

The Flight of Metaphysics

Gerard V. Bradley

One of my old law professor once told his students that we'd be better off if we never saw two things actually being made: hot dogs, and law. Though there's still some truth to it, this chunk of wisdom has not aged well. Yes, it is hardly edifying to observe law being made, it is even cause for joy when the finished product is tolerably fit for the common good. But C-Span and the ubiquitous media have made it impossible to entirely avert our gaze. "News" these days is little more than politics and celebrity. And our politicians act like celebrities.

I've never seen a hot dog being manufactured. But I'll grant that, back when I was a law student, seeing it would have made me a vegetarian. Now we have turkey dogs and chicken dogs. On the horizon are soy dogs, salmon dogs, veggie dogs and various other good-for-you-hot-dog-like-substances. A glance at today's hot dog production line might well make us carnivores. Or at least hot dog lovers.

Law students expect sage advice from their professors. Passing on my professor's caution is out of the question. What do I tell my students? The most helpful thing I say to them is be alert to what's desperately *missing* from the law: metaphysics. Judges and lawyers are down on metaphysics these days. To them metaphysics is dreamy talk about fantastic stuff. Metaphysics is all faith-based statements about the farther reaches of reality — Pluto and beyond — if it is about anything real at all.

Well, one can run from metaphysics, but even Supreme Court Justices cannot hide from the deep structures of everyday reality — metaphysics. Here's one example of the law's flight from metaphysics. Our law has already given up on defining religion as a particular something or other, like knowledge of and relationship with a greater than human source of meaning and value. Any claim, proposition, or articulable feeling that one wishes to call one's "religion" *is* religion for purposes of constitutional analysis.

Another example of the law's retreat from metaphysics has more tragic consequences. The matter of who or what is a person with a right not to be killed is not in our law, transparent for the metaphysical truth of the matter. It is a question of legal fiction driven by the interests of dominant groups within society.

The truly critical *open* question in our law today is whether

O Timothee, depositum custodi, devitans profanas vocum novitates et oppositiones falsi nominis scientiae, quam quidam profitentes circa fidem aberraverunt. Gratia vobiscum. 1 ad Timotheum 6

Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Newsletter

VOLUME 19, NUMBER 3

SUMMER 1996

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL:

The Flight of Metaphysics 1

LETTER TO THE EDITOR 2

ARTICLES:

In Defense of Life 3

The *Apologia de Fuga* Revisited 4

Contemporary Interpretations of Christian Philosophy 11

Modernism and the "Tail of the Devil" ... 15

FROM THE FOUNDER:

Letter to a Bishop 23

DOCUMENTATION 24

REVIEW ARTICLE 41

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 45

BOOK REVIEWS 47

BOOKS RECEIVED 51

(continued on page 2)

ISSN 1084-3035

marriage is a real something with irreducible contours and features, or a trademark people might attach to whatever relationships they wish to call “marriage.” Former *New Republic* editor Andrew Sullivan put the latter view succinctly: “Marriage is a formal, public institution that only the government can grant; and yet it is also the most intimate and private of things, its meaning separate for each couple.”

“Couple” of what? If marriage’s meaning is so separate and private, why just a “couple?” Why not as many as there are willing participants? On this view, “marriage” would, like “religion” in our law, qualify for special treatment and have particular civil effects, but it would be whatever folks wanted it to be.

It is pretty well known that a Hawaii Supreme Court decision of May, 1993 promised to legalize homosexual marriage. (When that happens, the incredibly important question will be whether these “marriages” will have to be recognized in other states under the Full Faith and Credit Clause of *the* old Constitution. If so, Hawaii will be to gay marriage what Nevada used to be to divorce).

The Hawaii Attorney General defended heterosexual marriage by an appeal to the reality of it:

Marriage was a custom long before the state commenced to issue licenses for that purpose [M]arriage has always been considered as a union of a man and a woman....the relationship proposed by the appellants does not authorize the issuance of a marriage license because what they propose is not a marriage.

The Attorney General said effectively that the state does not deny homosexuals the opportunity to marry, as if “gay marriages” were possible but prohibited. (This is the way dissenters think of the Pope’s stand on women priests). “Gay marriage” is impossible; the state no more *denies* marriage to Jack and John than it denies them the opportunity to be girls, or to be Michael Jordan ... and Dennis Rodman.

The Hawaii Supreme Court’s response: the argument from the true nature of marriage is “circular and unpersuasive,” an “exercise in tortured and conclusory sophistry.”

Metaphysics, anyone? ✕

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

May 6, 1996

Dear Editor,

Msgr. Kelly, Charles Rice, K. D. Whitehead and others did a superb service for Catholic colleges and universities with their articles in the March 1996 issue. They put the finger on the solution: bishop by bishop will have to cultivate his own back yard.

But where in all heaven is FCS’s concern for seminaries? Are you giving up on them? Victims of the consequentialist brigands, most are half dead, half alive, like the wounded man lying prostrate on the road to Jericho.

I move that FCS be a Good Samaritan to seminar-

ies. Become an accreditation agency for them. Set up standards, do the inspection, publish results to bishops, parishes and seminaries.

FCS already has strong men in place on the faculties of many seminaries. They can help to set the standards, do the inspection beginning at home, pour oil and wine into wounds, and escort them to the hospital. Find a benefactor who will fund a special FCS Office for Accreditation of Catholic Seminaries. The Lord has provided FCS with talents. Don’t bury any of them! Oremus.

Fr. Anthony Zimmerman
Nagoya, Japan

In Defense of Life

John Haldane

*Department of Moral Philosophy
University of St. Andrew*

Moral philosophy begins with moral intuitions and then, by arguments, either confirms or refutes them. Until recently it was assumed that philosophers ought not, as philosophers, to concern themselves with actual moral problems, but should instead only analyze the language of ethics. Those bad days are gone, and a mark of their passing is the frequent involvement of philosophers in the public debate of social and moral issues.

One very widespread intuition is the sense that it is absolutely wrong to kill the innocent. Can this be given a rational foundation? Suppose we are interested in moral truth and are neither skeptics nor nihilists; then it is evident that the prohibition against murder will be part of any acceptable ethical system. A moral view that countenanced the taking of innocent life would be corrupt but would also be incoherent. What could it offer as a higher value to be aimed at in preference to respect for life? Possibly the achievement of one's well-being whatever the cost to others? Or perhaps the preservation of the species? But the former could only be self-defeating, since with each concerned to further his or her own good the stability necessary for individual well-being would never be realized. The ethics of species preservation suffers from a similar kind of incoherency. It is quite clear, especially in the modern world, that the only hope of saving mankind is by a policy built upon respect for individual human life.

The same point can be brought against those who would elevate a political idea — be it formed in terms of the *state*, the *nation* or a *class* — above the prohibition against murder. The belief that one may kill the innocent, for whatever reason, is morally repugnant, but is also self-defeating with respect to whatever other value is given priority. One who urges that it is acceptable to act in this way is unlikely to live to see the kind of society he wants; nor could such a society be expected to survive, since

from its very moment of conception it would be vulnerable to the activities of those, who like its architects, adhere to a doctrine of justified murder.

Ethical intuition and prudential reasonings are in agreement, then, in rejecting the view that it is sometimes permissible to commit wilful murder for the sake of some desired, even desirable end. This conclusion bears directly on a number of current issues concerning, for example, terrorist violence, the possible use of weapons of mass destruction, and the practice of abortion.

Consider the last of these. The argument against terminating life in the womb is an application of the principle mentioned above:

1. It is always wrong to take the life of an innocent human being.
2. A foetus in the womb is an innocent human being.
3. Therefore, it is always wrong to take the life of a foetus.

Since the reasoning is valid the conclusion can only be rejected by denying one or both of the premises. As regards (1) however, the cost of denying it is a lessening of respect for life, and thereby a weakening of the argument against terrorism and unjust wars. The case against chemical or nuclear warfare is not merely one of quantity, as if killing a thousand people was wrong but killing one or two was not. Even if it were, the staggering total of abortions rivals the 'Megadeath' figures calculated by military strategists.

The other more popular option for the defender of abortion is to deny (2). Typically it is claimed that human beings exhibit certain species characteristics: thought, deliberation and language use, and that since a foetus lacks such characteristics it cannot be classed as human. The central flaw in this reasoning is its equivocation on the meaning of "capability." *To be capable* may mean either: *currently* able to do a thing, or *potentially* able to do it, i.e. to be the sort of creature that can en-

It is quite clear, especially in the modern world, that the only hope of saving mankind is by a policy built upon respect for individual human life.

gage in the activity. While a foetus is (in the first sense) incapable of thought, it may yet belong to a species of thinking animals. Incapacity in its former meaning no more disqualifies it from being a human subject than does senility or imbecility remove an individual from the human race. A human is not as such a foetus, an infant, a young man or an old man. Rather these are proper stages

in the development of life. Thus there is no good reason to deny that a foetus is a human being that is not also a valid reason for denying that an infant or an adult is a human. To follow the abortion case in this direction leads easily to an apparent justification of infanticide and non-voluntary euthanasia.

As before, it would be well to anticipate and respond to objections. The first will come from those who argue anti-abortion legislation forces women to procure miscarriages by means which are likely to lead to more deaths, not fewer. This concern to eliminate the 'back street abortions' is virtuous, but it simply fails to touch the present issue. If, as I maintain, abortion is unjustified killing, then it is irrelevant in moral terms whether or not it is legal. It is also beside the point whether the context is that of a medically safe operation. Certainly unqualified termination's are dangerous and ought to be avoided for the sake of the mother, but all abortion is wrong and ought to be avoided for the sake of the innocent foetus. Let me add, however, that the adoption of this position obliges the defender of life to do what he or she can to enable women to bear unwanted pregnancies by removing stigmas attached to illegitimacy and handicaps, and by campaigning for proper assistance for those in need.

A different form of objection is that brought forward under the banner "A Woman's Right to

Choose." This contends that the question whether or not to have an abortion falls within a person's prerogative to decide how their body may be used. This is not the trivial claim that each person has the right to choose how to act. This, although true, is independent of issues of rightness or wrongness in behavior — for in this sense the person has the right to do wrong. Rather the claim is that an unwanted pregnancy is an infringement of a property right, and the woman's entitlement to determine the use of her body overrides the right of the foetus not to be killed.

This argument has several aspects but it will be sufficient to note two points. First suppose we allow the (contentious) claim that an unwanted pregnancy constitutes the violation of a property right. It is surely an error to believe that this proprietorial claim licenses the killing of an innocent human being. To suppose otherwise is to fall in with those challenged earlier who elevate some other feature above the right of life and who in consequence put at risk their preferred value. Secondly, and relatedly, property rights are conditional on the maintenance of life. Without full respect for the latter the former are reduced to a set of accidental facts of possession lacking any moral justification. In short, the fight of the innocent not to be killed is fundamental to any coherent conception of human rights and it is the basis for any further claims. ✕

The *Apologia de Fuga* Revisited

Refuting the Thesis of the Anthanasian Turn

by Robert F. Gorman

St. Athanasius of Alexandria has been remembered throughout the history of the Eastern and Western Churches as the great patron of orthodox belief. A stalwart defender of the Nicene Creed, he suffered banishment or exile from Alexandria five times for a total of about twenty years, about half of his episcopal career. But reputations often change as the times themselves change, and it should come as no surprise during our

age of radical skepticism, that a distinguished saint of orthodoxy should come under attack as a thug, a wishy-washy coward, or even more recently, a gangster.¹ The latter presentation has been made by Barnes in his recent biography of Constantine and Eusebius, but the attacks on Athanasius began with full force in the late 1800s, about the same time that German biblical scholars attempted with full relish to undermine the historicity of the scriptures, and he has been under attack ever since. Thus, although most scholars up to the end of the nineteenth century generally extolled Athanasius's personal virtue, a revisionist interpretation has largely held sway ever since, despite the fact that many of the earliest charges made against Athanasius, such as that he was a forger, are now almost completely discredited. Athanasius, fortunately, has had his defenders, among them Arnold who meticulously points out the flaws and refutes many of the arguments made by Athanasius's detractors.²

I became interested in Athanasius, while doing

research on the question of exile and banishment in the writings of the Church Fathers. His *Apologia de Fuga* was the most fully articulated writings on the subject in the entire corpus. As I did further secondary reading, however, it became clear, that a certain tendency existed in recent scholarship to undermine the credibility of the argument Athanasius made in that work. His principle argument concerning the legitimacy of flight as opposed to martyrdom is as follows.

. . . to all men generally, even to us, is this law given, to flee when persecuted, and to hide when sought after, and not rashly tempt the Lord, but wait . . . until the appointed time of death arrive, or the Judge determines something concerning them . . . ; that men should be ready, that, when the time calls, or when they are taken, they may contend for the truth even unto death. This rule the blessed Martyrs observed in their several persecutions. When persecuted they fled, while concealing themselves they shewed fortitude, and when discovered they submitted to martyrdom. (Athanasius, *Apologia de Fuga*)³

With these words, St. Athanasius, articulated a scripturally-based, Christian defense of flight in face of persecution. The common Christian heard in Athanasius's pronouncements a powerful voice offering an alternative to immediate martyrdom in the face of persecution — a voice of prudence and of Christian humanity. In his *Apologia de Fuga*, Athanasius quite properly placed the blame for flight on the persecutor not the persecuted. Persecution, he averred, was a work of the devil. According to Athanasius, the Christian was under no obligation to accept immediate martyrdom at the hands of persecutors. Rather, following the example of Jesus (as well as the teachings of Jesus, cf. Matthew 10:23), of the apostles, and of the patriarchs of the Old Testament, Christians may rightfully flee in the face of monstrous persecution. Flight was a trial and tribulation in some ways superior to unseasonable martyrdom. The Christian in flight must persevere, keep the faith, and serve as a sign of the iniquity of persecution. A rush to death is not necessary, a tempting of fate may even be rash, but when flight becomes impossible, the Christian bravely meets death at the persecutor's hand.

Athanasius's version of Christian comportment in

St. Athanasius, articulated a scripturally-based, Christian defense of flight in face of persecution

the face of persecution marked a departure from the previous tendency of the church to exalt martyrdom, there being little doubt that the early Church revered and honored the martyrs as paragons of Christian witness. But contrary to popular belief, the vast majority of Christians chose to flee persecution, avoid apprehension, or escape detection, rather than to embrace as martyrs an unseasonable death. Much evidence

attests to the fact that many early martyrs for a time were hidden from harm, as was Polycarp, or retired from the immediate jaws of persecution and death, as did Cyprian.⁴ As for the masses, even from the earliest days of the Church, escape from martyrdom through flight was widely practiced.⁵ Thus, the readiness of the martyrs to die for their faith, marked them for special adulation and praise, among so many others who avoided the opportunity to win this highest badge of Christian witness.

Concerning the theology of martyrdom among patristic figures, only Tertullian argued that flight was impermissible for the Christian, and even in his case this view represented a change of heart that most likely occurred after he embraced the Montanist heresy.⁶ The rest of the corpus of martyrology, although exalting martyrdom did not prohibit flight. Still, until Athanasius, there was no systematic effort to develop a theology justifying flight in the face of persecution, although at least one patristic figure, Cyprian, admitted the prudence of withdrawal “until the tyranny be overpassed.”⁷

Because of Athanasius's important role as an early advocate of flight as opposed to martyrdom in face of persecution, his own views on the subject have recently become the subject of some scrutiny. The position he staked out in the *Apologia de Fuga* was a clear and powerful one. But what of his earlier works? Might they betray other sentiments that cast doubt on the factors that motivated Athanasius's argument in the *Apologia de Fuga*? Were the views he expressed in that work motivated by a genuine and long-felt attitude toward persecution and flight? Or were they instead motivated by a tactical shift for political and apologetic reasons? Following this line of analysis, Alwyn Pettersen, has suggested that the *Apologia de Fuga* represented a significant shift in Athanasius's views on

whether or not flight was permissible in the face of martyrdom or persecutions.⁸ Pettersen cites several earlier Athanasian works to support the assertion that Athanasius — in an effort to dispel charges or cowardice — abruptly shifted from a pro-martyrdom/anti-flight position to a more pro-flight perspective. This claim by Pettersen that Athanasius performed an abrupt theological shift, I refer to as the thesis of the Athanasian turn. It will be argued here, that Pettersen's thesis of the Athanasian turn is based on both an incomplete analysis and a misapplication of Athanasius's earlier works in which the apologist seemed to extol the virtues of martyrdom to the exclusion of those of flight. In addition, the thesis ignores certain key works altogether, most particularly Athanasius's *Encyclical Letter* of 342 A.D. written during the occasion of his second exile. It will be argued, too, that the political character of Athanasius's position and his personality must be ignored to fully embrace the thesis that he performed a *volte face* on the issue of flight. In short, the politically charged nature of Athanasius's ministry from his earliest ascension to the episcopate, must be weighed in the balance with his theological, pastoral, and hagiographic writings in order to demonstrate with any confidence that he abruptly converted from a pro-martyrdom to a pro-flight theology. A close examination of the evidence suggests that the thesis of the Athanasian turn cannot be sustained, as will be demonstrated below.

II

Pettersen, often noting the limited ways in which his evidence can be employed to the task, argues that the earlier works of Athanasius, including his *De Incarnatione* (318 A.D.), *Festal Letter 13* (341 A.D.) and *De Vita Antoni* (356–57 A.D.) differ significantly from the *Apologia de Fuga* (357 A.D.) in their treatment of Christian comportment in the face of persecution and martyrdom.⁹ The latter, he suggests, is much more temporal rather than other-worldly in focus, and thus marks an abrupt departure from Athanasius's earlier works. In addition, Pettersen asserts that the early works “presuppose that one ought not to flee, whereas *De Fuga Sua* allows for flight in certain circumstances.”¹⁰

Pettersen also notes that there existed in Egypt by the mid-fourth century a growing Hellenistic, neo-

Platonic conception that preferred a long gradual process of self-development rather than immediate death as a means of effecting union with God.¹¹ In this general intellectual environment, many would have been receptive to Athanasius's “sudden” pro-flight argument. All that was needed, then, was a catalytic event — Athanasius's flight in 357 from Arian harassment — to goad him into changing his mind on this question. Add to this the fact that his flight was being ridiculed by the opposition as an act of base cowardice and weakness of Christian virtue, and one had all the motive one needed to effect such a dramatic *volte face*. This, coupled with the opportunity to carry it off, given the larger influence of Hellenistic theology with its emphasis on allegorical rather than literal scriptural interpretation, provided Athanasius a context in which to effect his turn. (It must be noted, however, that Athanasius was not a thorough-going proponent of Hellenistic theology).

Central, then, to Pettersen's argument is that Athanasius, as evidenced by his own writings, was an opponent of flight in face of martyrdom until 357, on the occasion of his third exile. A secondary argument is that his shift toward a pro-flight perspective occurred mainly as a result of his flight from the Arians in 357. If Athanasius held a view of flight as permissible before 357 A.D., or if he at least did not disallow flight, then the idea that he changed his mind is untenable. It may well be that his writing of the *Apologia de Fuga* was motivated at least in part by the political circumstances and reputational factors surrounding his flight from Arian persecution, but such an admission can be made even as one refutes the contention that Athanasius changed his mind abruptly regarding the permissibility of flight.

III

Pettersen's argument concerning the Athanasian turn can be refuted by 1) assessing the quality of evidence in the works cited in support of Athanasius's presumed anti-flight position; 2) consulting other earlier works that underscore and pre-date arguments Athanasius made in the *Apologia de Fuga*, and; 3) accounting for the political as well as the ecclesiastical nature of Athanasius's ministry.

Pettersen relies, as noted above, on three primary sources to develop the thesis that Athanasius opposed

flight until his third exile. The first of these sources, *De Incarnatione*, was written by Athanasius before he attained the age of twenty and a full decade before he assumed the bishopric of Alexandria. It is a theological treatise that only tangentially can be viewed as an apology for martyrdom. It is in no way a systematic treatment of either martyrdom or of flight, and even where the virtues of the martyr are extolled there is no positive prohibition of flight.¹² An exhortation on the wonderfulness of martyrdom is not an equivalent, in any case, to a condemnation of flight. One can admire the courage of the martyr without condemning the refugee. Indeed, one paragraph alone in *De Incarnatione* is devoted to the witness of martyrs to the victory of Christ over death, and it is the latter sense that gives purpose to a discussion of the martyrs in a work that is otherwise unconcerned with martyrs as such.

But Pettersen does not rely solely on *De Incarnatione* to build his thesis. Rather it is cited as an earlier view that finds later expression in Athanasius's *Festal Letter 13* of 341 A.D. and his *Vita Antoni* of 356–357 A.D. These later works, Pettersen contends, establish clearly Athanasius's "other-worldly view" concerning martyrdom in face of persecution. Indeed, the *Festal Letter 13*, written during Athanasius's second exile and first flight from Alexandria (note that Athanasius first was formally banished by Constantine's imperial decree and hence did not flee from Alexandria on that occasion, unlike his second exile which was precipitated by Arian harassment and persecution, not by imperial edict) exhibited a good deal of long-distance pastoral concern for the well-being of the Alexandrian flock. It was also an exhortation to observe Easter in the face of Arian harassment. It did, indeed, speak of the need to resist Arian decrees, to submit patiently to the trials and afflictions of persecution. But nowhere in this letter did Athanasius argue against flight as a matter of principle. It is at once a pastoral letter, a consolation, and a call to resistance. All it called for, as Pettersen admits, was for constancy in Christian faith.¹³ In short, one must *read into* the text of this letter the notion of a latent opposition to flight. One must rely on an argument from silence: namely, that Athanasius disapproved of flight

because he did not positively mention it as an option and because he only mentioned resistance to persecution, trials, and tribulations. That Athanasius may have viewed persecution as a trial or tribulation must be discounted if one is to pursue an argument from silence, even though in those works where Athanasius does argue for flight he characterized it *as* a trial and tribulation far greater than death itself.¹⁴ *Festal Letter 13* is, then, not a reliable source of Athanasius's views on the subject of flight in time of persecution. Indeed, it does not help us very much at all. However, written as it was by someone who *had* fled, its utility for proving that Athanasius supported martyrdom instead of flight is even further undermined.

The final source cited by Pettersen, *Vita Antoni*, is a bit more problematical, if only because Pettersen claims that it was written only months prior to Athanasius's third exile and to the subsequent writing of *Apologia de Fuga*, thus leaving the appearance at least of a very abrupt shift of opinion. It should be noted that some doubt exists as to the actual time at which *Vita Antoni* was written, and it is conceivable that the *Apologia de Fuga* may actually have predated it.¹⁵ In any case, that Athanasius in this work praised St. Antony's defiant challenge of the persecuting authorities is beyond doubt. That Athanasius held Antony up as a model for Christian emulation is also true. That the *Vita* is full of an admiration for the other-worldly serenity of Antony is also true. However, it is also true that this very first of all hagiographic works was foremost a biography. Athanasius might extol Antony's virtue and courage in the face of the Maximinian persecution without condemning others for taking a less

**Athanasius might extol
Antony's virtue and
courage in the face of
the Maximinian
persecution without
condemning others for
taking a less heroic and
defiant stance in pur-
suit of Christian virtue.**

heroic and defiant stance in pursuit of Christian virtue. As with the other two previously cited works, one must leap to a conclusion without hard evidence that Athanasius, by praising Antony's defiance in face of persecution, intends to indict those who would flee or shrink from open defiance. Moreover, it is instructive to note that Antony was approaching the age of sixty at the time he displayed this courage, and that despite his impertinence to authorities, he was allowed to withdraw and did willingly withdraw from the scene of persecution to the serenity of the

desert where he lived to the ripe old age of one-hundred five. Clearly, the *Vita* is not one of Athanasius's polemical works, nor is he preoccupied in it with the issue of martyrdom or of flight.

What we have, then, are at best three dubious sources from which to make an argument that Athanasius opposed flight as a permissible option for Christians facing persecution or martyrdom. Pettersen recognizes the difficulty in this, and even discusses the weaknesses of these sources, but nevertheless, concludes that the "other-worldly stress" of the previous works stands in stark opposition to the temporal focus of *Apologia de Fuga*, where flight is clearly sanctioned by Athanasius. Pettersen concludes that despite their limitations these sources stand in abrupt contrast to the pro-flight stance taken by Athanasius in the *Apologia de Fuga*. The theology has taken for Pettersen too radical a turn to be ignored.

But has it really? Referring to several of the festal letters, themselves, we find that Athanasius entertained a variety of notions about how the persecuted might deal with persecution. In *Festal Letter 10*, while pointing on one hand to Christ's submissiveness even unto death at the hands of his persecutors, Athanasius also cited with approval the example of the Hebrews under Moses, who, in contrast, fled from their Egyptian persecutors and won the eternal rewards under divine protection:

We may take as a type of this distinction the departure of the children of Israel and the Egyptian from Egypt. For the Egyptians, rejoicing a little while in their injustice against Israel, when they went forth, were all drowned in the deep, but the people of God, being for a time smitten and injured, by the conduct of the taskmaster, when they came out of Egypt, passed through the sea unharmed, and walked into the wilderness as an inhabited place.¹⁶

In the long run, the persecuted not the persecutors were rewarded with a promised land, and it was a land attained by flight.

Nor is flight something that can separate the Christian community for "no place can separate us, but the Lord gathers and unites us together."¹⁷ In *Festal Letter 11*, Athanasius, citing Exodus (viii, 26) again, as well as Corinthians (vi, 17), stipulates that it is right to depart from the wicked, to go far away from iniquity and seek virtue.¹⁸ One may of course depart iniquity in spirit or

**One may of course
depart iniquity in spirit
or one may physically
leave a city where
iniquity prevails.**

one may physically leave a city where iniquity prevails. Flight from iniquity, whichever way it is effected, is a duty for the Christian — and it is not clear from the works we have so far consulted that Athanasius preferred one of the two options for flight from iniquity over the other.

Athanasius's festal letters as a whole can be taken as an indictment of persecution, just as *Apologia de Fuga* echoes a similar refrain. They honored the persecuted, and consoled them. But they did not present an unmitigated argument against flight as an alternative to martyrdom. Indeed, as we will see below, such an argument runs counter to other writings of Athanasius that substantially predate the *Apologia de Fuga*.

IV

If all one could advert to in order to decide the question whether Athanasius performed a theological about-face in 357 were the evidence cited by Pettersen, a real debate would exist from grounds of uncertainty and a legitimate difference of views could be sustained by those who would prefer to support or oppose the thesis of the Athanasian turn. But the telling fact that turns the tide indisputably against Pettersen's thesis is that Athanasius did write prior to 357 explicitly about flight in ways that he later more fully developed in *Apologia de Fuga*. Pettersen does not cite this evidence, most importantly Athanasius's *Encyclical Letter To Bishops Throughout the World* of 339 A.D., written in haste during his first flight (and second exile) from Alexandria.¹⁹ It is worth noting that this document was written some two years before *Festal Letter 13* which Pettersen cites as evidence of the Athanasian turn.

Written a full eighteen years prior to *Apologia de Fuga*, the *Encyclical Letter* is not only a political indictment of the Arian cause, but a preview of the theological arguments Athanasius later systematically articulated in *Apologia de Fuga*. In it, Athanasius invoked Matthew 10:23, arguing that he, being persecuted in one city fled into the next, so that in doing so he might mitigate Arian anger against the body of Christians by removing himself from the center of controversy. He argued that his flight was providentially assisted and that it promised to reduce bloodshed against Christians. Still, as

Athanasius noted, the Arians persisted in harassment of Catholics. He even observed, without judgment, that “the people who condemn the impiety of the Arian heretics choose rather to be sick [alienated, that is, from fellowship with one another] and to run the risk than that the hand of the Arians should come upon their heads.”²⁰ Athanasius, far from condemning passive resistance to Arian authority, condemned the persecutors for their coercion of Catholics. He, in turn, like the “monument of iniquity” he later referred to in *Apologia de Fuga*, survived by God’s grace to escape and “to relate these few particulars concerning their [Arian] conduct.”²¹

Several themes, then, of both a political and theological nature appear in the *Encyclical Letter* that later so clearly make their way into the *Apologia de Fuga*: 1) Matthew 10:23, is cited to justify Athanasius’s flight; 2) Athanasius articulates an uncompromising condemnation of persecution as evil; 3) Athanasius tolerates passive Christian responses in face of persecution; 4) his own flight emerges as a symbol, a monument, to the iniquity of persecution, and; 5) providential acts are cited as assisting the escapee in flight. This is not the writing of a man who opposes flight, but of one who seeks to justify it both *as a form* of resistance to persecution and as a scripturally permissible means of Christian witness.

The Apologia de Fuga, written eighteen years later may be a more articulate and systematic treatment of the subject of flight, but it manifestly is not the first time Athanasius wrote on the subject. This fact alone should be sufficient to convince the undecided that Athanasius made no abrupt turn in his thinking on this subject in 357, since as early as 339 he had already served notice of his real thinking on the matter.

Without entering any more deeply into the recent hotly contested debate in Athanasian scholarship regarding the saint’s character, it is important to reemphasize the political side of Athanasius’s ministry. From the beginning of Athanasius’s episcopate, controversy ensued, first over whether he had attained the requisite age for episcopacy. The growth of the Arian, Miletian, and Manichean sects constantly divided his See. His festal letters show a growing awareness of the Arian menace. A staunch advocate of the Nicene Creed, Athanasius was a tireless opponent of heretical doctrine. He was an active political force. It should come, then, as no surprise that Athanasius would not only castigate his persecutors for their iniquity, but that he should

tactically choose to flee rather than meet an untimely death. He stated on more than one occasion that he knew full well that his Arian antagonists would love to get him and slake their thirst for revenge with his blood. He was, in a very real sense, the centerpiece, the key-stone of Orthodox resistance to Arianism in the East. His death, even by martyrdom, in this crucial period, might have spelled defeat for the Nicene cause. He clearly would not give to his opponents what they wanted dearly — his own head. Athanasius articulates such an understanding in both the *Encyclical Letter of 339* and later in the *Apologia de Fuga*. In the latter he articulated a justification for flight that any Christian might embrace without the slightest sense of being inferior to the martyr, or weak in faith. In it, we see the real Athanasius standing up: for flight in face of persecution and for brave martyrdom when resistance or flight is no longer possible. Pettersen, in his accurate treatment of the content of *Apologia de Fuga*, illustrates the power and force of the argument in this remarkable document.²² In it, both the political *savoir faire* and theological virtuosity of Athanasius are displayed.

V

The above analysis suggests clearly that Athanasius was at no time an opponent of flight as a means of avoiding persecution. This is not to say that he opposed martyrdom either. Rather, what we have in Athanasius is a person who could admire both martyrs and refugees as Christian witnesses, just as he could admire the life of an ascetic, such as Antony, while himself living a life full of active public service in the troubled and strife-torn See of Alexandria. One might extol a martyr or an ascetic without actively courting martyrdom or becoming a hermit. So it was with Athanasius. There is no inconsistency here. Indeed, the role of the Christian was to bear witness to the truth of their faith and to stay true to its central tenets.

For Athanasius, seasonable flight from persecution was preferable to tempting fate, however. The trials and tribulations of flight in the mean time could help to temper Christian virtues. Perseverance in the face of the trials of flight could be a great boon to the development of the Christian soul. In fleeing from unseasonable death, Athanasius observed that the Christian mimics the example and takes the advice of Christ and of the patriarchs and apostles. Flight is no ignominious thing, but rather a

hard fate to be borne in a spirit of Christian fortitude.

These notions are not the result of a sudden revelation in 357 A.D. They were the outgrowth of a life spent in the personal experience of exile and flight. The evidence does not support the view that Athanasius harbored a secret distaste for flight for years only to reverse himself after his third exile so as to justify an hypocrisy. Indeed, Athanasius was anxious to answer the charges of cowardice leveled at him by the Arians and, in the *Apologia de Fuga*, he does so with great force and eloquence. But Athanasius was definitely not motivated by a desire to justify a sudden theological shift, for indeed, he never contended that flight was impermissible to Christians. Moreover, he castigated persecutors and extolled the virtue and prudence of flight as an alternative to martyrdom. Evidence for this is found not only in the *Encyclical Letter of 339*, but also in occasional festal letters from 338 to 348. Indeed, in these festal letters, one detects a balanced mixture of calls for steadfastness in the face of persecution, bowing to tormenters, and Old Testament references to delivering oneself from evil by fleeing from it.

In the *Apologia de Fuga*, Athanasius's theory of Christian comportment in flight from persecution comes to full fruition. The argument presented there was a compelling, beautifully expressed, and systematically mature one, and it is far from a retraction of earlier views. It is, rather, a drawing together of various strands, stated in great clarity and precision. It is the fullest and most complete statement Athanasius gives us on persecution, flight, and martyrdom. It represents not a turn, but an insightful completion of earlier Athanasian notions that finally crystallized during the dangerous days of his third exile when once again the integrity of the Catholic faith hung by a precarious thread exposed to the scissors of Arian partisans. Provoked by the threat not only to himself, but to the faith he held so dearly, Athanasius was compelled to answer the Arians, not only to disprove charges of cowardice, but to place the blame for persecution on its perpetrators, rather than on its victims. In so doing he did not turn a new leaf, but rather took many a leaf out of his previous works and fashioned an even more powerful defense for flight than he had hitherto had reason or opportunity to construct.

Revisionist treatments of Athanasius and his works have done the saint serious injustice during our current age of skepticism. Thankfully, the more outrageous attempts at character assassination have been soundly

debunked in recent years. Although perhaps less damaging to his reputation, the claim that Athanasius suddenly turned round to embrace flight from persecution as against martyrdom, and that he wrote the *Apologia de Fuga* in hypocritical defense of his cowardice also needs to be plainly rejected as yet another false assertion among the many that have been leveled at the great defender of the faith. ✠

Endnotes

- ¹ In this connection see, Richard P. C. Hanson, *The Search for a Christian Doctrine of God: Arian Controversy, 318-381 A.D.* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1988), and; Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), especially at pp. 230-31.
- ² Duane Arnold, *The Early Episcopal Career of Athanasius of Alexandria* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).
- ³ Athanasius, *Apologia de Fuga* in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (hereinafter NPNF)*. Vol. 4. Second series. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), p. 263. For a slightly different translation see: *Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (hereinafter LOP). Vol. 13, (London: Walter Smith, 1885), pp. 204-205.
- ⁴ See Cyprian, "Preface to the Treatises of Cyprian," in *LOF*, Vol. 3 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1840).
- ⁵ Eusebius, *The History of the Church* (New York: Penguin, 1989), pp. 68, 213-214.
- ⁶ Tertullian, "Fight in Time of Persecution," translated by Edwin Quain, S.J. In *The Fathers of the Church* (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1959), pp. 275-307. The seventy of Tertullian's position in this work is not found in his earlier pre-Montanist position which tolerated flight. See Tertullian "Of Patience," *LDF* Vol. 10. (London: Walter Smith, 1885a) and his "First Book to His Wife," *Ibid*.
- ⁷ St. Cyprian, Epistle 20, translated by Sister Rose Bernard Donna C.S.J. in *The Fathers of the Church* Vol. 51 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press), pp. 53-55.
- ⁸ Alwyn Pettersen, "To Flee or not to Flee: An Assessment of Athanasius' De Fuga Sua," *Studies in Church History* Vol. 21 (1984): 38-39.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30 & 38.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.
- ¹² Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei* translated by Sister Penelope Lawson, C.S.M.V. (New York: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 35-67, especially at p. 44.
- ¹³ Pettersen, "To Flee or Not to Flee," p. 30.
- ¹⁴ *Apologia de Fuga*, (in *LOF*), pp. 200-201.
- ¹⁵ See the Preface to *Vita Antoni* in *NPNF*, Vol.4., p. 188.
- ¹⁶ Athanasius, *Festal Letter 10*, in *Ibid.*, p. 531.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 528.
- ¹⁸ Athanasius, *Festal Letter 11*, *Ibid.*, p. 536.
- ¹⁹ Athanasius, *Encyclical Letter*, in *LOF*, Vol. 13 (London: Walter Smith, 1885), p. 9.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ *Ibid*, p. 8.
- ²² For another treatment in addition to Pettersen's exegesis of the *Apologia de Fuga*, see Robert F. Gorman, "Persecution and Exile in the Patristic Period: Athanasian and Augustinian Perspectives," *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 6, no. 1, (1993): 40-55.

Contemporary Interpretations of Christian Philosophy

A lecture given at Naga City by
Fr. Joseph M. de Torre, on Feb. 24, 1996

Is there such thing as a Christian philosophy?

Let me first define my terms as precisely as possible, as I learned from my alma mater, the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, popularly known as the Angelicum, where I took my doctorate in Philosophy in 1953.

The concept of “Christian Philosophy” has undergone heated polemics in our century, being criticized by both Catholics and non-Catholics as being non-existent, since what passes for Christian philosophy, according to these critics, is in reality Christian *theology*, that is, an effort to rationalize the Christian faith, making the rational or philosophical arguments conform to an already accepted conclusion dictated by faith. For example, Heidegger would maintain that such kind of arguing is not a *free* enquiry into the truth of reality, and therefore not “philosophy” but theology. Some prominent Catholic philosophers of the School of Louvain have also supported this view.

On the opposite side, perhaps the most persuasive champion of the “existence” of Christian philosophy and of its right to exist has been the late Etienne Gilson, with the full support of another outstanding Thomist philosopher of our age, the late Jacques Maritain, as well as the phenomenologist Dietrich von Hildebrand, and many others.

In my book *Christian Philosophy* (1980), I purposely distanced myself from such controversies, which raged particularly in the 1930s. These were thoroughly documented in the outstanding work of Ronda Chervin

and Eugene Kevane, *Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (1988).

My approach was rather to actually expound that philosophy, trying to avoid the two extremes of oversimplification and over-complication: neither evading the objective depth and range of the philosophical questions, nor complicating the obvious and thus blocking the insights into reality by excessive analyses that miss the wood for the trees. I took for granted the affirmative answers to the following two questions: “Is a Christian philosophy possible?” and “Does a Christian Philosophy actually exist?” And I concentrated my effort on the actual exposition of that philosophy, hoping to prove the pie in the eating, that is, showing the power of that philosophy to transform man and society.

By Christian philosophy I understood (a) the body of philosophical and scientific insights, both theoretical and practical, accumulated by Christian thinkers — theologians, philosophers, poets, historians, artists, statesmen, dramatists and scientists — in twenty centuries of Judeo-Christian tradition of divine revelation, under the guidance of the teaching authority or Magisterium of the Church centered in the Papacy; and (b) the methodology of scientific and philosophical enquiry, based on the most rigorous and objective laws of the natural logic of the human mind, as part of Judeo-Christianity’s full adherence to an unquestioned epistemological realism.

No less than Pope Leo XIII, an outstanding philosopher in his own right, employed the expression “Christian philosophy” in the subtitle of his Encyclical *Aeterni Patris* of 1879, which he considered the most basic and programmatic document of his crucial pontificate. The subtitle was “On the restoration of Christian Philosophy in Catholic Schools.” He therein

maintained that all the events that take place in society, for good or ill, are hatched in the classrooms of philosophy. In other words, ideas rule the world.

I have already on many occasions discussed the effective power of Christian philosophy to transform man and society. I wish now to point to several areas of world culture and civilization where this influence has had distinctive effects historically detectable and verifiable.

In my book *Christian Philosophy* (1980), I purposely distanced myself from such controversies, which raged particularly in the 1930s.

Admittedly, this influence of Christian philosophy in society, in individuals and in the world of culture has occurred under the guidance of Christian theology. But this fact does not disqualify it as a genuine and real “philosophy,” that is, as a free rational enquiry into reality, since the Christian theologian must make a full use of his rational philosophy and logic in order to articulate his theology. Nay, theology is nothing but the rational effort to understand the faith in divine revelation, as the well-known Augustinian formula put it: “faith seeking understanding.” So, faith holds the primacy, but reason both precedes it and follows it.

Philosophical enquiry begins always with *questions*. St. Thomas Aquinas, theologian and philosopher, always begins the articles of his *Summa theologiae* with the enquiring term *Utrum* (whether). He wrote the latter for Christians, using philosophy as a tool for theology to be a blend or synthesis of faith and reason. But in his earlier work — *Summa contra Gentiles, seu de Veritate Catholicae fidei contra errores infidelium* — he was addressing not Christians but “gentiles,” and so his starting point and method for every question had to be perforce philosophical so that philosophy in this case was used rather as a pathway than a tool. Of course his philosophy was “Christian” in so far as he himself was a Christian theologian, but it was thereby no less a real philosophy, appealing to experience and using rational discourse, that is, based on objective evidence and logical demonstration, both inductive and deductive, or, as he would put it, *a posteriori* and *a priori*.

It is precisely this philosophy utilized by Christian theologians that has had an obvious and far-reaching impact on man and society, on Western civilization and culture, and thereby on world culture and civilization. It is actually the Judeo-Christian tradition with its distinctive philosophy that has given the edge to the Western world in leading the world civilization, not any alleged genetic or racial superiority, whose complete falsehood has been thoroughly demonstrated by sound philosophy and modern science, and resolutely rejected by sound theology. Racism is utterly absurd, so that the evident superiority of Western culture can only be the effect of its distinctive religion, namely the Judeo-Christian tradition.

That this tradition has actually shaped European civilization and thereby world civilization led Cardinal Newman in his *Idea of a University* (1850) to propose that Christian theology should be the core subject of the liberal arts curriculum, so as to contextualize the

philosophy that has shaped world civilization. The present Pope, acknowledged world-wide as the most outstanding philosopher of our age, has made the centrality of Christian Philosophy one of the capital themes of his pontificate, especially in the social teaching of the Church on the dignity of the human person, the primacy of the family, and the function of the state with regard to the common good, as a basis for ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.

Let us now examine the actual historical application of Christian philosophy to the most central areas of culture and civilization, namely science and technology; economics; political institutions; and the creative arts.

Science and Technology

The scientific and technological breakthrough took place in 16th century Christian Europe, coinciding with the European evangelization and colonization of the American continent. But this breakthrough, which has accelerated at a bewildering pace ever since, did not occur out of the blue. It was the consequence of the philosophy of science elaborated by the early 13th century universities founded by the Church, in Paris, Bologna, Oxford, Naples, Padua, Cambridge, Cologne, Salamanca, etc., etc., as has been brilliantly demonstrated by Pierre Duhem and Stanley Jaki, among others.

The congenital and thorough epistemological realism of Christian philosophy led St. Thomas Aquinas, right in the middle of the 13th century, to describe the three levels of the mind’s penetration into reality as (1) the abstraction of essences from sensible bodies; (2) the abstraction of pure quantity from them; and (3) the intellectual grasp of universal being in everything (the famous *esse* or *actus essendi* of St. Thomas Aquinas). Here was the seed of the scientific breakthrough. By joining (2) and (1), namely mathematical physics, the scientific method crystallized, namely the golden rules of (a) empirical observation, (b) experiment, and (c) quantification.

Some theologians then began to apply this method, such as Roger Bacon, Albert the Great, Robert Grosseteste, Alfred of Saxony, John Buridan and Nicholas Oresme, with remarkable discoveries in all the fields of physics, later on acknowledged by no less than Newton, who said that “we stand on the shoulders of giants.”

The Thomistic method was the real cause of the scientific breakthrough, not the method advocated by Francis Bacon, or that of Rene Descartes (both in the 17th century), since the latter reduced it to mathematical deduction (mistrusting observation and experiment), and the former reduced it to pure observation and experiment, excluding mathematics. The real creators of the scientific breakthrough, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler, and, of course, Newton, followed the three golden rules formulated by St. Thomas Aquinas, ignoring the philosophical controversies between rationalists and empiricists, as well as gradually purging science of all magic, superstition and mythology. The technological revolutions logically and historically following the scientific breakthrough of the 16th revolution century are still dazzling our imagination and making us dream of a cosmic colonization of outer space by humanity.

The Economic Revolution

Economic mercantilism, based on the preservation of a limited zero-sum of material wealth and a royal absolutism owning and controlling the economy, an economy based on slavery or forced labor, population control and wars of territorial expansion, had plunged humanity since time immemorial into a chronic state of poverty, disease, tyranny and oppression. The great Aristotle, in spite of his remarkable insights in the field of metaphysics and ethics, actually contributed to the rationalization of a static economy based on slavery and population control through the practice of abortion. Throughout the early Christian centuries the Church, thoroughly engaged in the work of evangelization, and constantly harassed by Barbarian invasions and Islamic aggression, could do nothing but endeavoring to “humanize” the evils of slavery, tyranny and war, thus preparing the ground for the emergence of modern democracy. But the new economic order brought about by the American conquest in the wake of the Renaissance, with its emphasis on the creativity of the human person, prompted Christian

The real creators of the scientific breakthrough, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler, and, of course, Newton, followed the three golden rules formulated by St. Thomas Aquinas.

theologians in the 16th century, specifically at the Spanish schools of Salamanca, Seville, Valencia, Barcelona, Alcala, Pamplona, etc. to look into both the political and economic issues arising from the American conquest.

Some of these theologians, like Mercado, Molina, Medina, Azpilcueta and others, went into a thorough examination of the traditional Aristotelian economic concepts, such as the nature of money, price, exchange, value, usury, etc., as well as the assumption that the only source of wealth is land and labor. Money, as a medium of exchange, and materialized in precious metals,

was considered as a dead wealth. Those theologians discovered the “living” nature of money, capable of “growing” by means of investment in productive enterprise in a free market, and the charge of an interest on loans (as distinct from abusive usury), with the development of credit facilities and freedom of enterprise and trade. These ideas paved the way for the economic, commercial, agricultural and industrial revolution of the 18th century, pioneered by Britain, scientifically articulated by Adam Smith, and brought to its full flowering in the United States of America. In his famous *Wealth of Nations* (1776), Adam Smith proved that the decline of the Spanish empire was due to its adherence to mercantilism, in spite of the pioneering work of Spain’s theologians, while the rise of the British empire was due to the expansion of free trade and free enterprise.

Karl Marx and many other socialists, always dreaming of the collectivist utopia organized from the top, painted a somber picture of the “capitalism” resulting from the economic revolution (from a static to a dynamic economy), and aimed at suppressing individual freedom and the right to private ownership. But the dramatic rise of Western peoples from the abyss of poverty and tyranny to the modern wealthy and democratic state bears historical evidence of the power of capitalism to lift people up from poverty, if they are free and enterprising. That evils have multiplied together with the achievements is not due to the economic revolution or the capitalist system as such, but to the quality of moral and cultural standards accepted by society.

The Human Rights Revolution

As mentioned above, the 16th century Spanish theologians, notably Antonio Montesinos, Bartolomé de Las Casas and, above all, Francisco de Vitoria, took an early interest in the plight of the native peoples conquered by Spain and Portugal in America. The conquest of Mexico was completed in 1521 and that of Peru in 1531. It was precisely in December of that year that the Virgin Mary appeared with native Indian features to a poor local peasant close to Mexico City, telling him that she was also his Mother. This signified the fundamental equality of all races before God, deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian tradition.

Meanwhile, in Salamanca, Francisco de Vitoria, having been briefed by Bartolomé de Las Casas regarding the unjust treatment of the natives by Spanish colonizers, launched on a series of electrifying lectures, drawing huge crowds, in which, basing himself on the teachings of Aquinas, he laid the foundations of modern democracy and international law (this is why the United Nations Organization, with its “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” considered Vitoria as its precursor). Going right against the prevalent public and “official” opinion in Spain at that time, with Emperor Charles V at the height of his power, Vitoria demonstrated the truth, later enshrined in the American *Declaration of Independence* (1776), that all men are created equal, with God-given unalienable rights, among which are the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, thus proclaiming the sovereignty of the people, without whose consent under the law no one has the right to rule. The drafter of the American Declaration, Thomas Jefferson, took it directly from English philosopher John Locke, who in his turn took it from Scholastic philosophers at Oxford, followers of Vitoria, Soto, Molina, Suarez, Bellarmine and others, as well as the Anglican Richard Hooker, also a follower of Vitoria. This tradition of Vitoria on human rights and international law was also transmitted on the European continent by Bodin, Grotius, Pufendorf, Leibniz and Kant, reaching up to our time and enlivening the world-wide movement of democracy and liberty.

But still in Vitoria’s lifetime Pope Paul III, prompted by Vitoria’s teachings which he endorsed fully, issued two decrees of excommunication in 1537 against those who would deprive the natives in

America of their life, liberty or property.

When Vitoria died in 1546 (the same year as Luther) the Council of Trent had just begun, and under the influence of Vitoria and his followers, such as Cano, Soto, Layuez and others, the Council Fathers reaffirmed the Catholic doctrine of the fundamental equality of all men based on the opening of salvation to all, against both Protestant elitism (only the “predestined” are saved) and the claim of racial superiority of the Iberian conquerors of America.

Vitoria’s doctrine of ordered liberty under the law — a constitution based on the natural law, not on the arbitrary will of a ruler, of an oligarchy or of a majority, while adopted by the American Constitution, was not adopted by the French Revolution, which opted rather for an individualism inspired by the Enlightenment, which put political power in the people’s will rather than in the natural law known through reason. The French Revolution left God out of the picture, with the well known disastrous consequences, while the American Declaration of Independence spoke of man’s God-given rights.

Christian Philosophy and the Arts

Finally, Christian philosophy’s unrivalled pursuit of beauty as the most comprehensive transcendental property of a reality created by a God who is Being Itself (idsum esse subsistens) spawned through the centuries an astonishing proliferation of aesthetic expressions, with a stunning blend of humanity and divinity, as can be seen, for instance, in Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel, and innumerable works of literature, poetry, song, music, painting, sculpture and architecture, and even in choreography and, more recently, in cinematography.

For literature alone, the monumental multi-volume work of Charles Moeler, *Literature du XXe siècle et Christianisme*, has provided an impressive review of 20th century literature inspired by Christianity. And as for music and song, the sublime melodies of Gregorian Chant and the unsurpassed compositions of Mozart and Beethoven, among many others, witness to the force of Christian philosophy to enliven and transform culture and civilization.

The Matrix of Culture

In conclusion, we can say that the Christian philosophy flowing from the Judeo-Christian tradition and guided by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church furnished the cultural matrix and inspiring force for a universal philosophy and civilization of order, peace and progress, issuing from the West as the geographical location where that tradition took root first. That all the evils that afflict the world today also come from the West can be explained by the Scholastic maxim that “the corruption of the best is the worst” (*corruptio optimi pessimi*).

But one thing is clear: that Christian philosophy, inspired by Christian theology, is an indispensable instrument for the Church to evangelize the world. This philosophy, deeply imbued with epistemological realism, presents (a) the human person in all his dignity rooted in his capacity to transcend himself infinitely through knowledge and love; (b) the monogamous family as the natural breeding and nurturing ground of that transcendence; and (c) the state as the servant of the common good through its protection of rights: individual rights, family rights, group rights and national rights.

At any rate, Christian philosophy on the person, the family and the state (the social teaching of the Catholic Church) proved decisive in the making of modern democratic and freedom-loving institutions. And it has provided a “public philosophy” (as the present Pope has repeatedly stated) for a universal inter-religious and democratic dialogue of peace and brotherhood. ✠

Naga City, February 24, 1996



Modernism and the “Tail of the Devil”

by Raymond B. Marcin

On October 13, 1977, toward the very end of his papacy, just a few months before his death, Pope Paul VI — the pope of the Vatican II Council — the pope of the Great Renewal within the Catholic Church — made a curious public statement. He told the world — and these are his words:

The tail of the devil is functioning in the disintegration of the Catholic world. The darkness of Satan has entered and spread throughout the Catholic Church even to its summit. Apostasy, the loss of the faith, is spreading throughout the world and into the highest levels within the Church. [1]

Strange, almost apocalyptic, language. The darkness of *Satan* has entered and *spread throughout* the Catholic Church — *even to its summit*. *Apostasy* is spreading *into the highest levels within the Church*. What could Pope Paul VI have meant? *Is the devil fomenting a problem of apostasy at “the highest levels within the Church?”* Do we even believe in the reality of the devil in these contemporary times? That very *question* — the fact that some of us have ceased to believe in the devil in any operative sense — might be an example of what Pope Paul VI was warning us about. Yes, the devil *is* real — so says the Holy Father — and the devil is at work in what we see all around us. What the Holy Father has referred to as “the disintegration of the Catholic world” is *also* real, and according to the Holy Father it is the work of that very real devil. What we ordinary Catholics may *not* see all around us is the spreading of “the darkness of Satan” to the summit of the Catholic Church and of *apostasy* into the *highest* levels within the Church. But the Holy Father has told us that that is exactly what is occurring.

Almost contemporaneously, a little more than three months before Pope Paul VI had uttered those apocalyptic words, Karol Cardinal Wojtila, the man who was to become Pope John Paul II, proclaimed to a Cracow, Poland, audience on June 24, 1977: We find ourselves in the presence of the greatest confrontation in history, the greatest mankind has ever had to confront. We are facing the *final* confrontation be-

tween the Church and the Anti-Church, between the Gospel and the Anti-Gospel. [2]

The final confrontation — the Church and the *Anti-Church* — the Gospel and the *Anti-Gospel*. Again, apocalyptic language. What *is* the Anti-Church? What *is* the Anti-Gospel? Despite their ominous and portentous implications, these are not difficult questions to answer, as long we approach them responsibly.

Catholic Christians, when faced with questions about the Church and the Gospel it preaches, usually take their lead from two sources, which are really one source, because they cannot be in conflict — Divine Revelation and Divine Tradition as expounded by the Magisterium of the Church.

In the context of Divine Revelation the Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Paul, has given us some interesting insights into the notion of an Anti-Church and an Anti-Gospel. Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth, advising them not to deceive themselves. These are Paul's words, written under the inspiration of God: "Let no man deceive himself; if any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For *the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*. [3] This is not an isolated statement in the bible. It is a scriptural theme. The Holy Spirit, through Isaiah in the Hebrew Scriptures, said, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside." (4) Similar themes appear in the Book of Job [5], the Epistle of James [6], and the Psalms [7]. What *is* the wisdom of this world? Why is it "foolishness" in God's sight? Why is it so in opposition to God's wisdom that God wants it "destroyed?" It does not seem like much of a stretch, in light of the Scripture quotes, to suggest that the wisdom of the world has something to do with what Pope John Paul II called the *AntiGospel*.

But that suggests a problem. Don't *we* in the world — especially we lawyers and law students who deal with worldly public policy and worldly conceptions of justice on a daily basis — don't we *have to* use the wisdom of the world? And yet in no uncertain terms *God* has said that it's all foolishness in His sight. And worse than foolishness. It is the wisdom of *Satan*. Paul, under the inspiration of God, also wrote these words to the Christians at Corinth:

[W]e refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the

sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case *the god of this world* (that is, Satan) has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. [8]

And as if He were talking to us today, lawyers and law students in the 1990s, Paul, under the inspiration of God, warned the Christians at Colossae to "[s]ee to it that no one deceives you by philosophy and vain deceit, according to human traditions, according to elements of *the world* and not according to Christ." [9]

Again, these sayings may seem counter-intuitive to Catholic lawyers and law students in the 1990s. We *have to* deal with the world — with *human* traditions. We have to, as it were, get down and get dirty with the problems of the world, and we have to solve those problems in the context of a system that uses "the wisdom of the world." And so we have a real dilemma as lawyers and law students in the 1990s: We have to work *in* the world, and we have to use the *wisdom* of the world, and yet we are warned by God Himself that the wisdom of the world is *foolishness*.

The Vatican II Council's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, *Gaudium et Spes*, acknowledged the necessity of an interaction between the Church and the world — but with a caution that those who invoke "the spirit of Vatican II" often omit. The discussion of the Church and the modern world in *Gaudium et Spes* began with this admonition: The whole of man's history has been the story of our dour combat with the powers of evil, stretching, so our Lord tells us [10], from the very dawn of history until the last day. . . . Hence the Church of Christ, trusting in the design of the creator and admitting that progress can contribute to man's true happiness, still feels called upon to echo the words of the apostle: "Do not be conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2). [11]

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, recently seemed to recognize our current dilemma, and his solution to that dilemma is posed in the form of a very interesting challenge. These are Cardinal Ratzinger's words:

[O]n the part of many Catholics in recent years there has been an unrestrained and unfiltered opening to the world, that is to say, to the dominant modern mentality.

After the phase of indiscriminate “openness” it is time that the Christian reacquire the consciousness of belonging to a minority and of often being in opposition to what is obvious, plausible and natural for that mentality which the New Testament calls —and certainly not in a positive sense — the “spirit of the world.” It is time to find again the courage of nonconformism, the capacity to oppose many of the trends of the surrounding culture . . . [12]

If Cardinal Ratzinger is urging caution and reticence in one’s attitude of openness to the world, he is certainly being consistent with Divine Revelation. The Apostle John, under the inspiration of God, tells us: “Do not love the world If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” [13] We are all familiar with the injunction that the Christian is called to be *in* the world but not *of* the world. What Cardinal Ratzinger decries is *not* openness to the world *per se*, but rather — to use the Cardinal’s words — “an unrestrained and unfiltered” openness to the world. “Unfiltered?” What “filter” might Cardinal Ratzinger have in mind? The teachings of the Church, of course. Vatican II’s *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)* makes a similar point: With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the whole people of God . . . to listen to and distinguish the many voices of our times and to interpret them in the light of the divine Word [14]

So — what does Divine Tradition as expounded by the Magisterium of the Church have to say about this “spirit of the world” — what Cardinal Ratzinger refers to as the “dominant modern mentality?” What does the Magisterium have to say about modern and contemporary worldly wisdom?

It’s at this point that we begin our discussion of “*Modernism*,” because the Magisterium *does* have something to say about the wisdom of the world, and its pronouncements on that topic generally and pervasively have to do with the several papal condemnations of something that has come to be called “Modernism.” “Modernism” is a term that is difficult to define but much easier to grasp. It is more of a “movement” than a set of fixed principles. The term “Modernism” is used in art and architecture as well as in philosophy and theology. In jurisprudence and political philosophy we

It is difficult to get a handle on the content of Modernism in philosophy and theology, precisely because of what Modernism is

often speak of today’s social milieu as the “post-modernist” era. The terms “Modernism” and “post-modernism”, are quite *au courant* in jurisprudence and political philosophy today. [15]

The interesting thing is that in the context of the Magisterium, the Church’s treasury of teaching on faith and morals, Modernism has been and is still denounced as a heresy. And the Modernism that has

been denounced as a heresy is *not* unconnected with the modernism and post-modernism that is being talked about in jurisprudence and political philosophy today.

From Pope Pius IX’s Syllabus of Errors, issued in 1846, through Pope Saint Pius X’s Encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis* in 1907 to Pope Paul VI’s more contemporary post-Vatican II announcement that Modernism “*is the most dangerous revolution the Church has ever had to face and it is still scourging her severely*” [16], Modernism has been consistently condemned by the Magisterium as a heresy and as both a threat to and a perversion of the Catholic Faith.

It is difficult to get a handle on the content of Modernism in philosophy and theology, precisely because of what Modernism *is*. Igino Giordani, the biographer of Pope Saint Pius X, explains the Modernism of Pius X’s day in these words: “Modernism . . . consisted principally in a state of mind and way of life that sought to make over Christianity, rationalistically explaining away its difficulties to make the religion acceptable to the thinking of the day.” [17] Because Modernism seeks to make “the thinking of the day” the criterion of religious “truth,” the content of modernist thought will vary *with* “the thinking of the day.” Indeed, at base, there can *be no* fixed religious *truth* in modernist thought. Modernism “changes with the age to conform to the age.” [18]

Modernism is what Cardinal Ratzinger was referring to when he cautioned against an unrestrained and unfiltered openness to the wisdom of the world (which, according to God’s holy word, is foolishness in God’s sight).

Despite the diffusiveness of the term, there *is* a history and an etiology to Modernism. Pope Paul VI has suggested that Modernism’s origins lie in the

Enlightenment and in the philosophies rampant around the time of the French Revolution. [19] No doubt the Church-bashing views of Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, and the other members of the Encyclopedist movement had their influence on the development of modernist thought within as well as without the Church. Pope Saint Pius X, however, was more specific about the genesis of modernism. He saw it in the epistemological system of the great Enlightenment philosopher of Immanuel Kant. [20]

As those of us who struggled through college philosophy courses know, Immanuel Kant's philosophy is somewhat obtuse and difficult. But it has been enormously influential. Kant is one of those pivotal figures in the history of philosophy. Once he wrote his *magna opera* philosophy was never the same again. All the main strains of modern philosophy, including even some strains of modern natural law philosophy, are filtered through the thought of Kant. And it is necessary, if we are to understand Modernism and "the spirit of the world" that we understand at least a little bit of Kant's philosophy.

At the heart of Immanuel Kant's theory of knowledge is the thesis that we do not "see" the world as it *is*, but rather as our minds restructure it for us. We can never know directly what Kant refers to as the thing-in-itself (the *ding-a-an-sich*). And Kant took this insight to great lengths, taking the position that many of the constituents of nature, such as time, space, and even causality, are found, *not* in the intrinsic nature of reality outside ourselves, but rather in the structure of our perceiving minds. We see things in time and space and we perceive things as adhering to the principle of cause and effect, not because the things and the events in themselves objectively impose time, space, and causality on our organs of perception and understanding, but because the structure of our organs of perception and understanding imposes time, space, and causality on the things and events being perceived. About things as they really are in themselves, according to Kant, we can know nothing. [21] That's a very hard concept to grasp, but it's at the heart of an understanding of Kantian theory.

If we cannot be sure of having a true perception of the things and events that inhabit reality outside ourselves — if the only reality that we can know is the version of "reality" that our mind restructures and

presents to us — then it is not surprising that things and events that are not part of the physical world — things like the soul, or God — will similarly be seen as impositions of the structures of our minds. According to Kant, "[t]he existence of the soul, its freedom and immortality, the existence of a world of objects outside of us, and the existence of God, are, of logical necessity, declared to be unknown and unknowable." [22] It is not that the "world out there" and the soul and God don't *exist*; it is rather that we can't really know those things as they truly are in themselves — *objectively*. We can only know them *subjectively*, that is as recreations in and of our own minds. Again, it's this thesis of Kant's that has become the foundation stone of modern philosophy. It leads directly through the philosophy of Kant's disciple Hegel [23] to the various forms of Pragmatism which are dominating philosophical, especially jurisprudential, thought today. And it leads directly to the heart of the modernist heresy of Pope Saint Pius X's day and the neo- or post- modernist heresy of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II's day.

The modernists of Pope Saint Pius X's day adopted this Kantian doctrine regarding the non-objectivity of truth and referred to it as the principle of *Vital Immanence* — the notion that religious "truths" only exist in any meaningful sense in the structure of the mind. Kant's Immanence theory in *philosophy* reduces all reality operatively to elements indwelling or "immanent" in consciousness. [24] Its implications for modernist theology are identical, and in the words of Monsignor Ronald Knox, God Himself is reduced to an F.I.F. — a Funny Interior Feeling. [25]

The "interior feeling," for the modernists, however, is not a *purely* personal, private thing (nor is it for Kant). It is seen by the modernists as a *common* or *collective* feeling. We *are*, after all, a Church. And it's this "collective feeling" — more often referred to by modernists as "the common consciousness" that defines the modernists' concept of the Church. In modernist thought, the Church originated "not as a visible hierarchical society founded by Christ, but simply as a product of the collective conscience of His followers." [26]

Similarly, dogma is a product of the "collective conscience" of the "faithful." [27] Pope Saint Pius X stated that the main doctrine of the modernists was that of *evolution* (but he was not referring to Darwinian theory). He described the modernists as believing that "[t]o the laws of evolution, everything is subject under penalty of death — dogma, Church, worship, even

faith itself.” [28] Since the “collective conscience” of the “faithful” evolves — obviously in line with the wisdom of the particular age — the meanings of dogmas also evolve, and understandings of the Church also evolve. The Church can change, in modernist thought, from a hierarchy to a democracy, as the times change. And beliefs — what we non-modernists think of as truths — can change as well.

It’s only a short step, of course, from a recognition that a “collective conscience” evolves, to a recognition that a collective conscience can be *influenced* to evolve in a particular direction. This explains why people of a modernist bent, who disagree fundamentally with many of the dogmas of the Catholic Church, adamantly refuse to leave the Church. Pope Saint Pius X said it almost a century ago. These are his words: “[I]t is necessary for (the modernists) to remain within the ranks of the Church in order that they may gradually transform the collective conscience. [29]

One more ingredient is needed in order to understand both Kantian and Modernist thinking. Kant’s curious epistemological system is contained in his book *The Critique of Pure Reason*. But Kant also wrote another *magnum opus*, entitled *The Critique of Practical Reason*. The latter work is the one in which Kant addressed the issue of human activity. When we pass from knowledge to activity we enter the sphere of morality. And it is here that Kant tries (some believe unsuccessfully [30]) to draw a connection between the perceiving mind and “reality out there.” According to Kant, it is in the sphere of human *activity* where we eventually find certainty as to things like the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God. In Kant’s thought, *action* is exalted above *knowledge* or intellect. [30] So too do the modernists value *action* over knowledge. According to Thomas Judge:

The modernist . . . go so far as to teach that the dogmas of the Catholic faith are of so little or no value considered as standards of belief, and that their chief and primary significance is to be sought in their power to suggest attitudes or modes of moral conduct. [32]

Cardinal Ratzinger has made the same point regarding today’s neo-modernism:

This explains why people of a modernist bent, who disagree fundamentally with many of the dogmas of the Catholic Church, adamantly refuse to leave the Church.

[S]ome facile slogans are making the rounds, one of which asserts that all that really matters today is *orthopraxis*, hence “right conduct,” love of neighbor. On the other hand, concern for *orthodoxy*, that is, for “right belief”, according to the true meaning of Scripture, which is read within the living tradition of the Church, occupies a second rank, when it is not downright alienating. [33]

Renee Casin, the French Catholic writer and teacher, put it this way:

The first misinterpretation on which (today’s neo-modernists) have embarked is the following: To deal effectively with the chaos of the real world, its injustices, and the alienations of every kind which have multiplied, the first pressing need is *action*. No longer does union with God have the primacy. Rather social activism has displaced it; little matter that a supernatural sacramental life has always occupied first place in the life of all the Saints. [34]

To suggest an example — I will venture to suggest that we have all heard the neo-modernist sermon on this very point of Christian *action* being more important than devotional efforts at union with God, and we have probably heard the sermon more than once. The text for the sermon is usually Matthew 22:36–39. A doctor of the *law* asks Jesus: “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

Beautiful words. The essence of what it is to be a true Christian. But the currently fashionable neo-modernist sermon [35] usually goes something like this: Yes, we should love the Lord our God. But the Lord our God is a Spirit. How do we go about loving an invisible *Spirit*? We can’t, at least not very easily. What we *can* do, however — and on a daily basis — is to love our neighbor. That’s in fact exactly how we love God — by loving our neighbor.

At best, the sermon puts the two commandments on a par, whereas Jesus actually said that love of God is the *greatest* commandment. Also, in the minds of most hearers, the sermon subtly reverses the order of the two commandments — love your neighbor

and thereby love God — whereas Jesus actually said that love of God is the *first* — the *greatest* and the first — commandment. And by the time the sermon is over, one is usually left with the mind set in which efforts at seeking union with God are really out of the picture entirely, and Christianity is reduced to a vague form of humanism. And Christianity as a vague form of humanism is the exact aim of the neo-modernist.

The true, orthodox understanding of the passage might be taken from the writings of Saint Alphonsus Liguori, the great Eighteenth Century moral theologian who was named a Doctor of the Church in 1871, and who is the patron saint of moral theologians. [36] The truth is that our “neighbor” includes our *enemy*, as the Sermon on the Mount tells us. Most of the time it is difficult enough to love our friends and neighbors. How can one truly love one’s enemies in the first instance? The answer is in the very words Jesus used. One loves one’s neighbor and one’s enemy with God’s love. That is what the words say. We first love God with our whole heart — all of it — and with our *whole* soul and with our whole mind then — and only then are we able to practice the second commandment, loving our neighbor and our enemy truly *as our self*. It is the love of God that is the *enabling* love — not the other way around.

Next, the modernists and neo-modernists have an unusual understanding of Church *dogma*. For modernists (and neo-modernists), the dogmas of the Church are real, but *only* to the extent that they suggest modes of moral conduct. Thus a modernist, or a neo-modernist of today, can say with a perfectly clear sense of internal consistency that he or she accepts, say, the dogma of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ without actually believing that Jesus Christ *physically* rose from the dead in an objectively real historical event. British author Michael Davies explained it well:

Dogma . . . for (a modernist) was simply symbolic, a *symbol* of what Christians believe, a symbol of their faith, and by faith (the modernist) meant something purely subjective, not something which was an accurate expression of objective reality. Thus Jesus exerted such an influence on His followers that this influence remained long after His death, and was ‘symbolized’ by the story of the resurrection. Whether the story was objectively true was not important for (the modernist), what

For modernists (and neo-modernists), the dogmas of the Church are real, but only to the extent that they suggest modes of moral conduct.

mattered was the truth that it was intended to convey — and this is a crucially important distinction, the distinction between orthodoxy and modernism. [37]

The end result is that the modernist (or the neo-modernist of today) can in “good” conscience believe none of what an ordinary Catholic believes, objectively speaking — he may not believe that Jesus was born of a Virgin, that Jesus *is God*, that Jesus rose from the dead, etc., etc., and yet he

may *say*, with interior consistency, that he *accepts* those dogmas, because he “accepts” them as symbols of some *moral* (not necessarily physical) event, like the influence of Jesus living on in the hearts or memories of His followers. Despite his non-belief, he will remain a very active member of the Church, while all the time doing his best to subtly change the beliefs of the ordinary Catholic, again all in “good” conscience. Are you confused and discomforted by what’s going on in the Catholic Church? Confused about what you should believe? About what the Church itself believes? If so, you’re experiencing the effects of the neo-modernist’s tampering with dogma.

In Pope Saint Pius X’s day theological modernism was already calling into question some of the basic truths of the Catholic faith — truths concerning the nature of God, the historicity of the Gospels, the Real Presence, the divinity of Christ, the infallibility of the pope, the facticity of the Resurrection, the nature of the Church, and the reality of personal salvation. [38] Most, if not all, of those questions are with us today, almost a century later, better honed and more thoroughly informed by the tenets of today’s popular modernist philosophies, such as pragmatism.

If we listen carefully in the theological and philosophical winds today we hear echoes of the Modernism so decisively and uncompromisingly condemned and anathematized by Pope Saint Pius X and his predecessors and successors. We hear today that the kingdom of God is not in the hereafter, but in the here and now (despite Jesus’ own clear statement that His kingdom is *not* of this world [39]). We are told that “salvation” today means liberation from *social sin*; *personal sin*, in the view of some in the Church, has ceased to be relevant, except insofar as it might have social implica-

tions. We are told that the true meaning of the Gospel is economic rather than spiritual. We are told that the Church is part of this world; that it is a democracy. We are told that dogmas derive their force, indeed in a sense their “truth,” not from their correspondence with the Word of God or even their objective historical facticity, but rather from their relevance to the human condition — no, to *current understandings* of the human condition. [40]

In theological terms, we are perhaps all familiar with today’s manifestations of the modernist heresy. They come from those who invoke what they usually call “the *spirit* of Vatican II” to suggest what the documents of Vatican II actually often denounce. The techniques of today’s modernists have been so successful that Cardinal Ratzinger has lamented:

In a world at which, at bottom, many believers are gripped by skepticism, the conviction of the Church that there is *one truth*, and that this one truth can as such be recognized, expressed and also clearly defined within certain bounds, appears scandalous. It is also experienced as offensive by many Catholics who have lost sight of the essence of the Church. [41]

There can be very little doubt but that, despite the papacy’s vigorous opposition over the past century and a half, the heresy of Modernism — what Pope Saint Pius X called “the synthesis of all heresies,” [42] — has not been stamped out. Indeed, today it seems stronger than ever. Paul H. Hallett, introducing Michael Davies’ book *Partisans of Error*, has an explanation:

Of one thing we can be certain: Modernism is too closely bound up with perverse human will ever to die. Its peculiar genius, which is to appear Christian and Catholic while evading the demands of a transcendent faith, is too well adjusted to the mentality of fallen man ever to become outdated. It will always survive in one form or another until the Day of Judgment. [41]

Pope Saint Pius X, however, has his own explanation for the success of the modernist movement — an explanation that seems especially relevant today. It has to do with the tactics used by modernists:

Let one of them [the modernists] but open his mouth and the others applaud him in chorus, proclaiming that science has made another step forward; let an outsider but hint at a desire to inspect the new discovery with his own eyes, and they are on him in a body; deny it — and you are an ignoramus; embrace it and defend it — and there is no praise too warm for you. . . . When an

adversary rises up against them with an erudition and force that render him redoubtable, they try to make a conspiracy of silence around him to nullify the effects of his attack, while in flagrant contrast with this policy towards Catholics, they load with constant praise the writers who range themselves on their side, hailing their works, exuding novelty on every page, with choruses of applause; for them the scholarship of a writer is in direct proportion to the recklessness of his attacks on antiquity, and of his efforts to undermine tradition and the ecclesiastical magisterium. . . . The young, excited and confused by all this clamor of praise and abuse, some of them afraid of being branded as ignorant, others ambitious to be considered learned, and both classes goaded internally by curiosity and pride, often surrender and give themselves up to Modernism. [44]

Where do we see these techniques of ostracization and intimidation today? Stand up for the right to life of pre-born babies? At first you will be ignored. If you persist, you are labeled a sexist, an oppressor of women, and told by the Surgeon General of the United States to get over your love affair with the fetus. Adhere to the Bible’s unequivocal condemnation of homosexual conduct as mortally sinful? Again, at first you are ignored. Persist and you are labeled a homophobic bigot. One does not have to multiply the examples to raise the suggestion that the techniques unmasked and condemned by Pope Saint Pius X way back in 1907 are today the techniques of what’s been called the “political correctness” movement, in both religion and politics. Take a conservative or traditionalist position in either religion or politics, and you are shunned as an ignoramus. Persist in it and you are branded a racist, sexist, homophobic bigot. [45]

It is an effective technique. It works. But it also discomfords us. At least it *should* discomfort us, because it is an *ad hominem* technique. It depends for its effectiveness not on the force of truth — recall in the modernist mind set operatively there *is no* “truth” — but rather it depends on intimidation. It may be at least part of what Pope Paul VI had in mind when he cautioned that *today, in our time*, “[t]he tail of the devil is functioning in the disintegration of the Catholic world.” [46]

These are distressing and confusing times for the non-modernist Catholic, and sometimes it seems as if there is no solace, except in prayer. And prayer is a great solace and a great solution for problems, and it should never be neglected. But lest we forget, there is

also Cardinal Ratzinger's challenge: "It is time to find again the courage of nonconformism, the capacity to oppose many of the trends of the surrounding culture." [47] ✠

Endnotes

1. Quoted in Ted and Maureen Flynn, *The Thunder of Justice* 213 (1993) (emphasis added). Earlier, in 1972, Pope Paul VI had this candid assessment of the aftermath of the Vatican II Council:

It was believed that after the Second Vatican Council there would be a day of sunshine in the history of the Church. There came instead a day of clouds, storms and darkness, of search and uncertainty. By means of some fissure the smoke of Satan has entered the Temple of God.

Quoted by James Likoudis in Preface, Renee Casin, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Orthodoxy, and Neo-modernism in the Church* (1977). In light of Pope Paul VI's condemnation of modernism as "the most dangerous revolution the Church has ever had to face," and his acknowledgement that modernism "is still scourging (the Church) severely" (see *infra* note 16 and accompanying text), there seems little doubt as to his view of the cause of the fissure whereby the smoke of Satan has entered the Church.

2. Quoted in Thomas W. Petrisko, *Call of the Ages* xxi (1995) (emphasis added).

3. 1 *Corinthians* 3:18-19 (emphasis added).

4. *Isaiah* 29:14.

5. See *Job* 12:17.

6. See *James* 4:4.

7. See *Psalms* 94:11.

8. 2 *Corinthians* 4:3-4. On the same theme see *John* 8:43-45, 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, and *Revelation* 12:9.

9. *Colossians* 2:8 (emphasis added).

10. Citing *Matthew* 24:13; 13:24-30 and 36-43.

11. *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Austin Flannery, O.P., ed. 1992) 773.

12. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger with Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*, pp. 36-37 (1985).

13. 1 *John* 4:15. See also *James* 1:27.

14. *Supra* note 11, at 946.

15. See, e.g., Gary Minda, *Postmodern Legal Movements: Law and Jurisprudence at the Century's End* (New York University Press 1995).

16. *Supra* note 1, at 222.

17. Igino Giordani, *Pius X: A Country Priest*, p. 153 (1954).

18. *Supra* note 1, at 222.

19. *Id.*

20. Thomas E. Judge, *The Encyclical of His Holiness Pius X on the Doctrines of the Modernists*, p. 103.

21. See Raymond B. Marcin, "Schopenhauer's Theory of Justice," in *Catholic University Law Review*, vol. 43, pp. 813, 821 (1994).

22. *Supra* note 20, at 104.

23. Hegel recognized the dilemma Kant's theory had created for metaphysics and epistemology. His (Hegel's) resolution of that dilemma is summarized in his famous statement: "The Real is the Rational and the Rational is the Real." Georg W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, p. 10 (T. M. Knox trans. 1967). In other words, the rationality that our perceiving minds superimposes on things and events is the only "reality" we can ever deal with; in that sense it is reality for us. See Marcin, *supra* note 21, at 824.

24. *Supra* note 17, at 106.

25. Michael Davies, *Partisans of Error: St. Pius X Against the Modernists*, p. 27 (1983).

26. *Id.* at 48.

27. *Id.*

28. Quoted in Davies, *supra* note 25, at 53.

29. *Id.* at 70.

30. Arthur Schopenhauer unmasked the flaw in the Kantian reasoning on this point. See Marcin, *supra* note 21, at 827-828.

31. *Supra* note 20, at 104.

32. *Id.* Conventional Catholicism, of course, tends to view dogmas both as standards of belief and as helps toward moral conduct. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. 28 (1994).

33. *Supra* note 12, at 23.

34. Renee Casin, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Orthodoxy, and Neomodernism in the Church*, p. xviii (trans. and ed. James Likoudis, 1977).

35. Based loosely on 1 *John* 4:12.

36. See, e.g., St. Alphonsus Liguori, *The Sermons of Saint Alphonsus Liguori*, pp. 224-233 and 345-353 (1982); and *Love is Prayer, Prayer is Love: Selected Writings of Saint Alphonsus Liguori* (adapted by John Steingraeber, C.S.S.R., 1973) *passim*, esp. pp. 53-69.

37. *Supra* note 25, at 62-63.

38. *Supra* note 1, at 227.

39. *John* 18:36.

40. See, e.g., *supra* note 1, at 226, 227.

41. *Supra* note 12, at 24.

42. Pope St. Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, para. 39 (1907).

43. Paul H. Hallett, *Introduction to Michael Davies, Partisans of Error: Saint Pius X Against the Modernists*, p. xx (1983).

44. Quoted in Thomas E. Judge, *The Encyclical of His Holiness Pius X on the Doctrines of the Modernists*, pp. 80, 91.

45. In the words of Michael Davies, "Modernism . . . will usually be presented to us under the guise of 'new insights,' contemporary biblical scholarship, or 'the findings of modern theologians.' Those who oppose it will be portrayed as ignorant, bigoted, or uncharitable — probably all three." See Michael Davies, *supra* note 25, at 2.

46. *Supra* note 1, and accompanying text.

47. *Supra* note 12.

Letter to a Bishop

Mgsr. George Kelly

I trust that these words, from an octogenarian protagonist of the faith to a respected friend, will be taken as a given: Do what you can to prevent the substantial meaning of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* from being eviscerated.

The credibility of the Catholic faith depends on the divine authority of the hierarchy. That authority — if you will pardon my use of an inadequate metaphor — is like a three-legged table. It relies on hierarchy's supreme right and responsibility to *define* — (1) *the priesthood and religious life*, where the Church's primary teachers are to be found; (2) the essence of *Catholic theology* where her best "apologia" is developed and transmitted; (3) the *Catholic school*, where young people go, or are sent, for formation in the faith, whatever else may be its function.

I was celebrating the silver jubilee of my priesthood (1967) when the first leg of that table was cut off. The bishops decided that it was un-American to terminate Charles Curran from his teaching post at *CUA*. Nineteen years later, when "big Charlie" was declared unfit by Rome to teach Catholic theology, "little Currans" were all over the Catholic landscape. *Humanae Vitae* (plus the Church's teaching on marriage) became the ultimate victims.

In the same year with its own studies of the priesthood, and for five years thereafter, by intervening in the contest of wills between the Sacred Congregation for Religious over the essentials of religious life, bishops cut off the second leg underpinning their authority. *Ecclesiae Sanctae* (1966) and *Evangelica Testificatio* (1971) fell off the table, too, with about half the population of our glorious school system. (That patrimony was unique in the history of Christianity). The fertile field of religious vocations suddenly began to go barren.

Now by all accounts — from my conversations with bishops — the third leg of Church authority is to be sawed off, too, viz. the heart and soul of that role which belongs to a Good Shepherd to decide when a school is or is not Catholic.

In 1972, I attended the *Congress of Catholic Universities* at the invitation of Cardinal Gabriel Garrone, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education. There I heard the president of Georgetown, in assembly, tell

the Cardinal that should he try to establish norms for the governance of his university, he, the president, would return home to decertify that institution as Catholic. The president of Notre Dame University, using different words, also threatened the Pope's Chief Educator.

Cardinal Garrone did not respond, "What thou dost, do quickly, or I'll do it;" but, angered at the rebellious spirit, instructed all college presidents (ten years before the New Code — 1973) to (1) set out formally in statutes or other formal document his institution's "character and commitment;" and (2) create internal machinery to guarantee both — in the areas of "faith, morality, and discipline," especially.

When the president of Georgetown and others, on return home, continued to tell the Catholic public that Rome really agreed with the Americans, I was sent by the President of St. John's University (N.Y.) to find out whether the Prefect was talking out of two sides of his mouth. I never, before or since, have faced such restrained anger by a Cardinal, of the French Prefect at the American deception. At one point, as if in desperation, he blurted out: "Is there no other voice for Catholic higher education in the United States than the leadership of *NCEA*?" (The *ACCU* is its offspring).

(Out of that one question came the *Fellowship of Catholic Scholars*.)

It is inconceivable to me that any successor to Cardinal Garrone would accept a non-judicial answer to what really is a juridical question. Or, that American bishops would bequeath to their successors a bankrupt estate of secularized colleges, where dissenting religious and theology professors remain in good standing to undermine episcopal and papal authority. A non-decision at a high level will also reduce the pastor on the street to care taking.

What we are doing here is nationalizing ineffectively that which traditionally is the function of the local bishop. Having succeeded in that goal, we are encouraging an amalgamated union of 230 + locals to continue in a general strike against the Church's government. (A strike called by a dozen or so biggies, forcing all the little ones to follow like sheep.) If this was an economic strike against the U.S.A., Catholic bishops would declare it immoral — for the harm it does to people. Instead, we negotiate with "strikers" in such a way as to legitimize a revolution against the Church's Constitution, as outlined in Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* (e.g. No. 27). In so doing we are for-

feiting our people's baptismal right to have their faith protected by those alone who can protect it, viz. Catholic bishops.

My suggestion is that this matter be tabled, that the amalgamated union (ACCU) be decertified as a bargaining agent in the Ameri-

can Church, and that thought be given to means by which local bishops can attend once more to the care of their own faithful, and in so doing be supported by the National Conference and by Rome. We must be prepared to withdraw accreditation from col-

leges, whose presidents contumaciously refuse to accept bishops' oversight of their Catholicity.

I just don't want an old friend like you to think my light has gone out! ✠

DOCUMENTATION

April Is the Cruelest Month: Springtime Reflections on Three Decisions Regarding Human Life and Dignity

+ J. Francis Stafford
Archbishop of Denver
Sixth Sunday of Easter, Mother's Day
May 12, 1996

I. Three Decisions

Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,

Three recent decisions by individuals from various governmental bodies cry out today for reflection, discussion and action by Catholics.

All three decisions occurred in early 1996: the veto by President Bill Clinton of a partial-birth abortion ban; the invalidation of a Washington State law against assisted suicide by the U.S. Court of Appeals; and the veto of legislation by Gov. Roy Romer that would have prohibited same-sex marriages in Colorado. We have had the springtime to reflect on their meaning.

These three decisions represent our culture's latest massive attacks on the dignity of the human person. We would do well to briefly review each of these actions. They represent a conspiracy against life at every level.

1. Veto of the partial-birth abortion ban

On April 10, President Clinton vetoed a bill that would have banned partial-birth abortions, except in cases when the life of the mother is endangered. In such late-term abortions, the child is delivered feet-first. When only the head remains inside the mother, the attending physician pierces the baby's skull with scissors. A tube is inserted, and a vacuum extracts the child's brain matter. The skull is collapsed.

Three more inches and the child would be fully born and entitled to constitutional protection. Three more inches and the "procedure" would be considered legal murder. The "procedure" — which the president of the United States, by his actions, approves — borders on infanticide. The Second Vatican Council calls both abortion and infanticide "abominable crimes."

One is forced to wonder how

President Clinton, who describes himself as a believing Christian, would respond to some key moral questions:

* What does the president consider the human fetus within the womb to be in the third trimester of pregnancy? Does the president simply equate the preborn human being with a nonhuman animal?

* Does the president agree with abortionists like Dr. Warren Martin Hern of Boulder that the human fetus is a morbid growth, a parasite — in Hern's exact words, pregnancy is "a neoplastic, endoparasitic . . . autoinfection" — in the mother's womb? Dr. Hern has been influential in the decisions of public policy-makers legalizing abortion, including former Gov. Richard Lamm and Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder. Yet he advises fellow abortionists against sharing details of their "medical procedures" with the media. Is the president willing to pursue the motives for Hern's reluctance? Are we?

2. Invalidation of a law against assisted suicide

In March, the U. S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit invalidated a Washington State law against assisted suicide. The Appeals

Court drew upon past U.S. Supreme Court decisions on abortion to put the interests of the person in power ahead of the life of the vulnerable. It argued that since a state's authority "may vary with the progression of the pregnancy . . . the state's interest in protecting people from physician-assisted suicide varies "at different points along the life cycle as a person's physical or mental condition deteriorates."

The court bluntly asserted that the lives of younger or healthier individuals are more valuable to the state than the lives of the sick or elderly. The court's ruling suggests that life's value is connected with what is physically and economically convenient. One doesn't need much imagination to see that the choice to die is near to being coerced. Nowhere is the cruel, blind power of money more evident.

The court's decision engages us in a decisive conflict between the Christian and post-Christian views of death. With the court, post-Christians assert a radicalized will to personal freedom. They treat freedom as the absolutely highest good and deny its dependence on truth. In ratifying the legality of assisted suicide, the court denies the millennial truth that God alone is the Lord of life and death. "It is I who bring both death and life" (Dt 32:39; cf 2 Kg 5:7; 1 Sam 2:6).

To choose suicide is an act of despair. It is to judge that one has been fundamentally deceived by life. Death by assisted suicide is reduced to no more than "a medical problem," a "natural and salutary release" from the absurd contradictions of life. It is the final alienation. The suicide has no "Thou" who can form a bridge leading out of the lonely self. Even within the enclosed universe of our

secularized culture, self-murder cannot be anything other than a graceless tragedy.

On the other hand, Christians facing betrayal, sickness, suffering, death and despair continue to trust God against all odds. To be sure, Jeremiah's lament is on the lips of many Christians, "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived" (Jer 20:7). But they are unequivocal about the dependence of freedom upon truth. This dependence is expressed most clearly and authoritatively in the words of Christ: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (Jn 8:32). And the truth is that the Son of Man alone holds "the keys of death and hades" (Rev 1: 1 8).

Disciples live their suffering in Christ. To die to the Lord (Rom 14:8) is to choose freely the supreme obedience to resist in hope the final trial. When all is collapsing, when nothing is possible anymore except the nobility of endurance in Christ, even when the struggle from a "natural" point of view — becomes grotesque, Christians still embrace the anguish and pain leading to death. Their action is not unlike St. Francis's final embrace of "Lady Poverty" in the church of St. Mary of the Portiuncula in 1226. His biographer writes that "he accepted death singing" and "loved his own to the end." Yes, Christians even rejoice in their sufferings for the sake of their brothers and sisters, and in their flesh they complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his Body, that is, the Church (Col 1:24).

The greatest graces of my episcopacy and priesthood have come about when I have been present to witness in faith this mysterious, surprising, unutterably loving

drama of human freedom and divine freedom. This drama unfolds in the death of priests, relatives and others who through the companionship, sympathy and support of other Christians are comforted and consoled by God in their afflictions (2 Cor 1:4).

3. Veto of legislation prohibiting same-sex marriages

Also this spring, Gov. Roy Romer vetoed legislation that would have prohibited same-sex marriages in the state of Colorado even if such unions were recognized elsewhere. Under current law, homosexual "marriages" granted in other states would be recognized in Colorado. Without even a hint of the historic import of his veto, the governor undermined by legal fiat what had been the foundation of civilization for the past 1,500 years.

Until the present moment, people have read reality through its nuptial/marital/covenantal meaning. From the very beginning, the premier sign of God has been the nuptial union of man and woman. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gn 1:27). Anglo-Saxon law was rooted in such an insight found in the early medieval rite of Sarum, the preferred rite of the English Churches, and before that in the Gregorian Sacramentary. The Sacrament of the Eucharist is the apex of reality as nuptial/marital/covenantal.

That early and medieval peoples interpreted the very nature of reality through the covenantal and bridal relationship of God and creation, of Yahweh and Israel, and of Christ and the Church is clear from this text contained in the ancient Gregorian Sacramentary:

“O God, you consecrated the union of marriage by a mystery so profound as to prefigure in the marriage covenant the sacrament of Christ and the Church.” This foundational insight about reality lasted until this decade.

As archbishop of Denver, I wish to emphasize again — as I have said repeatedly in the past — that the acceptance and promotion of homosexual activity as a valid moral option are a direct assault on the ancient moral vision which, for more than 15 centuries, has established both the private and public responsibilities indispensable for the achievement of the free order of society. The governor’s veto is a repudiation of the basic foundation of the state and society as we have known them.

II. Some Springtime Reflections

In developing these reflections, I wish to express a special concern for young Americans. What effect will these three decisions have upon them? Evil laws will only increase their mistrust and skepticism. The older generation matured in a society that was still in touch with the past. They knew something of the life-giving culture built up over the past 1,500 years.

Yet, the violence of this century had already forewarned us of how far we had drifted from the medieval Christians’ perception of the world. The poet Chaucer captured that vision well when he described April with its “sweet, musical showers” as a time of pilgrimage. Since publication in 1922 of the great T. S. Eliot poem “The Waste Land,” April — normally a time of new life and rebirth — had

begun to be perceived as “the cruelest month.” So even for older Americans, creation was fast becoming a loveless place without beauty.

Our young people know little or nothing of that receding world of beauty and of love. Their reading lists include such authors as Fraser, Nietzsche, Freud and others whose writings have undermined that civilization. As students they look into the modern abyss created by these men, and they interpret the fearful spiritual confusion which they see as “interesting,” and even “exciting.” Reflect upon today’s music. Too often, the ugly and cruel have become the contemporary world’s standard of value — not beauty and goodness and truth.

Young people instinctively recognize the absence of love and beauty in their world. And in their hunger for truth and goodness, they look for if “emergency rations.” They seek interpersonal relations of various sorts to fill the void in a world that is at best impersonal, at worst hostile and Darwinian.

World Youth Day ’93 in Denver indicated that many young people are burdened with the pain of their loss of God. They look upon one another, they long for the gaze of love to be returned. What do they find? They commonly discover the futile gaze, the empty gaze, or no gaze at all.

In an article appearing recently in *The New York Times*, Meghan Daum, born in 1970, writes about her generation’s experience of such relations. “Three decades after the pill put a government-approved stamp on premarital sex, we’ve entered a period when mistrust equals responsibility, when fear signifies health What could be

sadder? We’re not allowed to believe anyone anymore. . . . One result is a corrosion of the soul, a chronic dishonesty and fear. . . . In this world, peace of mind is a utopian concept.”

One senses here that a process of unraveling has begun. Daum speaks of “a specter of death that floats above the pursuit of” intimate interpersonal relations between young adult men and women. One recalls the troubling words of Pope John Paul II that there is “a culture of death” at work on a planetary scale. His words point out the bitterly painful quality of the world’s guilt.

The three recent decisions will hasten the sense of weariness one finds in many young Americans today. Having already grown tired and empty within, they experience the further decline of wonder and awe and adoration before the mystery of life and death. Their nonchalance, a close kin to boredom, does not sustain them in the drama of human and divine freedom.

But these three decisions affect us all. The dignity of human life is being eclipsed for everyone. The marriage covenant is no longer how our civil and media pace-setters interpret family, civilization and religious faith. The modern world is being drained of authentic life. The absence of objective truth in the exercise of personal freedom opens the door to the manipulative abuse of power and totalitarianism. Against our will, a new kind of well-heeled, spin-controlled barbarism is being insinuated into daily life, and into the fabric of our families.

How else are we to interpret, the ‘right’ given by the president and federal court to a family to kill

their own members, whether children or aged parents? What other meaning can be assigned to the decision of the governor of Colorado, who evidently no longer defines the family as founded upon the relation of man and woman? These decisions are an urgent warning about the apathy of our people. It is impossible to overestimate the mischief of these decisions. They strike at the heart of our civilization. Mothers and doctors, at one-time universal signs of life, have too often become today signs of the destruction of life.

The direction of the modern state is against the dignity of human life. These Spring decisions harbingers a dramatic intensifying of the conflict between the Catholic Church and governing civil authorities.

III. The Catholic Response

Where should Catholic men and women stand in this struggle about our civil and moral foundations?

Obviously, this is not the first conflict between Church and state in history. Many of our ancestors faced similar confrontations when they immigrated to what they perceived (then) to be “this land of freedom.” But wherever they lived, our ancestors understood themselves to be walking on pilgrimage through a strange country.

Our pilgrimage today is also in company with Jesus, the “lamb standing, as though it had been slain” (Rev 5:6). He has already drawn the sting from death. So Christians can face the future, despite its anxieties and challenges, with courage and joy. It remains

God’s secret how many of us today and in the years to come will be admitted to share in the suffering of Jesus in Gethsemane.

Life with the Son of God is a discipleship of folly. This shouldn’t come as a surprise. We have known from our morning days that folly in the eyes of the world — has been the form of the Christian life.

Francis of Assisi dramatized that truth for us in the creation of the first creche at Greccio, where the infant Jesus rests among rough animals. Nor can we forget that the One whom we call Lord and Master later preferred to ride the donkey rather than the elegant stallion. Nor did He choose the soaring eagle or hawk as the image of the Holy Spirit, but rather the modest dove.

Today our weapons cannot be the same as the weapons of those who stand for a “culture of death.” Coercion and violence of any kind are not the Christian way. Ours rather are the weapons of the Gospel. “Take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.” (Eph 6:13).

Do not be afraid! “Death and life were locked together in a unique struggle. Life’s Captain died; now He reigns, no more to die” (*Roman Missal, Easter Sunday Sequence*). ☩

ANNOUNCEMENT

News from the Society of Catholic Social Scientists:

The SCSS’s fourth annual national meeting-conference will take place on October 25-26, 1996 at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Steubenville, Ohio. At the conference, Fr. Francis Canavan, S.J. will receive the SCSS’s Pope Pius XI Award for “Contributions toward the Building of a True Catholic Social Science.” For further information, call the Conference Office at Franciscan University of Steubenville: (614) 283-6314. This year, the SCSS is launching a new scholarly journal, *The Catholic Social Science Review*. For information, call Dominic Aquila: (614) 283-6243. The SCSS is also bringing to completion an anthology entitled *Defending the Family*, co-edited by Paul Vitz and Stephen Krason. Publication plans are not yet finalized. It is also working on a series of pamphlets which seek to apply the principles of Catholic social teaching to major American public issue areas. For general information about the SCSS, call Stephen Krason: (614) 283-6416.



The Mission of a Dominican College

Rev. Philip A. Smith, O.P.
President of Providence College
Faculty Address, April 17, 1996

Introduction

At my first faculty meeting on September 28, 1994, I stated that I considered “my primary responsibility to be the implementation of our mission.” Our Mission Statement is crucial for the future of Providence College because it is the document that expresses our self-understanding and character, our purpose and philosophy of education. It is the ultimate standard for allocating resources, shaping the curriculum, evaluating present programs or introducing new ones, and setting the direction for the future. In the end, Providence College will be successful only to the degree that the outcomes we achieve match the goals and objectives we establish to fulfill our mission.

Our new mission statement is the result of a long and careful process involving every segment of the campus. It has been endorsed by the Faculty Senate and approved by the Board of Trustees.

The importance of the mission statement is emphasized in the first standard for accreditation of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. This standard also asserts that the mission of the institution must be “accepted and widely understood by its . . . faculty and administrators,” and that “specific objectives, reflective of the institution’s overall mission and purposes” be developed for each area of the institution.

Since this is a faculty meeting, I will confine my comments to the need for our mission to be accepted and understood by our faculty and to those aspects of the mission statement that relate to academics: liberal arts, Catholic identity, Dominican perspective and educating students to be “responsible and productive citizens in their own society and the world community.”

My remarks about the mission statement are about many things: fashioning an educational vision that will enhance academic excellence and will prepare students for life in society. They are about fidelity to our intellectual and religious traditions, our philosophy of education and my responsibility to implement the mission of the College.

Liberal Arts

My comments on the liberal arts will be brief since they have been discussed at length in the process of our curriculum review. But first, I want to reaffirm my conviction that academic excellence must be the coin of the realm at Providence College. In any college or university worthy of the name, scholarship must be pursued and truth sought for their own sake in every discipline.

Religious affiliation cannot substitute for scholarship. If Providence College does not fulfill its proper role as an educational institution, it fails to fulfill its mission and undermines any role faith might play in academic affairs.

Commenting on the importance of a liberal arts education, the late Dr. Rene Fortin framed the issue like this: “Tertullian’s famous question, ‘What has Athens to do

with Jerusalem?’ remains the abiding question, but now exponentially expanded: what do Socrates and Augustine, Shakespeare and Michelangelo, Marx and Einstein, Sartre and Solzhenitsyn have to do with us, or to say to us?”

Since its inception, Providence College has responded to the Athens-Jerusalem question by providing its students with a liberal arts curriculum designed to educate them in the great ancient and modern traditions that have shaped our present world. To this end, we have developed a core curriculum consisting of the humanities, the fine arts, the natural sciences, the social sciences and mathematics. For more than a quarter of a century, the centerpiece of this core curriculum has been the Development of Western Civilization Program, a team-taught approach that situates ideas in their historical and cultural context.

The goal of all liberal education is the liberation of the mind from the restraints of ignorance, and the elevation of the spirit to know and embrace the values that enrich human life with dignity and meaning. A liberal education, therefore, must enable students to seek knowledge, recognize beauty, cultivate character, practice virtue and foster community. The commitment of Providence College to liberal education and the specific form it takes on our campus is rooted in its Dominican educational tradition shaped mainly by St. Thomas Aquinas.

In the Dominican tradition, Athens has a lot to do with Jerusalem. Reflecting the Thomistic unity of the human person, our liberal arts education is designed to nurture the whole person. The

core of our academic program provides students with opportunities to advance their critical thinking and communication skills, to discover and evaluate their spiritual life and experiences, to study the achievements of the past, ponder the meaning of the present and prepare for shaping the future in a manner that includes the divine dimension of reality.

Our commitment to an integrated program of liberal studies demands that our core curriculum requirements reflect this vision of liberal education. It is not enough simply to provide different courses in different disciplines. The various components must relate to one another, to the core in general and to the rest of the curriculum. A well-integrated core curriculum will enable the College to achieve its educational goals of not only transmitting cultural traditions but also of preparing our students to deal with broad intellectual issues, questions of value, problems of change and concerns that relate to the future development of society.

Catholic Identity

It is relatively simple to identify the essentials of the liberal arts and to indicate how the various components relate to one another within the core and to the rest of the curriculum. It is more challenging to identify what the adjectives “Catholic” and “Dominican” add to the liberal arts to make Providence College distinctive and unique.

Our Catholic and Dominican heritage must be understood carefully. It cannot be reduced to the inspirational phrases found in our recruiting and development literature, to courses taught in the

theology department, or to pastoral counseling or liturgical celebrations, however important these may be.

Rather, our religious identity must permeate the work and life of the College. This notion of permeation represents a philosophy of education broader than academics and an understanding of religion broader than a confessional creed. It requires nothing less than the existence of a Catholic culture that cuts across the curriculum and the campus and finds expression in what we say and do, both as an institution and as individuals.

I regard the Memorial Mass celebrated on March 27th to commemorate the tragic deaths of our two young students as a fine example of what I mean by a Catholic culture. While representing and incorporating individuals from every segment of our College community, the memorial liturgy transcended every one of them. It was an excellent expression of how an academic community in the Catholic tradition grieves over the loss of loved ones. This culture can be created and sustained only if the faculty, administration and staff are supportive of our mission and well-disposed to Catholicism, whether or not they share that belief.

The Catholic intellectual tradition is central to our Catholic identity because Catholic education is rooted in tradition. I know some agree with George Bernard Shaw's quip that a Catholic university is a contradiction in terms. I am also aware that some identify the Catholic intellectual tradition with oppression, narrowness and dogmatism. I acknowledge that sometimes the tradition has been untrue to its own principles, has been slow to

embrace legitimate new ideas, has reacted with repression and coercion. The Catholic tradition is not unique in that regard. In any case, I am more interested in shaping the future today than in defending the past.

The meaning of tradition is very important in this context. This is not an exercise in nostalgia, an academic version of “Dances With Wolves.” Tradition is not an irrelevant relic of a dead past, but the dynamic development of Catholic thought over the centuries. I have found the work of Margaret Steinfelds, the Editor of *Commonweal*, helpful for understanding the nature and the implications of tradition. She describes tradition like this: “A tradition is...a focus for questioning, a framework for ordered inquiry, a standard for preferring some sets of ideas (and values) over others; tradition is the record of the community's conversation over time about its meaning and direction. A living tradition is a tradition that can raise questions about itself.”

Actually, Catholicism has an incredibly rich and diverse intellectual tradition, stretching back to the first Christian university in third-century Alexandria led by the brilliant Origen. The task of scholarship is to retrieve the best of that tradition and bring it to bear on our current educational efforts. Since it is alive and oriented to the future, the Catholic tradition must dialogue with contemporary culture, but it must also weigh the new ideas and theories of our pluralistic society in light of the memories, beliefs and practices of its tradition.

Fidelity to the intellectual tradition requires that theology

courses be included in the curriculum and that student learning be evaluated by examination. These courses must be taught with the same rigor as other academic disciplines and by professors whose academic training is in Scripture and Catholic or Christian theology. However, that is not enough to ensure a Catholic identity. It is possible that theology courses could meet the standards of academic excellence and instruction without ever coming to grips with our Catholic heritage, if it is not reflected elsewhere in the curriculum. How can that be done?

I hope that we are past such polemical questions as: Is there a Catholic chemistry, biology, accounting or mathematics? Clearly, the Catholic intellectual heritage does not pertain in exactly the same way and to the same extent to every discipline and program. The tradition is more relevant to literature and economics than it is to chemistry and biology. Religious and moral issues should never be forced into classroom discussions. Where they are pertinent, they should be treated like any other topic: openly, fairly and accurately, with opportunity for discussion. The classroom is not the place to preach nor should professors be evaluated on the basis of their piety.

However, even if there is no Catholic “biology” or “chemistry” as such, there is a Catholic perspective on the meaning and use of the data when they impinge on moral, religious and ethical questions. Through its long and rich heritage, the Catholic tradition has made enormous contributions to national and international problems such as social justice and economic policy,

hunger and homelessness, war and the arms race, health care and welfare reform, immigration and the role of government in life. Today, Providence College can also make a distinctive contribution to higher education by committing itself at the very center of its educational efforts to the philosophical, theological and moral dimensions of the questions it addresses.

Personal and institutional witness are also crucial for Catholic identity. Pope Paul VI once stated that “contemporary people listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers or if they listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.” It is the actions of individuals and the institution that legitimate or negate the claim of Providence to be Catholic. We weaken our credibility if we proclaim “Truth” as our motto but engage in deceptive practices; if we maintain that every person is an image of God but treat members of the College community and others with disrespect; if we promote a value-oriented philosophy of education but separate the transmission of knowledge from the cultivation of character.

The Unique Dominican Perspective

The Dominican perspective on education springs from the unique vision of St. Dominic which inspired it. He established his order of Preachers because he was convinced that the problems of his day called for nothing less than a conversion, not only of heart but also of mind. Thus, he insisted that his followers prepare for ministry by engaging in serious study and combining it with a life

of prayer and meditation. Although Dominic’s focus was on preaching, education was included within the scope of the Order’s ministry almost from the beginning. In fact, the Dominican tradition has always been intellectual at its core.

Moreover, many aspects of St. Dominic’s vision are as valid for academics as they are for preaching: his emphasis on the integration of study and spirituality; his passion for truth; his recognition of the human person as the image of God; his compassion for those mired in darkness and despair; his burning desire to communicate his message to his listeners.

One of St. Dominic’s most important legacies was the necessity of personal witness for effective ministry. His own preaching against Albigensian dualism succeeded only when his life and actions preached as eloquently as his words. He reminded his followers that the success of their ministry would hinge on the credibility of their lives. They must first experience the “light” and live the “truth” they proclaim. St. Dominic’s vision took academic form largely through the efforts of the great 13th century saint and genius, Thomas Aquinas. A number of themes he developed and refined have become distinctive features of the Dominican educational perspective ever since. Let me reflect on just a few of them that have implications for the mission of Providence College today.

1) The relation of faith and reason: The Dominican tradition has always regarded faith and reason as distinct but inseparable. Faith illuminates reason but does not destroy it. Far from being at odds, faith and reason are one in the

arduous task of probing the mysteries of the universe and the meaning of the Gospel. Thus, following in the footsteps of such saints and scholars as Aquinas and Albert the Great, the Dominican tradition can study all created reality according to the rigorous standards of human inquiry because we believe that the natural order is intelligible. This compatibility of faith and reason encourages the search for truth and the pursuit of academic excellence across the entire spectrum of knowledge and rejoices in human accomplishments.

However, while compatible, faith and reason are also distinct. The Dominican tradition has always understood the human person in the light of faith as an image of God, but it has consistently rejected fundamentalistic interpretations of Scripture. Similarly, as Steinfels has noted, discoveries in psychology, sociology, anthropology, history and the sciences enrich our understanding of who we are and what we do, they do not exhaust the meaning of the human person nor determine the human journey.

Human persons are not solely genetically or socially determined. There must always be room for divine grace and free will, thought and faith, conscience and choice. This perspective is the rationale for the requirement in moral theology. Moral behavior must be grounded in an understanding of person that transcends individual disciplines and affirms the human person as the image of God.

2) The role of philosophy: Because of the importance given to reason, the tradition places a special emphasis on philosophy and philosophical thinking. Aquinas trans-

formed Western Christianity by philosophical insights drawn from Aristotle and Plato, Arab Muslims and Jewish thinkers. It is simply impossible to understand the intellectual tradition apart from philosophy. Philosophy is necessary for grasping the meaning of the human person, probing the ethical basis of human behavior and developing a systematic and disciplined approach to the real.

Aquinas' philosophical understanding of the unity of human person has far-reaching implications for the Dominican educational tradition. Education is addressed not only to the mind but to the whole person. The integration of the liberal arts with specialized disciplines and the relation of spiritual, moral and social growth to intellectual development flows directly from the Dominican philosophy of education designed to embrace every dimension of the person.

3) The goodness of creation: The Dominican insistence on the basic goodness of the human person and created reality stems from St. Dominic's struggle with the Albigensians who maintained that all material creation was evil, including the human body. Following Dominic, Aquinas placed the human person as the image of God at the center of his research and writings. Centuries later, two Spanish Dominicans, De Vittorio and Las Casas, appealed to the dignity of the human person to defend the rights of Native Americans against exploitation by Spanish colonials. In our own time, the dignity of the human person and the goodness of creation have enormous implications for our program of studies concerning

issues of human rights and the common good, life and death, hunger and health care, peace and justice, economic policy and the political theory, participation in community and environmental concerns.

4) Aquinas has left a methodology that is important for education. In his great theological masterpiece, the *Summa Theologiae*, he developed his search for truth by asking questions. He died before the *Summa* was finished. That the *Summa* be incomplete was providential because a method that proceeds by asking questions about mystery can never be finished. After the manner of Aquinas, each generation must refashion the tradition in a way suited to its own time and place. Each generation must contribute to the growth of the tradition and the search for truth by asking questions about its complex issues and mysteries. Asking the right questions is essential for reaching the correct answer and is just as important.

At its General Chapter in Avila in 1986, the order urged its members to exercise their ministry on the frontiers. In our context, a frontier is the dynamic outer edge of a living tradition. The Avila Chapter identified five of these: the frontiers between life and death, humanity and inhumanity, Christian experience and the great world religions, religious experience and secular ideologies, the Catholic tradition and other Christians.

This list is by no means exhaustive nor is it easily adapted to the academic enterprise. However, while frontiers do not dictate the content of the curriculum, they can shape our attitudes toward change. They suggest that the most

fundamental issues facing education today arise from our broader social and cultural context. Thus, the current challenges facing us are not so much frontiers of education as they are frontiers for education. In the words of Vatican II, we discover the frontiers for educational efforts by “reading the signs of the times.” The challenge for Providence College is to bring the richness of our tradition to bear on the issues emerging from the frontiers of our culture.

Responsible and Productive Citizens... in Society and the World

Providence College cannot fulfill its mission if it focuses only on academic excellence and fidelity to our religious and intellectual legacy, independently of how people live and die in our broader society. We must also be concerned about the kind of students we graduate because the College influences the thinking and values of society primarily by shaping their insights and morals. Obviously, we must prepare students well academically for careers, professions or graduate school. We must also educate them to be responsible citizens in society. Our goal should be to graduate young men and women with the intellectual vision and the moral values, the sensitivity to human suffering and the commitment to service necessary for making the world a brighter and a better place.

I will use the Catholic tradition of the common good as a framework for discussing responsible citizenship. In doing so, I want to acknowledge my indebtedness to the thought of Father David Hollenbach. While Catholic

thought has long regarded the common good as the general end of social life, it is always in relation to the dignity of the individual. As Pope Paul XII declared, “The person . . . is the subject, the foundation and the end of social life.” Since education is the primary means of sustaining and developing culture, society’s ability to achieve the human good for each citizen will depend largely on its educational efforts.

I have already noted that education on the frontiers entails reading the “signs of the times.” Even a casual reading of the “signs of our times” reveals a highly pluralistic and a deeply divided nation as evidenced by the bitter conflicts and debates over such issues as unemployment and illegal immigration, human rights and health care, the elderly and the homeless, abortion and assisted suicide, affirmative action and welfare reform, environmental protection and job preservation to mention just a few. These and similar social conflicts appear to be insoluble by means of the individualistic presuppositions that are so prevalent in our society. I think an education rooted in the common good can make an important contribution to the challenges facing society.

The Catholic tradition of the common good rests on the conviction that it is only in relationship with others that human persons can achieve dignity and the fullness of life. This concept of person is rooted in the biblical notion of the Covenant. God called Israel as a people, not as individuals one at a time. It was reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council which proclaimed that “it pleased God . . . to make (people) holy and save them

not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people” However, for humans to flourish in community, it must be a place where they can experience and actually live the basic human values of truth, justice, freedom, friendship and love.

This communal concept of person has implications for how we understand freedom. Freedom cannot be defined solely as the right to be left alone by others. Authentic freedom in society is positive, the freedom to do something. Its exercise depends on the communal relationships that give individuals a measure of real power to shape their lives and environment. Certainly, oppression and infringement on dignity and rights violate the very foundations of freedom. However, an understanding of freedom that restricts it to immunity from interference by others strikes me as incomplete. The biblical freedom described in the Exodus account is not simply freedom from oppression but also freedom for participation in the shared life of a people. Liberation was from bondage into community.

The human good in community cannot be achieved without justice. In their Letter, Economic Justice For All, the American bishops offer the following minimum definition of justice: “Basic justice demands the establishment of minimum levels of participation in the life of the human community for all persons.” Put negatively: “The ultimate injustice is for a person or group to be treated actively or abandoned passively as if they were nonmembers of the human race.” The bishops call this exclu-

sion “marginalization,” the exclusion from social life and from participation in the common good of the community. Robert Bellah describes communities who “marginalize” as “lifestyle enclaves,” a kind of club whose members are united by shared living patterns, leisure activities or mutual self-interest. In a community of the common good, there is an active and genuine concern for the well-being of others, with a special obligation to care for the poor, the weak and the powerless.

We live in a society deeply, and perhaps even dangerously, divided along the lines of religious beliefs and value systems, social behavior and political ideologies, national origin and ethnic background, race and class. In the midst of this social fragmentation, there is

also a growing quest for traditional and common values and for the need to connect with others to discover meaning and a sense of direction in life. I believe the Catholic tradition of the common good can contribute to this quest by offering a vision of life in community whereby the individual person can flourish by experiencing essential human values and contributing to their development by witnessing to those values in dealings with others.

Conclusion

Our revised statement has clarified our identity, reaffirmed our philosophy of education and confirmed our commitment to service.

My reflections on the meaning of four elements of our mission

reveal that Providence College stands heir to an incredibly rich legacy. We are a dynamic institution, rooted in the past, poised on the edge of the present and oriented toward the future. However, for our future to be viable, we must be clear about our identity, carve out a niche in the academic world and be excellent at what we do. We simply cannot do everything and do it well.

Our challenge is to fashion an educational vision that matches the talents of our students, fosters academic excellence, retrieves the best of our tradition, meets the demands of the present and prepares for the opportunities awaiting us in the Third Millennium. There is no need to fear tomorrow. Together, we can forge a future that will dawn bright with promise and hope! ✠

A Special Seminary

It would please me immensely if Fellowship members would take some interest in Holy Apostles Seminary. Located in a small Connecticut town, unpromisingly named Cromwell, Holy Apostles is an altogether exceptional place.

When Professor John Haas, of the splendid St. Charles Seminary in Philadelphia, was commenting on TV (EWTN) on Pope John Paul II's visit to St. Joseph Seminary in the New York Archdiocese, he offered a very short list of the best seminaries in the country (he named three), Holy Apostles was on the list.

I have been rector at Holy Apostles for five years, and am

leaving there to return to my province this summer. Holy Apostles is a hard place to leave. But it deserved a rector younger than I, and found an ideal new rector in Fr. Douglas Mosey, CSB.

Materially, it is a poor seminary. Its buildings are old; it has no marble halls; its financial underpinnings are fragile; and it does not have the long tradition of many seminaries. But I found it a great seminary. It has a splendid faculty, an excellent formation team, a clear vision, and a magnificent spirit. And over the last decades, when vocation shortages are so great, it has each year sent large numbers of graduates to serve as priests — as priests who love the Church deeply.

Holy Apostles was founded by

Father Eusebe Menard. He founded also the community of missionaries of the Holy Apostles, who run the seminary. A chief concern of Father Menard was to establish a school for later vocations. But he also planted in Holy Apostles a great spirit.

From its beginning, he taught all at Holy Apostles to have a great love for the Church. He planted deep within it a strong and manly spirit of prayer, a great love for the Eucharist, earnest devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and an astonishing spirit of fraternal generosity.

He taught it also a spirit of Gospel poverty and simplicity. Every student at Holy Apostles has always been required to give at least three hours of manual work to serve the seminary community, and

each takes a turn doing dishes. In the evaluations we ask the students to give us each year of all aspects of seminary life, they tell us never to lose these signs of Gospel poverty and fraternal service.

At the recent Vatican visitation of seminaries, the team visiting Holy Apostles was tempted to urge that it be closed. For its financial base was very weak; and lack of money (dreadful though money is) can lead to weaknesses almost everywhere. But the team noted also that there was a spirit at Holy Apostles that had to be saved. They urged the three bishops of Connecticut to serve on the Board of the seminary, to preserve what was excellent in it, and to guide its necessary growth. They have done so generously.

Father Francis Lescoe, who was a rector at Holy Apostles for many years before I came, did great things for the school. Especially he persuaded excellent professors to come to Holy Apostles, to serve a seminary that was generously Catholic, and filled with good students who loved the Church, and their priestly calling.

Recently a team of educators (not all of them Catholics) was sent to Holy Apostles by the Commission on Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges to assess our application for re-accreditation.

After their visit, this team presented an astonishing report to the Commission and to us. They chose, in this academic evaluation, to speak first of what they called the “spirit” of Holy Apostles. For, they said, “Because of this spirit Holy Apostles is a particularly beautiful and unique example of the great variety of institutions of higher education . . . in New England.”

They spelled out at length the elements of this spirit. In words seldom found in such academic reports, they wrote that the first element of this spirit is “a great love of the Church,” which gives focus and direction to all that is done there. They felt that the spirit was well served by the exceptional personal services given to the students — in educational assistance, in counseling, in spiritual guidance. They spoke of the warm spirit of cooperation that ruled everywhere, and even added that there was at Holy Apostles “a serious but joyful pursuit of holiness.”

They spoke also of the excellence of the theological faculty, and of the important structural improvements in the school over recent years.

Many things contribute to the spirit of Holy Apostles. Certainly a first place must be given to the fine faculty, the devoted formation team, and the whole staff. But perhaps the seminarians themselves contribute most. The seminary has many students of a more mature age, men who had been physicians, lawyers, and held other sorts of secular positions. It has also many students of a more standard age. The majority are diocesan students, but there is a good minority of members of religious communities. And something splendid happens: the best of every element works to encourage and support all the others.

Holy Apostles needs more students: we had about seventy five in theology this year, but we would do better with about twenty more. We would wish that Fellowship members who might come to know of the seminary would speak to others about it. This is a good

place to become a priest.

Holy Apostles needs financial help too. It is not supported by a diocese or by a prosperous religious community. It is seeking now to set up a real Office of Development, but finds that expensive. In puzzling ways, a devout lay group that pledged to assist the seminary (and other concerns of their own) years ago, got control of the names of most of our benefactors, and refuses to give us access to them. We ask for prayers that they may change their minds, and that those who would want to help this special seminary may be able to do so.

But God certainly takes care of what he wishes to flourish. If any in our Fellowship know people who would be pleased to know about and pray for our school, and, when possible, occasionally help materially as well, the seminary would be happy to send to anyone who is interested its *Newsletter*. Holy Apostles needs the prayerful support of many (happily we have in a special way the earnest prayers of all the Poor Clare Monasteries in the Immaculate Conception Federation). Those who might have some interest in helping may write to: Very Rev. Douglas Mosey, CSB, Holy Apostles Seminary, 33 Prospect Hill Road, Cromwell, CT, 06416. ✠



Review Criticizes New Edition of Father McBrien's *Catholicism*

The third edition of Catholicism, by Father Richard McBrien, "poses pastoral problems particularly as a textbook in undergraduate college courses and in parish education programs," says a review of the work prepared by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Doctrine and Pastoral Practices. McBrien is a theology professor at the University of Notre Dame. The review, sent to the U.S. bishops by the NCCB Committee on Doctrine, was made public April 9.

In a recent letter to Father Richard McBrien, Archbishop John R. Quinn, chairman of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine and Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk, acting chairman upon Archbishop Quinn's retirement, expressed disappointment that the new edition of Father McBrien's book *Catholicism* did not sufficiently correct several deficiencies that the committee had identified in its examination of the first two editions of the book undertaken in the early '80s. This examination culminated in a 1985 statement specifying a number of deficiencies that the committee hoped would be corrected in any future editions.¹

In addition to bringing this matter to the author's attention, the Committee on Doctrine has also determined that a more general review of the book would now be

helpful to the Catholic community at large. This review was prepared by the staff of the Committee on Doctrine and is published with the authorization of the committee.

This review provides an outline of the major difficulties that the book poses from the standpoint of those who are concerned to monitor the possible effects of the book, not on theological specialists, but on theological beginners, the vast majority of the people of God in every age. Insofar as *Catholicism* is a work of speculative theology, professional theologians may evaluate it; insofar as the book is an introductory textbook of Catholic theology, it has certain shortcomings from the pastoral point of view that will be examined in this review.

The problems which *Catholicism* poses as an introductory text fall into three categories. First, some statements are inaccurate or at least misleading. Second, there is in the book an overemphasis on the plurality of opinion within the Catholic theological tradition that makes it difficult at times for the reader to discern the normative core of that tradition. Third, *Catholicism* overstates the significance of recent developments within the Catholic tradition, implying that the past appears to be markedly inferior to the present and obscuring the continuity of the tradition. Falling within the latter two categories are difficulties that reappear throughout the work; they constitute a pattern that could be overlooked by an exclusive focus on particular passages.

A. Examples of Inaccurate or Misleading Statements

1) *The Impeccability of Jesus Christ*

Catholicism insists that it is possible to hold the faith of the church while maintaining that Jesus Christ could have sinned. "It is not that Jesus Christ was absolutely incapable of sin, but rather that he was able not to sin and, in fact, did not sin" (p. 547). The book argues that "both views — the one favoring impeccability and the one that does not — are within the range of Catholic orthodoxy" (p. 547). This position, however, cannot be reconciled with the Christology of the councils.² In two natures, Jesus Christ is only one hypostasis (or person), the hypostasis of the Word. With Christ there is no possible subject of the verb *to sin*. There are indeed two wills in Christ, but only one person, one subject. The contention that Jesus could have sinned, if followed to its logical conclusion, inevitably implies a Nestorian or an adoptionist Christology, though it must be said that *Catholicism* does not draw such extreme conclusions.³

2) *The Virginal Conception of Jesus*

Catholicism presents the virgin birth of Jesus as being of uncertain and perhaps even doubtful historicity.⁴ The book argues that belief in the virgin birth should be considered a theologoumenon, "a non-doctrinal theological interpretation that cannot be verified or refuted on the basis of historical evidence, but that can be affirmed because of its close connection with some defined doctrine about God" (p. 542).

While the adjective *non-normative* has been deleted from the new edition's definition of theologoumenon (in the study edition, p. 516), the book continues to describe belief in the virgin birth as "nondoctrinal." This belief, however, has been a constant part of church teaching from the first century and has been reaffirmed by the Holy See since Vatican II.⁵

It is confusing to say, as *Catholicism* does (p. 543), that the cooperation of Joseph in the conception of Jesus was not excluded by any *explicit* definition. That point has been implicitly taught in the creeds, and the implication has been spelled out by constant and repeated magisterial teaching since the fifth century.

The 1985 statement of the Committee on Doctrine pointed to (among other matters) the treatment of the virginal conception of Jesus in *Catholicism* as one of those that were found "confusing and ambiguous." This description also applies to the treatment of this question in the new edition, for it remains substantially the same. The book seems to suggest that as a result of modern biblical scholarship the scales tip against the factual historicity of the virginal conception. Interpreted in this way, *Catholicism* comes very close to denying, if it does not actually deny, an article of faith.

3) *The Perpetual Virginity of Mary*

While *Catholicism* offers an examination of the virgin birth and concludes that this belief is a theologoumenon, its treatment of the belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary is purely descriptive and

never systematic. The matter is discussed in terms of a descriptive history of the development of this belief, an account that itself appears in the course of an overview of the development of veneration of Mary in general (pp. 1078-1100). This overview has a decidedly skeptical tone, emphasizing the lack of reference and the occasionally negative references to Mary in the New Testament and in the early church, the influence of apocryphal and particularly Docetic writings, and the opposition of major saints and theologians (Bernard, Bonaventure, Aquinas) to doctrines such as the immaculate conception.

The book stresses that the New Testament says nothing about the perpetual virginity of Mary (rather, it speaks of brothers and sisters of Jesus) and asserts that even in the second century there is no evidence for this belief apart from the apocryphal Protoevangelium of James (pp. 1081-83). According to *Catholicism*, the development of belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary "coincided with a newly positive assessment of virginity" (p. 1083). While the book does not explicitly conclude that the cause for the acceptance of belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary was the church's desire to promote virginity as an ascetical state, the reader seems to be invited to draw this inference. It was because the church sought to foster the "glorification of the Virgin Mary for ascetical reasons" that the church ignored the opposition of those like Tertullian who recognized that such a doctrine "introduced a new danger of Docetic trends" (p. 1083). The acceptance of belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary is presented as closely if not inextricably

linked with the fostering of asceticism, which supposedly arose only in the third century. After pointing out the absence of evidence for this belief in the New Testament and second-century fathers, including the opposition of Tertullian, the text continues:

"Mary's perpetual virginity, however, came to be almost universally accepted from the third century on. By now consecrated virgins had been established as a special state in the church, and Mary was presented to them as their model" (p. 1083).

Although *Catholicism* does not arrive at any explicit conclusions as to the status of the belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary, the description of the history of the development of this belief gives the impression that rather than a truth that the church only gradually uncovered, the belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary was a creation of the third-century church as part of its program to promote virginity and asceticism. The book apparently favors the view that Mary had "normal sexual relations after the birth of Jesus" and that Jesus had blood brothers and sisters, while admitting, however, that the New Testament evidence does not constitute an "insuperable" barrier to the belief that Mary remained ever a virgin (p. 1081).

While the perpetual virginity of Mary may rank lower in the hierarchy of truths than the virginal conception of Jesus, it must be reckoned as a constant teaching of the church, and not as an open question.⁶ The net effect of the discussion of the point in *Catholicism* is to leave the impression that the teaching of the church on this matter is not to be trusted.

B. Overemphasis on Plurality Within the Catholic Theological Tradition

1) *The Focus on Description*

Catholicism is committed to presenting a wide plurality of theological positions, both Catholic and non-Catholic. This emphasis on description, however, leaves the necessary task of synthesis relatively neglected. The book gives an overview of the theological scene in all of its variety and presents numerous brief summaries of many positions. It confronts the reader with a broad range of opinions and requires the reader to make judgments among them. The problem, however, is that the reading of the text itself does not prepare the reader to do this. The rapid succession of brief summaries does little to help a beginner to understand, for often such summaries are only useful if one already has knowledge of the subject. The book does not do enough to enable the reader to grasp what is the main current of the Catholic teaching and theological tradition.⁷

The central problem is the fact that the intended audience of the book is those who are just beginning to study theology. The book requires the reader to find his or her own way through what is sometimes a bewildering number and variety of positions. There is a difference between respecting the intelligence of the reader and making unrealistic demands upon one's intended audience. While a trained theologian may have little trouble negotiating through the various positions presented, a beginner does not have a developed sense of what are really important depar-

tures from Catholic tradition and what are not. The danger here is that the reader could simply become confused about what the church believes. It is a weakness of this book that, by devoting so much attention to the presentation of the multiplicity of opinion, it provides insufficient direction for those seeking to know what is truly at the core of the faith.

2) *The Mainstream and the Fringes*

Catholicism's emphasis on the plurality of theological positions on various issues is that by including so many positions it leaves the reader with the impression that all of these positions are part of the mainstream theological conversation, when in fact a number of them are decidedly on the fringes. The burden is on the reader to discern which positions are in the mainstream and which are not.

For example, when the book places the Christology of Hans Kung between that of Karl Rahner and Walter Kasper, it implies that all three are equally representative of the Catholic theological tradition. Similarly, the opinion of a radical feminist such as Rosemary Radford Ruether appears among the Catholic positions on ecclesiology (p. 704) and worship (pp. 1073-74). Matthew Fox is treated as one of the major figures of post-Vatican II spirituality; the only hint that the text gives as to Fox's position on the outer fringes of Catholic theology is the understated caution that "the titles of his early trilogy of spiritual books tended to veer somewhat from the conventional" (p. 1048). This descriptive approach, with its successive summaries of various positions,

does not provide the beginner with enough information to assess the place of these positions within the Catholic theological tradition as a whole.

One of the schools of thought presented is that of feminism. The label *feminism* connotes a broad range of concerns and opinions. While a feminist theology has made an important contribution to Catholic thought, some of the positions taken by feminist theologians are in fact quite far from mainstream Catholic theology, if not actually inconsistent with orthodox belief. The problem is that *Catholicism* embraces feminist theology as a category *in toto*, without making any distinctions, and gives no hint as to the extent to which some forms of feminist theology are in tension with the Catholic theological tradition. The book portrays feminist theology as part of the established consensus of contemporary theology and adopts its language, speaking in terms of "patriarchy" and "androcentricism" (pp. 350-355, 533). In the Preface, the book presents the emergence of feminist theology as the foremost example of positive change in the church since 1980 (p. xlv). One of the essential criteria offered for Catholic Christology is a congruence with a feminist interpretation of Christ:

"Christological explanations which interpret the maleness of Christ in an androcentric way or the headship of Christ in a patriarchal way effectively deny the proclamation and praxis of Jesus regarding the universality of God's love and the openness of the kingdom to all, women and men alike" (p. 533).

Catholicism offers no explana-

tion of the meaning of the terms *patriarchy* and *androcentrism*, however, and fails to give the reader a sense of the degree to which aspects of feminist methodology are in tension with the tradition.

Particularly troubling are the discussions of the fatherhood of God” and “God language” (pp. 352-55) and the treatment of the maleness of Jesus in a chapter on Christology (pp. 512-13). It seems to be implied that the practice of speaking of God as Father or Son and of Christ as bridegroom is “patriarchal” and “androcentric.” The reader is not alerted, however, to the difficulty of reconciling these radical theses with biblical usage and the Catholic tradition. The biblical and traditional language, even in cases where it is figurative, cannot be reduced to freely chosen metaphors for which we may substitute others at will. Titles such as *Father, Son and bridegroom* are indelibly inscribed in the Christian consciousness and have authentically theological reasons behind them. The admittedly demanding but nonetheless crucial questions of revelatory language and of the “analogy of faith” at issue here do not receive adequate treatment.

3) *Insufficient Weight Given to Magisterial Teaching*

While *Catholicism* is concerned to include a wide range of voices in the theological conversation, the teaching of the pope and bishops is often reduced to just another voice alongside those of private theologians. By presenting the range of views, the text is obviously intended to reflect the fact that there is serious debate over certain questions in the contemporary church.

The problem is not that the book describes positions in opposition to those of the magisterium, but rather that its presentation often lends them more weight than the magisterium itself. The method in several controversial questions is to present the official teaching and then to follow it with a rebuttal by Catholics who disagree. The impression is thus given that the “official” teaching is only one among a number of opinions, in no way binding on the faithful.

For example, the presentations of the questions of contraception, homosexuality and women’s ordination all take for granted that these are open questions; the official church teaching appears as merely one of the options for the reader.⁸ Different positions are presented, and it is left to the reader to make a choice, while the text implies that the “official church position” is erroneous on all three points.⁹

In the treatment of contraception — one of those matters pointed to in the Committee on Doctrine’s 1985 statement as “confusing and ambiguous” — it might have been appropriate to mention that five popes since 1930 have consistently taught that contraception is intrinsically evil. For this and other reasons, Catholics who reject this teaching would be invited to reconsider their positions. The treatment of contraception in *Catholicism*, however, does not encourage such Catholics to undertake a reconsideration of their views on the matter, but rather confirms them in their lack of acceptance of magisterial teaching.

Likewise, the question of women’s ordination is another problematic aspect of the book

cited in the 1985 statement that has not been corrected. Again, the issue is handled simply as a “disputed question” in theology. The official teaching of the church is inserted in a section headed “arguments against,” thus giving the impression that whatever doctrine the church may have on the question is not binding.

A further weakness is that the arguments on each side are presented so succinctly that they are hardly intelligible unless one consults the documents to which the book refers. In particular, *Catholicism* gives an oversimplified summary of the 1976 report of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. The book maintains that the commission “reported that it could find *no support* for the exclusion of women from the ordained priesthood on the basis of the biblical evidence alone” (p. 776, emphasis added). It does not report the commission’s statement that “the masculine character of the hierarchical order which has structured the church since its beginning thus seems attested to by Scripture in an undeniable way.” While acknowledging that the New Testament by itself *alone* does not “settle in a clear way and once and for all the problem of the possible accession of women to the priesthood,” the report did say: “Some think that in the Scriptures there are sufficient indications to exclude this possibility, considering that the sacraments of eucharist and reconciliation have a special link with the person of Christ and therefore with the male hierarchy, as borne out by the New Testament.”

Finally, there are passages in the book that speak of popes having “erred in matters of faith” (p.

781; cf. p. 762) and having “come down on the side of a heretical position” (p. 479) without explaining the scope and significance of such errors. In the absence of further explanation, such statements could serve to cast doubt on the reliability of church teaching. *Catholicism* gives insufficient clarification on such issues.

4) *Doctrinal Minimalism*

Also in keeping with the emphasis on the plurality of opinion within the Catholic tradition, the overall direction of the text of *Catholicism* is toward reducing to an absolute minimum the church teachings and beliefs that are to be considered essential to the Catholic faith and to which one must adhere in order to consider oneself Catholic. In part, this is the result of the aforementioned inclusion of a range of widely divergent and sometimes contradictory positions in the theological discussion, an inclusion that implies that there is very little that these positions hold in common.

At the same time, a tendency toward minimalism also arises from what appears to be the book’s concern to accommodate those who may have difficulty accepting some part of the Catholic faith as it has traditionally been understood. At times, the text seems to make every effort to provide Catholics a way out of accepting church teachings or beliefs that are controversial or difficult to understand in terms of contemporary ways of thinking. For example, the book seems to go out of its way to allow someone to remove the doctrine of the virgin birth from any connection with history by asserting that “whether the Holy Spirit’s involvement positively excluded the cooperation of

Joseph is not *explicitly* defined” (p. 543). The implied conclusion of the discussion of the belief in the virgin birth is that as long as one affirmed that in some way Jesus shared an intimate communion with God from birth, then the virginity of Mary is not essential (p. 542). Similarly, the text often implies that the most intellectually respectable position is the minimalist position, the one that makes the least demands upon the believer in terms of reconciling belief with current attitudes of thought, as in the argument for positing ignorance in Jesus, where the book asserts that “there is no incontrovertible proof that [Jesus] claimed a unique sonship not open to other persons” (p. 551).

It is against this backdrop that the brief section on the “binding force” of the Marian dogmas (pp. 1102-4) appears somewhat troubling and ill-advised, even if the conclusions, drawn from the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, are in themselves quite nuanced. It seems to fit into a pattern of setting minimum requirements for belief.

C. Overemphasis on Change and Development

Catholicism’s clear affirmation of the superiority of modern theology and modern anthropology — based upon the advances made by modern science and philosophy — provides a crucial background for its presentations of various positions. The problem is that this embrace of modernity is so enthusiastic as to imply a certain naive denigration of pre-modern thought (and thus of all forms of thought that do not embrace modernity).

The text is at times quite harsh in its criticism of patristic and medieval thought (pp. 163-65).¹⁰ From the perspective of *Catholicism*, modern thought has definitively superseded ancient and medieval thought.

“Significant scientific, philosophical and theological advances in our understanding of human existence did not occur until the 18th and especially the 19th centuries, with the discoveries of Darwin and Freud, the new social analysis of Marx and the new focus on the human person as subject in the philosophy of Kant, in idealism and in modern psychology. The medieval view of human existence could not, and did not, do justice to the special character of the person” (p. 164).

In this view, only with the Enlightenment do we have the basis for an adequate anthropology and thus for an adequate theology. “In the final accounting, the Enlightenment marks the division between an often precritical, authority oriented theology and a critical, historically sophisticated and philosophically mature theology” (p. 641).

Thus the contemporary theologian who has absorbed all the advances of modern thought is in a superior position with regard to the tradition as a whole (and also to ecclesiastical authorities who may be still operating from a pre-modern or preconiliar point of view). For *Catholicism*, modern thought becomes the prism through which the tradition must be viewed and judged. This is the basis for the book’s emphasis on change in the tradition. After the Enlightenment, everything is now subject to revision because of the attainment of

this higher vantage point. “Because of the scientific, philosophical and theological developments outlined in Chapter 4, the time for an anthropological recasting of all the traditional doctrines is at hand” (p. 166). The book often does not explicitly say that some traditional teaching must be discarded, but it points the reader in this direction by noting that history seems to be moving in a certain direction, thus implying that the traditional doctrines are soon to be superseded. Examples would be belief in the virgin birth and the intrinsic evil of homosexual acts.¹¹

Catholicism interprets Vatican II as the justification for this approach to theology. In this view, Vatican II marked a great change in direction because the church ceased to oppose and instead welcomed the modern world and sought to incorporate the advances of modern thought (pp. 77-80; 92; 95; 166-67; 910-11; 1214). *Preconciliar* and *premodern* are here effectively convertible. Left unmentioned are the *ressourcement* movement leading up to the council and the council’s own calls for renewal through a further *ressourcement* by a return to the sources of the tradition. In *Catholicism*, the council appears simply as an *aggiornamento*, a one-sided embrace of modernity.

The overall effect of this exaltation of the modern over the traditional is to provide a justification for those theological positions that call for a much greater accommodation of church teaching to contemporary culture and at the same time a distancing from traditional beliefs that are considered outmoded or incompatible with modern thought. The book often implies that the “progressive”

theologians are pointing to the future of the church and that the pope and the bishops have not yet caught up. In this sense, the theologians — and by implication the readers — have a superior vantage point from which to look upon church teaching and tradition. Church teaching can be effectively dismissed simply by being classified as reflecting “preconciliar thought.”¹²

Summary and Conclusion

Catholicism poses pastoral problems particularly as a textbook in undergraduate college courses and in parish education programs. The principal difficulties with the book lie not only in the particular positions adopted, but perhaps even more in the cumulative effect of the book as a whole. The method is to offer a broad range of opinions on every topic with the apparent intention of allowing or stimulating the reader to make a choice. This places a heavy burden on the reader, especially since some of the opinions described do not stand within the central Catholic tradition. The reader who is a theological beginner could easily assume that all the authors cited are equally a part of the mainstream Catholic conversation, whereas some of the authors are closer to the margins. While the book could be a helpful resource to theologians looking for a survey of opinions on some question, it might well be bewildering and unsettling for Catholics taking undergraduate courses in theology. For some readers it will give encouragement to dissent.

The problem is further aggravated because *Catholicism* gives very

little weight to the teaching of the magisterium, at least where there has been no explicit dogmatic definition. At many points the book treats magisterial statements on the same level as free theological opinions. On a number of important issues, most notably in the field of moral theology, the reader will see without difficulty that the book regards the “official church position” as simply in error.

This review has focused exclusively on the problematic aspects of *Catholicism*. Certainly, as the 1985 statement of the Committee on Doctrine affirmed, there are many positive features to be found in the book. Nevertheless, this review concludes that, particularly as a book for people who are not specialists in theological reasoning and argumentation, *Catholicism* poses serious difficulties and in several important respects does not live up to its ambitious title. ✠

¹ *Origins*, vol. 15, no. 9 (Aug. 1, 1985): 130-32. The Preface to the new edition of *Catholicism* is somewhat misleading when it characterizes the Committee on Doctrine review as “careful and essentially sympathetic,” thereby implying that the bishops had no serious concerns with the book. In fact, in the way that the Preface refers to the committee investigation and statement, they appear almost as a subtle endorsement of the book or as a guarantee of its reliability as a guide to Catholic teaching in the sense that the book has withstood the careful scrutiny of the Committee on Doctrine of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

² In the anathemas against the Three Chapters, the Second Council of Constantinople (553) condemned the opinion attributed to Theodore of Mopsuestia that Jesus attained impeccability only with the resurrection (Denzinger-Schontzner, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* 434).

³ It is not that *Catholicism* is overtly Nestorian or adoptionist. The book does uphold the divinity of the Son and the doctrine of the Trinity in general (p. 318). It explicitly affirms that the Word of God became human for our salvation (p. 480) and that “Jesus Christ was, in his very being and from the beginning, the Word made flesh” (p. 556). Yet although the book at some points talks about maintaining both the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ,

at other points it seems unclear about the singleness of the hypostasis or the identity of the person. For example, the book speaks of the question of Jesus' sinlessness as being a question of "the intimate communion of Jesus with God" (pp. 548-49). Jesus Christ "was so completely in union with the Father that he was in fact absolutely without sin" (p. 547). Because of the hypostatic union Jesus was "aware of himself as a subject in whom God was fully present and as one who was fully present in God" (p. 556). Such statements certainly admit of an orthodox interpretation, yet there is a somewhat confusing tendency to juxtapose Jesus and God, as if they were somehow separate.

⁴ The book identifies two factors that have brought to an end the "virtual unanimity of belief" in the virgin birth and led many to deny the virginal conception of Jesus — "a newly critical way of reading the New Testament, and a newly evolutionary way of perceiving human existence and human history" (p. 543). Throughout the book, both of these are presented as unambiguous advances of modern thought and modern theology. Indeed, the book points out that the two factors that have led many to deny the virgin birth are "two of the same factors which generated a change in our understanding of Jesus Christ and of Christian faith itself" (p. 543). The implication is that those who embrace the new theology (supposedly vindicated at Vatican II) are those who deny or at least call into question the virgin birth.

⁵ The book itself refers to the Apostle's Creed,

the Nicene Creed, the Fourth Lateran Council and the Second Council of Lyons.

⁶ See *Lumen Gentium*, 52 and 57; Denz.-Schon. 291, 294, 427, 442, 503, 571, 1880.

⁷ In the chapter on Christology, the book itself reveals an awareness of the problem of making one's way through the wide range of Christological positions briefly summarized in the text: "How does one even begin to evaluate such a wide array of theological positions?" (p. 530). The book does speak of "an objective and objectifiable Christian and Catholic tradition" (p. 530) and offers six "Christological criteria" to help the reader discern this tradition. This attempt at synthesis, however, is extremely brief (three pages) compared with the 35 pages of summaries of various Christologies. (The fact that these three pages are followed by another 30 treating "special questions in Christology" that either cast doubt on church teaching or at least reflect unfavorably on it does not help with this problem of discerning the core of the Catholic tradition.)

⁸ On birth control: "There are two sides to the birth control question in Catholic moral theology" (p. 982). With regard to homosexuality, the book summarizes the current state of theology by presenting three positions, the "official magisterium" view standing at one of the extremes and the position of Charles Curran and Richard McCormick representing a "mediating" position (pp. 996-1000). At the end of the discussion of the ordination of women, the book begins its conclusion with: "Whatever position one takes on the ordination question..." (p. 779).

⁹ The presentations of the conflicting positions often fail to be evenhanded, for the expositions of the dissident opinions are usually more fully developed than those of the "official" position, particularly since the expositions of the dissident opinions include the counter-arguments that respond directly to the arguments used in support of the "official" position, whose counter-arguments are not presented (e.g., pp. 983-89; pp. 777-78).

¹⁰ The book also at points presents a superficial understanding of patristic and medieval theology as when it asserts: "We are not composite beings, made of body and soul as two separate parts (as the medieval Scholastic philosophers had it)" (p. 159).

¹¹ As pointed out above (Footnote 4), the book asserts that the factors that have led many now to deny the virgin birth are clear advances on the part of modern thought and modern theology (p. 543). Likewise, with regard to homosexuality, it is because "new questions are arising in light of new developments and scientific research in medicine, psychiatry and psychology" that the traditional teaching must be re-examined (p. 996).

¹² For example, with regard to the question of natural law and the new approach proposed by some contemporary moral theologians, the book argues that "the hierarchical magisterium . . . has continued to employ the philosophical approach of the preconciliar manuals of moral theology," as in *Veritatis Splendor* (p. 962).

REVIEW ARTICLE

Review of Henri de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*

(San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995). 539 pp., \$24.95.

by Sister Joan Gormley
Mount Saint Mary's Seminary
Emmitsburg, Maryland

Introduction

The first edition of De Lubac's classic study of contemporary atheism was divided into three parts, the first dealing with the atheistic humanism of Feuerbach (Marx) and

Nietzsche, the second with the atheism of Auguste Comte, and the third with the Christian prophet chosen by de Lubac to answer modern atheism, the Russian novelist, Dostoevsky. Though the author always regarded this book, completed in 1943, during the German occupation of France, as somewhat fragmentary and unfinished, he never substantially revised or expanded it. He did, however, refer interested readers to two other essays of his, which were published together in 1950: "The Search for a New Man" and "Nietzsche as Mystic." Happily, the present edition has been expanded by a fourth part which

includes these two essays: the first, showing specific dimensions of "new man" formed by Marxism; the second, describing Nietzsche's quasi-mystical experience of the Eternal Return. The book has also been expanded by inclusion of extensive footnotes omitted in the 1949 English edition.

In his preface, the author tells us that his purpose is not to produce a theoretical or theological discussion of atheism but to provide an "historical survey" of representatives of contemporary atheism. The word "drama" in the title should be taken literally, for the dramatic element remains strong throughout. Each of the represen-

tatives of modern atheism is shown, in his turn and in his circumstances, making the choice to reject God and then devising plans to transform the world and society in the liberated man's image. With passion and willingness for sacrifice, these thinkers pursue their schemes to get rid of God and restructure the world. What de Lubac is at pains to show is that, however auspicious and promising these utopian schemes might look for man in their beginnings, they invariably lead to his enslavement. The choice to reject and annihilate God invariably brings with it the choice to reject and annihilate man.

But the dramatic action of de Lubac's study lies not only in the choices and struggles of atheists but also in the contrast between the fervent engagement of atheists in their atheism and the tepid commitment to living their faith on the part of many Christians. While the proponents of atheism act from what appears almost like a sense of vocation, the great majority of Western Christians, de Lubac thinks, are carried along by a "a sort of immense drift," towards abandonment of their Christian heritage, and even of belief in God. One of the goals of *The Drama* is to make Christians aware of the spiritual situation of modern times — a situation which, we might add, still prevails today, more than fifty years after the book appeared. Christians have to recognize the influence of Comte, Feuerbach and Marx, and Nietzsche — and their successors — on all areas of life today: social, political, economic, pedagogical. For the underlying, often unrecognized, movement of the systems inspired by these atheistic and anti-theistic thinkers is the rejection of

God and the spiritual and social bondage of man.

Representative Atheists: Feuerbach (Marx); Nietzsche; Comte

The first figures to occupy center stage are Ludwig Feuerbach and his more radical disciple, Karl Marx. Basing himself on the Hegelian dialectic, Feuerbach declared God to be nothing more than the sum of man's positive attributes, projected by man outside himself and then named God. This is tantamount to saying that the god for man is man. Awareness of this transference or alienation, Feuerbach maintained, would effect a turning point in history. Adopted and adapted by Marx and Engels, Feuerbach's conclusion became the cornerstone of the Marxist system for the transformation of society. It is curious that, given the enormous influence of his thought, Marx receives so little attention in this book. This might be one reason why de Lubac considered *The Drama* to be incomplete. In any case, the essay in Part IV of the present edition, "The Search for the New Man," helps to fill in the gaps. It shows Marxism as a system which builds upon the total elimination of God from life and results in the formation of a "new man" and a new society totally at odds with the Christian view and totally destructive of man.

Like Marx, Nietzsche built upon Feuerbach's notion that God was the projection of what is best in man. Nietzsche, however, saw the projection in terms of strength and weakness: what man does when he believes in God is to

project upon God his strength, thus leaving himself weak and dependent. Special venom is heaped upon Christianity which, with its doctrine of grace, summed up for Nietzsche all that was wrong with religion in general. He was all but intoxicated with joy at the thought of murdering God and proclaiming his death to the world, and this, in spite of the fact that he could see the horrors to be unleashed upon the world in the new era of the Superman. He foresaw darkness over Europe and was the likes of which had never been seen. At the prospect he exulted: "Thanks to me . . . a catastrophe is at hand. A catastrophe whose name I know, whose name I shall not tell . . . Then all the earth will writhe in convulsions."

De Lubac devotes much space to Nietzsche. He seems to recognize the legitimacy of at least some aspects of his critique of contemporary Christianity, especially in its accommodation to Hegelian rationalism and historicism. He understands the scorn Nietzsche expresses in face of the mediocrity of the Christian life and piety he saw around him: "If they want me to believe in their Saviour, they'll have to sing better hymns! His followers will have to look more like men who have been saved." But perhaps more than that, de Lubac bears compassion for this poor man desirous of giving a total 'Yes' yet ruined by his revolt against God and resentment towards Christ and Christianity.

The question inevitably arises as to what the Christian response to atheism should be. De Lubac maintains that the only effective response to Nietzsche, and those like him, can be found, not in apolo-

getic discourse, but in the witness of authentic Christian life. That answer he finds personified in the nineteenth century figure, Soren Kierkegaard, whom he describes as “a witness chosen by God” to recall Christians from rationalism to faith, from immanentism to transcendence. Kierkegaard had said that “preparation for becoming attentive to Christianity does not consist in reading books or in making surveys of world history, but in deeper *immersion in existence*.” The same is true of giving a credible response to atheism. Christians need to rediscover Christ and then live their Christian faith with courage and heroism. Christian life that is weak and tepid, instead of providing a counter witness to atheism’s rejection of God, lends support to that rejection.

The last protagonist in the nineteenth century drama of atheistic humanism is Auguste Comte. His fame rests largely upon his law of the three successive stages of the human mind and of society: the first two stages, the theological and philosophical, belonged to man’s immaturity and were now past; the third stage, the physical, in which natural laws are at work, marks the onset of man’s maturity and a new era. Comte’s schema does, of course, involve the elimination of God, who is conceived of as belonging to man’s childhood, and consequently, to be abandoned when man comes of age.

Having disposed of God to his own satisfaction, Comte set about the task of devising a new social order. With Marx and Nietzsche, he shared an abhorrence of Christianity. However, he admired Catholicism and thought it possible to de-Christianize it so that it would

serve as model for the system that would be the basis of the new social order. Thus Comte came to see himself as founder of a universal positivist Church with its center in Paris. He fully expected to be preaching positivism from the pulpit of Notre Dame Cathedral by 1860.

Borrowing elements from Catholicism, Comte elaborated a kind of dogmatic system. “Humanity” would take the place of God; scientists, schooled in “systematic generality” would assume the role of priests; there would also be ceremonies, dogmas, sacraments, and feasts. He even constructed a “Trinity” consisting of the Great Being, the Great Fetish, and the Great Environment. As a stage on the way to the revolution, there would be unlimited free thought, and pictures of future happiness would be painted to appeal to the imagination. Once the revolution was in place, however, positivism would be imposed, and all would be expected to accept without question the teaching of the scientists. An active police force would ensure that no accommodations to religious faith or differing opinions would be permitted.

De Lubac admits the almost comic aspects of Comte’s enterprise, including his almost fantastic attempts to enlist the Jesuits, and even the pope, in his schemes for the establishment of positivism. It is hard to imagine a more dreary prospect than the totalitarian social order and secularized religion proposed by Comte. But de Lubac realizes that Comte’s de-Christianized version of Catholicism continues to have its proponents and followers. The removal of Christ and the reduction of Christian life

to allegiance to social programs are continuing temptations which bear a family resemblance to the fantasies of Comte. But most clearly, de Lubac sees in Comte the reality that, when God is removed, something will be found to replace him. He also sees that the elimination of God leads inexorably to the enslavement of man. In Comte’s system, with the worship of God removed from life, man is forced to submit himself, like a slave, to the will of other men.

The Christian Response to Atheism: Dostoevsky

The principal representative chosen by de Lubac to offer the Christian response to modern atheism is the novelist, Fedor Dostoevsky. In simple but compelling terms, the nineteenth-century Russian author explains the situation of the West: “The West has lost Christ and that is why it is dying; that is the only reason.” The one basic choice placed before modern man is that between the man-god of the atheists and the God-man of Christian revelation. Dostoevsky had faced that choice himself and made it in favor of Christ and the faith of the Church. He saw the same choice placed before every man.

Many atheists pass across the pages of Dostoevsky’s novels. Through them, Dostoevsky shows in dramatic fashion that, without God, man has nothing but falsehood and inevitably becomes an enemy to himself, and ends by organizing the world against himself. He shows the disaster coming upon man as a result of those revolutionary ideals which are the legacy of Western liberalism and its project

of eliminating God and secularizing society. No matter how valid is this or that element in the secularist critique of society, Dostoevsky sees the truth that those who “kill” God also kill man. He also saw that man without God cannot remain free.

As the curtain is about to fall on the drama played out in the pages of de Lubac’s work, we might ask if he sees any hope. Since this book is a deeply Christian meditation on the Christian situation, the answer is necessarily affirmative. De Lubac allows Dostoevsky to respond for him.

The first sign of hope is in the faith of those Christians who have continued to believe from the heart. Many of these are unlearned and poor. For example, a character in one of his novels meets a young peasant woman with a baby. When the baby smiles for the first time, the woman makes the Sign of the

Cross. When asked why she made this sign, the woman answers: “All the joy that a mother feels when she sees her child smiling for the first time . . . God feels every time He sees . . . a sinner praying to him from the bottom of his heart.”

From this event, Dostoevsky takes hope, seeing that the very heart of Christianity is expressed by a poor woman of the people. Such simple faith is the most compelling answer to today’s atheism.

Another reason for hope is the power of the gospel itself. Dostoevsky does not despair of the gospel touching the heart, even of the atheist who thinks man has invented God. The key to reaching such a person is to announce the gospel from personal experience of the Church’s faith, thus showing that faith is not just words. The Christian must speak of his meeting with Christ, telling what he has seen and

speaking of eternity. This might touch the heart of the atheist, who being really more idolater than atheist, is searching for someone to worship. Through contact with true Christians who preach the gospel by their lives as well as by words, the atheist might be converted and enter into the spiritual world, the gate of which is guarded by the mystery of Christ.

Such a conversion occurs in *Crime and Punishment*, when Raskolnikov, converted in Siberia, opens the New Testament. This, says Dostoevsky, is the beginning of another story. For the meeting with Jesus Christ and with his Church always marks the beginning of a new era for every individual person and for society as a whole. In that encounter alone begins the other story, the “drama” of a true Christian humanism and the salvation of the world. ✠

THANKS TO MICHAEL LETTENY

For the past several years, Michael Letteny has served as managing editor of the Newsletter. Now, as he completes his graduate studies in philosophy at Notre Dame and takes his wife and three children to Cincinnati where he will teach in Xavier University’s department of philosophy, I want formally and publicly to express my thanks to Mike for the superb and conscientious job he has done. He is what T. S. Eliot called Ezra Pound—*il maggior fabbro*. RMcl

**Board of Directors
of the Fellowship of
Catholic Scholars
1993-1996**

PRESIDENT

Prof. Gerard V. Bradley

219 Law School
Notre Dame, IN 46556
(O) (219) 631-8385

**VICE PRESIDENT/PRESIDENT
ELECT**

Rev. Joseph Fessio

Ignatius Press
2515 McAllister St.
San Francisco, CA 94118
(O) (415) 387-2324

PRESIDENT EMERITUS

Rev. Msgr. George A. Kelly

107-10 Shore Front Parkway
Rockaway Beach, NY 11694
(H) (718) 945-4856

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY/TREA-
SURER**

Dr. Jude Dougherty

Catholic University of America
Washington, DC 20064
(O) (202) 391-5259
(H) (301) 299-7886

DIRECTORS

Dr. Carl Anderson

John Paul II Institute
2900 N. Dinwiddie St.
Arlington, VA 22207
(O) (202) 526-3799
(H) (703) 534-9144

Rev. Kenneth Baker, S.J.

Homiletic and Pastoral Review
86 Riverside Dr.
New York, NY 10024
(O) (212) 799-2600

Rev. Cornelius Buckley, S.J.

University of San Francisco
San Francisco, CA 94117
(O) (415) 666-0123

Sister Timothea Elliot, RSM

St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie
Yonkers, NY 10704
(O) (914) 968-6200

Sister Joan Gormley

Mount St. Mary's Seminary
Emmitsburg, MD 21727-7799
(O) (301) 933-1279
(H) (301) 447-5295

Dr. John Haas

St. Charles Borromeo Seminary
1000 E. Wynnewood Rd
Overbrook, PA 19096-3099
(O) (610) 667-3394

Dr. Michael J. Healy

Franciscan University of Steubenville
Steubenville, OH 43952
(O) (614) 283-6228
(H) (614) 282-2146

Helen Hull Hitchcock

Women for Faith & Family
P.O. Box 8326
St. Louis, MO 63132
(O) (314) 863-8385

Dr. James Hitchcock

University of Saint Louis
St. Louis, MO 63103
(O) (314) 658-2910
(H) (314) 863-1654

Rev. Ronald Lawler, OFM. CAP.

Holy Apostles Seminary
33 Prospect Hill Road
Cromwell, CT 06416
(O) (203) 632-3010
Fax 203-632-0176

Dr. Joyce Little

St. Thomas University
Houston, TX 77006
(O) (713) 522-7911
(H) (301) 956-1936

Dr. William May

John Paul II Institute
487 Michigan Ave. NE
Washington, DC 20017
(O) (202) 526-3799
(H) (301) 946-1037

Dr. Joseph P. Scottino

Gannon University
Erie, PA 16541
(O) (814) 871-7272
(H) (814) 459-6258

Dr. Janet E. Smith

University of Dallas
1845 Northgate Dr.
Irving, TX 75062
(O) (214) 721-5258
(H) (214) 650-0785

Msgr. William B. Smith

St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie
Yonkers, NY 10704
(O) (914) 968-6200 Ext. 8248

Rev. Earl A. Weis, S.J.

Loyola University
Chicago, IL 60626
(O) (321) 274-3000

Dr. Kenneth Whitehead

809 Ridge Place
Falls Church, VA 22046
(H) (703) 538-5085

**PRESIDENT EMERITUS and
EDITOR OF FCS NEWSLETTER**

Prof. Ralph McInerny

Jacques Maritain Center
714 Hesburgh Library
Notre Dame, IN 46556
(O) (219) 631-5825
(H) (219) 232-2960

**MANAGING EDITOR OF
FCS NEWSLETTER**

Michael Letteney

Jacques Maritain Center
714 Hesburgh Library
Notre Dame, IN 46556
(O) (219) 631-5825

Language & FAITH

September 20-22, 1996
St. Louis, Missouri
Regal Riverfront Hotel

6

9

9

I

1996 Program Topics

Language and Mediation of the Sacred

The Language of Contemporary Church Music

Challenging and Replacing the Language of the Culture of Death: Past and Present

Language and the Invitation to Conversion

Language and the Truths of Faith

The Church's Translation Problem Today

Issues in Contemporary Biblical Translation

Translation of Liturgical Texts

Program Chair

Sr. Joan Gormley, Mount St. Mary's College

Please call Franciscan University's Christian Conference Office at 1-800-437-8368 to receive conference registration materials.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF CATHOLIC SCHOLARS
19TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

Marriage: The Rock on Which the Family Is Built

by William May
 Ignatius; 1995; 143 pages;
 paperback, \$9.95

This book consists in great part of articles published previously. It is an excellent presentation of the teaching of the Church's Magisterium on many aspects of married life.

May shows that marriage is the divine plan for human beings, and explains why (1) it requires that there be but one man and one woman, (2) children, equal in dignity to their parents, must be conceived in their parents' loving embrace, (3) the spouses must give one another love, (4) the marriage must be open to procreation, (5) it must respect the wife's fertility, (6) it must be a domestic Church, (7) parents are their children's primary educators, not the State or the Church, (8) the family must serve society by works of social service, while the State foster family life, (9) the family must defend its rights, (10) the State must respect and compensate mothers who remain at home to care for their children, and (11) the State must support the marriage bond if men are to be fathers to their children. One chapter deals with the complementarity of the sexes, another with Pope Paul VI as a prophet, another with laboratory generation, and a fourth with what it means for a family to be a domestic Church.

In an appendix a summary is given of Pope John Paul's 1994 *Letter to Families*.

The book contains the chief truths of our faith today as they relate to family life, with an explanation of why these truths are beneficial, why they protect spouses and children from many evils. There is enough material in this small book for months of sermons or classes.

Leonard A. Kennedy, C.S.B.

Review of Catholicism, Liberalism, and Communitarianism: The Catholic Intellectual Tradition and the Moral Foundation of Democracy, ed. K. Grasso, G. Bradley, and R. Hunt.

Catholicism, Liberalism and Communitarianism makes a genuine contribution to American political thought. This fine volume contains essays that are diverse in subject and in approach, as well as direct in their address to political questions of immediate concern.

Each of these essays would stand alone as exceptionally thoughtful and well written, but in this carefully planned collection they come together to form a coherent and powerful argument for the guidance that Catholic social thought could provide contemporary democracies — were it to receive serious consideration. After an introductory chapter that argues persuasively for the need for a volume such as this, the following two chapters establish first principles, explaining, respectively, the anthropology that underlies Catholic social thought and the political principles articulated by the Second Vatican Council. The next five chapters tackle specific problems of modern democratic government: religious freedom, the ground of limited government, judicial review, and city and world government. The following three chapters examine the contribution that such Catholic thinkers as Maritain, Murray, and contemporary Thomists have to make to modern political thought. Chapters 12 and 13 evaluate the potential contribution of Catholic thought from Protestant and Jewish perspectives. A concluding chapter attempts an overview of the preceding discussions.

Especially deserving of mention in this collection are Kenneth Grasso's interpretation of the political theory of Vatican II and Christopher Wolfe's

essay on subsidiarity. Adherents of the politics of the left and of the right have misunderstood the language of human rights employed by the Council in viewing it as a capitulation to modern liberal democracy. Grasso shows that the Council perceived what was true in contemporary "rights talk" and developed a new and robust formulation of Catholic political theory that is completely faithful to the tradition. Wolfe argues that the principle of subsidiarity provides a more solid ground for limited government than the doctrines of social contractarians, while avoiding many of the difficulties that social contract theory presents. Many find even the term "subsidiarity" confusing, but Wolfe's essay is utterly lucid.

There is disagreement among the contributors on the question of whether the cultural problems that contemporary democracies experience have been caused by a perversion of the principles of democracy or whether these difficulties may in fact constitute a working out of the logical conclusions of the philosophy of democratic government. In any case, it appears that most of the contributors do not take seriously the potential contribution of communitarian thought to the renewal of democracy. For a subject that is contained in the book's title, communitarianism receives very little attention and when it is mentioned at all, it is in an uncomplimentary context.

Perhaps the most encouraging thing about this volume is that most of its contributors have two or three decades of scholarship ahead of them. Most of the ideas presented in this volume are hardly popular, but these scholars have world enough and time to see to it that Catholic social thought is given due consideration by those in authority.

Mitchell Muncy
 University of Dallas

The Large Family: A Blessing And a Challenge

by Eugene F. Diamond, M.D.
 Ignatius Press — San Francisco
 Catalog No. 0-89870-571-1
 165 pages \$9.95

There are two principal pathways to the understanding of large family living. The first is to experience it by being the parent or a member of a large family. The second is to observe large families and counsel them as a professional dedicated to the care of the parent-child relationship. By these standards, Dr. Eugene Diamond, the author of *The Large Family: A Blessing and A Challenge* is uniquely qualified to write such a book. His expertise is compounded of empirical knowledge as the father of a family of thirteen children and special insights derived from forty years experience as a practicing pediatrician treating families of all sizes. His style is a mixture of a warm personal and descriptive portrayal of his daily involvement in the dynamics of large family living and a more detached scientific and sociological evocation of the internal and external forces which influence the large family's special position in society.

The chapters on "The Mother of a Large Family" and "The Father of a Large Family" are almost unavoidably personal but the author demonstrates an ability to generalize legitimately from the intimate experiences of his own forty-five year marriage. The parenting skills involved in managing a large family inevitably evolve as the size of the family increases. The challenges will recapitulate themselves however and parental responses become more measured and less emotionally-charged. Older children become assistants and surrogates to facilitate the negotiation of the many routine and unexpected tasks and problems of daily living.

One of the more fascinating chap-

ters is "Large Family Research." Here the "small family system" is contrasted with the "large family system." The small family system is dominated by planning and parenting is likely to be intensive with interaction characterized by cooperation and democratic relationships. Parenting in large families tends to be extensive rather than intensive with less concentrated care, oversight and possessiveness. Group emphasis and awareness predominate and authoritarian rather than democratic roles are played. Large family living, viewed from the outside may seem to be more chaotic than systematic but the reality, as this chapter elucidates, is a contrast in systems.

Some of the most difficult themes of large family group dynamics are illustrated in the chapters on "Family Morale" and "Preserving Individuality." While it may appear to be almost impossible to preserve individuality in a large variegated group of infants, children and adolescents, the author seems to be comfortable that this can be readily achieved. He rather looks to the preservation of Family Morale as the much more difficult group challenge. To an extent, preserving individuality tends toward the preservation of morale but a group of strong individuals do not necessarily coalesce into a group with high morale and identity. Experience in business, sports, military units and the like tend to authenticate the author's view that the maintenance of morale demands both skills and dedication.

The chapters on "Preservation of the Large Family," "Population Hysteria," and "Maternal Deprivation" are more scholarly and dependent on data and the sociological and scientific literature as well as intuitive responses. Likewise the "Free Choice of Family Size" is an astute exposition of the many subtle and overt disincentives that political and bureaucratic entities bring to bear on the freedom of couples to choose the number of chil-

dren which families would embrace according to personal and spousal preference.

The author endorses permissiveness in the supervision of playtime in children and he particularly disapproves of the intrusive adult and parental involvement in juvenile athletics and competition. In the chapter on the "Adolescent," however, he recognizes the strong need of children in this most vulnerable period for direction, role-models and appeals to idealism and religious conviction. Large family living may well be the preferred setting for emancipation into adult responsibility.

This is not really a "how-to" book but there is a lot of material that is worth emulating in the chapters on "The Economics of a Large Family" and "Priorities in a Large Family." Feeding, clothing, and educating a large family are obviously potential sources of stress but the maintenance of discipline, ideals, and the work ethic require just as much ingenuity if not more. The overall impression which emerges from the book is that of a warm personal experience which was eminently worth living. The success seems to have resulted not so much from special techniques and planning as from a fundamental reliance on Divine Providence and the grace of God. As the author states in his epilogue, "The large family is indeed a blessing and a challenge with God as the source of both."

This book would be a worthwhile and educational experience for clergy, teachers and parents of families of any size. If the Federal Government through the Department of Health and Human Services were to decide to fund an in-depth long term study of large families, the results could not exceed the cumulative wisdom of the author's experience.

Herbert Ratner, M.D.
 Editor, Child and Family

Virginity: A Positive Approach to Celibacy for the Sake of the Kingdom of Heaven

Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap.
Alba House, New York, 1995
96 pages

During the late 1980's, my wife and I had the marvelous opportunity of living in Rome for two years. Regularly on Sunday evenings, an exuberant Capuchin appeared evangelizing on the Italian television waves . . . Padre Raniero Cantalamessa. It was only later that we learned that he had previously been a professor of Church History and the Origins of Christianity at the Catholic University of Milan, that he had served on the International Theological Commission (1975-1981), and that in 1980 he was nominated Preacher of the Papal Household.

In his new work, *Virginity: A Positive Approach to Celibacy for the Sake of the Kingdom of Heaven*, his ability as a writer rivals that of his preaching. In a form that is both exhortatory and profound, he addresses virginity and celibacy lived for the sake of Christ and His Kingdom. In his brief introduction, he decries the vigorous attack of the dominant culture on virginity and celibacy and reminds us that what Christ has planted in this world no one will ever be able to uproot. He then moves into the first of the two parts into which the work divides itself: "The Biblical Motivation for Virginity and Celibacy for the Sake of the Kingdom of Heaven." (The second part deals with the living out of that virginity and celibacy). The more important section seems to me to be the first, for in it he sets forth an apologetic for this form of life and indicates its specific contours.

Cantalamessa sees the Mt. 19:10-12 text ("and there are eunuchs who have made themselves so for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let anyone accept this who can") as the "Magna Carta" of a second state of life

which the Lord Himself is instituting. This new form of living is not to be seen as a depreciation or diminishment of the married form. It does, however, point emphatically to the great *eschatological* form of life of the blessed who "neither marry nor are given in marriage, because they are no longer able to die — they are like angels and are children of God, since they have attained the resurrection." (Lk. 20:34-36; cf. Mt. 22:30)

Fr. Cantalamessa also discusses the missionary dimension of celibacy and virginity. Here, the *fruitfulness* of virginity is recognized as being rooted in the virginal fecundity of the Trinity Itself:

Yes, the first virgin really is the holy Trinity, not just because the first generation of the Word by the Father is virginal, but also because the Trinity created the universe alone, without the aid of any other principle, not even some kind of "pre-existing matter." (p. 7)

He carefully comments on St. Paul's Letter to the Corinthians wherein he counsels the unmarried to remain so that they might be wholly "concerned with the Lord's affairs." Where celibacy and virginity were previously embraced in other religious traditions for the sake of ritual purity or undistracted meditation, the Christian virgins' intentions are thoroughly *personal*, they are focused on the Person of Christ, and their "fruitfulness is spousal in nature." (p. 18) They are "Spouses of God's Majesty! Spouses of the Absolute!" (p. 25) In this sense the consecrated believer *epitomizes* the entire virginal Church. It is by a nuptial union, consummated on the "marriage bed" of the cross, that redeemed humanity receives the new birth from above. Cantalamessa points unswervingly to the salvific fecundity of what Paul calls our "co-crucifixion" (sustarurao — Rm. 6:6; Gal. 2:19) with Christ:

A virginal and chaste life is therefore in a very profound sense a paschal life." (p. 47)

In this way, it models the life that flows from the virginal and celibate life of the Master Himself. Every believer is called to the purity of a generous chastity, whether consecrated or married. But, as Cantalamessa points out:

the virgin must appropriate (this paschal form of life) by a wholly special title, so that he or she becomes its witness and sign for everyone in the Church." (p. 47)

Although every believer's paschal union with Christ should overflow into service to others, the consecrated believer is more readily available to imitatively manifest God's very own gratuity and generosity:

when they love and care for children who are not their own according to the flesh, nurse the sick people of others, care for other people's old folk, and when — especially in the case of the Church's cloistered monks and nuns — they carry the weight of other people's sins, bringing them before God in intercession for the world. (p. 18)

The second part of the book is titled, "How to Live Virginity and Celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom." Both marriage and virginity are to be seen as charisms from God. On this point, it is worth noting that in Mt. 19:3-12, Christ, *both* after specifying the indissolubility of the marital union and inaugurating the life of those who renounce sex for the sake of God's reign, states that each of these paths of life are for those who "can accept this teaching." Both are gratuitously bestowed by God and both require a corresponding acceptance and gratuitous self-bestowal on the part of the recipients.

Every charism is a particular "manifestation of the Spirit" (cf. 1Cor. 12:7) and requires — in the recipient — humility, joy, peace, and freedom. Fr. Cantalamessa sketches for us an interior portrait of the virginally consecrated using these qualities as the prime colors. He insists that the consecrated life must never become self-serving:

The gift [of celibacy and virginity] is destined only for some, for those who are called, but are its beneficiaries. (p. 63)

It is a life lived for the common good, for the sake of the whole Body of Christ. It must be cultivated, he adds, by mortification. Here, I found Cantalamessa's arguments especially well-formulated and persuasive. I might add, speaking as a married man, that a definite mortifying *continentia* is required of every believer. If one cannot come to *contain* oneself, one has nothing to give anyone, either to Christ or to others in Him. A healthy knowledge and acceptance of the goodness of one's sexuality is also crucial, says Cantalamessa. He acknowledges that what the consecrated is renouncing for the love of the Lord is good in itself and yet that:

Only God knows the fragrance of this sacrifice, which touches not just the heart or the body, but the very being of the creature. (p. 81)

Another major feature of the virginal life is community and this not just for the sake of the good company. "Relationships constitute the person," writes Cantalamessa, precisely because we are co-united in the image of the Tri-Personally united God. Among the Fathers, it was the "Ever-Virgin" (Aeiparthenos) Mary, who after "the Arch-Virgin" (Archiparthenos) Christ, portrays the boundless gratuity of the Infinite One. Cantalamessa cannot close without a rich meditation on her. He quotes the great Akathist Hymn:

Hail, mother and nurse of virgins!
Hail, you who lead souls to the
Bridegroom!
Hail, Virgin Spouse! (p. 89)

William Riordan
Sacred Heart Major Seminary
2701 W. Chicago Blvd.
Detroit, MI 48206

Catholic Family Perspectives Weekly Magazine to Be Launched on the Internet

Beginning June 2, 1996 (Trinity Sunday), Catholics and others from around the world with access to the World Wide Web on the Internet will be able to receive a free weekly electronic magazine — or "ezine" — which will feature hypertext-linked articles and information on issues which affect families generally or the Catholic family in particular.

The premiere issue of the ezine, to be called *Catholic Family Perspectives Weekly*, will include articles by well-known pro-family advocate John Cavanaugh-OKeefe of Laytonsville, Maryland; San Diego, California canon and civil lawyer Dr. Edward Peters; Jan Fredericks of Rochester, New York, who along with his wife Dr. Barbara Fredericks has adopted and cared for children with disabilities; and Professor Dominic Aquila, Chairman of the Department of History and Political Science at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio. Future issues will include articles from other invited and unsolicited contributors who wish to share their love of the Catholic Church and the family with interested readers, or users, on the Internet.

The capabilities of the World Wide Web will allow users of *Catholic Family Perspectives Weekly* to quickly access with the click of a mouse the complete text of referenced documents that are available on the Internet, official Catholic pronouncements such as the 1983 *Charter of the Rights of the Family* and selected World Wide Web pages containing hypertext link collections, such as "Catholic Resources on the Net."

Catholic Family Perspectives Weekly will be published and edited by John F. Wagner Jr. and Helen Ann Wagner of Rochester, New York. The Wagners are the parents of six children, aged 4 to 14. Mr. Wagner, a senior editor with Thomson Legal Publishing, is an attorney and member of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, a national association, and the St. Thomas More Lawyers Guild in Rochester. Both Mr. and Mrs. Wagner are professed members of the Secular Franciscan Order.

"In bringing Catholic family culture to the Internet, we are following the lead given to us by Pope John Paul II," Mr. Wagner said. "As early as his message for World Communications Day in 1989, the Holy Father recognized that the Church must avail herself of the new resources provided by computer technology, and the Vatican launched its own Web site last year. While there are numerous other Catholic outreach ventures on the Internet, ours will be an interactive publication written from the perspective of the family — the 'domestic church.'"

Catholic Family Perspectives Weekly can be accessed on the World Wide Web at the following Uniform Resource Locator, or URL:

<http://www.vivanet.com/~jwagner/cfpw.htm>

Submissions of articles for possible publication in the ezine, as well as comments or questions, can be sent via e-mail to Mr. Wagner at the following address:

jwagner@vivanet.com

Mr. and Mrs. Wagner can also be reached by telephone at (716) 254-1811.

BOOKS RECEIVED

AVON BOOKS, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019

Visions of Mary, Peter Eicher. 228 pages. \$5.50 paperback. ISBN: 0-380-78270-7.

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA PRESS, 2200 Girard Ave., Baltimore, MD 21211

Commentary on the Book of Causes, St. Thomas Aquinas (trs. V. Guagliardo, O.P., C. Hess, O.P., and R. Taylor). xxxvii + 193 pages. \$26.95 hardback. ISBN: 0-8132-0843-2.

CENTRAL BUREAU, CUA, 3835 Westminster Place, St. Louis, MO 63108-3472

Power over Life Leads to Domination of Mankind, Michael Schooyans (trs. J. Miller, C.S.C.). 75 pages. \$8.00 paperback. ISBN: 1-887567-01-1.

CROSSROAD, 370 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Contemporary Christian Morality: Real Questions, Candid Responses, Richard C. Sparks. xix + 159 pages. \$12.95 paperback. ISBN: 0-8245-1578-1.

Guest in their own House: The Women of Vatican II, Carmel McEnroy. xvi + 309 pages. \$15.95 paperback. ISBN: 0-8245-1547-1.

Raising Abel: The Recovery of the Eschatological Imagination, James Alison. 203 pages. \$19.95 paperback. ISBN: 0-8245-1565-X.

The Struggle for Theology's Soul: Contesting Scripture in Christology, William M. Thompson. xii + 310 pages. \$39.95 hardback. ISBN: 0-8245-1543-9.

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESS, University Box L, Bronx, NY 10458

Peirce's Philosophical Perspectives, Vicent Potter (ed. Vincent Colapietro). xxvii + 212 pages. \$30.00 hardcover. ISBN: 0-8232-1615.

FRANCISCAN PRESS, Quincy University, 1800 College Ave, Quincy, IL 62301-2699

Marriage: The Sacrament of Divine-Human Communion, Sister Paula Jean Miller, F.S.E. xiv + 268 pages. \$24.95 paperback. ISBN: 0-8199-0967-X.

IGNATIUS PRESS, 2515 McAllister Street, San Francisco, CA 94118

A Christian Mother's Reflections: Pregnancy Diary, Mary Arnold. 149 pages. \$9.95 sewn softcover. ISBN: 0-89870-564-9.

A Collection of Poems, Mother Mary Francis, P.C.C. 176 pages. \$11.95 sewn softcover. ISBN: 0-89870-573-8.

Born Fundamentalist, Born Again Catholic, David B. Currie. 215 pages. \$11.95 sewn softcover. ISBN: 0-89870-569-X.

Catholic Education: Homeward Bound, Kimberly Hahn & Mary Hasson. 400 pages. \$14.95 sewn softcover. ISBN: 0-89870-566-5.

Ecumenical Jihad: Ecumenism and the Culture War, Peter Kreeft. 172 pages. \$10.95 sewn softcover. ISBN: 0-89870-579-7.

Father Elijah: An Apocalypse, Michael D. O'Brien. 596 pages. \$24.95 hardcover. ISBN: 0-89870-580.

Fire of Mercy, Heart of the Word: Meditations on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis. 746 pages. \$29.95 softcover. ISBN: 0-89870-558-4.

The Heart of Virtue: Lessons from Life and Literature on the Beauty of Moral Character, Donald DeMarco. 231 pages. \$12.95 sewn softcover. ISBN: 0-89870-568-1.

The Large Family: A Blessing and a Challenge, Dr. Eugene Diamond. 165 pages. \$9.95 sewn softcover. ISBN: 0-89870-571-1.

The Saints Show Us Christ: Daily Readings on the Spiritual Life, Fr. Rawley Myers. 364 pages. \$14.95 sewn softcover. ISBN: 0-89870-542-8.

The Vatican and Communism During World War II: What Really Happened?, Robert Graham, S.J. 199 pages. \$12.95 sewn softcover. ISBN: 0-89870-549-5.

Saint Dominic and the Rosary, Catherine Beebe. 161 pages. \$9.95 sewn softcover. ISBN: 0-89870-518-5.

We're on a Mission from God: The Generation X Guide to John Paul II and the Real Meaning of Life, Mary Beth Bonacci. 213 pages. \$11.95 sewn softcover. ISBN: 0-89870-567-3.

PRESIDIO PRESS, 505 San Marin Drive, Suite 300, Novato, CA 94945

Convenantal Theology: The Eucharistic Order of History, Donald J. Keefe, S.J. xv + 784 pages. Hardback. ISBN: 0-89141-605-6.

SIMON & SCHUSTER, Simon and Schuster Building, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

Breaking Through God's Silence: A Guide to Effective Prayer, David Yount. 224 pages. \$20.00 hardback. ISBN: 0-684-82419-1.

SOPHIA INSTITUTE PRESS, Box 5284, Manchester, NH 03108

The Essential Rosary, with Prayers, Caryll Houselander. 96 pages. \$5.95 deluxe paperback. ISBN: 0-918477-36-0.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON PRESS, Linden and Monroe, Scranton, PA 18410

No Higher Court: Contemporary Feminism and the Right to Abortion, Germain Kopaczynski, OFMConv. xxiii + 247 pages. \$29.95 hardcover. ISBN: 0-9040866-50-1.

MOVING?

Tell the Fellowship.
Call (219) 631-5825
FCS
PO Box 495
Notre Dame, IN 46556
(the Post Office does not
forward 3rd class mail)

**Fellowship of
Catholic Scholars
Newsletter**

Box 495
Notre Dame, IN 46556

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Notre Dame, Indiana
Permit No. 10

Fellowship
of Catholic
Scholars
Newsletter