s not the Catholic view. As Deneen lucidly explains, “Liberty is not a condition into which we are naturally born but one we achieve through habituation, training, and education – particularly the discipline of self-command.” He makes this point in a chapter on the liberal arts, a liberal arts education classically understood as an education for liberty. But it shouldn’t just be a matter for four-year colleges. Ideally, the entire culture – including law and policy – would cultivate freedom for excellence.

And so we’re left with two rather different understandings of culture – one in which it constrains and one in which it cultivates. In reality, it constrains in order to cultivate. Cultures cultivate human nature.

### *Social Persons*

Which, of course, leads to another important aspect of Catholic thought for our time: We’re not isolated, atomistic individuals; we’re social, communal persons. One aspect of being created in the image and likeness of God is that we participate in God’s own triune nature. As God is understood as a community of persons in relation to each other, so too should we understand ourselves as a community of persons in relation to each other. And it is in community that we develop authentic freedom and flourish. The culture in which we find ourselves will cultivate our natures – for better or worse.

Thus far, this article has largely been a riff on the dignity of the human person, one of the first key principles of Catholic social thought. It is the social nature of man that brings to the fore three other key principles: the priority of the common good, and the demands of both solidarity and subsidiarity. All three of these principles flow from a proper understanding of human nature. And all three speak directly to the challenges of our time.

My Ph.D. dissertation was titled “Neither Liberal Nor Libertarian: A Natural

Law Approach to Social Justice and Economic Rights.” At the heart of that argument was the claim that both of the contemporary American ideologies get property rights and duties wrong. This is partly because almost no one talks about duties, partly because whenever anyone does talk about duties they assign them to the state, and partly because the leading accounts of property rights on offer are too absolute, without corresponding accounts of property duties incumbent upon property owners.

For any of this to make sense, a sound conception of common good would have to be advanced. But without a shared understanding of objective goods, no shared understanding of common good is even possible. How could we have goods in common, or even a common good that we all share – and all participate in – if human fulfillment is simply desire-satisfaction or utility maximization, where individuals have their own private desires and separate utility functions?

This is why the Catholic emphasis on reason’s ability to grasp the truth, including the truth about human goods, is so important. For without an understanding of objectivity in the realm of goodness, there can be no common good – only private, individual goods that are then aggregated. This, of course, is how the dominant methodology of contemporary liberalism – both Right and Left – approaches the question. Be it in terms of GDP growth or redistribution of income, the focus tends to be aggregates of private goods.

Little attention is paid to the institutions of civil society that facilitate our flourishing – and how our various practices and policies impact those institutions. Nor is there any attention given to the duties that we owe to those institutions. This is ironic, given how much the phrase “social justice” is thrown about today. Sadly, we pay little attention to its original meaning: that man is a social creature, that societies other than the state have real existence, and that we have real duties to these societies.

Let me unpack this. Some people think social justice is a twentieth-century invention of progressive thinkers, but this starts the history of social justice midstream. To understand its true meaning, we must look further back to its real historical origins.

### *Understanding Social Justice*

The first known use of the phrase “social justice” is by a Jesuit Thomist, Luigi Taparelli, in his multi-volume work published between 1840 and 1843 titled *Saggio teoretico di dritto naturale appoggiato sul fatto* (*A Theoretical Treatise on Natural Law Resting on Fact*). I want to emphasize two arguments Taparelli highlighted by coining the new phrase “social justice”: first, that man is social by nature and belongs to many societies and, second, that man has natural duties to others in justice.

Taparelli created the phrase “social justice” to highlight that there are societies in between individuals and governments. He wanted to avoid both the individualistic and the collectivistic temptations. He wanted to point out that the truth was somewhere in between. He wanted to highlight that, as a matter of nature, man is a social being and that this places duties on individuals – duties people have to their family, to their church, to their community. It also places limits on government – that government is limited by the reality of the natural family, that government is limited by the prerogatives of religious communities, that government is limited by the authority of civil society.

But so too that government has duties to support – not supplant or attack – these communities. This is where our most challenging problems lie in the United States. How can we be in solidarity with our neighbors, while also respecting the demands of subsidiarity to empower them, not replace their own initiative? A big part of the challenge here requires us to be able to think about what common goods are at stake. For if we can recover a sound understanding of common goods, and recognize the demands of both solidarity and subsidiarity, we’d recognize the extent of our problems.

“The American Dream is dead,” candidate Donald Trump famously announced on the campaign trail, to the astonishment of many beltway elites. Their disbelief was understandable, given how thick their bubbles are. From their perspective, things were great. The Great Recession had ended. The economy was growing. Unemployment was plummeting. The stock market was at all-time highs. How could anyone seriously claim that the American Dream was dead?

The elites don’t only have thick bubbles – they have thick communities. And inside the protective cocoon of community the American Dream is alive and well today. But for many Americans, Trump was the first politician to articulate their reality. And as Tim Carney points out in his new book, *Alienated America*, when one studies the electoral map and looks at which counties went strongest for Trump in the primary elections, it was the counties that lack what the social scientists call “social capital.” Where churches are shuttering. Where marriage rates are declining. Where single-parenting and absentee dads are the norm. Where suicides and opioid overdoses and deaths of despair are shockingly high.

In short, certain geographic regions in the United States simply lack actual community. And where community is lacking, so too is opportunity. And where opportunity is dead, so too is the American Dream.

To these social problems, we are offered material solutions. But liberal government redistribution programs and libertarian universal basic income (UBI) schemes do little to support meaningful community. In many cases, they end up making the problems worse.

But those are the leading alternatives among our intelligentsia today. And in



a cycle of mutually destructive perverse incentives, both radical individualism and collectivism grow together. As American community falls apart, another government solution crops up. As that government program metastasizes, institutions of civil society are crowded out, regulated into oblivion, and shut down (frequently in violation of religious liberty) because they don't share the government's liberal values. As those institutions of civil society disappear, another government program is proposed. On and on the cycle continues, decimating what Edmund Burke called the "little platoons," what Tocqueville described as America's rich associational life, and reducing us to atomistic individuals and centralized government.

But only at the bottom. When you look at the top – when you look at the college-educated, upper-middle class – you see thriving communities, robust social capital, and a way of life that facilitates the American Dream. That is why so many elites have been entirely blind to the struggles of the lower and middle class – struggles that have been documented in books with titles such as *Coming Apart*, *The Fractured Republic*, *Hillbilly Elegy*, and *Alienated America*. America is divided. Not primarily along racial lines. Not primarily along religious lines. Not primarily along partisan lines.

America is divided along community lines – between those who have rich familial, religious, and civic connections and those who do not. Those who do are thriving. Those who do not are failing. The fault isn't primarily globalism, or technology, or trade – though those all play a role. The problem is that without social capital and a rich web of civil society Americans can't navigate the pathway through these changing times.

So now the question is what can be done for working-class families, especially for workers who find their skills less and less marketable in ever-changing markets because of the forces of globalization and new technology. Appeals to Enlightenment rights or utilitarianism will not allow us to think well about how to the justice in the distribution of costs and benefits of the creative destruction of free trade and how best to smooth out the rough patches. We need to think through the appropriate roles of various institutions. What does justice require of families and churches, of workers and business owners, of civil society and charitable organizations, of local and national governments? What rights and duties do these various individuals and societies have?

In a certain sense, the social and economic challenges I have mentioned can be classified as partly the result of de-industrialization making way for the knowledge economy. If Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum*, which inaugurated modern Catholic social thought, was a response to the industrial revolution, what we now need is a response to the de-industrial revolution. What to do is a question for policymakers. That we need to think about what to do is a demand of justice, and

the principles of natural law should inform how we think about it.

Catholic thinking on these questions strives to strike a balance. It is sensitive to the role that markets can play in fostering initiative and innovation, creating jobs, and lifting people out of poverty, but it is not blind to the damage that market activity can cause. Natural law arguments look to the demands of justice and the ways in which liberty can both foster and undermine the common good. They take seriously the rights of private property owners but also their duties in stewarding their wealth. This, in turn, provides an intellectual framework for thinking about both the justifications and the limits of economic liberty – and the reasons that we might be concerned with market failures and excesses.

I don't have space to develop this point here, but let me note that this is not just a challenge to Catholic thought, but to living. How do we live the realities of our social nature? And what can we do to assist in the replanting of civil society so that more people can live them?

### *Conclusion*

John Paul and Benedict wanted the Church to benefit from the advancements of modernity, but they also wanted our modern world to benefit from the wisdom of the Church. It was to be a two-way conversation, and they had little patience for those who proposed either the progressive or traditionalist monologue—the world setting the agenda for the Church with the Church remaking herself accordingly, or the Church imposing herself on a modern world without reading the signs of the times to discern what of modernity was good and what was bad. This critical engagement entailed speaking to the modern world in terms it could understand and on topics that lay at the heart of contemporary life. Human freedom, its social preconditions and metaphysical foundations, took center stage.

And that brings us full circle. A major theme throughout the most recent papacies has been the centrality of sound anthropology. Pope Francis warns us of what he calls “gender ideology” and the attempt of developed nations to impose this on the rest of the globe in a new form of what he calls “ideological colonization.” Just as previous generations of the Church rose to meet the challenges of their ages – challenges to truths about God and truths about the Church – so, too, does our generation need to rise to the occasion to defend truths about man.

## The March for Life, the President, and Executive Branch Developments

*William L. Saunders\**

THE FORTY-SIXTH ANNUAL March for Life, with hundreds of thousands of participants, took place in Washington, DC, on January 18. During their presidencies, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush each spoke to the marchers via telephone or radio hookup from the Oval Office. However, Mike Pence became the first Vice President to address the march in person in 2017. In 2018, President Donald Trump spoke from the Rose Garden. His message was broadcast live to those gathered on the Mall via the jumbotrons.

This year the vice president was there once again in person to address the marchers, and the president spoke to those gathered by video. The vice president echoed his theme from two years ago that “life is winning in America,” noting in particular ongoing efforts to defund Planned Parenthood (more on that below).<sup>1</sup> The president emphasized that the “right to life” is “the first right in our Declaration of Independence.”<sup>2</sup> He pledged to veto any law infringing human life.

In fact, after the Democratic Party took control of the House of Representatives as a result of the November elections, one of the first bills they introduced and passed was H.R. 21, which would have reversed the president’s policy (Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance) requiring international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that receive global health assistance funds from the United States to refrain from performing or promoting abortion. This

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<sup>1</sup> Emily Ward, “Vice President Mike Pence: ‘Life Is Winning in American,’” *CNS News* (January 18, 2019), <https://www.cnsnews.com/>.

<sup>2</sup> Katharine Jackson, “Trump Tells Anti-abortion Marchers He Will Support Them,” *Reuters* (January 18, 2019), <https://www.reuters.com/>.

prompted the president's remarks noted above.<sup>1</sup>

Trump's administration continued, and expanded, the ban on the use of U.S. funds to advance abortion abroad. On March 26, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo reported that two years into the Trump administration, "the vast majority of our implementing partners have agreed to comply with" the president's policy. Now it was time to close any remaining loopholes: "We will refuse to provide assistance to foreign NGOs that give financial support to other foreign groups in the global abortion industry."<sup>2</sup> Pompeo also said the administration would strictly enforce a 1981 rule (the Siljander amendment) prohibiting the use of U.S. funds to lobby for abortion. Thus, in response to a December letter from nine U.S. senators,<sup>3</sup> funds were banned from going to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which is part of the Organization of American States (OAS), because of its lobbying for legalization of abortion in Latin America. "The OAS," Pompeo stated, "should be focused on addressing crises in Cuba, Nicaragua, and in Venezuela, not on advocating the pro-abortion cause."<sup>4</sup>

Following upon Pence's remarks at the March for Life about defunding Planned Parenthood, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued a final rule concerning Title X of the Public Health Service Act.<sup>5</sup> The new rule reverses an Obama-era interpretation of Title X. It requires rigorous physical and financial separation of family planning and abortion activities in Title X-funded projects, and it prohibits referral for abortion in any Title X program. (It returns to the interpretation and practice begun under the administration of Ronald Reagan.) The rule requires Planned Parenthood (as well as other abortion providers) to disentangle its sixty million dollars of Title X funding from its abortion business.

### *The Supreme Court and Other Judicial Matters*

Ruth Bader Ginsburg returned to the Supreme Court on February 19. She had

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<sup>1</sup> The bill has no chance of passing the Senate.

<sup>2</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, remarks to the press, March 26, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2019/03/290669.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> James Lankford et al., letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, December 21, 2018, available at <https://www.lankford.senate.gov/news/press-releases/senator-lankford-leads-letter-to-secretary-pompeo>. Lankford's cosigners were Senators Thom Tillis (R-NC), Mike Enzi (R-WY), Mike Lee (R-UT), James Inhofe (R-OK), John Kennedy (R-LA), Roy Blunt (R-MO), Ted Cruz (R-TX), and Joni Ernst (R-IA).

<sup>4</sup> Pompeo, remarks to the press.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Statutes and Regulations: Title X Notice of Final Rule," accessed April 25, 2019, <https://www.hhs.gov/opa/title-x-family-planning/about-title-x-grants/statutes-and-regulations/index.html>.

been away from the Court since December 21, when she had cancer surgery.<sup>1</sup> Given her position as a staunch liberal and abortion-rights supporter, her absence had triggered much speculation about whether she would return. Of course, if she had not, Trump would have been able to nominate her replacement. Given that the number of Republican senators increased following the elections in November, it seems likely his nominee would be confirmed.

That speculation was influenced, of course, by the furor over the nomination and confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh to replace Anthony Kennedy, as detailed in my previous column. One of the most outspoken defenders of Kavanaugh, Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), has now become the chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Fierce Kavanaugh critics and Judiciary Committee members Kamala Harris (D-CA) and Mazie Hirono (D-HI) have attacked subsequent nominees to the federal judiciary's lower courts for belonging to the Knights of Columbus, which the senators suggested was an extremist organization.<sup>2</sup> The person widely considered to be on the short list for the next vacancy on the Court, Amy Comey Barrett, was subjected to hostile questions by Diane Feinstein (D-CA) and others because of her Catholic faith (see my prior columns). In the *Washington Post*, Paul McNulty and John Sparks chronicled the growing hostility among Democratic senators to nominees who have religious faith. As they noted, "An insightful *Harvard Law Review* note on Article VI in 2007 concludes: 'The drafters and proponents of the No Religious Test Clause would be astonished to learn that members of the Senate Judiciary Committee have questioned judicial nominees under oath about their religious beliefs and the extent of those beliefs.... Requiring a nominee under oath to profess a religious belief runs afoul of the [Constitution].'"<sup>3</sup> Article VI of the Constitution states, "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

As noted in my prior columns, the real underlying issue is whether the nominee will take an "activist" or an "originalist" approach as a judge. The activist takes the constitutional text as a "living" thing that the justice helps bring to life through his or her understanding of the needs of contemporary society; the originalist tries his or her best to understand and apply the text as the framers

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Hurley, "Justice Ginsburg Keeps Busy as U.S. High Court's Writer-in-Chief," Reuters (March 4, 2019), <https://www.reuters.com/>.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Warren Davis, "Senior Democrats Attack the Knights of Columbus: Is a culture War Brewing," *Catholic Herald* (January 11, 2019), <https://catholicherald.co.uk/>.

<sup>3</sup> Paul J. McNulty and John A. Sparks, "Senators Should Stop Asking about Judicial Nominees' Religious Beliefs," *Washington Post* (March 4, 2019), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>.

intended. Democrats have advanced their agenda, for example, abortion, through an activist interpretation, and they fear originalist judges will reverse it. Of course, vacancies on the Supreme Court are to be filled through the nomination and confirmation process. Since the current president, Trump, is a Republican, and since he has vowed to nominate only originalists, the Democrats are doing everything possible to prevent the Court from gaining a solid “conservative” (originalist) majority. They are even talking of expanding the number of justices on the Court.<sup>1</sup> This has been tried in the past, perhaps most notably by President Franklin Roosevelt. The Constitution does not specify the number of justices, and there have been different numbers over the years, but it is hard to believe that the Democrats would be proposing this if they did not feel *Roe v. Wade* were at risk of being overturned.

One of the justices whom the Democrats feared would “swing” the Court “to the right” is Chief Justice John Roberts. He said famously in his confirmation hearings that he would decide cases as an umpire calls “balls and strikes,” that is, as he sees them, not as he wishes them to be. Ironically, Roberts, according to some observers, has stepped into the famous “moderate” role of Anthony Kennedy.<sup>2</sup> (In reality, it is inaccurate to refer to Kennedy as a “moderate.” He is the inventor of the infamous “sweet mystery of life” test, so named by Antonin Scalia. Under this highly activist test, the Court has found a right to same-sex marriage and to abortion in the guarantee of the Fourteenth Amendment that “no state shall... deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.”) Roberts, along with – to the surprise of many conservatives as well as liberals – Kavanaugh, have disappointed social conservatives on a couple of cases that concern abortion, but they arguably did so for procedural reasons<sup>3</sup> even though the Court’s three “solid conservatives” (Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch, and Clarence Thomas) wanted the cases argued before the Court.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Editorial Board, “The Black Robe New Deal,” *Wall Street Journal* (March 11, 2019), <https://www.wsj.com/>.

<sup>2</sup> See generally, Jimmy Hoover, “Chief Justice Roberts Already Wielding Swing Vote,” *Law360* (March 4, 2019), <https://www.law360.com/>.

<sup>3</sup> The two cases were *Gee v. Planned Parenthood of Gulf Coast Inc.* and *Anderson v. Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri*. See generally, Ken Klukowski, “Brett Kavanaugh and John Roberts Reject Two Cases Involving Planned Parenthood,” *Breitbart News* (December 10, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> The two cases involved the question of who has standing to bring a lawsuit to challenge a state’s determination of who is a “qualified” Medicaid provider under federal law. The issue arises because several states have attempted to restrict such funds from going to Planned Parenthood because those states found Planned Parenthood was engaged in the illegal sale of fetal tissue and organs and was involved in fraudulent billing practices. Since the case involves issues of standing, a somewhat technical procedural issue, the justices who did not vote to review the case may have felt that the issue, which is involved

In another case that was denied review for procedural reasons, Kavanaugh issued a strong statement in favor of religious liberty: “As this Court has repeatedly held, governmental discrimination against religion – in particular, discrimination against religious persons, religious organizations, and religious speech – violates the Free Exercise Clause and the Equal Protection Clause.”<sup>1</sup> The Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment states that government “shall make no law...prohibiting the free exercise [of religion].” The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment affirms that no state shall “deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” Essentially, Kavanaugh was saying that, while the particular issue in the case was not ripe for consideration, when the question of religious liberty arises in a subsequent case, he will take a robust approach.

That subsequent case may very well be pending for decision before the Court as this column is written. It is referred to as the Bladensburg Cross case.<sup>2</sup> It concerns a cross that was erected in a private memorial park after World War I. The land was subsequently acquired by the state of Maryland. The question is whether the state unconstitutionally “establishes” religion<sup>3</sup> by having a memorial park with a large cross in it.

I will not review in detail the test for “establishment” of religion, except to say that the test, and all versions of it, are notoriously difficult, even impossible, to apply in a way that provides guidance for future conflicts.<sup>4</sup> Further, the test privileges, unlike in other areas, an “offended observer.” In other areas, one must have standing in order to bring a lawsuit; that is, one must have suffered a concrete and particularized injury. Here the only injury is to one’s feelings, not to one’s person or property; such injury is not sufficient in other cases. Justice

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in many other kinds of federal lawsuits, was not “ripe” for decision on these particular facts. However, Justice Thomas, writing for Alito and Gorsuch as well and filing an unusual dissent from a decision not to review a case, excoriated those who did not vote for review, suggesting that was due to the fact that Planned Parenthood was involved and that the other justices wanted to avoid anything that touched “the politically fraught issue” of abortion, even when the Constitutionality of abortion was not involved. Thomas felt the issue needed to be resolved since, inter alia, different federal courts had reached different conclusions on the standing issue. For Thomas’s dissent, see *Gee v. Planned Parenthood of Gulf Coast Inc.*, 586 U.S. \_\_\_\_ (2018) (Thomas J., dissenting).

<sup>1</sup> *Morris County Board of Chosen Freeholders v. Freedom from Religion Foundation*, 586 U.S. \_\_\_\_ (2019) at 2.

<sup>2</sup> *The American Legion v. American Humanist Association*, 410 U.S. \_\_\_\_.

<sup>3</sup> The First Amendment states that government “shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.”

<sup>4</sup> The three prongs of the Lemon test, are (1) Does the action have a secular purpose? (2) Does it neither inhibit nor advance religion? (3) Does it excessively entangle government with religion?

Gorsuch raised the issue during oral argument.

It is widely expected the Court will jettison the current test (the Lemon test), but there are widespread doubts that five justices (that is, a majority) will agree on a new test. (The top contenders to replace Lemon are a “coercion” test and a “historical practice” test.) If a new test is not agreed to by a majority, then the decision will fail to provide guidance for governments and citizens in future conflicts. Nonetheless, if the Court were to reject standing for the “offended observer,” no one would be able to sue, which would effectively eliminate these cases. As is usually the case with controversial cases, it is expected the Court will not announce its decision until its term ends in late June. Of course, the Court could issue an opinion that is essentially limited to the facts of this case (for example, the public park with the cross existed for ninety-three years without anyone raising a legal challenge), which would provide no guidance for future disputes.

Readers may be aware of recent reports that the Republicans “broke Senate norms” concerning the confirmation of lower court judges (that is, district court judges) and non-cabinet-level appointees. What happened was that the Republican majority of the Senate interpreted an existing rule to permit a majority to change the requirements (Senate rules) for bringing debate on a nominee to a conclusion (invoke cloture). Before that vote occurred, the Democrats were insisting on thirty hours of debate on the Senate floor for each nominee. This was contrary to Senate practice and part of the Democrats’ effort to prevent originalists from being confirmed to the lower courts (and to stop as many nominations for non-cabinet posts as possible). The Republicans changed the rule to allow for two hours of debate.<sup>1</sup>

### *State Developments*

Sophisticated readers know that America has one of the most permissive abortion regimes in the world. Abortion is available in the United States at any time for any reason. (While *Roe* instituted the trimester framework and recognized state interests in the mother’s health and in “fetal life,” *Roe* stated that those interests would be overridden when the mother’s health was at risk. *Roe*’s companion case, *Doe v. Bolton*, defined *health* as any factor found by the abortionist to be significant.)

Thus, readers might ask, what was the point of passing a law recently in New York to permit abortion until birth? The point is to prepare for the day when a

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Jipping, “Mitch McConnell Didn’t Break Filibuster Norms,” *National Review* (March 12, 2019), <https://www.nationalreview.com/>; and Kelsey Snell, “Senate Rewrites Rules to Speed Confirmations for Some Trump Nominees,” NPR (April 3, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/>.



“conservative” (that is, originalist) Supreme Court reverses *Roe* and *Doe*. On that day, it will be state law that governs. That is why they passed the law in New York.

It was grotesquely ironical that Governor Andrew Cuomo ordered the 9/11 Memorial to light up in celebration of this great victory for “women’s rights.” The rail surrounding the memorial pool lists the names of those who died in the attacks of 9/11. Several times a woman’s name is given along with “and her unborn child.” In any context except abortion, everyone realizes (and deplores) that the death of the unborn is the death of an innocent human being.

The law, passed on the forty-sixth anniversary of *Roe*, was condemned by, among others, Archbishop Joseph Naumann, chair of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops pro-life committee.<sup>1</sup> The furor over the New York bill, and a similar one in Virginia, caused a rise in pro-life sentiment among Americans.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Other Developments: Human Rights and Abortion*

In November, the U.N. Human Rights Committee published Comment 36, to guide the understanding and implementation of article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). In doing so, the HRC attempted to make abortion an accepted part of every nation’s law and practice. First, it is important to note that, other than a regional protocol in Africa, no binding international document mentions abortion. Abortion advocates have, thus, long sought to shoehorn abortion into the provisions of binding international documents. This is precisely what the HRC is trying to do with Comment 36.

The ICCPR is a treaty; that is, it contains legally binding obligations for any nation that ratifies the treaty. Most nations have ratified it, but those that have not are not bound by its terms. The ICCPR is one of the two major treaties designed to implement the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was issued by the United Nations after World War II.<sup>3</sup> It is worthwhile to pause and consider the preamble to the Declaration in order to understand how far off line the HRC went with Comment 36.

World War II was the most devastating armed conflict in history, with at least 50 million civilian noncombatants killed. In order to avoid the scourge of a possible World War III, the United Nations issued the Declaration. The preamble

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<sup>1</sup> Jordan Bloom, “An Archbishop’s Warning to Catholic Politicians,” *Catholic Herald* (March 7, 2019), <https://catholicherald.co.uk/>.

<sup>2</sup> Alayna Treene, “New Poll Finds ‘Dramatic Shift’ on Abortion Attitudes,” *Axios* (February 24, 2019), <https://www.axios.com/>.

<sup>3</sup> The other treaty is the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

of the Declaration states that

recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace.... [But] disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind.... [Therefore,] the peoples of the United Nations have in the [Charter of the United Nations] reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights [and] in the dignity and worth of the human person.<sup>1</sup>

To summarize, the Declaration recognizes the dignity and human rights of the individual human person and believes this is necessary for international peace and justice.

The Declaration was not (and is not) binding international law. Rather, as it states itself, it enunciates a “common standard of achievement” for all nations. As noted above, it required the creation and ratification of treaties, such as the ICCPR, in order to make the “rights” recognized in the Declaration binding upon nations.

#### *ICCPR – Implementing the Declaration*

Let us take a close look at article 6 of the ICCPR. Subpart 1 provides, “Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.” The subparts that follow deal with the death penalty and with genocide. Subpart 5 states, “Sentence of death...shall not be carried out on pregnant women.”<sup>2</sup>

By its plain terms, “every human being has the inherent right to life.” That logically includes persons born or unborn. And what is abortion if not the arbitrary “deprivation” of the life of an innocent person at the whim of another? Article 6 forbids that, too. Finally, why would subpart 5 prohibit the execution of pregnant women who are guilty of capital crimes? The reason must be because it would violate the right to life of the innocent unborn. How does Comment 36 “interpret” article 6?

#### *Comment 36*

Comment 36 acknowledges that “article 6 recognizes and protects the right to life of all human beings. It is the supreme right...whose effective protection is the prerequisite for the enjoyment of all other human rights.” It goes on to say the

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<sup>1</sup> U.N. General Assembly, Declaration of Human Rights (December 10, 1948), preamble.

<sup>2</sup> U.N. General Assembly, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (December 16, 1966), §3(6)(1) and (5).

right “should not be interpreted narrowly.... Article 6 guarantees this right for all human beings, without distinction of any kind.”<sup>1</sup>

In paragraph 12, the HRC recognizes that “a deprivation of life may . . . be authorized by domestic law and still be arbitrary.” That applies squarely to *Roe* and *Doe*, which authorizes an abortion for any reason whatsoever, at any time during pregnancy, as explained above. Paragraph 24 states that “persons with disabilities, including psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, are also entitled to special measures of protection.” Paragraph 61 states, “Femicide, which constitutes an extreme form of gender-based violence that is directed against girls and women, is a particularly grave form of assault on the right to life.” As readers know, abortion often targets unborn girls as well as the disabled.

Therefore, it is startling to read paragraph 8, which purports to “protect” the “right” to abortion:

States parties<sup>2</sup> must provide safe, legal and effective access to abortion where the life and health<sup>3</sup> of the pregnant woman or girl is at risk, or where carrying a pregnancy to term would cause the pregnant woman or girl substantial pain or suffering,<sup>4</sup> most notably where the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest or is not viable. In addition, States parties may not regulate pregnancy or abortion in all other cases in a manner that runs contrary to their duty to ensure that women and girls do not have to undertake unsafe abortions,<sup>5</sup> and they should revise their abortion laws accordingly. For example they should not take measures such as criminalizing pregnancies by unmarried women or apply criminal sanctions against women and girls undergoing abortion or against medical service providers assisting them in doing so, since taking such measures compel women and girls to resort to unsafe abortion.<sup>6</sup> States parties should not introduce new barriers and

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<sup>1</sup> U.N. Human Rights Committee, *General Comment No. 36 (2018) on Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, on the Right to Life* (October 30, 2018), §1(2) and (3).

<sup>2</sup> *States parties* means those nations who have ratified the treaty.

<sup>3</sup> The reader should bear in mind that the definition of *health* is, as discussed in the text, endlessly elastic.

<sup>4</sup> Here *suffering* encompasses mental and emotional suffering and is, again, endlessly elastic.

<sup>5</sup> This is an absurd statement. It assumes there is a right to abortion. (Thus, it must not be unsafe.) But there is no general, overall human right to abortion. At some international conferences – which are not themselves binding law – it has been stated that “where abortion is not against the law, such abortion should be safe” (U.N. Population Fund, *Programme of Action* [September 1994], 8.25, <https://www.unfpa.org/>). That is the opposite of what Comment 36 is asserting.

<sup>6</sup> To the best of my knowledge, this claim is unsupported by social science data. Even if it were the case, however, no binding treaty prohibits such laws. Therefore, it is within the legal power and jurisdiction of individual states to decide how to address this.

should remove existing barriers that deny effective access by women and girls to safe and legal abortion, including barriers caused as a result of the exercise of conscientious objection by individual medical providers.

Paragraph 8 is stunning, even bizarre, in its assertions about abortion. As noted, there is no international treaty giving a right to abortion, and as we reviewed above, no provision of article 6 of the ICCPR can be fairly interpreted as providing one. It is astounding that in a document about the “fundamental” right to life “of every human being,” there is not a single mention of the right to life of the unborn, even of the handicapped, girls, or minorities. In so failing, Comment 36 undermines the very premises of its first paragraphs: The right to life is “for all human beings, without distinction of any kind.” It is “the supreme right...whose effective protection is the prerequisite for the enjoyment of all other human rights.”<sup>1</sup>

But the fact is that no one is obligated to take Comment 36 as definitive or binding. The HRC, whose only authority is provided by the terms of the ICCPR, was not provided with the authority to interpret the meaning of the ICCPR so as to bind states parties. Its comments regarding abortion rights are, at best, “advisory.” And, as this review of the texts of article 6 and Comment 36 has demonstrated, Comment 36, in failing to recognize the right to life of the innocent unborn, is hardly worth the paper it is written on.

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<sup>1</sup> U.N. Human Rights Committee, *General Comment No. 36*, §1(2) and (3).

## *From the Editor's Desk*

### Where There's Smoke, There's Fire

*Joseph W. Koterski, S.J.\**

THERE HAS BEEN MUCH vitriolic reaction toward Benedict XVI's recent essay "The Church and the Scandal of Sexual Abuse" from some quarters. The issues under discussion here take us back to the document that is at the heart of the current ecclesial battles, John Paul II's 1993 encyclical *Veritatis splendor* ("The Splendor of Truth"). That encyclical identified four erroneous trends in moral theology that needed correction. With every new theological skirmish, it becomes more obvious that the encyclical is correct in its analyses and deeply pertinent to the issues Benedict is considering in his essay. What the current scandal makes clear is the unacceptable consequences that flow from failing to make the corrections *Veritatis splendor* showed to be necessary. As Richard Weaver long ago insisted, ideas have consequences.<sup>1</sup>

The Pope Emeritus wrote this essay as a personal contribution to the February 2019 Vatican discussions about the scandal of sexual abuse, and it was later published in a German ecclesial journal.<sup>2</sup> In the first part he reviews the wider social context of the crisis that has shaken the Church. In the second part he points out various effects of this situation on the formation and lives of priests. In the third part he offers some suggestions about the proper response on the part of the Church. It is no surprise, of course, to find here the sharp vision and sound judgment that we have come to expect from his pen. At the core of the moral analysis used in this essay are the insights and distinctions of *Veritatis splendor*.

It is, however, no surprise that the popular press has pilloried the connections that Benedict XVI sees between the collapse of normative standards regarding sexuality and the advent of clerical sexual abuse. A new normalcy has arisen that

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

<sup>2</sup> Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, "The Church and the Scandal of Sexual Abuse," hereafter cited as *Essay* by part (in Roman numerals) and paragraph number (in Arabic numerals). The English translation used is from the Catholic News Agency.

so clouds moral vision as to make the deep-seated linkages that the Pope Emeritus points out seem quaint or tenuous. In fact, his essay is clear-sighted, and the encyclical on fundamental moral theology that John Paul II issued when Benedict was the Prefect for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith remains highly relevant to the questions at hand.

### *1. The Revolutions of 1968*

There was a new music in the 1960s, and with a new music there often comes vast social change. Whether the change in that era's music was actually the cause of these changes or just an effect of social change is difficult to say. But with the revolutionary changes the world was then beginning to experience in the electronic media, the songs that the West began to sing quickly spread throughout the world. In some ways Bob Dylan captured this moment in his song "The Times They Are A-Changin'."

The principles that had kept most cultures relatively stable suddenly seemed more fragile. The relations of cause and effect, to be sure, have proven extremely complex to chart, but the tragic social consequences are undeniable in many spheres of life, including the feminization of poverty that has followed the easing of restrictions on divorce and the adoption of certain welfare policies, the widespread acceptance of contraception and abortion that have accompanied a rise in hedonism and promiscuity, and the widespread confusion about sex and gender that has been associated with the campaign for the normalization of homosexuality. All of these have been parts of the sexual revolution, and it was just one aspect of a cluster of revolutions that affected modern society.

The Church was not immune from these pressures. In works like *Values in a Time of Upheaval* and *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*<sup>1</sup> Benedict examines the wide array of forces that have destabilized European culture. In his most recent essay he concentrates on the effects of the sexual revolution on the ecclesial culture:

Among the freedoms that the Revolution of 1968 sought to fight for was this all-out sexual freedom, one which no longer conceded any norms. This mental collapse was also linked to a propensity for violence.... Part of the physiognomy of the Revolution of '68 was that pedophilia was then also diagnosed as allowed and appropriate.<sup>2</sup>

Benedict points out that simultaneous with the sexual revolution in the wider

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, translated by Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006); *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, translated by Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> *Essay I* (1).

culture there occurred within Catholic moral theology “a collapse that rendered the Church defenseless against these changes in society.”<sup>1</sup> Outraged by Paul VI’s heroic reassertion of the Church’s traditional stance on the immorality of contraception, those advocating its moral legitimacy attacked the theory of natural law that had traditionally played such a large part in the articulation of Catholic moral theology in general and in the defense of this position in particular.

The larger question is thus how we are to do moral theology. The Second Vatican Council had prudently called for a renovation of the place of scripture within the presentation of moral theology,<sup>2</sup> in order to correct for the way in which Sacred Scripture was often cited only for background or substantiation. Certain *avant-garde* theologians of the day urged the creation of “a moral theology based entirely on the Bible.”<sup>3</sup> In tracing the degeneration of Catholic moral theology in this period through the increasing predominance of consequentialism and proportionalism, Benedict recounts the case of Father Bruno Schüller, who tried to develop a morality based entirely on revelation and then decided to create a more pragmatic moral theology instead after he discovered that “from the Bible alone morality could not be expressed systematically.”<sup>4</sup>

The result (foreseen or not) of taking this sort of pragmatic turn in moral theology was the production of a relativistic morality with no absolute goods and no intrinsic evils. Instead there was emphasis on personal value-judgments, understood as contingent on the purposes of human agents and on circumstances. In response to this trend, John Paul II issued the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 1992 and *Veritatis splendor* in 1993. The third section of the *Catechism* makes extensive use of the terminology and argumentation of *Veritatis splendor* to explain the foundations of morality and then examines the implications of the Ten Commandments for many moral questions that have arisen in our day. Those who dissent from the Church’s traditional moral teaching have often denied seeing a description of their own positions in this encyclical, but there is reason to think that such denials are tendentious, given the way the encyclical has alternately been denounced or ignored.

The second portion of Benedict’s 2019 essay analyzes the consequences that the dissolution of the moral teaching authority of the Church had for various spheres of ecclesial life in recent decades, and especially for priestly training in seminaries and houses of formation. In particular, he takes note of the growing acceptance of the moral permissibility of homosexual activity among some

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<sup>1</sup> *Essay I (2)*.

<sup>2</sup> *Optatam totius* (Declaration on the Training of Priests), 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Essay I (2)*.

<sup>4</sup> *Essay I (2)*.

theologians<sup>1</sup> and a tendency in canon law to give such strong protection to the rights of those accused of pedophilia as to make conviction by trial virtually impossible and thereby to provide little to no protection for the Faith.<sup>2</sup> Most of the rest of this column will be devoted to this section of the essay.

In the third section Benedict weighs in on the notion that the current crisis is so severe as to require the creation of “another Church.” In a sense this is an application of the same principle that guided him on questions about the proper interpretation of the Second Vatican Council, namely, that what we need is a hermeneutics of continuity, not a hermeneutics of rupture. Quickly dismissing the idea of the need for “a new Church” (“Well, that experiment has already been undertaken and has already failed”<sup>3</sup>), Benedict urges that only obedience to God and love for our Lord Jesus Christ can point the way to conversion of heart and thus the real solution to the problem.

To resist the evils that threaten, Benedict writes, we need to embrace the love of God that Jesus brought to the world: “The power of evil arises from our refusal to love God....Learning to love God is therefore the path of human redemption.”<sup>4</sup> To unpack the implications of this stance, he explains that the Faith gives us certainty about the existence of a God who is good and wants the good. Without this certainty, human life ultimately has no goal and no meaning. There would be no standards of good or evil. Power rather than truth would alone determine things. Further, he argues, a God who did not make himself known would likewise leave us in the lurch. A society that “treats him as non-existent” is “a society that loses its measure.”<sup>5</sup> Echoing some of the points that he made in his first encyclical, *Deus caritas est*, Benedict patiently reviews the paradoxes of cultural suicide. In a society that embraces the idea of the death of God as the way to maximize freedom, “what dies is the purpose that provides orientation” and thus there is an end to real freedom. When the compass that points us in the right direction disappears, we can no longer distinguish good from evil.

With this assessment of moral dysfunctionality in view, Benedict then draws out various applications to the present crisis, and it is these applications that have drawn the ire of such critics as Massimo Faggioli, one of the great proponents of a hermeneutics of rupture, in a recent column entitled “Blaming It All on the Sixties.”<sup>6</sup> Without dealing in any detail with even a single aspect of Benedict’s

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<sup>1</sup> *Essay II (1)*.

<sup>2</sup> *Essay II (2)*.

<sup>3</sup> *Essay III (1)*.

<sup>4</sup> *Essay III (1)*.

<sup>5</sup> *Essay III (1)*.

<sup>6</sup> Massimo Faggioli, “Blaming It All on the Sixties: How the Pope Emeritus’s Essay on Sex Abuse Has Been Weaponized,” *Commonweal* (May 3, 2019), 6. The column by Cathleen Kaveny is an instance of a theologian who seems so angry with Benedict as to be



analysis, Faggioli devotes his essay to the complaint that “Benedict’s essay has been quickly and predictably weaponized by those who have been trying to discredit Francis since the start of his pontificate.” Instead of examining the arguments that Benedict laid out for seeing the various dimensions of the sexual revolution as flowing from the acceptance of the death of God, regardless of its destructive consequences for human life, Faggioli champions the theory that the current crisis is “fundamentally about clericalism and the abuse of power.”

To be sure, there are abuses of power by clerics, as we have seen in the scandal associated with former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, but it is unfair for Faggioli not even to mention Benedict’s handling of the crisis during his pontificate and his critique of clerical misuse of the juridical process (discussed above) to protect those who have allowed perverse sexual appetites to escape punishment for having preyed upon the innocent and the vulnerable. Benedict deepens that critique in the final section of his essay where he reviews the tendency to think of the Church in predominantly political categories.<sup>1</sup>

Benedict sees the root of the problem as rising from the absence of awareness of God. This insight allows him to give a far more perceptive explanation of many aspects of the current crisis. To take just one example, Benedict writes:

It becomes suddenly apparent that what is evil and destroys man has become a matter of course. [Pedophilia] was theorized only a short time ago as quite legitimate.... And now we realize with shock that things are happening to our children and young people that threaten to destroy them. The fact that this could also spread in the Church and among priests ought to disturb us in particular. Why did pedophilia reach such proportions? Ultimately, the reason is the absence of God. We Christians and priests prefer not to talk about God, because this speech does not seem to be practical.... God is regarded as the party concern of a small group and can no longer stand at the guiding principle for the community as a whole. This decision reflects the situation in the West, where God has become the private affair of a minority.<sup>2</sup>

For Benedict, the task we must undertake to deal with the moral upheavals of our time is once again to “recognize God as the foundation of our life instead of

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unable even to understand his text. Kaveny accuses Benedict of having misunderstood the moral species of sexual abuse by clerics as if he said that it is primarily a case of sacrilege. This is entirely to miss the point, that his remarks about protecting the good of the Faith are about the abuse of the juridical process to shield abusive clerics. Benedict’s text and his track record are entirely clear about understanding sexual abuse as an intrinsic evil perpetrated on the young and the innocent. Cathleen Kaveny, “Putting Justice First: What Benedict’s Letter on Abuse Gets Wrong,” *Commonweal* (June 1, 2019), 6.

<sup>1</sup> *Essay III* (3).

<sup>2</sup> *Essay II* (1).

leaving Him aside as a somehow ineffective phrase.” This means that we may never take God for granted and that we must respect what he has revealed. It means recognizing God as the center of our thoughts, words, and actions in all areas of life. The following passage shows the specificity of the program that Benedict envisions.

Let us consider this with regard to a central issue, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Our handling of the Eucharist can only arouse concern. The Second Vatican Council was rightly focused on returning this sacrament of the Presence of the Body and Blood of Christ, of the Presence of his person, of his Passion, Death, and Resurrection, to the center of Christian life and the very existence of the Church.... And yet a rather different attitude is prevalent. What predominates is not a new reverence for the presence of Christ's death and resurrection, but a way of dealing with Him that destroys the greatness of the Mystery. The declining participation in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration shows how little we Christians of today still know about appreciating the greatness of the gift that consists in his Real Presence.... The way people often simply receive the Holy Sacrament in communion as a matter of course shows that many see communion as a purely ceremonial gesture.<sup>1</sup>

## *2. The Reasons for Holding Certain Trends in Moral Theology Erroneous*

Benedict's essay is proving to be yet another flashpoint in the ongoing war for the soul of the Church. The theological rock on which it stands is *Veritatis splendor*, for the quarrel is not about just various particular issues but about the character of Catholic moral theology as a whole. To be well equipped for the discussions that will be needed in the years to come, it will prove invaluable to know this document well.

This encyclical concerns certain fundamental questions of the Church's moral teaching in the many different spheres of human life. As the introduction to the document makes clear, the reason for its composition was the urgent crisis that had arisen from a lack of harmony between the traditional positions of the Church and various theological positions regarding questions of the greatest importance for the Church, for the life of faith, and for society itself.<sup>2</sup>

Even in its structure, the encyclical can serve as a model for how moral theology should be done. Rather than being content with short quotations from scripture to confirm or illustrate some point, the entire first chapter offers an extended reflection on a crucial passage of scripture, the conversation of Christ with the rich young man (Matthew 19:16-21). In the second chapter, each of the four sections devoted to one of the erroneous trends in current moral theology is

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<sup>1</sup> *Essay III (2)*.

<sup>2</sup> *Veritatis splendor*, 4.

rooted in important passages from scripture that address the issue in question, with supplementary distinctions and arguments from philosophical ethics and other disciplines, as appropriate. The final chapter offers encouragement and practical advice for living out the Church's teaching, with a sustained pattern of scriptural references to the power of the Cross of Christ.

Interestingly, *Evangelium vitae*, the companion piece to *Veritatis splendor*, with its focus on the issues of abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, and capital punishment, uses a similar structure. Its opening two chapters are devoted to the examination of key scriptural texts – the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis and extensive passages from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. They are followed by a chapter that reflects on crucial passages from scripture that are normative for various issues that involve the protection of innocent human life. *Evangelium vitae* concludes with a lively paraenetic chapter on building a culture of life and developing the needed habits of prayer and service in our communities.

Benedict's essay roots the failures of much contemporary moral thought adequately to defend human dignity in the absence of a sense of God and thereby a way to distinguish good and bad, right and wrong. He singles out *Veritatis splendor* as showing the way in which Christian ethics must be undertaken. Quoting from Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes*, the introduction sounds the signature theme of John Paul II's pontificate and the predominant theme of Benedict's essay:

In fact, *it is only in the mystery of the Word incarnate that light is shed on the mystery of man*. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of the future man, namely, of Christ the Lord. It is Christ, the last Adam, who fully discloses man to himself and unfolds his noble calling by revealing the mystery of the Father and the Father's love.<sup>1</sup>

Now, the stances that one takes in any form of ethics invariably depends on one's commitments about human nature. For a genuinely Christian ethics, there must be an authentically Christian understanding of anthropology, and so a Christian anthropology needs to have a Christological focus or it will not be truly Christian. As the above quotation notes, we must look to Jesus Christ to understand humanity and to grasp what God's love for us calls us to do in our lives and our conduct. Admittedly, certain aspects of what is normative for human behavior will be able to be discerned in every age and in every culture, but only the person of Christ "fully discloses man to himself and unfolds his noble calling."

One aspect of the analysis that Benedict provides in his recent essay concerns the tendency of much of the moral theology in the second half of the twentieth

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<sup>1</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, 22, quoted in *Veritatis splendor*, 2 (italics in original).

century to imitate the proportionalism and consequentialism of secular utilitarianism. Its proponents take this course, he notes, when they reject traditional natural law ethics and yet stay disconnected from any vision of scripture as having morally normative implications.

Chapter 1 of *Veritatis splendor* was John Paul II's proactive intervention into the sphere of moral theology. By taking the reader carefully through the dialogue between Jesus and the rich young man, *Veritatis splendor* makes the case for holding that there is an inseparable connection between the eternal life that the young man wants (Matthew 19:17) and obedience to God's commandments. Even though some of the commandments are stated in the form of negative precepts, they are all expressions of what is required by Jesus's commandment of love of neighbor, for they are intended to safeguard the good of the human person, the very image of God, by attending to various goods of human persons:

"You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness" are moral rules formulated in terms of prohibitions. These negative precepts express with particular force the ever urgent need to protect human life, the communion of persons in marriage, private property, truthfulness, and people's good name.<sup>1</sup>

As statements about the necessary conditions for love of neighbor, the commandments give insight about the proper orientation for human freedom. To make this point, John Paul II quotes a revelatory passage from Augustine's commentary on the Gospel of John:

"The beginning of freedom," Saint Augustine writes, "is to be free from crimes...such as murder, adultery, fornication, theft, fraud, sacrilege, and so forth. Once one is without these crimes (and every Christian should be without them), one begins to lift up one's head toward freedom. But this is only the beginning of freedom, not perfect freedom..."<sup>2</sup>

The theme of mature freedom is developed at greater length in chapter 2, but already in this opening gambit there is a foundation for considering many others topics, for instance, in the area of Catholic social teaching. John Paul II regularly stresses the point that the demands of charity presume that we have fulfilled the demands of justice, but the obligations of charity go so much further, as articulated in such later documents as John Paul II's *Centesimus annus* and Benedict XVI's *Deus caritas est*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Veritatis splendor*, 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Veritatis splendor*, 13, quoting *In Johannis Evangelium Tractatus* 41, 10.

After giving a comprehensive account of how any valid presentation of Catholic moral theology necessarily has to be grounded both in revelation and in sound reasoning, *Veritatis splendor* turns in its second chapter to the identification and analysis of various post-conciliar visions of morality that are inconsistent with “sound teaching” (2 Timothy 4:3). The common element in all four of the sections that comprise this chapter is the tendency to lessen or deny the dependence of freedom on truth. Citing a forceful statement by John Henry Cardinal Newman about the rights of conscience, this section of *Veritatis splendor* affirms “conscience has rights because it has duties.”<sup>1</sup>

For the present purpose of having an overview of *Veritatis splendor*, let me summarize the highly detailed synthesis of revelation and reason found in the second chapter in this way. In each of the four sections the document focuses on a key concept that can be understood rightly or wrongly – one might think of the distinction here on the model of good cholesterol and bad cholesterol. In the section on freedom and law (*Veritatis splendor*, 35–53), the crucial term is *autonomy*. In the treatment of conscience and truth (*Veritatis splendor*, 54–64), the term is *conscience*. The portion of the chapter dedicated to consideration of fundamental choice and specific kinds of behavior (*Veritatis splendor*, 65–70), it is the meaning assigned to *fundamental option* that is in question. Finally, the discussion of the moral act (*Veritatis splendor*, 71–83) distinguishes two senses of *teleology*.

It is impossible to imagine any anthropological text from the pen of John Paul II that does not develop a rich notion of human freedom, and *Veritatis splendor* is no exception. One of his recurrent themes in this area is the need to make a distinction in regard to what sort of things we may make decisions about and what we may not.

Using such scriptural passages as Genesis 2:16-17, Sirach 15:14, and Romans 2:15, John Paul II argues that revelation teaches that the power to decide what is good and what is evil does not belong to human beings but to God alone. It is this scriptural basis that grounds his careful philosophical distinction of the good cholesterol and the bad cholesterol senses of *autonomy*: autonomy as self-mastery in the sense of taking responsibility and autonomy as legislating moral principles for ourselves. The stages of human development increasingly require that individuals take responsibility for their free choices, but that proper sense of human autonomy is not to be confused with the mistaken notion that it belongs to human beings or social groups to legislate the principles of morality for themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> *Veritatis splendor*, 34, citing John Henry Cardinal Newman, *A Letter Addressed to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk: Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching* (London: Longman, Green and Company, 1881), 2:250.

Associated with this crucial distinction is John Paul II's argument that the natural moral law should be understood as morally obliging because it is rooted in the eternal law by which God providentially creates human beings with the power of free choice. This argument not only undercuts the notion that the natural moral law could ever be adequately understood in purely secular terms<sup>1</sup> but also defuses the notion that there is some intrinsic conflict between freedom and law, for the natural moral law (like the commandments that constitute divine law) exist precisely to protect the good of the human person by protecting the goods essential to human life.<sup>2</sup>

At the heart of the second section of this part of the encyclical is a distinction between the authentic sense of *conscience* and those conceptualizations that diverge from the Church's tradition and magisterium. Some notions of conscience tend to overstress human subjectivity and the need for personal judgment in moral matters. John Paul II clearly affirms that there is a need for individuals to make practical judgments and to take responsibility for all their choices, whether to act or not to act as well to act in this way or that. But the judgments that a person of good conscience makes are not decisions about what the norms of morality are but decisions about what we are going to do or not do in light of moral norms over which it is not our prerogative to decide. We do not decide upon fundamental moral principles; rather, we need to decide what we will or will not do. We do need to discover them (the commandments, the precepts of the natural moral law at various levels of specificity) and then discern their proper application to specific cases, so that we can make proper decisions about what actions to take.

As in the first section's distinction about the meanings of *autonomy*, this second section offers us, as it were, good cholesterol and bad cholesterol versions of *conscience*. The mistaken notion of the term takes following one's conscience to reside in consistency when applying one's chosen principles. What this notion misses is that consistency is not enough, as becomes evident when one considers the problems at issue in the crisis generated by the scandal addressed in Benedict's essay. An individual's consistency in applying the principles of hedonism, for instance, would provide no protection for the young and the innocent against a single-minded predator. Consistency in the applications of one's principles only makes sense only when the principles being applied promote real respect for the dignity of the person and the inviolability of innocence. In turn, the absolute nature of these principles requires that they be grounded in what God had revealed to us and in the way that God loves human beings made in his image.

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<sup>1</sup> *Veritatis splendor*, 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Veritatis splendor*, 35.

The third section of the second chapter puts its focus on diverse senses of the term *fundamental option* in moral theology. This notion can be praiseworthy when used to describe a person's motivation – for instance, when it is used to characterize those who have had conversions and now desire to make service of Christ and his Church the goal of all their choices and behavior. But the term is pernicious when moralists employ it in an attempt to say that there can be no such thing as mortal sin in any particular action of a person who has made a praiseworthy fundamental life-choice.<sup>1</sup> This latter sense of the term would mean that the moral coloration of a particular choice derives from the fundamental life choice that individuals make and denies that there can be particular choices that actually contradict what they want to make for life as a whole.

One can see this erroneous tendency in the reasoning of those who reject the notion that “good people” with “good intentions” could possibly be thought to commit a mortal sin when they resign themselves to habitual acts of masturbation or when they decide that they have good reason for using contraception within their marriages. While these examples are specially pertinent for the discussion of the sexual revolution, the scope of this term should not be restricted to the sexual sphere in which it apparently originated. It could just as easily be used to condone rationalizations about choices to lie for some good purpose or to ignore legitimate statutory laws that would make performing one's business transactions for a charitable purpose excessively costly.

At the heart of the error that *Veritatis splendor* here is pointing out is the change that revisionist moral theologians were promoting in the effort to understand the relation between persons and their acts. According to the proponents of the notion of fundamental option in moral theology, the key to moral analysis is the overall decision that an individual freely makes, such that particular acts that flow from this option would constitute only partial attempts to give it expression and should not be subject to moral evaluation.

But, as John Paul II points, out, “there is no doubt that Christian moral teaching, even in its Biblical roots, acknowledges the specific importance of a fundamental choice which qualifies the moral life and engages freedom on a radical level before God.”<sup>2</sup> By our fundamental choices individuals can give their lives direction and, with the help of God, process toward God. But, *Veritatis splendor* reminds us, “this capacity is actually exercised in the particular choices of specific actions.”<sup>3</sup>

The proper moral analysis of human acts cannot be done only from consideration of a person's life-intention or fundamental option. In addition to

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<sup>1</sup> *Veritatis splendor*, 69.

<sup>2</sup> *Veritatis splendor*, 66.

<sup>3</sup> *Veritatis splendor*, 67.

considering the specific intention in regard to a particular choice (what has traditionally been called the *finis operantis*) there is also need to consider the nature of the action (the *finis operis*) and the circumstances, including the consequences. In this crucial section of the encyclical one finds a superb treatment of the notion that certain types of action are intrinsically evil and never allow for any legitimate exception. Just as we find in §1755 and §1766 of the *Catechism*, the encyclical makes this point with great clarity: “Once the moral species of an action prohibited by a universal rule is concretely recognized, the only morally good act is that of obeying the moral law and of refraining from the action which it forbids.”<sup>1</sup> In the sort of case that is at the heart of the crisis described in Benedict’s essay, acts such as homosexual intercourse or sexual conduct with an infant or child are always and everywhere wrong, and one may never claim that they are morally legitimated because done by “good people” or by individuals with a fundamental option for Christ.

The final section of chapter 2, entitled “The Moral Act,” turns our attention to the error in the reasoning of those moral theologians who privilege the calculation of consequences for their moral assessments, to the exclusion of consideration of the nature of the actions under assessment. Here the crucial term is *teleology*, for there is a world of difference between the good cholesterol sort of teleology that consists in a genuine attentiveness to the end-directedness of an action of some type or to the end intrinsic to human nature and the bad cholesterol sort of teleology involved in the exclusive attentiveness to consequences (actual or likely), as if this consideration were the only one relevant to the moral evaluation of an action.

*Veritatis splendor* takes note of the good cholesterol sense of teleology by observing: “The moral life has an essential ‘teleological’ character, since it consists in the deliberate ordering of human acts to God, the supreme good and ultimate end (*telos*) of man.”<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the reasoning provided in support of this position is both philosophical and scriptural. Pope John Paul II here calls once again upon his earlier detailed analysis of the conversation between Jesus and the rich young man as well as upon important texts from St Paul, such as Paul’s insistence that it is not licit to do evil that come may come of it (Romans 3:8).

The philosophical portions of this section expose the inadequate understanding of the object of moral action that are present in the theological versions of utilitarianism that go under the title of consequentialism or

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<sup>1</sup> *Veritatis splendor*, 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Veritatis splendor*, 73.



proportionalism.<sup>1</sup> Consequentialism claims to draw the criteria of the rightness of a particular way of acting entirely from a calculation of the foreseeable consequences flowing from a given choice. Proportionalism weighs the various values and goods that an individual is seeking and focuses on the proportion between the desirable and undesirable effects of that choice, in an effort to select the “greater good” or “lesser evil.”

As the final section of the second chapter of *Veritatis splendor* explains, the Church sees the need to take account of the likely consequence of a specific action, but never to the exclusion of a consideration of the nature of an action of that type and never to the exclusion of the intentions of the agent. It is precisely because of the need to take consequences into consideration that theologians have provided extensive account of the principle of double effect. One must take consequences into account, but one should do so only after one has established that the action under consideration is not an intrinsic evil and after one has established that one never desires anything evil as an end or as a means.

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In providing us with a library of scholarly works on our faith, John Paul II and Benedict XVI have done the Church an inestimable service. We pray for the grace of the Holy Spirit upon all involved. For our own part, we can be grateful to have works long and short that will reward the time we spend studying them.

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<sup>1</sup> *Veritatis splendor*, 75.



# Reading the Letters of Saint Paul

*Joseph W. Koterski, S.J.\**

**A**MONG THE MANY FRUITFUL WAYS of understanding the writings of St. Paul is to focus on the connection that he makes again and again between some important facet of the mystery of Christ and the ways in which Christians ought to live.

The mystery of Christ is so rich that no one image or model can exhaust the subject. Perhaps it is for this very reason that St. Paul chose to emphasize different aspects of Christ in each of his writings. The letter to the Romans, for instance, shows Christ as creating the New Covenant by his blood. He then elucidates the way in which Christians are to live out this Covenant. In many ways this letter evokes the stories of the creation of the Old Covenant in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy and the way in which his Chosen People were to live out the Covenant by keeping the Commandments.

The letter to the Philippians, to take just one other example, shows us Christ pouring himself out for our salvation and taking on the form of a slave by assuming our human nature rather than clinging to his own proper and exalted status as the Son of God. It then lays out an ethics and a spirituality of humility. To illustrate this recurrent theme, let us consider four letters from the Pauline corpus.

## 1. Ephesians

In the letter to the Ephesians the central image is that of Christ as the head of his body the Church (1:15–2:24). By his headship, he gives unity to the Church for the sake of directing its mission to the whole world (3:1–4:24). Flowing directly from the fact that we are to be members of his one body the Church there are various implications for our lives and conduct (4:25–6:20).

This letter originates from the time of Paul's captivity in Rome. He repeatedly mentions his imprisonment (3:1, 4:1, 6:20), in a jail not far from St. Paul Outside the Walls. On a recent visit there I saw the small cell where he was held and not far away the place where they cut off his head. One could easily understand how Paul might have felt cut off from the body of the Church at this

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time. But, quite the contrary, he explains from the start of the letter that he feels himself part of the ecclesial body throughout the world by reason of the universal headship of the Lord Jesus: “And [God the Father] has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church that is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all” (1:22-23).

Precisely by grasping the Christological teaching at the core of Paul’s approach we can better understand the specific character of the spiritual and moral advice that he gives in the second half of each letter. These directives are not just Paul’s personal ideas and not merely the residue of his training as a Pharisee. Rather, they come directly from the particular aspect of the mystery of Christ that is emphasized in each letter. For this reason they are crucial for authentically living the Christian life and are truly normative for Church doctrine.

In the first two chapters of Ephesians we find this letter’s Christological theme. From before the foundation (the creation) of the world (1:4), God mercifully chose (2:4) to send his Son to redeem us (1:7) from our sins (2:1-10). His incredible generosity is especially manifest in that this redemption extends also to the Gentiles (2:11) and not only to Israel (2:12). The Son’s mission is to reconcile the whole world with God by incorporating both Jew and Gentile into one body (2:16), thereby making it possible for all of us, whatever our heritage, to be adopted (1:5) into the household of God (2:19) as the sisters and brothers of Jesus, the children of God by baptism.

The next chapter and a half (3:1–4:24) concerns the Church that is the body of Christ. These remarks are not only about the congregation in Ephesus but about the Church as a whole. In establishing the Church, Christ gave it a clear purpose: to make known something that had not been disclosed to earlier generations (3:5), namely, that God’s plan for salvation (3:9-10) includes not only his chosen people but all the nations. In Greek, this universality is stressed when we call the Church “Catholic” (*kat’holou*, literally “through the whole [world]”).

The first half of the fourth chapter stresses an important way in which Christians should reflect the unity that Christ gave the Church. The members of his body are “to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:1-3). There is, he tells us, one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all (4:4-6). In reciting this litany of unity, Paul is not merely voicing idealistic words of exhortation but making a direct application of the specific aspect of Christology that he used as the cornerstone of the letter.

Christ, the head of the body the Church, gives unity to the Church, and so the members of the Church like the members of the body need to do what the head directs. They should do so not out of servile fear but should be willing to “bear

with one another” according to “the grace given to each of us in the measure of Christ’s gift” (4:7).

Paul’s way of developing this idea unfolds through a review of the variety of the blessings that Christ bestows on the Church (4:11-17). Some are to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, and so on, but all are to contribute to “building up the body of Christ” in “a unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God” and reach maturity “according to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (4:12-13). The surrounding verses in this passage recount ways in which the growth that God intends could be stunted by childishness and by living no differently from Gentiles who have not been incorporated into the body of Christ. Those who still “live in the futility of their minds” (4:17) are darkened in their understanding and alienated from the life of God by reason of “the hardness of their hearts” (4:18).

In the final portion of the letter (4:25–6:24) Paul turns his attention to the daily conduct of Christians. Read out of context, this passage is sometimes misinterpreted as a benighted imposition of Paul’s personal opinions and consigned to the sphere of anachronistic advice that modern Christians may ignore. Read in context, the message here is challenging but crucial for authentic Christian living. In fact, Paul’s introduction to it has the spirited nature that it does precisely because he understands how challenging it will be to live as true Christians: “Put off your old nature that belonged to your former way of life..., be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (4:22-24).

The details are as bracing as they are illuminating. “Be angry,” he begins, “but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil” (4:26-27). Some cultures, admittedly, find any expression of anger as an embarrassment, but Paul understands even anger to have been one of God’s gifts. It is a bodily passion that gets us worked up about the wrong involved in something that appears unjust. God made us to have it, and yet not to be ruled by it. Paul’s clear instruction is to put even our anger under the direction of a mind that wants to reflect Christ in all things. By directing us to deal with our anger before sundown, Paul gives us eminently practical advice. There are to be no long-held grudges, or even the disproportionate resentments that come from giving the devil the chance to work on us overnight!

After giving similar instructions about such hard emotions as bitterness and wrath, Paul turns in his fifth chapter to the sphere of attraction, desire, love, and marriage. He warns us against any form of impurity, greed, drunkenness, and covetousness (5:3-20). His teachings on marriage, in particular, brings out the implications of Christology for morality that have been prominent throughout this epistle.

Husbands and wives are to be mutually submissive to one another, out of reverence for Christ (5:21). Wives are to obey their husbands as the Church is to be subject to Christ (5:22-24). Husbands are to love their wives and to be ready even to die for them, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her (5:25-27). It is hard to imagine a text in which Paul makes more clear the need for morality and spirituality to be rooted in the life of Christ and the Church. His additional comments about the way in which the New Adam sanctifies and purifies his bride by his sacrifice for her on the Cross evokes a memory of the way in which the Old Adam failed to do that for his bride and instead joined her in sin (Genesis 3:6-7).

The sixth chapter applies the root-image of Christ as the head of his body the Church to other domestic relations, those between parents and children as well as those between the heads of households and their servants. Christians are to think of themselves as “servants of Christ, doing the will of God from their hearts” and “knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive again from the Lord” (6:6-7). We are to trust not in our own strength but in the strength of Christ. Paul then develops this point by meditating on the image of putting on the very armor of God, in order to be able to withstand the wiles of the devil (6:11-20).

## 2. Philippians

In the Letter to the Philippians the theme is Christ’s humility and our need to imitate his humility. The letter begins in prayer for the Christians at Philippi, a city of Thrace (northeastern Greece) that Paul visited on his second missionary journey between 50 and 52 A.D. and then again between 53 and 58 A.D. After a greeting (1:1-2), Paul is effusive in his thanks for the way in which the Philippians have embraced the Gospel (1:3-5) and been generous in supporting him (4:14-18). Accordingly he prays that God, who began such good work among them, will bring it to completion in Christ (1:6) and supply their every need (4:19).

There is much that is quite personal in this letter. We read, for instance, of Paul’s Pharisee heritage (3:5), his yearning to visit the brethren at Philippi (1:8), and the success of his witness to Christ even among the praetorian guard during his imprisonment (1:12-14). We hear of his hope to send Timothy to them (2:19-24) and his plea that Eudoia and Synteché come to agreement with one another in the Lord (4:2).

The Christology found in this document (2:5-11) is unique among the various approaches to the mystery of Christ in the Pauline corpus. Often called a kenotic Christology (from the Greek word *kenosis*, “emptying”), the central idea here is that in the Incarnation the Eternal Word of God “emptied himself” by taking the form of a servant rather than clinging to the equality with God the Father that was his by right. This passage is in the form of a short hymn that Paul incorporates into

his Letter as something from the liturgy of the Church in ancient Philippi.

Before we turn to Paul's account of how Christians are to imitate Christ's humility, there is much theological significance that deserves careful comment. The scholarly terminology current nowadays would label the Christology operative here "a descending high Christology" because this Letter explicitly asserts that the one who takes on a human nature has equality with the Father (2:6) and that he descends to the level of human beings by taking our form and adopting the status of a servant (2:7). By contrast, scholars use the term "an ascending low Christology" to characterize those writings in which Jesus is taken to be given divine honors only after doing various deeds or in which the mystery of Christ's being is only gradually disclosed to be divine. There is nothing of the sort here, for this Letter formally recognizes his equality with the Father from its start and praises the generosity that is shown by taking on a full human nature and not clinging to what he has by virtue of his divine nature.

In this divine self-sacrifice he shows his complete obedience to the will of the Father, even to the point of a painful bodily death by crucifixion. On account of this perfect humility, the Father has exalted his human name ("Jesus") and joined to it the title of "Lord," that is, *Kyrios*, the word that throughout the Greek version of the Old Testament translates the special Hebrew term *Adonai* that reverent Jews always substitute for the sacred and unpronounceable name of God (YHWH). The hymn closes by acclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord. We have in this text the source for our Christian liturgical practice of bowing at the name Jesus (2:10). It is one of the premier textual sources for the proclamation of the divinity of Jesus in all Christian creeds (2:11).

From this emphasis on the humility of Christ Paul draws the implication that Christians are to imitate him by their own practice of humility. Because he took on the form of a servant, Paul and Timothy call themselves his servants (1:1). Fully aware that his imprisonment may lead to his death, Paul can assert: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (1:21). His prayer for the Philippians is that they may practice a similar humility: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the Gospel, and not be frightened in anything by your opponents" (1:27-28).

It would be understandable for a certain pride to creep in among those who successfully undertake difficult tasks, such as giving faithful witness to Christ in the face of persecution. Perhaps this explains the way in which the Christological hymn that is at the center of Paul's message in this Letter is introduced by a similar call for humility: "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own

interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this in mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God” (2: 3-5). It is Christ’s own humility that should set the pattern for the conduct of his followers.

For St. Paul, the sort of humility that is required is never mere sentimentality, and it is certainly not the cowardly lack of spirit that later anti-Christians like Nietzsche liked to ridicule when they denounced Christian meekness. Among the considerable range of practical applications that Paul envisions for Christian humility, he includes not only the need to avoid grumbling but also the need to prepare oneself for martyrdom: “Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain” (2: 14-16).

A final aspect of Paul’s insistence on the need to imitate the humility of Christ is his recognition that this imitation is a life-long process and not the work of a single day or a single deed. After admitting how much his conversion to Christ cost him (3:2-6), he resiliently insists that nothing that he once possessed and then lost can compare with what he has gained by knowing Christ (3:8).

Of special importance for us as we read this Letter and aim to make his practice our own is his sense that maturation in Christ needs to be our whole life’s work: “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.... Forgetting what lies behind and straining to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.... Brethren, join in imitating me and mark those who so walk as you have an example in us” (4:12-17).

### 3. Romans

The letter of St. Paul to the Romans uses the same basic structure found in his other letters. It features one important aspect of the mystery of Christ (chapters 5-11) and brings out its implications for Christian life, morality, and spirituality. In this case, the focus is on Christ as enacting the new and eternal covenant in his blood. The early parts of Romans (chapters 1-4) show our desperate need for Christ while the final portions (chapter 12-16) set forth the implications of this covenant for faith, conduct, and prayer.

There is no more basic theological idea in the pages of scripture than the covenant. Even when we speak of the bible as consisting of the Old Testament and the New Testament, we are using this central notion, for the term “testament” is one that derives from the Latin term *testamentum* as a translation of the Greek word *syntheke* and the Hebrew word *berith*. In modern languages like English, the distinction between words “testament” (as in “last will and testament”) and



“covenant” (as a sacred compact) could conceal the unified idea suggested by the biblical terms.

The truth of the matter, however, comes clear when we realize that the reason why we use the phrase “New Testament” to designate the collection of the Gospels, Acts, the various Letters, and the book of Revelation is that they concern the new and eternal covenant made by Christ. Similarly, the reason for using the phrase “Old Testament” of the collection of the books that make up the Torah, the prophets, and the other writings such as the historical books, the psalms, and the sapiential books is that they concern the series of covenants that preceded the new and eternal covenant in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The better to appreciate the Christological emphasis of Romans, it may be helpful to call to mind briefly the series of covenants that God created. In the garden of Eden God made a covenant with Adam and Eve that permitted them to eat the fruit of any of the trees in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16-17). When they yielded to Satan’s temptation by eating that fruit and thus claiming the divine prerogative of determining what is good and what is evil, they suffered the penalty for their disobedience by expulsion from the garden. The effects of their sin afflicted not only Adam and Eve but the entirety of the human race that descends from them, including the need for wearying labor and for pain in childbirth (Gen. 3:16-19).

After the flood, God not only arranges to repopulate the earth through the offspring of Noah but also creates a second covenant that softens the stipulations of the first. There remains the need for each person to face a moral reckoning with God, precisely because of God’s special love for human beings as made in his own image (Gen. 9:6). The rainbow that God designed to appear in the clouds will serve as a reminder of this new covenant, for God promised never again to destroy the world by flood (Gen. 9:8-17). Instead, he will rain upon the just and the unjust alike – a symbolic way of expressing that in his own time God will call both the good and the evil to account but that no longer will there always be an immediate punishment for wickedness as there was with Adam and Eve or with Cain when he murdered Abel. Jesus alludes to this change in the covenant within the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:45).

It is significant for our understanding of Romans to appreciate that these first two instances of the covenant concern the whole human race. God then undertakes a special relationship with his Chosen People in the covenant made with the childless Abram. God promises not only descendants as numerous as the stars in

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<sup>1</sup> See Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Many Religions – One Covenant: Israel, the Church, and the World*, translated by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999). German original: *Die Vielfalt der Religionen und der Eine Bund* (Hagen: Verlag Urfeld GmbH, 1998).

the sky but a special land in which to freely worship the Lord alone (Gen. 15:1-11). As a sign of this covenant God changes his name to Abraham (“father of the people”) and specifies the requirement of circumcision (Gen. 17:1-14). The remainder of the story of the patriarchs recounts the protection and the blessings that God brings on Abraham and his descendants until the moment when it is time to bring the Chosen People to the Promised Land (as foretold to Abraham in a dream at Gen. 15:12-16).

There is good reason to take the fourth covenant mentioned in the Old Testament, the one that God makes with Moses, as the paradigmatic case, if only for the extensive way in which it is recorded in Exodus and Deuteronomy. As we will see below, the very structure of the letter to the Romans reflects some of the structure of the Mosaic covenant.

As scholars have often noted,<sup>1</sup> the form that the bible uses to describe this covenant recapitulates the standard structure found in suzerainty treaties between a lord and his vassals in the ancient Near East: an identification of the parties to the treaty, a recitation of the history of the relationship between these parties, a formal statement of the stipulations that will govern the relationship, the benefits that will come from observance of the treaty, the consequences that will follow from its violation, and the oaths sworn before some higher authority.

In both Exodus (20:1-17) and Deuteronomy (5:1-21) the basic pattern typical of such suzerainty treaties is used for recording the enactment of the Mosaic covenant, except for the final part. There is, after all, no higher authority than God before whom the Lord could possibly swear. What we do find are clear statements about the parties (the Lord and Israel), a rehearsal of their relationship (with an emphasis on the deliverance from servitude in Egypt), the stipulations (the ten commandments), the benefits (the blessings that will follow to the thousandth generation for those who keep the commandments), and the consequences (the burdens that will afflict the children of those who sin).

The third of the covenants made with Israel and the fifth of those mentioned in the Old Testament is the one made with David (2 Sam. 7:1-17). It comes when God had already acceded to the plea of his people to have Saul for their king and when Saul’s successor, David, could finally rest from his enemies. In response to David’s plan to build a temple to house the ark of God, the Lord revealed a message for David through the prophet Nathan that his successor (Solomon) would build the temple but that he would secure the kingdom by forever ensuring that a descendant of David would reign upon the throne (for example, Ps 18:2).

Just as sinfulness broke the original covenant and led to God’s gracious

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Richard J. Clifford, S.J., *Deuteronomy, with an Excursus on Covenant and Law* (Wilmington DE: Michael Glazier, 1982).

enactment of a covenant with Noah, so too persistent sinfulness brought about the consequences for violation of the covenants that God had made with Abraham, Moses, and David. After the division of the monarchy into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, many of the kings proved sinful and rebellious against the Lord. The Assyrian invasion in 721 B.C. ended the royal line in Israel and the Babylonian captivity that began in 587/586 B.C. brought its end for Judah.

The Lord, however, remained faithful to what his covenants. In accord with the promises of a new covenant that he issued with Isaiah (for example, 54:10) and Jeremiah (31: 31-34), God sent his Eternal Son to become incarnate of the Virgin Mary: Jesus Christ. The genealogies of Matthew (1:1-17) and Luke (3:23-38) make a point of showing the place of David in the ancestors of Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus. Anointed the Messiah, Jesus does the royal deed of dying for the redemption of his people and of all humanity, and thus enacts the promise associated with the throne of David, a promise that had long been thought to have been forgotten when the line of kings was broken at the time of the Babylonian captivity.<sup>1</sup> It is with a prominent reference to David that St. Paul's letter to the Romans begins (1:3).

After a salutation to the Christians of Rome (1:1-7) and a prayer of thanksgiving for their faith (1:8-15), St. Paul devotes four chapters to the power of God to take up the desperate situation of humanity in general and of Israel in particular and to bring about salvation through the new covenant initiated by the sacrifice of Christ. This section of the text plays a role comparable to the first two sections of the Deuteronomic covenant: the identification of the parties and the history of their relationship.

St. Paul's argument in these chapters serves to prepare for his assertion of the necessity for faith in Christ. In his view, divine judgment would be righteous in condemning both Jews and Greeks for their failures to live in accord with what God has given them to know about his will. The Jews have special access to the will of God through the special covenants he made with Abraham, Moses, and David. The "Greeks" to whom St. Paul refers in this letter are not presumably not just those people who live in Greece or who speak in the Greek tongue but all of humanity insofar as it still lives under the covenants made with Adam and Noah.

St. Paul's reason for holding even those who have not enjoyed the benefit of revelation liable to divine judgment is his conviction that what can be known about the true God is evident from his creation. In phrases that resemble chapter thirteen of the Wisdom of Solomon, St. Paul takes those who worship nature or

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<sup>1</sup> See my "Carpaccio's Mysterious Painting," *Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly* 38 no.3-4 (Fall/Winter 2015): 5-10.

idols to task for the senseless nature of their worship and for embracing degenerate forms of morality (1:18-32).

In the course of inveighing against any form of hypocrisy, he interestingly grants that God will give a just reward to those who succeed in acting according to the lights they have been given: “[God] will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life” (2:6-7).

Those who have received the benefit of divine revelation of the Law and yet who have sinned will be judged by the Law. One cannot expect to be saved merely by having an expertise in the Law that makes one capable of teaching it to others (2:21) or by one’s membership in the Chosen People through circumcision (2:25). For St. Paul, the advantages of having divine revelation are considerable, especially through the witness that the scriptures give to Christ even before his coming (3:21), but insofar as one sins, there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. What is needed is faith in Christ Jesus who made the new and eternal covenant by his blood (3:25).

For St. Paul, Abraham’s faith illustrates this point (4:1-25). It was not any of his deeds that made him righteous, nor his circumcision, for his actions only followed his profession of faith. The letter stresses that all the covenant-promises Abraham received depended on the faith that he placed in God, and that God made someone as good as dead by his age and childlessness alive again and the father of countless descendants. Like the way that St. John the Baptist challenged the Pharisees who came out to the desert (Mt 3:8-9), St. Paul challenges his reader not to rest content with being descendants of Abraham but to follow his example by making the act of faith themselves and by producing fruits worthy of repentance.

At the conclusion of the chapter St. Paul points us to the act in which we must put faith in order to become participants in the Christian covenant: “That is why his faith was reckoned to him as righteousness. But the words ‘it was reckoned to him’ were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who was raised from the dead, Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (4:23-25).

The middle section of this letter (chapters 5-11) provides a detailed account of Jesus Christ as the one who enacts the new and eternal covenant. Beyond the promissory character of previous covenants this covenant brings about the justification of believers, for the death of Jesus in time (“at the right time Christ died for the ungodly,” 5:6) is the redemption of believers of all times. What is required of us is faith in him, and this faith is what justifies us – that is, it restores right relationship to God after the damage done by sin. “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:1) because while we were still God’s enemies “we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (5:10).

The inexhaustible richness of the mystery of Christ enables Paul to explore different facets in each of his letters. Where Ephesians stresses the headship of Christ over all creation and where Philippians concentrates on the way he pours himself out in complete humility for our sakes, Romans again and again stresses the Christ as making a definitive covenant that sets aright the relationship of humanity to God and permits each individual to be justified by placing faith in Him. From the obedience of such faith will come the works of charity that are the new commandments of this new covenant (chapters 12-16).

St. Paul's vision of Christ as completing what was incomplete and sanctifying what was sinful about life under the initial covenants involves showing Christ as the new Adam (5:12–6:23). In this section the central notion is the punishment (death) incurred by the first Adam's transgression of the original covenant. This penalty entered through the sin of one man and spread to all his descendants. By baptism into the new covenant we receive a share in his death by going beneath the waters, and then a sacramental share in his resurrection when we rise up from them. This happens not by any merit of their own but as his free gift. If we retain the gift of divine life by living (6:12-14) in accord with the baptism that begins our restoration to friendship with God and our gradual sanctification (6:19), we will be given an abiding share in Christ's life forever by a resurrection like his (6:5, 6:23).

The new and eternal covenant in Christ is at once something that perfects and sanctifies the older covenants and something that is truly new and eternal. St. Paul shows this in detail by his analogy with re-marriage after the death of a spouse and by his treatment of our life in the Spirit (chapters 7-8). So long as both husband and wife are alive, the law demands their fidelity and forbids union with anyone else as adultery, but after the death of one's spouse one is free to marry someone else. The words by which he draws out the point of the analogy are striking: "Likewise, my brethren, you have died to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God" (7:4). To say this is to show the regard of the new and eternal covenant for the previous covenants, as when he writes: "So, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good" (7:12). But our entrance into the new covenant us to the new life of the Spirit (7:6).

This new life in the Spirit does not mean that the commandments of the Law do not apply. Rather it is a life marked by the sort of freedom that can come from practicing a willing obedience in faith to all that the commandments require and in addition being deeply alert to the stirrings and promptings of the Holy Spirit (8:1-17). It is the cultivation of this obedience of faith that Paul takes to be central to his own apostleship (1:5). The effects of the sanctification process upon us that participation in this covenant are numerous, including the help of the Spirit in our

weakness so that the Spirit will guide us when we find ourselves not knowing how to pray as we ought to do (9:26) and that Christ will intercede for us from his seat at the right hand of the Father even when we are experiencing persecution or peril (9:34-35).

As a kind of coda for the entire section on the Christian covenant, the final segment (chapters 9-11) presents St. Paul's understanding of the identity of the true Israel. Mindful that it was Israel to whom the promises of the covenant were made, Paul argues that the true Israel is not the set of those who descended from ancient Israel in the flesh but the people who have received the fullness of what God long promised. What God promised was the gift of his Son as the Messiah and Redeemer, and so it is those who have come to believe in Christ (and thus including many Gentiles) who are the true Israel. St. Paul's heart aches for his brethren (9:1-5), but he insists that coming to have possession of what was promised is not a matter of justice or injustice but entirely a matter of the mercy and divine gift (9:6-18).

The implication of this insight about the true Israel is that salvation is open to everyone. What is required is the sort of life and love that follow from a confession that Jesus is Lord and belief that God raised him from the dead. A life in accord with this faith is possible for anyone: "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who fall upon him. For everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved" (10:12-13). Amid St. Paul's effort to explain that the salvation of the Gentiles has taken place in a way that resembles the grafting of wild olive shoots into the root of an olive tree (11:17), he also explains his hope that the branches native to that tree will someday be grafted back in (11:24). He puts this assertion explicitly in covenantal terms: "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob, and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins" (11:26-27).

Just as the Mosaic covenant includes a set of stipulations, so too the final chapters of the letter to the Romans (12:1-15:13) before attending to such epistolary matters as travel plans (15:22-33), personal greetings and instructions for the community (16:1-24), and a special blessing (16:25-27).

The content of the normative part of this letter is what we would expect from knowing the teachings of Christ recorded in the Gospels. Like the first tablet of the Old Law and the first commandment of the New, the doctrine here begins with an instruction on true worship. St. Paul urges us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, along with minds that resist conformity to this world and that are trained instead on doing the will of God (12:1-2). To accomplish this he urges the cultivation of a profound humility and a readiness to use the particular gifts that each of us have received for service in the one body

of Christ that is the Church (12:3-8).

Like the second tablet of the Old Law and the second commandment of the New, what follows spells out the injunction of Christ not only by quoting a number of the commandments (13:9-10) but also by providing number examples of how we are to love our neighbors as ourselves: “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good, love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor” (12:9-10). The list that follows is lengthy but practical: bless those who persecute you, repay no one evil for evil, live peaceably with everyone so far as it is possible, and leave vengeance to God. Presumably relying on the directives of Jesus about rendering to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s, St. Paul includes a section on the respect and obedience that Christians are to render to worldly authorities (13:1-7). Toward the end of the section there is a brief treatment about such disciplinary and ascetical matters as eating and fasting, couched within a directive not to pass judgment on one another in such questions (14:1-12) and a correlative directive to err on the side of charity by self-denial rather than ever to place an obstacle or stumbling-block in another’s way (14:13-23).

#### 4. First Corinthians

The length of the First Letter to the Corinthians (sixteen chapters) and the variety of topics that it covers make it desirable to know best how to approach it. Just as in Paul’s other letters, here too there is an emphasis on one specific aspect of the mystery of Christ – in this case, that he alone is the incarnate wisdom of God. Keeping this in mind will allow us to grasp what unifies the many and diverse admonitions that Paul is giving to the Corinthian church as well as to take his words to heart for ourselves.

This letter is thought to be among the earliest writings of the entire New Testament. It shows the Christians at Corinth suffering from dissension (for example, 1:10-17, 3:1-23, 6:1-11, 8:1-13, 11:17-23). It seems likely that the confusions and quarrels arose from not knowing whom to believe. Paul hints at this when he writes: “What I mean is that each one of you says ‘I belong to Paul’ or ‘I belong to Apollos’ or ‘I belong to Cephas’ or ‘I belong to Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1:12-13).

There were, to be sure, real differences of opinion about matters of discipline within the early Church that proved difficult to work out. For example, there was a profound disagreement between Peter and Paul over whether one first needed to be circumcised and thereby become a Jew in order to become a Christian (see Acts 15:1-29 as well as 1 Cor. 7:17-24). In this case, the Apollos whom Paul mentions was a native of Alexandria who is said to have taught many things about

Jesus quite accurately even though he knew only about the baptism of John until Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and explained more about the ways of God to him (Acts 18:24-28).

Perhaps the dissension that Paul is addressing in this letter arose from a lack of clarity about the message of Christ as a whole. It is not uncommon for individuals to latch on to one or another part of a story without knowing the whole, and even to get passionate about their own positions.

In this letter the particular aspect of the mystery of Christ that Paul has chosen to emphasize becomes all the more important: Christ crucified shows us the incarnate Wisdom of God. For Paul, it is essential for believers to find their unity in Christ. It is not that Paul wants unity at all costs, for instance, by means of some least common denominator that might generate a tolerant pluralism that would allow competing wisdoms to flourish. Rather, he is insistent on a difficult but crucial point, even if it seems foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling-block to the Jews: that Christ crucified shows forth the power of God and the wisdom of God. What human minds might see as folly or as weakness proves wiser than any human wisdom and stronger than any human strength (1:22-25).

Had Paul been addressing only Christians of Jewish heritage, he might well have focused on Jesus as the one who fulfills the prophets or the Law, but for a congregation of mixed ancestry in the city of Corinth, Paul selects a broader category – wisdom. This was a quality honored in the Jewish tradition, especially by the reverence given to sapiential books like Proverbs, Job, Qoheleth, Sirach, and the like, but also one well known to Greek culture through its array of philosophical movements.

Paul carefully explains the sort of wisdom that he has in mind: “When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words of wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that you faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (2:1-5).

Paul’s focus on Christ Jesus crucified is thus based on what has been handed down about the life of Jesus, not on the “wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age” (2:6). The reasoning here is not some sophisticated calculation of pleasure and pain in the fashion of hedonistic Epicureans, not the cultivation of a reserved indifference to being upset by anything outside one’s own control in the fashion of the Stoics. Rather, it involves trust in something that faith in God makes us able to see: “But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification” (2:7).

The wisdom that Paul mentions here is not secret in the sense that the gnostic



religions touted a knowledge with magical power that they kept hidden from everyone except the initiated. Instead, this wisdom was a secret that God kept hidden for long ages, until the right moment of human history came for its revelation, namely, that God the Father had sent his beloved Son in human form to suffer and die on behalf of wayward human beings. For Paul, the wisdom of God thus unfolds in a display of divine power. Through the suffering that the Son takes upon himself, divine charity will prevail. In this way God intends to reorder all the disorder of this world's loves.

With this Christological focus in mind, we can more easily see the significance of the various topics that Paul treats in the rest of this letter, including dissension within the community, confusion about what constituted sexual immorality, and disagreements about such disciplinary practices as head-covering and the permissibility of eating meat that had been offered to idols. He also uses this Christological focus to provide a deeper understanding of the Eucharist, of the diversity in gifts and charisms found within the Church, and of the singular importance of belief in the resurrection of Christ from the dead for Christian faith.

For Paul, the jealousy and strife that mars the community at Corinth comes from an immaturity in faith (chapter 3). Those who have not yet become spiritually mature still have to be fed on milk, for they are not yet ready for solid food (3:1-4). In time the nourishment of faith will make them grow strong (3:5-9). Paul then changes his imagery: whatever is to be built needs to have the solid foundation of faith in Christ crucified (3:10-11). Those in whom this faith lives will come to understand what it means personally to be God's temple and to have the Holy Spirit dwelling within (3:16-17). To live on any other basis would be to deceive oneself about what is wisdom and what is folly (3:18-13).

It is not for the Christians at Corinth (or anywhere else) to think themselves capable of judging which parts of the Gospel of Christ are acceptable, as if they had a superior wisdom of their own (4:1-5). Rather, it is their duty to conform their minds to Christ. To help them, those who preach the message of Christ must always be trustworthy servants of Christ and of his divine mystery. They must add nothing of their own and they must even be ready to appear fools for Christ's sake by preaching Christ crucified (4:6-8).

Much of what follows comes as Paul's fatherly correction to those who have become the adopted children of God by their baptism (4:14-16). He clearly feels the need to be stern in places (6:15-18), but even the hardest things that he needs to say come from his sense that those whom God has called to be his people need to become holy in his sight (1:2, 7:17-24). The balance of the letter contains three long sections on the implications of seeing the crucified Christ as the incarnate wisdom of God.

The long section on the nature of Christian marriage and the proper

understanding of sexual immorality (chapters 5-7) has this aspect of the mystery of Christ as its center. Each believer is a member of the body of Christ, and so the conduct of each believer needs to reflect that status (7:15). In passing, Paul also shows the application of this doctrine to greed, drunkenness, and theft (5:11), but his main concern is with those whom lust has so blinded (5:1-5, 6:9) as to make them forgetful of the baptism with which they were washed and sanctified (6:11).

As a remedy for such bodily misconduct, Paul gives a firm and insistent fatherly reminder: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own. You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (6:19-20). And as a reply to questions that the Corinthians had posed to him (7:1) Paul articulates in a fatherly way some of fundamental aspects of the Christian understanding of marriage (7:2-16, 7:25-39), with considerable detail and a sensitivity to the practical problems that people face in trying to live out the demands of Christian marriage.

Similarly, in the next long section (chapters 8-11) Paul employs the same aspect of the mystery of Christ as before – the mystery of Christ crucified as the incarnate wisdom of God – to resolve a practical problem that bothered the Corinthian community (whether it was licit to eat food that had been sacrificed to idols) and to offer a profound theology of the Eucharist. On the point under dispute, Paul finds that there is no problem with consuming these meats, for the uniqueness of Christ as alone the incarnate wisdom of God means that what is portrayed by the idols has no existence and there is no God but one (8:4). Paul’s only caveat comes from the practical charity that needs to be exercised so as not to scandalize those of weak conscience (8:9; see also 10:27-30), a line that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* interestingly cites in parallel with the Golden Rule and with the prohibition on doing evil that good may come as instances of moral rulers that apply in every case (CCC §1789).

After handling the question about eating such goods, Paul then meditates at length on the implications of the theme of the crucified Christ as the incarnate image of God (chapter 9). This aspect of the mystery of Christ is, for him, the source of the duties of an Apostle to bear witness to Christ and to spread the Gospel (9:19-27) and of the rights that an Apostle must have in order to carry out those duties (9:1-18). Since the context of the Apostle’s missionary work could be among the Jews or among the Gentiles, these considerations about the apostolate lead Paul to a reflection on the lessons derivable from Israel’s history (chapter 10). The conclusion that he draws gives witness to the urgency of bearing witness to the crucified Christ: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God. Give no offense to Jew or to Greeks or to the Church of God. Just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of the many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I

am of Christ” (10:31–11:1).

Yet, while the believer is free to consume or not consume (10:14) what was offered to idols, for there are no such gods and thus these are empty words (10:19), Paul sees the need for the greatest reverence at the Eucharist: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (10:15-16). Paul’s further development of this point not only repeats his earlier warnings about dissension (11:18) but provides us with the words the Lord used in instituting the Eucharist (11:23-26) and warns against the sacrilege of receiving the Eucharist unworthily (11:27-32) as what we need to fear (not the consumption of foods offered to nonexistent idols).

Before turning to certain practical matters at the letter’s end (chapter 16), there is one last lengthy section. It deals with two related topics: the discernment of true spiritual gifts and of genuine prophecy (chapters 12-14), and the necessity of holding the resurrection of Christ as an ineradicable part of the Christian faith (chapter 15). Yet again we find the same aspect of the mystery of Christ operative here as before.

In Paul’s account of the variety of gifts that come from the Holy Spirit (12:1-11), he makes the test for the discernment of authenticity to be whether the spirit that comes to us is able to say that Jesus is Lord (12:3). Implicit here, presumably, is the preference of gnostic religion for arcane wisdom and its unwillingness to admit and reverence the incarnation and the crucifixion of the Lord. True religion, on the other hand, sees the pervasive implications of faith in the incarnate Lord, truly crucified and truly risen.

Presumably it is for this reason that Paul adds to his discussion of the variety of spiritual gifts a section on the variety of ministries. He explains them in the analogy to a single body with many members (12:12-26) and then draws the conclusion: “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (12:27) and lists various ministries that the Church has established (12:28-31).

Throughout this letter Paul has been again and again insistent on the connection between the incarnation and divine love. The crucified Christ as the incarnate wisdom of God took suffering for sin upon himself as the way in which divine charity – God’s love for the world – chose for reordering all the disorder of this world’s loves. In the next section (chapter 13) Paul takes up love as the greatest of the gifts of the Spirit and urges us earnestly to desire the spiritual gifts while having divine love as our aim (14:1). Without the re-ordering of our loves on this divine pattern, the gifts are useless (14:2-40).

Joined with his remarks on the discernment about true spiritual gifts and about genuine prophecy is a section on the resurrection of Christ as an ineradicable part of Christian doctrine. The truth of this point may seem so

obvious to believers that it does not need saying, and yet it has not always been quite that obvious. In fact, to judge from the reaction that Paul got from the Athenians after preaching on the Areopagus, this was precisely the sticking point. They found most of what Paul had said to be as enlightened as their own philosophizing, but the simple mention of the resurrection of the dead led to their polite dismissal of his claims: “We will hear you again about this” (Acts 17:32).

Realizing that the truth of all the rest of the faith depends in great measure on whether Jesus really did rise from the dead, as he prophesied that he would, Paul devotes chapter 15 not only to listing the witnesses (15:3-11) but to the construction of an argument for their credibility (15:12-19). Paul’s entry into apologetics at this point in the letter can guide our own efforts in this area. If those who claimed to have seen Christ resurrected from the death knew that they were not telling the truth, there should have been something that they could expect to gain by their lie. But men who do not receive any temporal gain (money, power, pleasure, or the like) and only suffering (imprisonment, shipwreck, suffering, death) have no good reason to lie when making claims about what they saw. For Paul, “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.... If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied” (15: 17-19).

What completes this chapter of the letter is a mystical account of the resurrected life that we can expect if we live according to the pattern set by the crucified Christ as the incarnate wisdom of God (15:35-58). Paul does not claim to know everything we would like to know on this subject, but he tells us in images what he does know. “What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain” (15:36-37). We do not know exactly what the resurrected body will be like, but we do know that what is sown is perishable, but that what is raised will be imperishable (15:42).

Further, we know that we will be yet more like Christ than we have ever been able to achieve before: “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall bear the image of the man of heaven” (15: 49). The incarnate wisdom of God points us to a great mystery: “We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet” (15:51-52). Perishable nature will put on the imperishable, and mortal nature will put on immortality. This, he tells us, comes from the power and the wisdom of God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (15:57).

## 5. Conclusion

By using these four examples, we can see an important pattern that can be a reliable guide when we turn to the reading of the Pauline corpus. Paul began to be

transformed by meeting Christ on the road. his long years of meditation upon Christ brought him to see how the mystery of Christ affects what we must believe and how we must live. The mystery of Christ cannot be captured in any one image, and so in each letter in the Pauline corpus we find one aspect given special treatment, and then we are shown its implications for Christian morality and spirituality.



# Notices

The year 2020 marks the centenary of the birth of Saint John Paul II (May 18, 1920 – April 2, 2005). To commemorate this anniversary, the FCSQ invites our readers to submit scholarly papers on his thought and legacy. Like his successor, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Pope John Paul II was the author of many books and articles as well as papal documents of various sorts. We intend to publish them throughout the anniversary year.

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## † In Memoriam †

### *Denis Meade, O.S.B. (1930-2019)*

Having received the sacraments, Fr. Denis (Thomas) Meade, OSB, died peacefully on June 18, 2019. Born in Des Moines, Iowa, on October 16, 1930, he entered the Novitiate at St. Benedict's Abbey (Atchison, KS) in 1949 and received the monastic name Denis, with St. Denis of Paris as his new patron saint. After professing first vows, Frater Denis completed his undergraduate work in history and was sent to Rome for seminary studies at Sant'Anselmo and later a degree in Canon Law from the Lateran University. He professed solemn vows at the Abbey of Montecassino on May 26, 1953 and was ordained to the priesthood at the Abbey of San Pietro in Assisi, Italy on June 28, 1955.

Fr. Denis began his service as a professor of theology at St. Benedict's College in 1961. For twelve years he was also novice master. For two years he interrupted his work at the College to serve on the marriage tribunal for the diocese of of Jataí in Goiás, Brazil. Later, from 2001 to 2005 he served again in Brazil, this time as novice master and formation director for St. Joseph Priory there. In recent years, Fr. Denis was working on an expanded edition of the 1957 publication *Kansas Monks: A History of St. Benedict's Abbey*; he was nearing completion of this work at the time of his death.

In recognition of his participation at early meetings of the Fellowship, Fr. Meade received the FCS Founders Award in 2018 during our conference in Atchison, Kansas. *Requiescat in pace.*

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## † Friends in the Fellowship †

Fr. James Schall, S.J., professor political science at Georgetown University and a frequent speaker at our conferences, passed away on April 17, 2009.

Msgr. Daniel S. Hamilton, a long-time Fellowship member and a great benefactor through the St. John Fisher Fund, died on Monday, February 18, 2019.

We plan to include memorial notices in our next issue. Please keep them in your prayers.



# Book Reviews

Matthew Levering. *Mary's Bodily Assumption*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015. 280 pp.

*Reviewed by Msgr. Charles M. Mangan, Diocese of Sioux Falls*

The dogma of the Assumption of the sinless, ever-virgin Mary, body and soul into Heaven, having been defined by Pope Venerable Pius XII in 1950, remains a subject of much interest, not only because it describes the destiny of the Mother of God but also because it says much about our own future.

*Mary's Bodily Assumption* by Matthew Levering presents the meaning of the Assumption and how it was discussed prior to and after its definition as well as what the author identifies as the “three scriptural pillars” (2) upon which faith in Mary's Assumption is based: the nature of typological exegesis, the Church's authority in interpreting divine revelation; and the fittingness of Our Lady's Assumption in the Lord's plan of salvation. Levering's stated task is to trace not the historical development of the belief but rather the underpinnings for that belief, with an emphasis on the Assumption vis-à-vis contemporary Christians, including non-Catholics.

In his introduction Levering asserts what is well known: while Catholics accept the dogma of the Assumption, the Orthodox do not because of their belief that “only those doctrines defined by the first seven ecumenical councils count as dogma” (3-4). The objections of Protestants to the Assumption have existed for five hundred years.

This volume is divided into two parts of three chapters each. Part 1 includes “Twentieth-Century Magisterial Teaching on Mary and Her Assumption,” “Early to Mid-Twentieth-Century Theologies of Mary's Assumption,” and “The *Nouvelle Théologie* and Mary's Assumption.” Part 2 offers “The Validity and Scope of Typological Exegesis,” “The Authority of the Church as Interpreter of Revelation,” and “The Fittingness of Mary's Assumption in God's Economy of Salvation.”

In *Munificentissimus Deus*, Pope Pius XII credited the dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception as having “stimulated reflection on Mary's Assumption” (17). Levering notes that this Apostolic Constitution is distinguished from later Church documents about Our Lady (he examines *Lumen Gentium* and *Redemptoris Mater*) as to how it used Sacred Scripture and its “frequent appeals to ecclesiastical authority” (21).

Three theologians of the period right before the dogmatic definition are cited: Joseph Duhr, S.J., Aloïs Janssens, C.I.C.M., and Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. Both Duhr and Janssens highlighted Our Lady as the New Eve. Duhr asked, “If Mary is united to Jesus in his Incarnation and Passion, how will she be

separated from Him in his Resurrection and victory?” (36). Janssens contended that “the portrait of Mary as mother of God and new Eve has rightly led the Church to make explicit the Assumption of Mary” (38). Garrigou-Lagrange, “the most eminent dogmatic theologian of the period” (33), averred “that because Mary shared more than anyone else in his victorious Cross – a victory that ‘included exemption from bodily corruption’ – so Mary also must have shared in his exemption from bodily corruption” (46).

Representatives of the New Theology are identified and their views concerning the Assumption noted: Karl Rahner, S.J. (though some do not consider him to be part of the *Nouvelle Théologie*), Hans Urs von Balthasar, Louis Bouyer, and Joseph Ratzinger. Levering’s short but perceptive summary of the thought of these four theologians deserves repeating:

Rahner’s assertion of resurrection-in-death as the key unlocking the doctrine of Mary’s Assumption leads to reflection on the Church’s traditional teaching about the intermediate state and the final judgment, and Balthasar’s emphasis on self-surrender (our ‘birth’ into heaven) relates Mary’s Assumption to Christ’s *kenosis*. Bouyer’s use of Genesis 2-4, Hosea 3, and Proverbs 8 connects a number of long-standing ways of thinking about Mary – the new Eve, the type of the bridal Church, the feminine figure of personified Wisdom – in a manner that illumines how Mary’s Assumption flows from her unique participation in the work of her Son. Ratzinger builds upon the Church’s long-standing veneration of Mary (see Lk 1) in his typological reasoning of Mary’s Assumption (79-80).

The author studies the approach to typological exegesis as exemplified by a trio of contemporary Protestant thinkers: Richard B. Hayes, Peter Enns, and Peter Leithart. Levering is convinced that while typological exegesis is beneficial, it is not enough: “It must be shown to attest to God’s saving power in Jesus Christ and must have its truth confirmed liturgically and theologically by the community of believers (the Church), guided by the Holy Spirit” (110).

Recognizing Jaroslav Pelikan’s unease with “the use of papal infallibility in defining Mary’s Assumption – a dogma that in his view lacks support from either Scripture or Tradition – as demonstrating the absurd position into which the modern Church has fallen” (128), our author responds with a spirited defense of the Paraclete’s action in guiding “the Church into all truth” (*ibid.*).

What is the relationship between Our Lady’s Assumption and the other truths of the Faith? Ushering the reader into the “analogy of faith,” Levering underscores the connection between the Assumption and: God’s Creation and the Fall; Israel’s Election; the Incarnation. He agrees with Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI that the “doctrinal fittingness” of this dogma (145) is observable by pondering the Word of God – that which he has revealed.

Levering declares in his conclusion: “Although the Church has continued to teach the doctrine catechetically and to celebrate it liturgically, Mary’s Assumption has not been a significant topic in Catholic theology for a number of decades” (148). Even though granting that the majority of Protestants do not accept this doctrine, and doing his part to engage Protestant concerns, the author insists that the Church would not be better off without this truth any “more than Christ on earth (or in heaven) would be better off without Mary” (151).

Matthew Levering, who is the James N. and Mary D. Perry, Jr. Chair of Theology at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois, provides a useful look at the dogma of the Assumption in this work, which has seventy pages of endnotes and thirty-five pages of bibliography. This reviewer recommends *Mary’s Bodily Assumption* as an important contribution to the continuing attempt of Christians to comprehend well Our Lady’s entrance body and soul into Paradise, an event that augers our own lasting face-to-face encounter with Our Lord.

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*The Memoirs of St. Peter: A New Translation of the Gospel according to Mark.* Translation and commentary by Michael Pakaluk. Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2019. 299 pp.

*Reviewed by John Gavin, S.J., College of the Holy Cross*

Do we need yet another translation of the Gospel of Mark? In the past year we have seen the publication of David B. Hart’s translation of the entire New Testament, while scholarly commentaries on the Gospel – generally accompanied by new translations – continue to appear. Furthermore, Michael Pakaluk, a renowned expert in ancient philosophy and business ethics, is not a card-carrying member of the professional school of exegetes. Why then do we need *The Memoirs of Peter: A New Translation of the Gospel according to Mark*?

In fact, this version of the Gospel, like any good translation, awakens the reader to new perspectives on the text – especially the reader who cannot understand the original Greek. Pakaluk’s fresh take on the work that he calls “the authoritative Gospel” provides a wonderful opportunity for both the faithful and the expert to rediscover the Good News. In addition, his commentary, devoid of the professional’s often tendentious forays into historical-critical analysis, offers striking insights that could come only from the philosophically trained mind of a Christian believer.

The overarching principle that shapes this translation is stated in the very title of the volume. The Gospel of Mark is the “authoritative Gospel” because it comes

from the memoirs of Peter as dictated to Mark. The long-standing attribution of this Gospel to the oral history of Peter has generally been rejected or questioned by modern biblical scholars. Yet, for Pakaluk, the intimate details of the Gospel, the prominence of Peter, and even the frenetic pace of the narrative point in this direction.

The Petrine basis of the Gospel, along with the style of Mark's Greek, leads Pakaluk to one of his most interesting decisions in the translation. The original Greek often switches tenses in the course of the narrative from past to historical present, while also making liberal use of the connective *kai*, most often translated as simply "and." Many modern translations smooth out the tenses and eliminate the occasional staccato rhythm of the narrative. Yet, Pakaluk argues that these features in fact reflect the rapid, almost breathless pace of an oral storyteller. As one reads the Gospel, one should picture an emotional Peter sharing powerful memories of Jesus with Mark, the dutiful amanuensis. Thus, Pakaluk maintains the tense changes, the terse sentence structures, and the rhythm of connectives – sometimes by translating the particle, sometimes by breaking up the sentence – in order to capture the excitement of the Gospel. Consider the following comparison:

He went away from there and came to his own country; and his disciples followed him. And on the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue; and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get all this?" . . . (RSV)

And he departed from there, and comes into his native country, and his disciples follow him. And when the Sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue; and many who heard were astonished, saying, "From where has this man received these things?" . . . (David Bentley Hart, *The New Testament*, 74)

He left that place. So he goes to his home town. His disciples follow him. When it was the Sabbath, he started to teach in the synagogue. The many people who heard him were thrown off guard and said, "Where did he get these things?" . . . (Pakaluk, 95)

While Hart, too maintains the tenses, Pakaluk's translation captures the clipped diction of the storyteller who rushes to share his tale. The result is an effective reintroduction to the wonder and emotional impact of "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

Any translation, of course, has idiosyncrasies that both delight and confound. I offer a sample of just some of his renderings that may inspire debate:

The first word in Mark's Gospel is *archē* "beginning" – the same word that appears in the first verse of the Greek translation of Genesis ("In the beginning...") and the Gospel of John ("In the beginning..."). Thus, many ancient and even

modern commentators understand both Mark and John to be echoing the creation story of Genesis. In Jesus there is a “recreation” of history and creation itself. The word “beginning” is maintained in most translations of Mark 1:1. For example, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son God” (RSV); “The beginning of the good tidings of Jesus the Anointed” (Hart, 1). Pakaluk acknowledges the Genesis echo, but elects to emphasize “the beginning” as the start of Jesus public life through a striking change in the verse: “This is how it began, the good news of Jesus, Anointed One of God, Son of God.” One may consider what has been lost and what has been gained by this translation.

He chooses to translate the Greek *parabolē* as “comparison” rather than in the traditional way as “parable.” For example, “He used to teach them many things in comparisons” (4:2). On the one hand, this translation helps the reader to better understand one aspect of the genre “parable” – the illumination of one set of circumstances through a comparison with another. Yet, on the other hand, it limits the full scope of the parable genre to one element and removes a word that, in fact, has acquired a significance even in common parlance.

He translates the Greek *staurosōn auton* as “Put him on a cross!”, thereby abandoning the most common rendering of “Crucify him!” For example, “To which Pilate said, ‘So then, what do you want me to do with the man you call the king of the Jews?’ They cried out another time, ‘Put him on a cross!’” (15:12-13). Those who have read and heard Mark’s passion narrative many times will be taken up short by this rendering. Is the multiplication of words for a well understood term (“crucify”) really necessary?

One example of Pakaluk’s engagement with the historical-critical apparatus appears in his translation of 1:40-41: “So a leper comes up to him, and, beseeching him and falling to his knees, he says to him, ‘If you so will, you can make me clean.’ Well, Jesus was *keenly affected*, and, reaching out his hand, touched him.” The words “keenly affected” are based on the decision to reject the Greek *splangnistheis* (“moved with pity,” “his guts were moved”) of the standard critical edition (Aland et al.) in favor of the not well-attested variant *orgistheis*. Pakaluk claims that the variant, from the Greek *orgē* (“temper, passion, anger”), was replaced by copyists because it implied a negative passion in Jesus. Yet, he selects the less attested Greek word in his own translation because it best reflects the ancient psychology in which an “anger” toward the disease itself comes from Jesus’ emotional center. Is he right to make this choice?

This brief selection of translations simply illustrates the benefit of engaging Pakaluk’s volume: whether his decisions delight or infuriate, they will regularly inspire reflection on the part of the reader.

I will conclude with a comment on the commentary. Pakaluk generally eschews an engagement with modern biblical scholars, relying primarily on the

florilegia of the *Catena Aurea*, the insights of saints and blessed (Newman, Escriva, and others), his deep knowledge of Greek and ancient thought, and, most of all, the fruit of his personal prayer. Thus, while scholars will most certainly benefit from his observations, it is the faithful who will grow the most from their reading of this work. I certainly often found myself pausing during my reading of the text in order to meditate on a new perspective. For example, his commentary notes the connection between Jesus' teachings on marriage in 10:1-12 and Jesus' welcoming of the children in 10:13-16. This connection indicates that "as marriage is an institution for founding a family through having children, the Lord's words 'do not stop the little children from coming to me' include the meaning that a married couple should be open to life and not stop up the sources of their fecundity" (175). A wonderful and timely insight that would escape many an exegete!

This new version of Mark's Gospel is a treasure. In a time of confusion and uncertainty, both Pakaluk's translation and commentary will bring readers back to the memoirs of "the Rock" and to a deep encounter with Christ.

Deacon James Keating. *Heart of the Diaconate: Communion with the Servant Mysteries of Christ*. New York: Paulist Press, 2015. 96 pp.

*Reviewed by Deacon Stephen F. Miletic, Franciscan University of Steubenville*

Fifty years ago the Church restored the permanent diaconate. Since then we have seen a constant increase in men entering the diaconate. Before turning our attention to a fine new book on the topic, we do well to consider the subject in general.

The 2017 worldwide count of permanent deacons stood at 45,609, with about 40 percent (18, 287) of these ministering in the United States. Over the past half century the educational level of applicants has risen significantly. A commonly held perception – and one that is quite correct – is that these men would "give the shirt off their backs, ready to help out, to serve as needed."

In the USA and elsewhere the threefold *munera* of the diaconate (liturgy, word, charity) has emphasized the ministry of charity. The widespread appreciation for deacons and for the diaconal ministry of charity, however, can hide a more serious challenge. The development and implementation of the document that restored the permanent diaconate has been varied. It has been well received in some quarters, not so much in others. It is not a question about the prescribed range of ministerial activities but about diaconal identity and

formation. We know from the document what a deacon may and may not do, but we need to consider what it means to be a “deacon.”

Current understandings of diaconal identity and functions are as varied as there are groups of people (lay, religious, clerics). It would not be an exaggeration to state that popular understandings of the diaconate are rooted almost exclusively within a sociological perspective. In other words, knowledge of their activities is the dominant way for understanding diaconal identity. Something essential and foundational, however, is lost in this perspective. Generally, efforts to answer the question “what/who is a deacon?” tend to result in the following statements:

The deacon is a type of “sacred social worker” who helps out with the marginalized and enables contact with available social services. He might even be trained for pastoral counseling or for providing links to social services both within and external to the Church.

The deacon is service oriented and thus like a member of the Knights of Columbus, and acts with special help from the Holy Spirit, given at ordination.

Some deacons are completely social service oriented. They help at soup kitchens, assist in ministry to survivors of trafficking, addiction, rehab support, and so on.

The deacon is a “lay cleric,” for deacons live a life consistent with that of laypeople. They typically have jobs outside the Church. Often they are married, have children, and do not receive payment for their services.

There is need to correct some of these perceptions. In fact, deacons are clerics. Some dioceses permit deacons to wear the clerical shirt when ministering, others restrict the shirt color to gray. In other places, however, they are not permitted to wear clerics at all, and this may be a sign of the identity crisis. In some dioceses or parishes, deacons are not allowed to exercise the ministry of the Word. To further exacerbate matters, the identity of the deacon (sociologically speaking) has come to be associated with discussion about gender equality. Discussion has focused on whether there is any historical precedent for “ordaining” female deaconesses.

How should the Church’s universal norms for the education and formation of deacons be particularized regionally across the globe? What is the foundational element that integrates the intellectual, pastoral, human, and spiritual elements of a deacon? Depending on who is implementing the formation program, any one of these four categories could be seen as foundational, but this ambiguity only exacerbates the problem of identity of the permanent deacon.

What does diaconal ordination mean for the deacon? As an ordained minister of the Catholic Church, a deacon has undergone an ontological change that bestows on him a sacred character by which he is reconfigured on the pattern of Christ the Servant. What is the sacramental character thus imparted? Does this have significance for the foundational identity of the deacon?

The thesis of Deacon Keating's book is this: the permanent diaconate will rise or fall to the degree that the applicants, aspirants, candidates, and ordained deacons are formed and enabled to enter and participate in the "servant identity of Christ" (1). Keating argues that by ordination a deacon receives a sacramental character that enables him to receive, experience, participate in the servant mysteries of Christ, and so be a minister in the Church. Such a thesis is simple and yet profound. Keating is clearly marching to a drumbeat quite different from what one finds in most formation programs and in popular understanding.

The introductory chapter of this book ("Ever New") argues for the necessity of a deeper interiority that must be developed in diaconal formation. This is an issue of identifying with God the Father through the Son by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The challenge is to determine which applicants are being drawn to deeper prayer and to deeper love of Scripture and the Church. Which of the applicants have the capacity to give themselves to their spouses in marriage, to their children, to others in need, and, to Christ in a foundational manner. This concern means that the renewal of the diaconate in all its various ministries will require men who seek God's help in ongoing conversion, have a manifest love of Christ, and can grow in theology and spirituality. Their spiritual journey should include recognizing their own pain, interior wounds leading their own graced participation in the sufferings and wounds of Christ. Ministry is most fertile when rooted in the passions of Christ, which are to flow through the deacon's own way of life.

Their marriages should be emotionally and spiritually mature such that their marriage vows are able to be drawn up into the diaconate without being obliterated by it. For Keating, the deacon's identity needs to be as a living icon of Christ the Servant rooted in a participation in Christ's servant mysteries.

Keating works out this thesis in chapters on "Calling," "Formation and Ordination," and "Ministry." The call to enter into ordained ministry requires two kinds of discernment. First, it is a call to become aware of what draws his interior life. This leads to a deeper way of praying – contemplative, silent, mystical. This could seem like a tall order, but in fact the call to contemplative prayer is commensurate with the universal call to holiness, both of which are foundational for anyone seeking to offer ministry in the Church. In addition, it is a good thing that formation programs are now four to six years in length. It takes time to develop interior awareness, prayer, and perception of the world. Within such time



frame, directors of formation should be able to identify some evidence of spiritual hunger assist the men undergoing formation.

Second, the call must be rooted in a sound human foundation. The candidate must be a sufficiently mature adult whose life can be measured against that of Christ as the standard (see Eph 4:11-15). There is need for a prayer life that goes beyond rote prayer. Such a prayer life needs to exhibit a hunger for Trinitarian love. Such love is the foundation for human, intellectual, and pastoral formation, since such a love sets one free for the heroic. Without this kind of love there is a risk that spirituality will devolve from personal encounter into an entirely private matter between the individual and his spiritual director. With a deeper Christic love a deacon will readily be able to share his faith with anyone, for he can be a bridge between Christ, to and from the Church, and, to the world. This spiritual element is the power that enables one to absorb grace, human skill development, and the many other requirements for ministry.

Keating's vision is a call for the diaconate to become an active sacramental witness in the Church. One sign of a positive vocational discernment is whether or not the prayer, spirituality, formation, and training increase the needed deeper sense of inner peace and contentment. Another important sign is whether the candidate's wife is also able to accompany her husband's spiritual and human development and whether or not she is able to release him for so much work outside of the family.

Diaconal identity takes place under the power of the Holy Spirit. Genuinely having a divine call shows that the individual is not only willing but capable of entering the suffering of Christ and so can be present to others in their suffering. Accompanying others on the journey means entering into their suffering and pain. The deacon's heart becomes, mysteriously, a way for Christ's own heart to be present.

Within such a context the deacon needs to face his own terrors, fears, disappointments, and inner wounds. The graces of his office are available in and through silent prayer, adoration, and ordination.

Readers of this book will find rich insights into Keating's treatment of the imagination and how it needs be transformed by grace, contact with Scripture, silent adoration, and the sacraments. The deacon's contact with Christ's servant mysteries will reorient his interiority, thinking, and imagination. The book is more than an exposition of the spiritual foundations for the renewal of the diaconate. A director of formation will find insights on how to develop the formation programs toward this foundational orientation. I highly recommend that every director of diaconal formation read this book carefully and share it liberally with his formation colleagues and those aspiring to the diaconate.

Deacon Keating is known as an agent of renewal for the Catholic priesthood through his work as Director of Theological Formation at the Institute for Priestly Formation (Creighton University, Omaha, NE). He has had extensive experience not only as a professor at a major seminary and as a spiritual director, but also as the director of the diaconal formation program for the Archdiocese of Omaha. His reputation as a leader and visionary for the renewal of the diaconate ranks as one of the very finest. He is the author of hundreds of articles and many books on the diaconate, and here he provides the Church with a deeply considered and central volume concerning the future of the diaconate. This book is a significant contribution to the renewal of the diaconate.

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Fiorella Nash. *The Abolition of Woman: How Radical Feminism Is Betraying Women*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2018. 234 pp.

*Reviewed by Thao Nguyen, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN.*

Fiorella Nash is a feminist writer and researcher for the London-based Society for the Protection of Unborn Children. Although titled *The Abolition of Woman*, Nash's book deals mostly with abortion and such related beginning-of-life issues as surrogacy, maternal health, and so on. She argues that contemporary feminism has betrayed women on these very issues because it has "allowed abortion to be used as a weapon against women, through state population-control programs, sex-selection abortion, and the denial of full information about abortion" (13).

In this volume Nash offers four sets of essays on prolife feminism. Chapters one and two address the patriarchy of the abortion industry. Chapter three through five deal with abuses of women's rights in developing countries and Western hypocrisy. Chapters six and seven deal with various issues of inequality. Chapters eight and nine tackle the "bodily integrity" argument.

The first essays focus on the ways in which the abortion industry has promoted wide-spread misconceptions of the truth about abortion. Nash refers to this industry as "the new patriarchy" (15). The coercion and cover-up constitute an offense against women, for they reinforce the stereotype of women as intellectually "shallow and childish" (19). In reply Nash urges the intellectual liberation of women by breaking from "indoctrinating propaganda" (26). These chapters are backed up by compelling studies and statistics.

Chapters three to five address the hypocrisy of Western feminism when it turns a blind eye to the abuse of women in many developing countries by the promotion of contraceptives and abortion. China's one-child policy, Nash shows, has amounted to a government-endorsed assault on women's reproductive rights.

Chapter four examines assisted reproductive technology and surrogacy as technologies that commodify the body of women. Here Nash uses the situation of women in India as her example. Chapter five considers the issue of gender-selective abortion in China. Nash comments that the practice exhibits a deeply ingrained misogynistic attitude.

Chapter six turns to the problem of maternal health. Of maternal deaths (estimated to number between 350,000 and 600,000 each year), 99% occur in developing countries. Nash offers two considerations here. First, the abortion industry has exaggerated the figures of life-saving abortive operations, at least in developed countries. Second, medical funding overwhelmingly goes toward providing abortions rather than improving maternal health care. Chapter seven covers such topics as rape, domestic violence and forced marriage, prostitution, human trafficking, and the portrayal of women in the media.

The final chapters address the “bodily integrity” argument used by the pro-choice side. There are two major forms of this argument: the “absolute sovereignty” version and the “fetus as parasite” version. Chapter nine (“Pregnancy: Problems, and Perspective”) sums up the findings of the previous chapters and concludes with Nash’s pro-life feminist declaration. She reviews the harsh reality of deficient maternal health care, abortion, and the distortion of public understanding as “evidence that a patriarchal society was failing women” (193). With regards to social justice in our today’s world, she argues that there is “no better movement to fight than a pro-life feminist movement” (198).

The great strength of Nash’s book is the thoroughness of her research. Nash is skilled in statistics, figures, media resources, and scientific studies and paint a vivid picture of reality. Her book will be valuable to proliferators searching for relevant news items, opinion sources, and statistics to support their stance. The book does have some shortcomings. It touches rather little on feminist philosophy, despite its title: *The Abolition of Woman: How Radical Feminism is Betraying Women*. By the term “radical feminism” she seems to refer to individual women and organizations rather than to feminist ideologies. When she does treat of ideologies, she shows that it is patriarchy rather than radical feminism that is failing women. The faults of radical feminism are touched upon most explicitly in chapters three to five, where we read about silence of Western feminism in regard to the ways that abortion and contraceptives have proven to be tools for the abuse of women.

In chapter eight Nash argues against the “bodily integrity” argument and goes into detail about the right to life, but she does not pick up on the way in which radical feminism’s appeal to the so-called body autonomy constitutes a betrayal of the motherly instinct. Nash mainly links the abolition of women to misogyny and patriarchy, and the causes of abortion to deception and external coercion.

These arguments are persuasive and valid on their own, but they are not about radical feminism as an ideology.

Today's feminism often sees "patriarchy" in the image of the traditional family with the father as the head. There is need for some distinctions in the way in which one uses the term "patriarchy" if one is going to provide an adequate distinction between radical feminism and genuine feminism. There can be no genuine feminism without understanding the complementarity of man and woman. When Nash asserts that the prolife battle "will be won by women with men standing should-to-shoulder with us, not presuming to lead us, not speaking on our behalf, but standing in solidarity with us" (197) there may be some risk of an overemphasis on autonomy and insufficient attention to the complementary nature of the sexes. Overall, however, I think this is an excellent prolife book.

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Peter Kreeft, *Symbol or Substance? A Dialogue on the Eucharist with C. S. Lewis, Billy Graham, and J.R.R. Tolkien*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2019. 232 pp.

*Reviewed by D. Q. McInerney, Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary*

Peter Kreeft has a way of writing books that puts on full and captivating display his deep and wide-ranging erudition and his fertile imagination. In his latest work *Symbol or Substance?* he gives us a fascinating account of an imagined meeting and intense exchange of views that takes place among three prominent Christian personages of the twentieth century, the British literary scholars and fictionists C. S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien and the American evangelist Billy Graham. They are not meeting to engage in anything like an organized debate. The setting is informal. They gather at the Tolkien's home in Oxford, and the spirited and stimulating conversation that ensues is reminiscent of the free-flowing dynamics of a Platonic dialogue. Lewis and Tolkien are long-time friends. While Graham is meeting both of them for the first time, the three men quickly fall into a mode of easy familiarity.

Kreeft tells us in his introduction that he felt he was more successful in capturing the personality and manner of speaking of Lewis than he was with either Tolkien or Graham. However that might be, the latter two come across quite convincingly, as engaging and articulate discussants, each with a personality uniquely his own. Kreeft is especially concerned to state the Protestant point of view in a fair and sympathetic manner. This he has done with marked success. Graham's presentation and defense of the Protestant position is clear, coherent, and forceful. The same can be said of the presentations by Lewis and Tolkien. Each participant speaks his mind freely, without equivocation, and in a manner

that is sensitive to the views of his interlocutors. The three are engaged in argument in the best sense of the term: no one is out to best anyone else, but all are commonly committed to the pursuit of truth.

The principal subject for discussion is the great divide within Christianity between Catholicism and Protestantism. Early in the dialogue Lewis makes a point of accentuating the positive by telling the others: “We can’t make our divisions primary or prior” (31). Later he suggests that “our agreements are much more important than our differences” (34). At the same time he insists that their differences cannot be ignored or papered over. He poignantly adds: “you can’t paper over an elephant” (ibid.). The dialogue that follows, however, shows that the nature of the divisions is such that they cannot be anything but primary and prior. In fact, they are more important than the agreements. The presence of the elephant is commanding.

A number of issues given special treatment over the course of the dialogue: the role of Sacred Scripture, the nature and role of faith, the relation between faith and works, the meaning and role of tradition. But the three conversants quickly agree that the single most divisive issue for Christians is the Eucharist, and therefore that must be the focus of their discussion.

The dialogue presents three distinct points of view on the subject of the Eucharist: the Catholic, the Anglo-Catholic, and the Evangelical Protestant. The critical question has to do with the Real Presence. Lewis and Tolkien are unambiguously on one side of the question, while Graham is clearly on the other. For Graham, the bread and wine in the Eucharist are to be taken only as symbols of Christ’s body and blood. His initial responses to the position taken by Lewis and Tolkien are rather sharp. He regards their literal reading of the words found in the Bible as being essentially materialistic, smacking of magic and even of idolatry. Their view of the sacraments is mechanistic, taking them as automatic dispensers of grace – “supernatural machines,” he calls them (109). The sum total of what Lewis and Tolkien have to say on behalf of the Real Presence is very impressive. They take pains to show that accepting the doctrine follows logically from a correct interpretation of Sacred Scripture. Lewis pointedly remarks that Graham’s stress on the spiritual, while paying insufficient attention to the material, suggests a leaning toward Gnosticism. Not surprisingly, Tolkien provides the most moving defense of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It is evident that, for him, what is under discussion is simply an existential fact.

Graham is adamant in his commitment to *sola fide* and *sola scriptura*. As for the first, his understanding of faith seems so much to emphasize its subjective aspect, the act of faith on the part of the believer, that its objective aspect -- what is to be believed -- tends to be blurred. As for *sola scriptura*, in more than one place Tolkien, for Graham’s benefit, calls attention to the irrefutable historical

fact that the Church, or tradition, precedes the Bible, for it was the Church that established the scriptural canon that all Protestants, rightly, now take as the revealed word of God. Graham does not deny this, but incongruously he maintains that Protestants accept no further authoritative declarations from the Chair of Peter: “We have no objections to the Church when she defines the Bible. We have objections to the Church when she defines new things, new dogmas” (181). The authority of the Church is to be recognized only selectively.

One of the amusing aspects of the dialogue is the fact that its three principal participants disclaim being theologians, and yet they do nothing from start to finish but talk theology, and pretty impressive theology at that. But does the dialogue in fact offer us three distinct Christian positions? It seems to me, based on the words of the participants themselves with each of them articulating the position that he represents, that the dialogue presents only two positions, the Catholic and the Protestant. I would place Lewis on the Protestant side of the big divide. He identifies himself as representing a middle way between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, but his own words make the stability of his stance problematic. He avows that he is of one mind with Tolkien in believing in the Real Presence, the key issue in the dialogue: “But the Real Presence, yes indeed with all my heart I do believe it, just as Tollers [Tolkien] does” (124). But just before that, he tells us that in his belief “I do not go as far as the Catholics go” (ibid.). His problem is with the formula of Transubstantiation “and the authority of the Church that supports it” (ibid.). He claims not to understand what the term means, and yet just a bit later (129) he gives a very reputable account of it, so it would seem he does understand what he is rejecting, precisely the Catholic position on the Real Presence. Lewis’s acceptance of tradition, as limited to the early Church Fathers, is consonant with what Protestantism would normally accept. He presumably would not want to be a spokesman for Anglicanism as a whole, for some of its adherents consider themselves to be Protestant. As a “high Anglican,” he belongs to a church whose identity is inseparable from the identity of a nation state, and was founded by a monarch who, by explicitly rejecting the authority of the pope thereby assumed the definitive Protestant stance. Given this state of affairs, the Church of England cannot seriously lay claim to being the universal church. This is precisely what John Henry Newman eventually came to realize, as he recounts in his *Loss and Gain: The Story of a Convert*.

In *Mere Christianity* Lewis presents an arresting summary of the rudiments of the Christian faith. Those who subscribe to them are like people in a hallway off of which are a number of doorways that lead into rooms representing specific Christian denominations. He cautions that one should not stay out in the hallway but must choose a specific room to enter, based on the conviction that the room chosen represents the truth. When, late in the dialogue, Tolkien admits that the

only way Christian unity will be realized is when Protestants “come home,” he is in effect telling Graham, and Lewis, that they are in the wrong room.

The situation in which the three men find themselves at dialogue’s end is disconcerting, for they are precisely where they were at the beginning. They are quite aware of this and call explicit attention to it. “But no one has changed his mind,” Lewis remarks, “no one convinced anyone else that his position was true, and we are still as far apart as we were at the beginning, aren’t we?” (230). Graham follows up on that note by adding: “the gap between us has become clearer and sharper and apparently greater” (*ibid.*). He tries to put the best face on the situation by proposing that at least two things have been gained by their meeting and discussion: they are now friends who are bound together by deep mutual respect, and they each have a better understanding of the positions of the others. But what is the practical upshot of that better understanding? If no minds have been changed, it would seem that it serves only to solidify each man in his own beliefs, and confirm his conviction that those of the others are erroneous. The big divide remains unaltered.





## Books Received

Jane F. Adolphe, Robert Fastiggi, and Michael A. Vacca, editors. *Equality and Non-Discrimination: Catholic Roots, Current Challenges*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019. 214 pp.

Brian Besong and Jonathan Fugua, eds. *Faith and Reason: Philosophers Explain Their Turn to Catholicism*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2019. 289 pp.

Perry J. Cahall. *The Mystery of Marriage: A Theology of the Body and the Sacrament*. Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2016. 490 pp.

Clemens Cavallin. *On the Edge of Infinity: A Biography of Michael D. O'Brien*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2017. 292 pp.

John J. Conley, S.J. *The Other Pascals: The Philosophy of Jacqueline Pascal, Gilbert Pascal Périer, and Marguerite Périer*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019. 263 pp.

Bill Donohue. *Common Sense Catholicism: How to Resolve Our Cultural Crisis*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2019. 291 pp.

Sam Guzman. *The Catholic Gentleman: Living Authentic Manhood Today*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2019. 177 pp.

Michael Pakaluk. *The Memoirs of St. Peter: A New Translation of the Gospel according to Mark*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 2019. 299 pp.

Patrick J. Ryan, S.J. *Amen: Jews, Christians, & Muslims Keep Faith with God*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018. 258 pp.



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