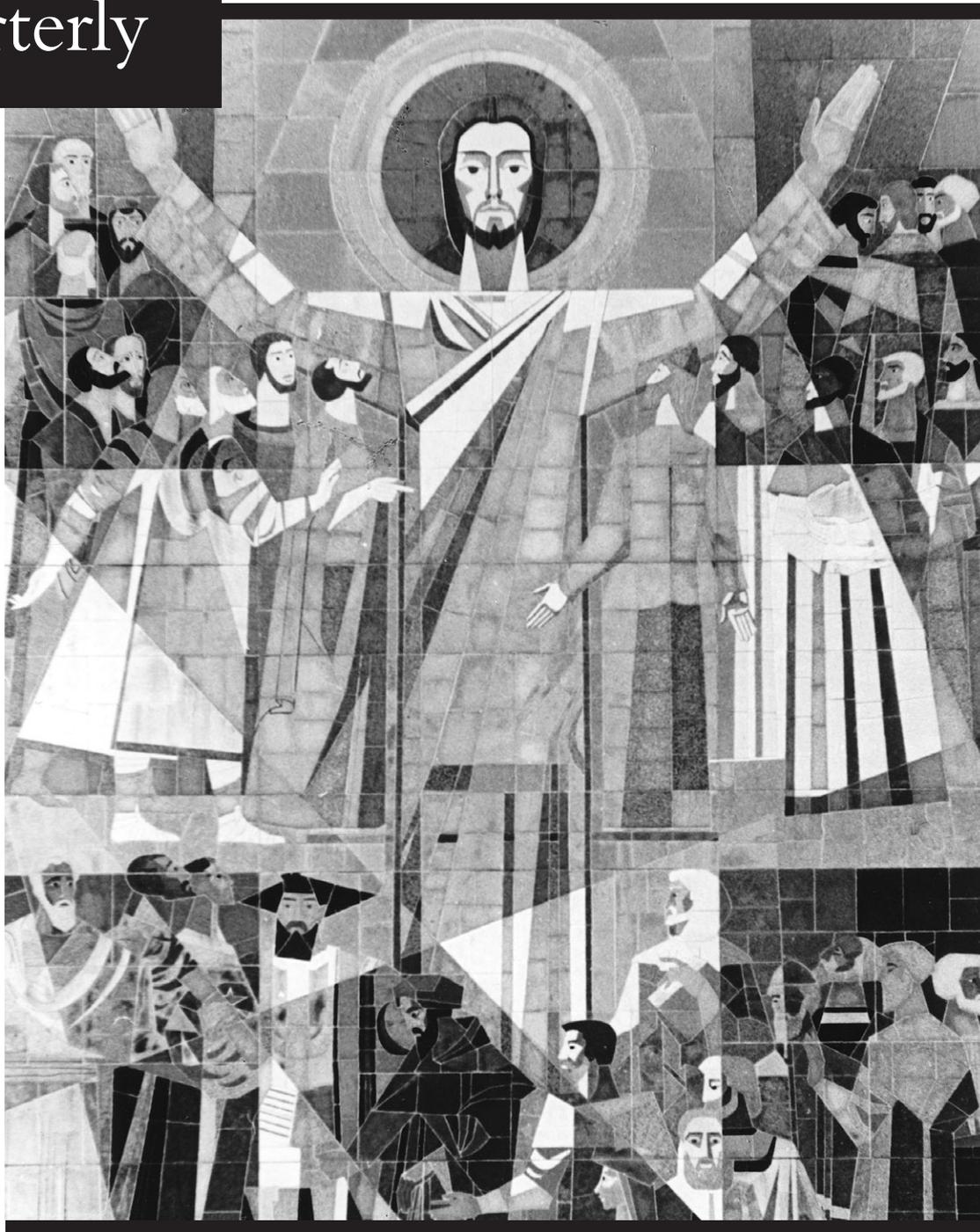


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Fellowship of Catholic Scholars

Scholarship Inspired by the Holy Spirit,
in Service to the Church

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NOTE: The Archives of the University of Notre Dame would like to preserve and make available to scholars a complete run of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Newsletter. We presently have only issues that happen to have come to us with personal papers (e.g., of Sister Rose Eileen Masterman, CSC, or Ralph McInerney). If you have back issues that you would be willing to donate, please write to archives@nd.edu

Comebacks and Service

I know now how Grover Cleveland must have felt. He served our country as its 22nd and 24th President, his terms separated by electoral defeat by Benjamin Harrison. I am, once again, President of our Fellowship. The press of other obligations caused Dean Bernard Dobranski of Ave Maria Law School to welcome relief from his duties as Acting President. I was willing to serve out the term. The Board of Directors was willing to put up with me. The rest is history.

Even before this comeback I had served longer as Fellowship President – six years – than anyone else. I was Vice-President before that. I probably know the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars as well as anyone. We face many challenges in the coming years, chief among them introducing and attracting younger scholars to our group. And we look to the future certain that many among our founders and guiding spirits will not, due to infirmity and death, be there to help us.

I know this, too: the Fellowship has a great asset, one in short supply these days. In season and out of season our members, directors and officers have remained faithful to our mission. What I mean, more exactly, is this: we have not shirked our duty, as we have seen it, due to fecklessness or out of respect for human (including episcopal) opinion. We stayed the course, for example, all through the *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* implementation debate, when practically everyone else was losing his head and blaming it on people like us. In all my years, too, no one has commandeered the Fellowship, no one has taken it over with an agenda, and made it an instrument for his or her professional advancement. No one has used the Fellowship as a soapbox or as a mouthpiece.

Make no mistake about it: the Fellowship is not comprised of meek individuals. Visionary, accomplished, charismatic figures crowd the pages of our history. All the more revealing, then, that these strong, opinionated men and women have come to the Fellowship, content to put one more oar into the water, to pull the barque at the direction of others, happy to be humble Servants of the Gospel.

Blaise Pascal's "Night of Fire": Conversion in Context

by Marvin R. O'Connell

He was a little man, even when measured by the standards of the mid-seventeenth century, five feet three or four inches in height, perhaps 130 pounds. His oval-shaped face was dominated by an aquiline nose over a thin-lipped mouth and pointed chin. He wore his dark hair in accord with the fashion of the day, letting it frame his face and sweep down to his shoulders and with bangs along the upper forehead. His complexion was sallow, almost waxen, like one who suffered from chronic illness. And so he did or rather so he had from a plethora of illnesses ever since infancy. When he was a baby in Clermont, thirty-one years before this late autumn evening in 1654, he had almost died, and since that time in Paris and then in Rouen and now in Paris again, he had endured successive bouts of migraine, sharp abdominal pain, paralysis off and on in his legs, persistent insomnia and an overall physical frailty which left him prey to any passing infection and which left him as well victim of the cumbersome and often painful medical procedures then available.

He had moved across the Seine and taken these rented rooms on the left bank only a few months before. Located in the rue de Francs-Bourgeois, near the Luxembourg palace, they lay not far from where he and his father and his two sisters had resided for some years during his childhood. Yet more than mere nostalgia had brought him back to the Latin Quarter. This quartet, he, his father, and his two siblings, had been exceedingly close in those days and indeed throughout their lives together. But his father, a career high government official, had been dead now these three years—he

scarcely remembered his mother who had died when he was a toddler—and his elder sister, Gilberte, had married and was raising a family back in Clermont. Nearby, however, was the Convent of Port-Royal, only a ten minute walk from the Francs-Bourgeois, where his beloved younger sister, Jacqueline, had been professed as a nun and where his two nieces, Gilberte's daughters, were boarding students.

His rented flat was not sumptuous, though it was adequate for a bachelor not overly interested in creature-comforts. If he remained a man of some means, his resources had recently diminished, due to a couple of bad investments and an inability to secure any financial advantage from his various research projects. Most notable among these latter was a large box-like contraption set in the corner of his work-room, the calculating machine he had invented a decade earlier. This ingenious device, with its interlocking wheels, bars, and weights, could add, subtract, multiply, and divide numbers composed of as many as eight digits. He had originally conceived it and put it together in order to help his father in the latter's tedious accounting chores; all attempts, however, to find a wider market for the machine had failed. Similarly, his groundbreaking investigations into the nature of the vacuum had taken money out of his pocket rather than the other way round. Nevertheless, these endeavors, along with a steady stream of treatises in mathematics and physics—from analyses of conic sections to a subtle elaboration of probability theory—had confirmed that this child prodigy had evolved into an intellectual respected across France and indeed across Europe.

Such plaudits that came his way—and they were many: "I am delighted," wrote one distinguished mathematician to a friend, "to find opinions of mine consistent with his, for I esteem immeasurably his genius, and I judge him very capable of reaching to the heart of any inquiry he undertakes"—praise and approval of this sort were sweet sounds to his ears, for, not unnaturally, he hankered after the approbation of his colleagues and fellow-scientists. It is true that René Descartes,

a generation his senior, tended to treat him with condescension, but this bothered him little, since he had from the first dismissed from his mind the celebrated cartesian methodology as irrelevant. Nor did he disdain the company of the rich and powerful, of noblemen and successful entrepreneurs, no less than savants. Indeed, both his sisters fretted that such ambitions and associations had too strong a hold upon him, and they warned him solemnly not to be beguiled by the lure of the world.

He had for some time felt that they were right to a degree, but still he pressed on with the scientific projects that had made him celebrity. Yet he grew increasingly uneasy and dissatisfied. "He comes to see me," Jacqueline reported to Gilberte, "and opens his heart to me so poignantly that I cannot but pity him. He acknowledges that in the midst of his grand occupations and of all those activities that can contribute to making him love the world, he really wants to leave all this behind him." He did and he didn't, and in this mixed mood of psychic ambivalence, as this Monday, November 23, 1654 was drawing toward the witching hour, with his manservant asleep in an outer room, Blaise Pascal sat at his work table littered with books and manuscripts and a clutter of quills, scraps of notes, small geometrical instruments. Then suddenly he was engulfed in a moment of unprecedented exultation. "From about half-past ten in the evening," as he wrote it down in the immediate aftermath, "until about half-past midnight, FIRE." It was for Pascal *la nuit de feu*, the night of fire.

Conversion is one of those words that testify to the richness as well as to the complexity of the English language. In its primary meaning it remains faithful to its Latin and French roots and points simply to a change of course of some sort. But this basic definition has ripened over the years. For a lawyer, conversion might apply to someone's unlawful appropriation of another's property. For a currency merchant it involves the exchange of dollars for yen or euros. A professor of logic will tell you that conversion is the interchange of subject and predicate within

a proposition, while a psychiatrist will insist that it signifies a defense mechanism whereby repressed ideas, conflicts, or impulses are manifested by various bodily symptoms. Politicians have not been unknown to go through a conversion when they sense a shift in the winds of public opinion; thus the present senior senator from Alabama, Richard Shelby, switched from the Democratic to the Republican party once satisfied that such a conversion accorded with his constituents' desires. And of course for the football fans gathered in stadiums or before their television sets on Saturday or Sunday afternoons every autumn, conversion refers to the point or points, often crucial, to be gained after a team scores a touchdown.

Yet despite all these and other verbal excrescences, conversion, at least in ordinary parlance, most commonly denotes some change of mind or behavior of a religious kind. Most often the phenomenon indicated is a simple and yet profound change of confessional allegiance. Such cases defy categorization, since each is a deeply personal event. Some religious conversions have been sudden and dramatic: Saul of Tarsus radically altered his life in one burst of blinding light that enveloped him along the road to Damascus. Others have been long, drawn-out affairs mingling introspection with conjecture: seven years passed between the moment Newman first experienced doubts about the validity of the Anglican *via media* and the rainy evening in Littlemore when he made his confession to the Passionist missionary, Father Dominic Barberi. Sometimes the conversion appears to have been a combination of the abrupt and the prolonged: Martin Luther struggled for decades to fulfill in every detail the mandate to perform good works as defined by the late medieval Church, until, in a flash of illumination, he concluded that he had discovered the correct interpretation of the seventeenth verse of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, that the just man lives by faith *alone*.

Not infrequently conversion, humanly speaking, has arisen out of a person's feeling of dissatisfaction or even disgust with an earlier life-style.

The poet T. S. Eliot found relief from the cultural wasteland prevalent among the intelligentsia of the lost generation after the first world war by embracing the sacramental symbolism of the high Anglican Church. At roughly the same time C. S. Lewis, a refugee from the harsh Calvinism of his native northern Ireland and entangled in youthful atheism in reaction to it, was surprised by the joy he experienced in a belief suffused by gentler gospel principles. Charles de Foucauld, sickened finally at his career of reckless dissolution among the wastrels and loafers along the boulevards of Paris, was transformed into the blessed “Hermit of the Sahara,” to which desolate place he brought his boundless love and his willingness to die a Christian martyr. And Dorothy Day, who, after the birth of her illegitimate daughter, gave up the Bohemian ways of Greenwich Village, became a Catholic, and expended the rest of her saintly years in tireless service to the poor and marginalized and to the cause of non-violence in an unprecedentedly violent world. Disenchantment with an institution can also play a role. In the late 1960s John Cogley, longtime editor of the liberal Catholic weekly *Commonweal*, and a hero of my young manhood, declared his conversion to Episcopalianism, because of his disappointment at the rate of reform and renewal undertaken by the ecclesiastical authorities after the second Vatican Council. Of course plain expedience can nudge certain people into a conversion. One celebrated instance was provided at the end of the sixteenth century by Henry of Navarre, who by right of blood was king of France but who was rejected by his countrymen because he was a Protestant. “Paris is worth a Mass,” he quipped famously, and, after formally submitting to the old religion, he was, amidst delirious demonstrations of joy among the Parisians, duly enthroned as King Henry IV.

But none of these cases, nor the innumerable similar ones that might be cited, exhausts the meaning of “conversion.” For us of the television age perhaps the most enduring insight into a more profound understanding of the phenomenon over the past half-century has stemmed from the world-

wide crusades of Billy Graham. Surely you have witnessed on the small screen, as I have—whether issuing from Baltimore or Berlin or Bangladesh—the eloquent witness to the Christian gospel preached by Dr. Graham, always followed by his appeal to the assembled hearers to come forward toward the podium and in doing so to testify that they were ready to accept Christ “as their personal savior.” A certain proportion of his hearers regularly made this public commitment, though one may legitimately doubt that all of them kept their pledge during the days and years that followed. Nevertheless, for those who adhered to the engagement they had given, a genuine conversion had occurred, a conversion entirely consistent with the Protestant tradition, which has emphasized an understanding of faith as a wholehearted, trusting commitment to a person rather than an intellectual assent to a creed. And this despite the unhappy aberrations of certain television evangelists like Jim Bakker or Jimmy Swaggert.

Consistent, I say, with the Protestant tradition, as manifested by the great Reformers of the sixteenth century, by persons who differed so markedly in temperament and circumstance as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Thomas Cranmer. Their conversion-experiences did indeed lead them to change their confessional allegiances, to fashion another creed to replace the one in which they had been reared. But such was not the case with all their contemporaries. One remembers, for instance, that demobilized soldier, Ignatius Loyola, caught up by mystic rapture in the caves of Manresa, who went on from there to found the Society of Jesus, the most influential Catholic institute over the last five hundred years. Or of Teresa of Avila, a nun of no particular fervor, who, while praying before a statue of Christ scourged at the pillar, was suddenly enveloped in a profound sense of inner peace, out of which, through many vicissitudes, there emerged in time a mystical interior castle and, simultaneously, a sweeping reform of the old Carmelite order. Or of Charles Borromeo, a cardinal and archbishop at twenty-two years of age simply because his uncle was the pope, a young

man of no special natural gifts or virtues, who in his splendid Vatican apartment mysteriously encountered Christ as his personal savior—if I may put it so—and proceeded to bring the momentous Council of Trent to a successful conclusion and, after that, to provide an enduring ideal of a bishop as shepherd of souls. Intensely personal experiences undergone by these Catholics, and many more like them, suggest that conversion in this most intimate sense of the word was by no means a Protestant preserve

Such events were, and are, shrouded in mystery. But Blaise Pascal, that man of science, left behind a record of his “night of fire.” There was, to be sure, no change in creedal allegiance involved, though it did reflect a certain partisan commitment. The Pascals were conventional, Sunday Mass-going Catholics until their residence in Rouen during the 1640s, when Pascal *père* was the royal tax-collector for the province of Normandy. In 1645 they came into contact with a charismatic priest who was, as Gilberte described him, “a very great servant of God. He governed his parish with very solid piety and preached at Mass the most admirable sermons.” And he was a Jansenist.

The Jansenist controversies which preoccupied the French Church during the seventeenth century were signs of vibrancy, not of decline. The Catholic Counter Reformation came late to France, due partly to the drawn out religious civil wars which did not end until Henry IV’s conversion, and partly because the reforming decrees of the Council of Trent were not promulgated in France, so suspicious were the Gallicans of any ultramontane initiatives. But when it did come, it flowered spectacularly, at least among the upper classes. This was the age of Francis de Sales, of Vincent de Paul, of Jane Frances de Chantal, and of a host other leading lights scarcely less notable. Robust preaching, a heightened dedication to theological scholarship, an upsurge of pious confraternities, many of them dedicated to works of charity, new religious congregations like the Oratorians and Teresa of Avila’s Carmelites flourishing, as did, even more than the others, the Jesuits—all these were harbingers of a

revivified French Catholicism no longer charmed by the rude jokes of Rabelais or the cool skepticism of Montaigne. Religious practice became fashionable.

And here was the rub. For a small but zealous and talented minority the revival was being spoiled precisely because it was so in vogue, because it did not take sufficient account of the dark side of the Christian message, the terrible depravity of sin which humankind had so little capacity to combat. Ladies and gentlemen might go to Mass, but they also continued to frequent the salons and engage in other forms of social worldliness. This view attained scholarly respectability through the works of an obscure Flemish academic named Cornelius Jansen. He purported to find in the fifth century teachings of St. Augustine a theory of sin and redemption, of grace and freedom, which virtually condemned what Jansen saw as the frivolous behavior of contemporary Catholics. The contentions that arose out of the posthumous publication of his masterpiece, a book called the *Augustinus*, were, like many such theological disputes, highly abstract and hard to follow. Suffice it to say, Jansen’s opponents claimed his approach was tantamount to adopting Calvin’s doctrine of predestination, while his supporters maintained that a refusal to accept the horrible consequences of original sin amounted to the old heresy of Pelagianism, which had held that Adam and Eve in the Garden had merely given a bad example to their progeny.

It has been said that St. Augustine, like the Scriptures themselves, can be quoted on both sides of any theological argument. However that may be, it is certainly true that the Jansenist evangel put emphasis upon the gloomier side of the great bishop’s teaching. And if the rigorous life style required by the Jansenists appeared to some as suggestive of John Calvin’s puritan testament, to others it seemed like a call to high idealism. The appeal to moral clarity and purity of motive has always had a certain fascination. Thus many of those unsophisticated in the nuances of theological debate—Blaise Pascal among them—reacted favorably to the Jansenist position on the sacrament of penance.

It went without saying that the penitent in the confessional box had to express sorrow for his sins in order to receive absolution. But what should be the intensity of that sorrow? The traditional teaching drew a distinction between “contrition”—I’m sorry because I have offended the benevolent God who has been so good to me and who sacrificed his Son upon the cross to save me—and “attrition”—I’m sorry because I have come to loathe my dark deeds and myself for having done them, and because I’m afraid of the eternal punishment they have merited. (When I was a child, subjected to the Baltimore catechism, we were taught to label these two, rather more intelligibly, perfect and imperfect contrition.) The traditional view maintained that attrition would suffice for the valid reception of forgiveness in the confessional. Not so, replied the stern Jansenists. Those who cannot summon up sorrow for having, so to speak, slapped God across the face, and who hide instead behind fear and self-disgust, deserve the doleful fate that awaits them.

So this was the fervent party the Pascals encountered in 1645 in Rouen. Blaise succumbed first to the dynamic Jansenist priest and his disciples, and then Jacqueline, and then, with some reluctance, their father. Blaise called it later his first conversion. And clearly, once he and Jacqueline had returned to Paris a couple of years later—his various ailments needed better professional treatment than that available in the provinces—that conversion had taken deeper root in his sister than in himself. Jacqueline, once her father died, and over the strong objections of her brother, took the veil at the convent of Port-Royal. This was the citadel of the Jansenist movement, presided over by that remarkable woman, Angelique Arnauld, Mère Angelique, who with her brothers, blood-sisters, nieces, and nephews, all by birth part of the Parisian elite, comprised a kind of Jansenist family firm which gave intellectual substance and practical vitality to the party. Blaise Pascal, meanwhile, while he attended Mass regularly at Port-Royal, continued fitfully his scientific

researches and even lent his acumen in the realm of mathematical probabilities to highly placed friends, who wanted to apply it to the uncertainties of games of chance. His interviews with the formidable Angelique—whom he always tremblingly addressed as “ma Mère”—were rare and troubling for him, because she made it all too clear that she doubted than any intellectual could be found among Christ’s elect.

These were among the factors that reached a climax on the evening of November 23, 1654, in the unostentatious apartment on the rue de Francs-Bourgeois. He told no one, not even his sisters, what had happened. Immediately after his death, however, eight years later, a servant, sorting through his clothing, discovered a doublet which appeared to have had extra padding inserted into its left side. Upon investigation, there was revealed a parchment and, wrapped inside it, a single sheet of paper, which, it seems, he had worn next to his heart ever since. Here was an avowal of the second and definitive conversion, a pact between God and himself, the *mémorial* of which Pascal carried concealed on his person till the day he died.

The event itself, so deeply private must remain forever largely an enigma. A lesser puzzle is why Pascal wrote two copies of the *mémorial* and kept both of them permanently at hand. The texts are substantially the same, though there are a few significant differences in content between them and a considerable one in form. Clearly the paper-text—written hurriedly, smudged, crowded with excisions and insertions, scarcely legible in places—was composed first, composed indeed at the very moment of illumination. Beneath a small cross crudely scrawled at the top of the sheet the words tumbled forth in hot intensity.

The year of grace 1654.
Monday, 23 November, feast of Saint Clement,
pope and martyr and others in the martyrology.
The eve of St. Chrysogonus martyr and others.
From about half-past ten in the evening
until about half-past midnight. Fire.

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac,
the God of Jacob.

Not of the philosophers and intellectuals.
 Certitude, certitude, feeling, joy, peace.
 The God of Jesus Christ.
 My God and your God [in Latin, accusative case].
 Your God will be my God.
 Forgetfulness of the world and everything
 except God.
 One finds oneself only by way of the directions taught
 in the gospel. The grandeur of the human soul.
 O just Father, the world has not known you,
 but I have known you.
 Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.
 I have separated myself from him.
 They have abandoned me, the fountain of living water
 [in Latin].
 My God, will you leave me?
 May I not be separated from him eternally.
 This is eternal life, that they may know you
 the one true God and J. C. whom you have sent.
 Jesus Christ.
 Jesus Christ.
 I have separated myself from him. I have run away from
 him, renounced him, crucified him.
 May I never be separated from him.
 One preserves oneself only by way of the lessons
 taught in the gospel. Renunciation total and sweet.
 And so forth.

The parchment text introduces a few minor verbal changes and grammatical corrections, as well as one curious omission: from the Latin phrase beginning “They have abandoned me the fountain,” the words “of living water (*aquae vivae*)” have dropped out. This quotation from Jeremiah (2:13) is not so identified in the parchment or the paper, nor is Jesus’s definition of eternal life given at the Last Supper (John, 17:3). Other biblical references, however, are supplied in the parchment, though in truncated form, so as to suggest they have been cited from memory. Thus, for example, after quoting part of Ruth’s beautiful pledge to Naomi (1:16)—“Wherever you go I will go, wherever you live I will live, your people shall be my people, and your God my God”—Pascal simply wrote “Ruth” on the parchment. Also, instead of the single cross inscribed at the head of the paper-text, there appear on the top and the bottom of the parchment more carefully drawn crosses, each of them

surrounded by little dash-like lines that imply rays of light emanating from them.

More significant than these relatively trivial alterations and additions was the appendix Pascal fixed to the end of the parchment. Gone is the prosaic and yet pregnant “And so forth (*Et ainsi de suite*)” of the paper-text, and in its stead are three supplementary lines.

Total submission to Jesus Christ and my director.
 Eternally in bliss, in exchange for a day of hard training
 in this world. May I never forget your words [in Latin].

The last line echoes Psalm 119:16—always a favorite of her brother, according to Gilberte—while the first two, especially the words “*soumission totale à mon directeur*,” have about them the authoritative ring of Jansenist Port-Royal.

In form the parchment-text differs sharply from that inscribed on the sheet of paper. The latter presents the reader with a script scribbled with feverish emotion; the former, by contrast, has a studied look to it, carefully composed, perfectly legible, beautifully crafted. Two words, “FIRE” and “GOD” are printed in capital letters. Certain other words received emphasis by reason of size or the density of the ink; among these are Christ’s name as well as the “grandeur” attributed to the human soul and the “total” renunciation of the world and its pomp that Pascal has now undertaken. The parchment-text, in short, stands as a measured and reflective confirmation of the original *mémorial*, the two now wedded together and secretly lodged over their author’s heart.

In attempting to reconstruct what happened to Blaise Pascal that fateful night, it is useful to recall—especially in this present age, so widely indifferent to it—how during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Bible defined not only the terms of religious controversy among Christians but also the norms of personal piety. It has been asserted that John Calvin knew the whole of the Bible by heart, and not only in order by apt quotation to smite his confessional opponents.

If this claim is an exaggeration, it is surely an excusable one, more excusable than the allegation that devotional emphasis on the Scriptures was an exclusively Protestant initiative.

Pascal's *mémorial* is in fact suffused with biblical imagery and reference, quite beyond the explicit instances alluded to above, and it would be impossible to unravel the obscurities in the document without placing it within that context. Once he had identified the specific date and the precise time of his illumination, Pascal wrote the word "Fire," and then he immediately invoked "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." The allusion was clearly to the third chapter of Exodus. Moses, having fled from Egypt, was tending the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro, which task brought him from "the far side of the wilderness to Horeb, the mountain of God." Here, as he rested, Moses "saw the shape of a flame of fire coming from the middle of a bush, but it was not being burnt up." Filled with wonder, he approached this extraordinary phenomenon, and then he heard a voice calling his name. "Here I am," Moses answered. "Take off your shoes," came the response, "for the place on which you stand is holy ground. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." A terrified and bewildered Moses, having covered his face in fear, then heard what his mission was to be, to lead the chosen people out of bondage in Egypt. But, said he, what am I to reply if I am asked who has sent me—"what am I to tell them?" "I Am who Am. This is what you must say to the sons of Israel. I Am has sent me to you, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

And this God was also "the God of Jesus Christ," and the words of the Savior recorded in the New Testament leapt into Pascal's mind even as he pondered this dramatic scene from the Old. When Jesus wished to confound those of his contemporaries who denied the resurrection of the dead, the Saducees, he too recalled the moment of truth on Mount Horeb. "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," Jesus reminded his stiff-necked listeners, and these

patriarchs, their earthly mission completed, nevertheless have survived until now, he said, for "God is God, not of the dead, but of the living (Matthew 22:32)."

So when Pascal wrote upon the *mémorial* the word "Fire" it was the burning bush on Horeb—the bush which burned and yet was not destroyed by the flames—that he was confronted with. "Here I am," Moses had said. And, echoed Pascal, here I am, *me voici*, all these centuries later, and what name am I to give to you, Lord of hosts? The answer came resoundingly: I am the God of Abraham and your fathers, and of Jesus your brother; I am the God, not of the philosophers nor of those who deal in complex dialectic and subtle abstraction, but of the holy people I have marked out from Abraham's time forever, as numerous as the sands on the sea-shore, the God, that is, who has chosen to dwell within the history of humankind. When Pascal contrasted the living God of the patriarchs with the conceptual Deity of the philosophers, he had passed over to the "holy ground" where the divine fire illumines without consuming, where the presence of God is discerned with an intensity and directness that mock the arguments of the savants.

An elaboration of this followed promptly by way of a second scriptural allusion—this one the four Latin words in the accusative case—which in the *mémorial* was linked closely to the first. Upon the parchment Pascal added the explicit citation to John, 20: 11-18. Mary Magdalen, on the morning of the Sunday after the crucifixion, went to the garden where the body of Jesus had been interred. She met there a man she assumed to be the supervisor of the garden, and, when she found Jesus's tomb empty, she asked this man to allow her to take charge of the corpse, which, for some reason she did not know, had been spirited away. The person to whom she addressed this appeal proved to be Jesus himself. "Woman, why are you weeping?" he said. "They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him." Then, suddenly, Mary recognized Jesus, who said to her: "Mary, tell my brethren I am ascending to my

Father and your Father, to my God and your God”—*Deum meum et Deum vestrum*, object of the verb *ascendere*, as Pascal had read in his copy of the Latin Vulgate. And these words immediately called into his consciousness the tag of Ruth’s pledge to Naomi: “Your God,” he quoted in French, “shall be my God.” And who was Ruth? She was the ancestress of King David and therefore also of Jesus, so often referred to in his lifetime as the son of David.

Here, at these biblical evocations, is to be discerned—to the extent that it can be discerned at all—the essence of Pascal’s ultimate conversion: the fire of the burning bush, the related appeal to the God of the patriarchs, echoed by Jesus himself, the experience of Mary Magdalen in the garden of burial, and, finally, the remembrance of Ruth’s vow which, in human terms, had put in train God’s visitation to his people in the person of his divine Son. Neither Moses nor Mary Magdalen recognized at first who it was that spoke to them—“I must go and look at this strange sight,” Moses had said, “and see why the bush is not burnt.” Similarly, Blaise Pascal had not appreciated the reality he had encountered at his first conversion nine years before. Or rather—so it appeared to him now—he had tried to absorb that experience the way a philosopher or savant would have absorbed it, as if it were an idea, a notion, conforming to the demands of the limited human intellect, and had tried to adapt it to the standards of the successful man of the world. It was not that he now judged such aspirations unworthy or even, to a degree, unuseful; they had become for him simply irrelevant. For how could one compare, say, Descartes’s bare, cold idea of the First Cause of a thinking substance to the rapturous apprehension of Mary in the garden, when, looking directly into the face of the risen Jesus, she cried to him out of a full heart, “Rabboni!”

This kind of realization is what has brought Pascal “certitude” and “joy” and “peace,” and brought him, too, to the conviction that he must now follow the path of “forgetfulness and of everything except God” and that only by adhering to

“the directions of the gospel” could the potential “grandeur” of his soul be achieved. He turned for inspiration to the gospel of John, this time to the seventeenth chapter and the end of Jesus’s priestly prayer at the Last Supper: “O just Father, the world has not known you, but I have known you.” In this same passage Jesus assured his disciples that they were his friends, that he was the vine and they the branches. The knowledge of such intimacy has consumed Pascal in this instant with “joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.”

And yet he grasped the woeful fact that he had routinely separated himself from a loving God, and he thought of the denunciation leveled by Jeremiah (2:5-13) against the people chosen like himself, reaching its climax with the chilling utterance: “They have abandoned me, the fountain of living water.” Was not the fearful recompense that God in his turn will abandon his people? “My God, will you leave me?” cried Pascal, echoing the terrible words of Jesus on the cross: “Eli, Eli, lamma sabachtani—My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” From this fiery moment Blaise Pascal will for the rest of his life quake at the prospect that God may justly abandon him, so that his constant prayer will be, “May I not be separated from him eternally.” Once more he invoked the assurance recorded in John’s gospel—“This is eternal life,” to know God and the Christ whom God has sent—without forgetting, however, that in the past “I have separated myself from him. I have run away from him, renounced him, crucified him.”

And then a sacramental *cri de coeur* that only a Catholic could have written: “May I never be separated from him,” which was a word-for-word translation from the Latin prayer recited just before the reception of Communion at Mass. Only “renunciation total and sweet” to the dictates of the gospel could “preserve” him from separation and dreadful abandonment. Or, as that same liturgical prayer expressed it: “May the recognition of your Body, Lord Jesus Christ, which I all unworthy presume to receive, not bring me to judgment and condemnation.”

But the analysis of the *mémorial* in biblical terms, crucial as it may be, cannot by itself explain the full significance of “the night of fire.” Many mysteries remain. One of them arises from what appears as a small difference between the paper-text and the parchment. The line that reads in the former “Certitude, certitude, feeling [*sentiment*], joy, peace” becomes in the latter—written, it will be remembered, after some reflection on Pascal’s part—Certitude, joy, certitude, feeling, sight [*vue*],” with a second “joy” inserted at the end and slightly above the line, as though in afterthought. The change in word-order and the omission of “peace” present a lesser problem than does the addition of “*vue*” immediately after “*sentiment*.” This last word can be translated, as indeed it has been here, as “feeling” or “perception.” But it also admits of narrower connotations, like consciousness or—perhaps better in this context—“love.”

Or perhaps best of all a combination of these meanings. What Pascal has experienced is a “love,” an overwhelming affection, which nevertheless brought with it also a species of knowledge, for *sentiment* always includes in its definition an element of the cognitive. Not, to be sure, the knowledge of “the philosophers and the intellectuals” which he already possessed in a fuller measure than most, but rather an intensely heightened perception, a boundlessly deepened consciousness of the kind Moses and Mary Magdalen had gained by “sight” in their personal encounters. Involved here therefore was a “certitude” far removed from that of abstract mathematical demonstration and, in consequence, a “joy” which surpassed ordinary understanding.

Did Pascal find in these two hours of *sentiment* and *vue* a confirmation of the opening lines of the little treatise “On the Conversion of the Sinner” he had composed shortly before (or, it is possible, shortly afterward)? “The first stirring that God inspires in the soul he truly condescends to touch leads to a knowledge and an extraordinary insight into himself and into reality.” What has been translated here as “an extraordinary insight”

reads in Pascal’s French “*une vue extraordinaire*. Here is an affective knowledge that issues from a direct confrontation between persons. Not “person” in the philosophical sense, a general and therefore necessarily vague delineation. It does not seem far-fetched to recall that *vue* can also be the past participle of *voir*, the verb to see. The *personne vue*—the person seen—by Moses on Horeb was “the God of Abraham,” the *personne vue* by Mary in the garden was her beloved “Rabboni.” “Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ,” cried Blaise Pascal. “May I never be separated from him.”

Yet it would be wrong to conclude that Pascal emerged from his searing conversion-experience disdainful of the disciplines that had nourished his intellect since childhood. Indeed, it might be argued that the kind of direct knowledge he arrived at then was not inconsistent with the mind-set of a scientist who performed innumerable discrete experiments before theorizing about the nature of a vacuum, and of an inventor who tinkered with no less than fifty models before he succeeded in producing a workable calculating machine. Pascal at any rate continued his researches virtually to the eve of his death. He did not see himself lapsing into fundamentalism, nor did he think his new moral status incompatible with his life-long habits. He had learned at his father’s knee to distinguish sharply between faith and reason—reason understood as the capacity to probe meaningfully into the finite. At issue rather, after November 23, 1654, was a question of priorities. As long before as 1647 Jacqueline Pascal had contended that her brother had ceased to be a mathematician. She meant by that claim, not that he had given up his intellectual pursuits, but that, after his first conversion, he could no longer be *defined* in terms of mathematics or of any other worldly endeavor. He had become a Christian believer, and his faith took precedence over all else. During the stressful years that followed, Blaise had wandered back and forth between his sister’s confidence and his own doubts and hesitations. The “night of fire,” however, settled the matter forever. ✠

Against Same-sex Marriage

by Gerard V. Bradley

On June 26, 2003 the Supreme Court rang the bell. The final round of the national debate over marriage is under way.

The specific result of *Lawrence v. Texas* was provocative enough. The case held that it cannot be a crime under our Constitution for adult homosexuals to have sex in their homes. This novel immunity is part of a larger liberty, the Court said, to express yourself sexually as you please. The real earth shaker, though, was the Court's audacious declaration that "persons in a homosexual relationship" have a constitutionally valid interest in marriage, procreation and family "just as heterosexual persons do". The dissenting justices rightly said that this claim would, if acted upon, "dismantle the structure of constitutional law that has" allowed our law to treat *only* the union of man and woman as marriage. Many informed observers think the "gay marriage" is inevitable, maybe a couple years away.

That is probably an accurate forecast—unless the Constitution is amended (as I think it should be) to prevent the Court from acting on the views it expressed in *Lawrence*. The leading proposal is called the Federal Marriage Amendment. *Marriage* is reserved for man and woman, and the law could not treat any other relationship as its legal equivalent. It leaves state legislatures considerable freedom to accommodate non-marital households, so long as no benefit or privilege—bereavement leave and the like—is limited to persons having immoral sex. Thus, legislators could decide that *any* state worker gets a day off to stay with a hospitalized member of his or her household. But this leave could not, under the FMA, be limited to "couples", or to those who are "intimate" partners—or to parties to any non-marital sexual relationship whatsoever, by any name or description.

The question of the day is, *Why* should the law limit marriage to heterosexual couples? That is the question posed by the coming debate over the FMA.

No answer fits neatly into our cultural practices. Marriage is already in a very confused state. The way that many married couples live is, in fact, scarcely distinguishable from the way some homosexual partners do. Where marriage means to so many heterosexuals: share a bed, share a checkbook, and maybe, some day, share parental duties, why *exactly* is it that two men may not marry? Saying that two men cannot marry appears, from this angle, to be arbitrary and maybe mean-spirited.

The fact is, the "gay marriage" movement is symptom, not cause, of a cultural collapse around marriage. That is why so many people view the movement sympathetically. Even many steadfast opponents of "gay marriage" cannot give a coherent account of their opposition. But that does not mean that there is no coherent answer.

Why should marriage be limited to the union of man and woman? Because the family rooted in marriage is the uniquely appropriate setting for children to come to be, and to grow. The law can—and should—help the family to flourish. Putting same-sex relationships on a par with marriages harms the family by radically severing the biological tie between the married couple and the kids they are raising. Once same-sex marriage is accepted, children are no essential part of what marriage means.

Why is gender complementarity essential to marriage? Because it makes possible the ties that bind a family. No two men—and no two women—form a mated pair. They cannot engage in sexual acts suited to procreation. They can never be a single reproductive principle. They cannot by their sexual acts become, literally, two-in-one-flesh.

Children can never be the "issue" of any same-sex act. But children of the married couple literally *embody* their parents' marriage, and that can never be for man and man, woman and woman. This procreative orientation of marriage makes possible the awesome web of valuable relationships we call the family.

Defenders of traditional marriage almost always speak—and they speak approvingly—of marriage and its orientation toward children. They say that “procreation” is the key to the law’s favor towards marriage. Some of these defenders speak, unfortunately, of a societal interest in population replacement: how will society carry on if people who cannot have children (i.e., two men) are marrying each other?

The law does indeed favor marriage for its “procreative” properties. But not as a pro-natalist legislative policy. It is not a matter of having 2.1 children per adult woman. It has nothing to do with having enough workers and soldiers.

The relevant “appropriateness” is not, at least not principally, that of providing adequate shelter, food, and nursing care (though obviously kids are entitled to that support, and parents ought to give it to them). Same-sex couples, unmarried heterosexual couples, single parents, even institutional caregivers can and do provide all these things well enough. The appropriateness of which I speak is *moral*, and it is *unique* to the family rooted in marriage.

By their marital acts the husband and wife express in a profound and special way their whole married life together: two-in-one-flesh. Children

literally *issue* from the marriage; kids embody their parents’ marriage, carry it forward into time, establish it in space. They are a standing reminder—a vivid reflected image, really—of the marital communion from which they come.

In the marital family, mother and father are, equally and exclusively, parents of all their children. Each and every child is, equally and wholly, entirely the offspring of the same parents. The enduring reproductive union of man and woman, then, establishes a world of valuable relationships, suffusing the whole family with an ineradicable mutuality and equality. The benefits of this *moral* environment, itself rooted in biological ties that can never really be broken, are vast and great.

This equality and mutuality across the biological and moral levels explains the law’s protection of marriage as the morally appropriate context of parenting. This factor may seem ethereal, mysterious, even dreamy. Not so. It is no more subtle or beyond the state’s concern than is the correct judgment that *equality* of marital friendship lies at, or very near, the heart of the state’s legitimate judgment that polygamy is not supportable, a crime even to attempt. This same awesome equality holds together the family, that great and awesome locus of ties that bind. ❧

Ethics on One Wing

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Several contemporary devotees of atheism offer moral theories that purport to capture the substance of morality within a world-view explicitly committed to materialism. The recent entries in this category share the view that many of the ethical norms endorsed by religious believers, especially Christian believers, are pernicious and should be eliminated. That is, their goal is not to develop a

naturalistic moral theory that will justify traditional moral norms, but rather to develop a theory that will justify replacing these norms with more “progressive” or “enlightened” moral principles. I consider here three such anti-theistic theories along with some criticisms of each approach. Finally, I propose a renewal of metaphysical inquiry as crucial to sustaining a sound and persuasive natural law ethic.

Three Naturalist Proposals (I) Nielsen's New Blend for the Nineties

Canadian philosopher Kai Nielsen published a book in 1972 called *Ethics Without God*; in 1990 the book reappeared under the same title, revised and greatly expanded. The earlier version simply endorsed a consequentialist moral theory directly, but sometime in the 1980's Nielsen tried to convert to a Rawlsian theory, with mixed success. Nielsen's current moral theory proposes a Rawlsian methodology of *wide reflective equilibrium* which he describes as follows:

We start with firmly fixed considered moral judgments such as . . . the belief that religious or racial intolerance is unacceptable, that promises must not be broken, that we need to have regard for the truth, that people are never to be treated as means only, and the like. Starting with these considered moral convictions that we hold most firmly, we see whether we can arrange them into a coherent and, of course, consistent package. We should also take the extant moral theories and see how well they match with these considered judgments. The relation is much like that of scientific theories to observed experimental data. . . . The theory that squares best with and explains best this consistent set of confidently held considered judgments is, *ceteris paribus*, the theory we should accept.

This approach sounds relatively harmless at first blush, apart from who is included in the "we" with reference to whose considered moral judgments we must square a moral theory. This is no idle concern, as becomes apparent when Nielsen describes the data set he has in mind. "*Wide reflective equilibrium* must not only seek the most coherent fit possible between considered judgments and moral theories; it must also seek the most accurate account available to us of the nonmoral facts (if that is not pleonastic); and the best social, scientific, and philosophical theories we have." Nielsen wastes no time in letting us know which philosophical theories count as the "best" in this context. "Many Christians believe that under all circumstances suicide is wrong, abortion is wrong,

and pre-marital intercourse is wrong. . . . According to some Christians, God categorically forbids suicide and so they conclude that suicide is wrong. But . . . there are serious and deep questions about whether the concept of God is a coherent concept and, beyond that, even if we can make sense of the concept, there is still the problem of whether there is a God or whether belief in God is rationally justified." Nielsen does not pause to consider whether prohibitions against suicide, abortion, and premarital sex might be derivable from one of his own "considered judgments," for instance, the claim that persons are never to be treated merely as means. Instead, he criticizes those believers who ground moral judgments in divine commands for failing to justify the ontological claims implicit in their theory. What it takes to justify these deeper claims is assumed to be (minimally) arguments for the existence of God and for the rationality of belief in God.

Nielsen does acknowledge the existence of a natural law tradition in ethics and notes that some have even accused him of adopting a natural law approach (horrors!) with his appeal to considered moral judgments. Of course, Nielsen's version lacks the rational foundation for these judgments provided by Aristotle or St. Thomas Aquinas. In fact Nielsen rejects any grounding of natural law in human nature, not by offering arguments against this approach but by asking several rhetorical questions about it: "How do we know that there is one thing—happiness, beatitude, or whatnot—that is the *rationale* of all rules of reason? . . . Even if there is only one such end, how do we know it is happiness or beatitude?"

Oddly, some of Nielsen's criticisms do more to support than to undermine Thomistic natural law theories, as when he claims that "one cannot just somehow see what is good through becoming aware that there is a supremely powerful and intelligent creator of the world." Presumably, this is the point of developing a moral theory and not stopping with cosmology. Nielsen himself describes natural law theory as grounded in a common humanity and in a common quest for happiness/

beatitude, not solely or directly in the existence of a perfect God. Be that as it may, his final verdict is that “the Thomistic conception of the natural law is a myth.” Why a myth, as opposed to merely mistaken or naive or, as Alvin Plantinga might put it, epistemically sub-par? Nielsen senses the looming presence of God in the background of most natural law theories, no doubt, as well as the presence of such disturbing entities as immaterial souls with free agency—and these are ruled out by his prior commitment to materialism.

Turning to Nielsen’s own proposal for an ethic without God, we are hardly surprised to find that it remains in this second edition a version of consequentialism, oriented toward fulfilling basic human desires and interests of varying sorts, maximizing the satisfaction of these desires to the greatest extent possible for all humankind. Nielsen starts with judgments about what things are intrinsically good, based on that fact that we pursue them for their own sake. His list includes happiness, self-consciousness, and a sense of self-identity. Presumably happiness (even if it is interpreted here simply as pleasure or as the satisfaction of one’s desires) is a strong candidate for an intrinsic good. Though Nielsen frets over is-ought problems, he also admits that “any realistic morality—secular or religious—links in some close way with what men on reflection actually desire and with that elusive thing we call human happiness.”

But why self-consciousness? It is a condition for happiness, but so are many other things—that one is alive, that the nature remains uniform, and so on—and self-consciousness cannot be an end of action (unless we count drinking a lot of coffee, or maybe popping acid). Self-identity is more puzzling still—can anyone fail to be self-identical? In any event, the only absolute moral norm in Nielsen’s theory is consequentialist: “Actions, rules, policies, practices and moral principles are ultimately to be judged by certain consequences: to wit, whether doing them more than, or at least as much as, doing anything else or acting in accordance with them more than, or at least as much as, acting in accordance with alternative principles,

tends, on the whole, and for everyone involved, to maximize satisfaction, that is, to maximize happiness, minimize pain, enhance self-consciousness and preserve one’s sense of self-identity.”

Though Nielsen is mildly troubled by the charge that consequentialism fails to ground any other exceptionless moral norms, he bites the bullet here and claims that there are “hard cases” where doing evil that good may come is not only permissible but even obligatory. Some of these cases are eerily relevant in today’s climate. For instance, certain acts of terrorism that target innocent people are said to be justified by their effects, when no other means of achieving the aims of the terrorist group present themselves. “In certain, almost unavoidable circumstances, they must deliberately kill the innocent,” Nielsen says. “In [the film *The Battle of Algiers*,] Algerian women—gentle women with children of their own and plainly people of moral sensitivity—with evident heaviness of heart, planted bombs that they had every reason to believe would kill innocent people, including children.” One might have thought that a moral theory that clashes so loudly with our considered moral judgments would have to be abandoned, but not so. Nielsen is content to make exceptions to these judgments for the sake of maximizing satisfaction for the greatest number. While some homage is paid to Rawls’ notions of equality and fairness in order to block some of the more shocking implications of consequentialism, it is consequentialism that wins any conflict between principles of justice and the perceived greater good.

Against Elizabeth Anscombe’s defense of moral absolutes, Nielsen claims that insisting on allegiance to a moral law even when it involves great sacrifice for oneself and others can itself be a “morally monstrous” position, since evaluation of actions should always involve choosing the lesser evil (he thinks). Consider the moral principle Nielsen endorsed at the beginning of his book—that persons must never be treated as instrumental to an extrinsic end. As the book progresses, this bold principle dies the death of a thousand qualifications—it turns out that (1) the fact “that a

normative ethical theory is incompatible with some of our moral intuitions (moral feelings or convictions) does not refute the normative ethical theory;" (2) the Kantian norm about respect for persons only requires that we treat them *initially* as equally deserving of respect, instrumentalizing them only with great reluctance; and finally (3) we do not treat a man *only* as means to an end in, say, whacking him to save the rest of us, as long as we don't single him out because of anything peculiar to him and we have "humane reasons" for acting as we do, (presumably these reasons aren't humane toward Jones, but you can't have everything).

Would the existence of God in the metaphysical background of these questions give one pause in setting aside fundamental moral convictions? In effect, Nielsen agrees that it would. Citing John Hick's description of the moral life endorsed by Jesus, Nielsen concedes, "If the creedal and doctrinal claims of Judaism or Christianity were true, then it would indeed be rational to act as Hick's believer is convinced we ought to act [that is, in imitation of Christ]." (Hick's article is from 1959, a time when *Hick* still thought the creedal and doctrinal claims of Christianity were true.) Naturally, this move cannot rescue moral absolutes for Nielsen, since he thinks "we have no evidence at all for believing in the existence or love of God."

It's a little difficult to see how Nielsen's blend of intuitionism, consequentialism, and Rawlsian liberalism holds together in the end. More importantly, it is hard to see how he can maintain a role for moral truth within the naturalistic framework to which he is committed. He proposes that a moral principle is true if it is required by "the moral point of view," which involves adopting Nielsen's consequentialist axiom enjoining maximal satisfaction of desires and interests, as long as we treat every person's interests with the same moral weight. As to why we should adopt the moral point of view, and whether this point of view is itself reflective of truths about the world, the only reason given is that societies need a moral code in order to have something higher to appeal to than the positive law and the will of the major-

ity. That a moral theory is socially useful in this way hardly entails that it is true. To the extent that persons in a society agree to adopt this particular moral point of view, presumably there can be some *agreement* about moral principles, but this falls short of showing that Nielsen's moral point of view is rationally justifiable.

Pragmatic considerations come into this adoption decision because of a failure to ground a consequentialist moral theory in anything else. Nielsen's appeal to *wide* reflective equilibrium is no accident, since he uses the metaphysical assumptions of current materialist views to rule out moral theories inconsistent with these assumptions. If we bring to our consideration of ethics a prior commitment to physicalism and determinism, it is no surprise that Thomistic natural law theories don't make the cut. Theoretical support for materialism is hard to find in Nielsen's book, except for a brief (nostalgic?) reference to the verification criterion of meaning. If this criterion were revived, however, Nielsen's own commitments to happiness and equality would fare no better than Aristotle's commitment to eudemonia. The moral intuitions he appeals to could not serve as raw data, revisable or no, since they would be considered strictly meaningless by positivist empirical standards. In the end, says Nielsen, he cannot give us a good reason to choose his moral point of view; it is a matter of simply choosing it.

(II) Moore's Objectivism Lite

Michael Moore, a living philosopher not to be confused with G. E. Moore, hopes to find a place for moral realism and objective moral norms within a moral intuitionist theory along the lines of that offered by (confusingly enough) G. E. Moore. Michael Moore treats "good" as an impersonal, natural quality that we postulate to be present in some objects and actions. In a 1996 collection of essays edited by Robert George called *Natural Law, Liberalism, and Morality*, Moore considers this question: "Would the existence of God help at all in justifying our belief

that morality is objective? Would God's existence strengthen the case for morality's objectivity?" His answer is that it would not, and he ultimately suggests that God's existence might be incompatible with morality's objectivity.

Moore defends a position he calls moral realism, a two-fold metaphysical claim that "(a) moral qualities such as goodness, wrongness, etc., exist . . . and (b) the existence of such moral qualities does not depend on what any person or group of persons believes about them." For Moore, moral qualities are natural properties of things, and facts about which activities, relations or states are good to do or good to be in are simply evident to us. One cannot ground their moral value in anything further, including any facts about human nature or human desires. "Rather, our actions, relations, or states possess the quality of goodness, a quality existing in the universe like wetness," and human actions need not be the only things in the universe that possess this quality, according to Moore. If a work of art has the property of being good, then it will be good whether or not there is any beholder in the universe (God included). Values are to be completely independent, on Moore's view, not just of persons *beliefs* but also of their needs, desires, ends, or motives. Values are not simply mind-independent, then, but wholly impersonal for him.

On the other hand, Moore wants moral truths to do some work in guiding our actions and choices. "If an action is morally right, or a state of affairs morally good," he says, "necessarily we have an objective, non-prudential reason to pursue it." How this is supposed to follow in Moore's theory is difficult to see. As Jorge Garcia asks in a critical response to Moore's article, "What makes value give people reasons to act if that value has no necessary connection to what advances any person's goals, projects, plans, needs, purposes, or function?" Moore's version of moral realism goes well beyond the claim that the good is independent of *what people believe about the good* to the claim that it is independent of people altogether. Perhaps a duty to pursue various goods is itself based in the value attached to this action, and we can recog-

nize this. In addition to apprehending the goods in the universe, we also apprehend that we ought to pursue these goods. (Much still needs attention in this theory, however. What counts as pursuit here? Maximizing the goods? Maximizing the pursuit of them and minimizing violations against them? Are there norms for adjudicating conflicts, and do we intuit these as well?)

While G. E. Moore compared "good" to an simple, unanalyzable quality like "yellow," Michael Moore compares "good" to "wetness," but neither thinker succeeds in finding a common reason to apply the term "good" to items as diverse as a movie, a computer, a sniper, and an afternoon. "Good" isn't like yellow or wetness, but we can often tell what qualities *make a thing good* or what is *good for that thing*. It's just that these qualities will not be the same in every case. Be that as it may, suppose we grant Moore's view of values as non-natural qualities, and go on to ask, as he does, whether the existence of God (as Christians describe God) would make any difference to ethics. Michael Moore deeply opposes divine command theories of ethics, but recognizes that there are other ways in which God's existence might be relevant to moral theory. In his critique of Moore, Jorge Garcia details some advantages that could accrue to one's moral theory if God exists.

- (1) God's existence helps justify the overriding importance of moral considerations over prudential considerations. God can ensure that acting rightly or virtuously will not lead to unredeemed calamity for a person
- (2) God's existence helps justify the existence of absolute moral norms that admit of no exceptions. The theistic picture includes the claim that God loves human persons for their own sake. That human persons should learn to love others (and God himself) is his primary goal for us. The *motives and intentions* behind our actions are the focus of moral judgments then, whereas the *consequences* of our actions matter only indirectly (e.g., we need to know what foods a baby can handle if we are trying to help and not harm her).
- (3) Theism grounds a view about human dignity, derived from the claim that every person has been willed by God and has a destiny in God (or at least in the contemplation of God). Theism thus "helps immunize

us against the modernist view that morality consists merely in placing constraints on the individual's pursuit of what is taken to be the basic business of life-satisfying his desires (nowadays dressed up in Rawlsian garb as 'living according to his own conception of the good')."

(4) Theism explains how objective values can have a place in the world of 'facts'. It presents the world of facts as already pervaded by value, since this world comes from, reflects, and returns to, the source of all [worldly] facts in the reason and will of God.

The grounding of absolute moral norms was a problem for Nielsen's theory and it turns out to be an equally grave problem for Moore. He tries to show that God's existence does nothing to increase the gravity or weight of agent-relative considerations in morality (the agent's attitudes, intentions, character, and the like). If God wants each person (equally) to conform to the moral laws, Moore asks, what about a case where my conforming to the law will result in others violating it? "What sense can we make of one Being, who, though he cares for each of us equally, doesn't care to minimize moral failure or maximize moral success?" Moore assumes that what God wants is to minimize the total number of times moral laws get violated-i.e., that God would be a consequentialist. But suppose that what matters to God instead is that persons become virtuous and loving and attain their ultimate end, not that they strive to bring about the greatest balance of moral success over moral failure (as if anyone could realistically make this a personal goal). Such a God would not endorse deliberately committing an evil that good may come.

While an explicit appeal to theism is not necessary for coming to *know* that there are some absolute moral norms, it can be difficult to show *why they should not be compromised* in the face of so-called 'hard cases'. Moore believes (I take it) that deliberately taking the life of an innocent person (murder) is wrong, incest is wrong, torturing prisoners is wrong. But he denies that moral norms can be captured in "text-like formulations" like "Do not kill." One must grant exceptions to this rule, for killing in self-defense, in defense of one's family, as a soldier in a just war, and so on, and "new exceptions will

always be in principle discoverable." Moore seems oblivious to any common elements in his list of exceptions or of the need to rule out pseudo-exceptions (killing because we are really, really angry). He concludes that there is no finite proposition that can capture moral principles-stated in propositional form, they can only be guidelines as to what is *prima facie* right or wrong. Just as in Nielsen's theory, one can be morally obligated to violate a fundamental principle to prevent great enough harms or promote great enough goods. Moore confidently opines that "one who would not kill or lie to save his family is in no sense a saint, but rather, a kind of misguided moral leper." Similar considerations apply to incest. "We might come across (actually or imaginatively in literature) incestuous relationships that enhance the dignity of persons in ways we had not anticipated. [!] In which event we might withdraw our initial judgment that incest is even *prima facie* wrong."

Moore defends his version of moral realism on the grounds that it is "the best explanation of various facets of our common moral experience. This is a fallible, scientific inference, not an unseemly leap of faith." God is not needed to make sense of this experience, according to Moore. Even so, why the hostility toward theistic moral realists? Shouldn't they (we) be seen as allies? Well, no, as it turns out. "My own metaphysics . . . is to refuse to countenance the existence of objective moral qualities unless they cause other (non-moral) entities, qualities, and events to occur, and such a causal role can exist for moral qualities only if they supervene upon, and in some sense are identical to, non-moral (i.e., natural) properties. . . . Nothing in this kind of ethical naturalism should shock empiricist sensibilities about what can exist."

In other words, Moore is committed to a materialist view of the world, and believes that while values exist, this is only because they are identical (on an item-by-item basis) with empirical properties of some kind. Values do no causal work-one may not be able to translate value language into value-free language, since the claim is not that value is itself (as a category) reducible to or identical

with some empirical quality. Moore's reductionism is rather a reduction at the level of particulars, so that one cannot neatly replace universal concepts about value with empirical concepts having the same extension. The analogy is with mind-brain identity theories in philosophy of mind; since it proved impossible to replace mental language with physical language, now the proposed identities are at the level of individual mental states and individual brain states. Moore claims his theory is still a form of realism, since values are independent of minds and their beliefs. On the other hand, they turn out to be identical with natural qualities and have no causal role to play, so *that qua* values they are in effect eliminated. For most philosophers, this would count as anti-realism about values. It is hardly obvious, then, that Moore has succeeded in preserving a role for objective moral principles in a world view committed to the non-existence of God, souls, and libertarian free will.

(III) Pinker's Blue Genes

The psychologist Steven Pinker stands out among popularizers of the evolutionary paradigm as the key to understanding nearly everything there is to know about human beings and their behavior. The key assumption of this approach is a view of the human mind as identical with the brain, and the brain as having evolved to its present state over vast millennia by way of random variation and natural selection (with or without 'punctuations' that cause major leaps in evolutionary development). As Pinker puts it in the preface of his 1997 book *How the Mind Works*: "The mind is a system of organs of computation designed by natural selection to solve the problems faced by our evolutionary ancestors in their foraging way of life." This assumption opens up a new discipline in the academic world, evolutionary psychology, which claims to find the physical causes (in the evolutionary history of the human race) that lie behind virtually every emotion, belief, and practice of human beings.

A difficulty for this new science is that it hardly

seems to qualify as a science at all. Claims about the evolutionary path behind specific emotions (such as altruism, sympathy, etc.) cannot be tested, or can only be tested in a very wide sense of that term. It's a matter of some amusement that those who rose up with indignant horror to condemn creationism as non-scientific are seldom found crusading against evolutionary psychology. The field is riddled with *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacies, since the fact that certain conditions obtained in the distant past that *could* perhaps account for current human beliefs, desires, etc. does nothing to show that these conditions *were* in fact the cause of those beliefs or desires. Even apart from the disputed notion of agent causation, one could attribute a large role to environmental and cultural factors in explaining a person's behavior and outlook. Instead, neo-Darwinian theories of human nature attribute nearly every such factor to the genes—and the 'goal' of our genes is to reproduce themselves; they are 'selfish' genes. If we care about our children, it is due ultimately to our interest in preserving our genetic legacy. If we tend toward melancholy, this will have a genetic explanation—perhaps in term of 'blue' genes.

As for moral beliefs, these are taken to reflect various human emotional reactions to different objects and practices, reactions that contributed at some point to the survival of the individual or of the human species. As emotions, they are neither true nor false. "People have gut feelings that give them emphatic moral convictions, and they struggle to rationalize the convictions after the fact." Moral convictions about what is good and bad, right or wrong, can have no objective or realist basis. Moral reasoning is nothing more than rationalization. We assume that Pinker will go on to embrace moral nihilism or non-cognitivism (since there are no moral facts in this view). Instead, he endorses consequentialism as the one moral theory that reason would recommend.

The difference between a defensible moral position and an atavistic gut feeling is that with the former we can give *reasons* why our conviction is valid. We can explain why torture and murder and rape are wrong

[perhaps he should check with Michael Moore about torture and murder], or why we should oppose discrimination and injustice. On the other hand, no good reasons can be produced to show why homosexuality should be suppressed or why the races should be segregated. And the good reasons for a moral position are not pulled out of thin air: they always have to do with what makes people better off or worse off, and are grounded in the logic that we have to treat other people in the way we demand they treat us.

It is remarkable that Pinker can know that promoting people's welfare and following the Golden Rule are grounded in reason, while other moral principles are dismissed as rationalizations of gut feelings. As it turns out, even the Golden Rule quickly succumbs to consequentialist considerations, since making people better off turns out to be mainly a matter of making oneself better off—others are out of luck.

It is probably unfair to criticize Pinker for the numerous philosophical blunders in his books, which are often entertaining and illuminating and are directed to a popular audience. What is shocking (to me, anyway) is Pinker's constant appeal to what 'most scholars' or the *cognoscenti* are saying as in effect a demonstration of a claim. Consider the many authorities and luminaries that appear in the following citation: "For millennia, the major theories of human nature have come from religion. . . . But the modern sciences of cosmology, geology, biology, and archeology have made it impossible for a scientifically literate person to believe that the biblical story of creation actually took place. As a result, the Judeo-Christian theory of human nature is no longer explicitly endorsed by most academics, journalists, social analysts, and other intellectually engaged people." Those who do continue to accept something like the Judeo-Christian theory of human nature come in for ridicule and contempt in later chapters of the book. (Leon Kass and President George W. Bush are particular targets here.) On the other hand, while Pinker is (we assume) scientifically literate, how confident can he be about the sweeping metaphysical claims he makes in the passage just cited?

Those of us of a certain age (i.e., 45 and up) might be reminded of a television commercial featuring the actor Chad Everett, who played a doctor in the series "Marcus Welby, M.D." The ad was for a medical remedy, perhaps a painkiller, and Everett began: "I'm not a doctor, but I play one on TV . . ." No one listened to the first part, because for us viewers he *was* a doctor. We saw him in thoughtful, capable, and compassionate action every week. A similar illusion is created by Pinker's list of respectable people who have jettisoned theism. Pinker is not a philosopher, but he does play one from time to time in his popular writings, without providing any careful arguments for his metaphysical claims or making much effort to capture accurately the views he attacks. Nor does he tell his readers that there are some well-informed and thoughtful people on the other side.

When Pinker turns to a consideration of particular moral judgments, his main concern is to eliminate moral absolutes and to completely erase moral prohibitions against the favored projects of current scientists—in vitro fertilization and cloning—and the favored practices of the cultural elite, especially sexual practices. Moral absolutes are dismissed as efforts to "treat an act in terms of virtue and sin as opposed to cost and benefit," when we should all know that considerations of virtue and vice are "morally irrelevant grounds." Two examples Pinker mentions in the realm of sexual ethics are incest (apparently a favorite for atheist moral theories these days) and, of all things, sex with a chicken. He assures us: "Many moral philosophers would say that there is nothing wrong with these acts, because private acts among consenting adults that do not harm other sentient beings are not immoral." Mention of sentient beings might lead to some concerns about the chicken, but let's pass over that issue for the time being.

Pinker cites a psychological study of a decade ago that asked people to justify or explain the strong reaction of disgust they felt when presented with various scenarios involving incest, bestiality, and the like (eating your dog was another example—he is already road kill and you need the

food). Initially, respondents to the survey focused on negative consequences of these acts, whether immediate or delayed, and on offenses to the wider community. If they were told that none of these negative consequences would (or did) happen in these cases, they were hard pressed to find a further reason for their moral disapproval. They would say things like “I don’t know; I can’t explain it, I just know it’s wrong.” The psychologists take this to indicate that there is no rational foundation for such moral claims, apart from a consideration of consequences—the cost/benefit model. But one might instead take seriously the respondent’s insistence that they “know it’s wrong,” even when told that the wrongness can’t lie in the negative effects of the action.

What grounds this deeply held moral conviction? Perhaps in the case of the sex examples, people believe that these offend against personal dignity, that they are degrading of oneself and others, that such acts cannot be sought as genuine goods for us, and so on. Knowing that the scientists will reject any such claims, they fall silent instead. The claim that human persons are inviolable, that they cannot be instrumentalized, grounds many of the moral principles that come under attack in *The Blank Slate*. Prohibitions against abortion, against auctioning orphans to the highest bidder among prospective adoptive parents, against harvesting organs from living people who are not going to live much longer—none of these survives the cost/benefit test. A typical treatment of these issues appears in Pinker’s endorsement of *in vitro* fertilization: “As recently as 1978, many people . . . shuddered at the new technology of *in vitro* fertilization, or, as it was then called, ‘test-tube babies.’ But now it is morally unexceptionable and, for hundreds of thousands of people, a source of immeasurable happiness or of life itself.” It is also a source of death or suspended animation for hundreds of thousands of other people (at the embryonic stage), but this fails to register on Pinker’s cost/benefit scale. Why is the death of these small persons not counted at all, even if only to be overridden by a so-called higher good?

The answer can be found in a telling passage on the morality of abortion, wherein Pinker shows his devotion to materialism and scientism. “The idea that ensoulment takes place at conception . . . flouts the key moral intuition that people are worthy of moral consideration because of their feelings—their ability to love, think, play, enjoy, and suffer—all of which depend on a functioning nervous system.” This is the kind of claim that can take your breath away. People are worthy of moral consideration because of their feelings and their abilities alone. What justifies Pinker’s fundamental claim about human nature? The answer is: nothing. A materialist picture of reality, including humans, interpreted through the lens of evolutionary biology, yields no discernible moral theory. Hence, those operating from this perspective either simply assert some initial axioms to get the system going or, as in Moore’s theory, pretend to accept ‘values’ into a system that has no place for them. Pinker thinks morality can survive just fine in this modern day in which all thinking people agree with him about human nature as the product of a blind watchmaker. Some of us will continue to have our doubts, however.

A Modest Proposal

Thomists and other advocates of the natural law share the view that some substantive moral claims are objectively true (correspond to a mind-independent reality) and that these are accessible by the use of human reason (independently of knowledge of special revelation). There are differences over what *kinds* of moral claims can be grounded in this way, the *ground* or *warrant* for the claims, and the *way they are known*. Many Thomists follow Aristotle in presenting claims like “Rational activity in accordance with virtue is the highest good for humans” as accessible to reason, grounded in human nature, and knowable by broadly empirical methods. Some more recent advocates of the natural law begin from practical reason, hoping to derive theoretical claims (such as “Knowledge is a basic good” and “one should never choose directly against a basic good”) from

the principles we use to make rational or intelligible choices. The movement from one to the other is not logically necessary, but is thought to be obvious to the normal, unbiased, reflective person. Finally, some natural law theorists ground substantive moral norms in self-evident, necessarily true basic principles that are held to be accessible to every rational person. The differences among these approaches to natural law are significant in many respects. One of the most important, I believe, lies in their respective implications for the role of metaphysics in moral enquiry. A natural law theory that begins with a theory of human nature clearly requires a defense (at some point) of that theory of human nature, and this in turn may require a defense of related metaphysical claims. The latter kinds of natural law theory seem to make no such initial appeal to human nature or to other claims about the world, apart from the moral judgments themselves.

Metaphysics, conceived of as (in part, at least) the study of what kinds of things are real in addition to those accessible to the five senses, finds few defenders in philosophical circles these days (and fewer still in the broader intellectual community). It is generally assumed that optimism about efforts to know what there is cannot survive attacks from positivism, scientism, hermeneutics, historicism, anti-realism, the purveyors of the paradigm-shift, and so on. Advocates of these anti-metaphysical positions also oppose one another, of course, but conventional wisdom is that they are the current players in the marketplace of ideas and it is bad form to offend all of them at once.

The current situation has discouraged philosophers of a metaphysical bent from pursuing traditional metaphysical questions guided by reason and common sense. At best, someone might venture a claim about what our ways of speaking commit us to, or what are the features of our conceptual scheme. As to whether these ways of speaking and thinking reflect genuine truths about the world, contemporary philosophers are often loathe to say. Some of this is sheer survival tactics, since in the publish-or-perish atmosphere of the academy, it ill

behooves one to proffer views that one's colleagues will universally condemn, not merely as mistaken, but as hopelessly naive, ridiculous, uninformed—in effect, an embarrassment. Safer by far to focus on the interpretation of a text, the description of a language game, or tracing the implications of a philosophical claim in a purely hypothetical way. (*If* it were accepted, *then* these claims would also have to be accepted, given a greater probability, etc.)

The aversion to metaphysics and the desire to dissociate oneself from its intellectual odiousness affects other parts of philosophy as well. Moral and political theorists increasingly aspire to operate in the open air, as free as possible from substantive metaphysical commitments. Strategically speaking, this approach has something to recommend it, since a moral theory may thus gain a fair hearing even from those deeply opposed to metaphysics itself or to the metaphysical claims lurking in the shadows of the normative theory. The goal would be to delay discussion of divisive deeper issues and focus on claims that are closer to the surface—the moral judgments themselves, or the attendant epistemological claims. One might try to display the coherence and explanatory power of the moral theory vis-à-vis our moral intuitions taken as 'raw data', prescinding from the question of where these intuitions come from and whether they have any rational force.

I have no intrinsic objection to such approaches. But it is increasingly clear that substantive *metaphysical truths* lie at the foundation of substantive *moral truths*, and that the metaphysical task cannot be postponed indefinitely. Indeed, it becomes even more urgent today in light of escalating assaults on human dignity from reproductive technologies and from social forces in a culture riveted to self-gratification. Showing that the moral prohibition against murder is absolutely binding is itself no piece of cake in today's climate, but at least there is a general societal consensus against murder. More difficult to defend are absolute prohibitions against the use of IVF technologies, cloning, contraception, homosexual acts, same-sex unions, and so on. The clear and present danger to oneself or others is

less obvious in these cases, and our society tends to support scientific innovations and look the other way with respect to what their neighbors are doing. (Smoking is the exception here, as is having “‘too many’ children.”)

In light of these realities, I believe we should undertake a renewed study of metaphysical problems, accompanied by a robust realism and a deep respect for reason and common sense. With respect to anthropology, it might be promising to develop a metaphysics of human nature that draws on both the Aristotelian/Thomistic understanding of man as a rational, social animal and the relational, personalist themes of Pope John Paul II. The goal would be to build a persuasive and substantive metaphysical foundation for natural law ethics, particularly where ethics addresses human sexuality. While some philosophers find substantial, perhaps irresolvable, tensions between the common sense methodology of Aristotle and the phenomenological methodology of personalism, it is obvious that John Paul II sees these two approaches as compatible and even complementary. A clear and carefully argued view of human nature and the dignity of persons is, I believe, the only permanent intellectual defense against the current assaults on human dignity.

Although advocates of natural law sometimes begin elsewhere in attempting to ground substantive moral claims, this does not render a theory of human nature unimportant for their own projects. Beginning from practical reason and the kinds of goods we choose for their own sake can perhaps lead to claims about what humans see as fulfilling for them or as necessary to their flourishing. But if it the materialist picture of human beings is correct, this project will appear to be nothing more than a catalog of human desires acquired over years of

evolutionary development, not a reason to endorse a particular group of desires as ultimate or to take their rational grounding as anything more than an elaborate rationalization. By the same token, an intuitionist moral theory generally assumes that the moral sense is a rational faculty leading us in the direction of truth, and that basic moral judgments are common to all rational persons. Both claims are hotly contested, and both can be better supported within a theistic metaphysical outlook that includes some account of human nature such that the basic principles available to conscience can be supported by attending to the kind of beings we are.

In his masterful encyclical on faith and reason, Pope John Paul II opens with this beautiful image: “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.” In seeking the truth about morality, reason is greatly helped by faith, even if neither the mysteries of faith nor the existence of God is presupposed in natural law theories. Nearly everyone begins with the moral intuition that the dignity of human persons is inviolable, but secular moralities seldom retain it in the end. Most people begin with a belief in an immaterial dimension of the self, and in free will as the basis of moral responsibility; without faith, one can be tempted to surrender these metaphysical claims and so destroy the very foundations of morality. I am a firm believer in the possibility of developing a sound natural law ethics without explicit appeal to articles of the faith. But when philosophical ethics explicitly rejects God and embraces naturalistic materialism, natural law theory does not have a prayer. Two wings are better than one, even if you can make it with one; and if we attempt to do morality without metaphysics, we won’t even have a whole wing—maybe just a few feathers. ✠

Hierarchy and Direction for Choice

by Daniel McInerney

This essay is a response to an invitation. Robert George has recently requested from “neo-scholastics” “a detailed account of how choosing in accordance with a principle of hierarchy is supposed to work across a set of cases.”[i] George’s invitation is put forward in a defense of what he calls “the incommensurability thesis” and its role in giving direction to human choice. Put briefly, and quoting George, “[t]he incommensurability thesis states that basic values and their particular instantiations as they figure in options for choice cannot be weighed and measured in accordance with an objective standard of comparison.”[ii] This raises a crucial question. In the absence of an objective standard of comparison, how is non-arbitrary choice between basic goods possible? For George, it is possible because the very respect that is due to the incommensurability of the basic goods generates principles that objectively guide human action. What reasons does George give for rejecting a natural hierarchy of human goods? First of all, it should be said that George does recognize certain natural hierarchies. Instrumental goods, he acknowledges, are subordinate to intrinsically valuable goods; sensible goods are subordinate to intelligible goods; and a fuller realization of the good is to be preferred to a meager realization.[iii] When George speaks of incommensurable “basic” goods, therefore, at issue is not these hierarchies but rather the set of intrinsically valuable, intelligible goods that together comprise human happiness.

So why then does George reject a natural hierarchy of basic goods, and the making of moral judgments on the basis of such a hierarchy? The reason he gives is put in the context of the

following example. Imagine a golfer faced with a decision between interrupting his best chance to break 80 and the opportunity to rescue a child drowning in the water hazard on the adjacent fairway. Granted that the only moral choice for the golfer is to drop his club and try and rescue the child, the question is how this decision is reached. For George, what is clear is that the golfer does not make his decision by acknowledging that the basic good of “life” is objectively better than the basic good of “play.” Why not? The answer is twofold: because either the notion of hierarchy places in jeopardy the common sense belief “that one ordinarily has no moral duty to forego one’s ordinary pursuits, including playing golf, to devote oneself to life saving or to join famine relief projects and other worthy lifesaving endeavors in far off places,” or the notion of hierarchy fails to provide a principle on the basis of which to decide when choices for “life” are required and when they are not.[iv] In other words, for George, either hierarchy forces us to fanatically reduce the value of lower goods in the hierarchy in favor of higher goods, and indeed the highest good, or it simply fails to do any work in telling us when choices in favor of a super-ordinate good are required. In either case, hierarchy seems hopeless in providing direction for choice, while the incommensurability thesis allows for the intrinsic choice-worthiness of basic goods even while it grounds the principles that would direct us at times to favor one basic good over another.

George is exactly right that the incommensurability thesis runs counter to what he calls the “neoscholastic”—I would say principally Thomistic—understanding that the human good exists naturally as a hierarchical arrangement—a *duplex ordo* as Aquinas describes it in the first *lectio* of the *Commentary on the Ethics*—in which goods are ordered both to one another and to the absolutely ultimate end.[v] So in responding to George’s invitation, what I aim to do in this essay is to provide an introduction, at least, to a Thomistic understanding of how the natural hierarchy of human goods provides direction for choice. In sum,

I will be arguing that non-arbitrary choices between contending substantial, or intrinsically valuable, goods are only possible when one of the goods is seen either as a necessary or expedient means for the attainment of another and intrinsically more valuable good. For Aquinas, in any line of action what is obligatory in itself is the intrinsically valuable good, or end, and that which is for the sake of this end, the means, is obligatory on account of it, either by being necessary or expedient to the attainment of this end.[vi] In determining, then, which of two or more choices is necessary or most expedient to the attainment of an intrinsically superior end, deliberation must first discern the appropriate natural hierarchy of human goods.

Several important issues hang on whether the incommensurability or hierarchy thesis wins this debate. Most obvious is the issue of how to justify non-arbitrary choices between conflicting, substantial goods. But analogous to this is the issue of how to justify non-arbitrary choices between entire lifeplans. Would I have non-arbitrary reasons for becoming either a butcher, baker, or candlestick maker? This latter issue touches upon a further question. If there is indeed a natural hierarchy of human goods, does this imply that there is one and only one “right” way of living a human life? Where in the argument for hierarchy, in other words, do considerations of wish, talent and temperament come in? The debate between incommensurability and hierarchy also raises the question of how to adjudicate between the *bonum mihi* and the *bonum commune*, the good that is a personal good for me here and now and the good that by nature is shared with those with whom I live in community. Is there a hierarchical ordering between these two kinds of good, or are they themselves incommensurable considerations of human agents?[vii]

But the most important—because the most fundamental—issue raised by this debate concerns the unity of the human good. For Thomists this comes down to the question of the ultimate end, of happiness. Thomists understand the ultimate end to have several analogous senses, the most primary

of which identify the ultimate end with God. For the Thomist, God is the *principium* of the hierarchy of goods, and thus God ultimately unifies the human good by providing the ultimate direction for choice.[viii] Defenders of incommensurability, by contrast, understand happiness solely in an inclusivistic sense; that is, as the name we give to that miscellany of incommensurable basic goods that give us satisfaction. While the inclusivist view does well in capturing our sense of the multiplicity of the human good, it seems to do less well in showing us how the collection of incommensurables amounts to anything more than the sum of various parts. Such a multiform view of human fulfillment has serious implications for a unified conception of the human person.[ix]

I want to address these issues from a Thomistic point of view in the following way. George has asked, in particular, for a detailed account of how choice in the context of hierarchy works across a set of cases. I believe it would be a mistake, however, to get down to cases right away. For the differences between the incommensurability thesis and the hierarchy thesis are differences that occur at the most basic level of understanding of the human good, and so any constructive debate between the two theses must first occur at this level. So, after first confronting a threshold challenge that any defender of hierarchy must confront, I will then develop the nature of the for-the-sake-of relationship that serves as the basic ligature of hierarchical ordering. This examination of the for-the-sake-of relationship will quickly lead us to the central question about the nature of the ultimate end, only after which will we be in a position to look at how hierarchy goes to work in some particular cases at different levels of moral decision-making. While this response to George’s invitation may not accomplish everything that George would require of the defender of hierarchy, I trust it will provide a first rough sketch of the form an adequate response to his invitation must take.

A Threshold Challenge

In his recent book, *Natural Law and Practical Rationality*, a natural law defense which, like George's, reposes upon the incommensurability thesis, Mark Murphy reads both George and John Finnis as issuing the following threshold challenge to any defender of hierarchy. Any defender of hierarchy must show first either that the incommensurability thesis applied to the basic goods is false, or that incommensurability is consistent with hierarchy.[x]

So to take up the first part of the disjunction: is it the case that the defender of hierarchy must reject the incommensurability thesis as false? The answer, perhaps surprisingly, is no. The incommensurability thesis is, in fact, not false if by incommensurability we mean that intrinsically valuable goods, at least, cannot be reduced to a single genus. This is one of the points pressed by Aristotle against Plato's Form of the Good in the sixth chapter of Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The Platonists themselves, Aristotle says, do not postulate a single form for classes of things in which prior and posterior are found, as is the case with numbers. While there are forms for individual numbers, there is no form of number itself, because the class of numbers is comprised of various natures ordered to each other and to a first. And so it is with the good. Goodness manifests itself across the categories: there are good substances, good qualities, good relations, and so on. And these various manifestations of good, as with numbers, enjoy an order of prior and posterior. That which has goodness in itself, substance, is prior to all those other goods that manifest their goodness only in relation to substance. From these observations Aristotle concludes that just as there can be no common form of number, so there can be no common form of good.[xi]

Thus it is perfectly appropriate to speak of intrinsically valuable (as opposed to instrumental) human goods as incommensurable. For human goods are not commensurable in the sense that they are merely different manifestations of a single

kind of good. In this respect, they have no shared *mensura*. Accordingly, the hierarchical understanding of good I am defending has no truck with a commensurability thesis, or with those quasi-mathematical, maximizing strategies of practical rationality that trade on such a thesis, and which natural law theorists like George are absolutely right to condemn.

So, if the incommensurability thesis is not to be rejected, then we must affirm the other side of the disjunction, namely, that incommensurability is compatible with a hierarchical understanding of the good. Both Russell Pannier and Mark Murphy have noted that this compatibility has been implicitly recognized by theorists such as George. As Murphy puts it, there is a *tu quoque* rebuff to George's objection to hierarchy, for George himself holds "that each person is under a practical requirement to form a life plan that includes a subjective prioritization of the basic goods in his or her life." [xii] But if the basic goods are such that they are amenable to subjective prioritization, then in principle, at least, there is nothing inconsistent in thinking that the basic goods can enjoy objective prioritization. "And if George asks," Murphy writes, "what particular requirements on choice are generated by the goods' naturally forming a hierarchy, the defender of that view can respond that it is the requirements on choice that would be generated by the goods' forming a structurally identical hierarchy through the agent's commitment." [xiii]

But what reasons are there for thinking that intrinsically valuable human goods actually do form a natural hierarchy? I would like to address that question now, as the next stage in showing how hierarchy works in providing real direction for choice.

The "For-The-Sake-Of" Relation

Earlier I referred to Aquinas's description of the human good as a *duplex ordo*, a twofold order of goods both to one another and to the absolutely ultimate end. As Aquinas also says in this *lectio* of his *Commentary*, the order of goods to one another is made possible by their order to the

absolutely ultimate end.[xiv] So in setting up the scaffolding of an objective hierarchy of goods, the existence and nature of an absolutely ultimate end must be established, as well as the ligatures that bind other less-than-ultimate ends both to it and to each other. Following both Aristotle's and Aquinas's procedure, I want to consider the ligatures first, the basic means-end structures that characterize the hierarchy of our objectives.

Permit me, first, some rather rudimentary distinctions that are nonetheless absolutely necessary for the argument to follow. Say that I have volunteered to play in a charity golf tournament. The actions that I take in preparation for my play-practicing for the tournament, driving to the site, the play itself—are all ends that I pursue for the sake of my overall end of benefiting some needy children. The benefit of the children serves as the final end, the term, of my action, while the ends subordinate to it serve as means to this final end. We already see that “means” and “ends” are relative terms. What makes the benefit of the children the final end of this train of action is that I would desire this end even if nothing else ever followed from it: such as public recognition of my action. All the other ends, however, at least within this train of activity, would not be pursued unless they were somehow productive of the end of helping the children. I might play golf for other reasons on other days, but I would not tune up to play in a charity tournament unless I was convinced that my participation would truly help the charity. Thus of any end we can ask whether we would pursue that end even if nothing resulted from it but the attainment of the end in question. Would I floss my teeth if that activity had no effect on dental hygiene? For most of us, I hope, the answer is no, and so we identify flossing teeth as a merely instrumental activity. Would we want to play golf apart from any usefulness it may serve? Of course we would. Playing golf is intrinsically valuable, a final end.[xv] This example helps clarify that certain ends can be both instrumentally and intrinsically valuable, depending on the context in which they are pursued.

The for-the-sake-of relationships that hold

between goods exhibit what Richard Kraut has called asymmetrical causal relations.[xvi] In Aristotle's well-known example, bridle-making is for the sake of riding, meaning that bridle-making helps bring riding into being and thus that riding is more desirable than bridle-making—hence the asymmetry in the relation. Moreover, because bridle-making is for the sake of riding, riding provides the standard or norm against which bridle-making is regulated. Bridle-making takes the form it does because the art of riding, the craft to which it is subordinated, takes the form it does. This is the meaning behind Aristotle's use in this context of the word *architektonikê*, “master-craft.” The Greek term connotes a craft that is superior, of course, but superior insofar as it is an *archê*, a ruler, over the others. Politics, Aristotle's *politikê technê*, is the master-craft of master-crafts because it dictates to all other sciences and crafts both what is to be done in these crafts and how they are to be employed for the end of politics: the common good.

We are beginning to see how hierarchy provides direction for choice, insofar as the good for the sake of which another good is pursued regulates the pursuit of the subordinate good. A clarification on this point. A higher good regulates a lower good in more than one way. Commenting on the passage from Aristotle just mentioned, Aquinas claims that politics regulates practical activities both as to whether they should be pursued and how they should be pursued. But politics regulates speculative activities only as to whether they should be pursued, either at all or by a particular person. Politics does not dictate how a speculative science should be pursued—how in geometry, for example, conclusions should be drawn from premises. For this depends on the very nature of the subject matter of geometry.[xvii] So in the order of practice, at least, what Aquinas has to say about the relationship between politics and other activities seems to hold generally: lower goods are for the sake of higher goods, which in turn dictate whether and how the lower goods are to be pursued.

It is a good question whether the asymmetry in the for-the-sake-of relationship must always run

in the same direction. Can x be for the sake of y, which in turn is for the sake of x? The goods of family life, on any Thomistic view, are ordered for the sake of practicing philosophy. But as a working philosopher, do I not also pursue philosophy for the sake of the goods of family life? This example quickly clarifies the point that goods are not ordered for the sake of each other in the same respect, thus ensuring that there is no true circularity in for-the-sake-of relationships. For while it is true that the goods of family life are ordered to philosophical wisdom, it is not true that philosophical wisdom is ordered, as a subordinate good, to the goods of family life. Philosophy understood as employment may be so ordered, but this is just to change the respect in which we consider philosophy. Employment understood as a mere means is always subordinated to the goods of family life, which in turn are always subordinated to the philosophical pursuit of truth.

For Aquinas, all intrinsically valuable goods exist in *per se*, that is necessary, relationships of the prior and posterior. Prudence is a superior virtue to fortitude, according to Aquinas, principally because it perfects that power of the soul concerned with the overall good of the agent. The hierarchy among these virtues is a necessary feature of the human good, such that a conception of fortitude not put in the service of and regulated by prudence would not be the genuine article at all. In the film *The Perfect Storm* the members of a fishing crew lose their lives pursuing a catch straight into the teeth of the storm of the century. True, they are down-on-their-luck fishermen, desperately in need of a good catch. But clearly it was not worth risking their lives to catch even more fish than they had already caught. The daring quality they exhibit in battling the storm is in some sense impressive, the film's marketing campaign may describe it as "courageous," but in the absence of prudence we can't admit that it's anything other than recklessness.[xviii]

We may conclude from this that the very character of intrinsically valuable goods depends upon how they are subordinated to and regulated

by goods superior in the hierarchy. This is why to speak of "basic goods"—even in their instantiations—as discrete, incommensurable items (George employs the unfortunate metaphor of 'quanta'[xix]) is not to speak of real goods at all, but only of generic, ghostly entities incapable of directing choice. Once again, it is a feature of intrinsically valuable goods (at least, of all but one of them) that they are instrumental to higher goods, and that the whether and how of their pursuit are guided by these higher goods. We simply don't fully understand the good of "life," for example, until we understand that in certain circumstances it must be sacrificed, subordinated to, the familial or political common good.

Of course, George and others attempt to get around this difficulty by invoking the notion of "integral human fulfillment," an appeal to an ultimate end that brings some definition to the basic goods and provides the ultimate direction for, and justification of, human choice. Hence it is opportune at this juncture of the argument to consider the role of the ultimate end in serving as the *principium* of the hierarchy of goods.

Before that, however, a brief digest of points made so far.

First, the Thomistic understanding of hierarchy affirms that intrinsically valuable human goods are heterogeneous in character. These goods are thus not commensurable, such that the many goods we perceive are merely instantiations of, or instrumentally useful for, the absolutely ultimate end, the one and only intrinsically valuable human good and the single measure of goodness. This kind of commensuration has been roundly repudiated by contemporary writers and rightly so.

Second, the incommensurability or heterogeneity of the human good, its resistance to any form of commensuration, does not preclude its being ordered according to priority and posteriority. All of being is ordered to substance, an order which is manifest in the moral sphere in the way that the different substantial human goods are ordered to that which is the substance of the human good in the most perfect sense: the absolutely ultimate end.

Third, within this hierarchical ordering of goods there are many different goods which are ultimate or final, though in a qualified sense. But the fact that they are ultimate in any sense means that they are desirable for their own sake. We don't just desire them because they help us achieve the absolutely ultimate end (though they do that, too); we don't wholly reduce them to instrumental goods simply because they have an instrumental aspect to them.

The Hierarchy of Happinesses

It is a commonplace of much contemporary Aristotelian scholarship and even some Thomistic that the for-the-sake-of relationship that I have been arguing is essential to an understanding of the human good cannot be applied to the ultimate end itself. In his book on Aquinas, for example, John Finnis speaks of *beatitudo* as a basic good. "But this turns out to be," he writes, "not so much an item to be added to the list of basic human goods, as rather a kind of synthesis of them: [namely] satisfaction of all intelligent desires and participation in all the basic human goods...and thus a fulfillment which is complete and intergral." [xx] Elsewhere Finnis describes imperfect beatitude, at least, as "the good of complete reasonableness in one's willing of human goods." [xxi] Roughly, then, we might summarize this view of the ultimate end as the activity of pursuing the basic goods in as unified a manner as possible, according to the hierarchy we have constructed for ourselves, without in any way disrespecting the intrinsic value of any of the goods by manipulating it as a mere means. To act in this way is to act both from reason and from virtue—and, apparently, "for the sake of" the ultimate end of imperfect happiness.

But it is important not to confuse the "for-the-sake-of" relationship with this inclusive relationship described by Finnis. By an inclusive relationship I mean a formal relationship of part to whole, as when we say putting is a part of golf,

or the pursuit of play is a part of imperfect happiness. To say that putting is "for the sake of" golf makes hash out of the phrase "for the sake of," if all that is meant is that putting is a constituent part of golf. True enough, putting is a part of golf if we are considering the constituent items and activities that go to make up a game of golf, like driving, chipping and cursing. This kind of consideration is formal in character. But within this formal consideration putting is in no meaningful sense "for the sake of" golf; for putting in this sense simply is golf. So, the only meaningful use of the phrase "for the sake of" is when the phrase is meant to say that one thing helps bring some other thing extrinsic to it into being and is regulated by it. Therefore, my two-putt on 17 is good insofar as it serves as the end of my desire to play golf on a Saturday morning; "putting" in this sense is the goal of an entire train of instrumental activities "for the sake of" landing me on the golf course. My two-putt on 17 is also good in an instrumental sense, insofar as it brings about, is "for the sake of," my continued play on 18 and my over-arching goal of finishing my round in the lowest possible number of strokes. "Putting" has an instrumental relationship to the good of "golf," if by "golf" we mean the completion of my round, not the game formally considered. [xxii] My point here is not to deny that it's meaningful to say, "Happiness for me is my family, my friends, my work, my recreational activities, my devotion to God, etc." We speak in this way all the time. My point, rather, is that this way of speaking does not refer to the primary sense of happiness, the sense which establishes the *per se* order of multiple goods according to prior and posterior—and this sense, of course, is founded upon God. Without this sense of happiness, no other sense of happiness (including the reference to a set of constituents thereof), and more importantly, no direction for choice, is possible.

I have no intention of canvassing here Aquinas's arguments for the very existence of an ultimate end, for why the ultimate end must be one and not many, and the dialectical arguments he uses to

manifest the nature of both imperfect and perfect happiness. Instead, I simply want to highlight some features of the arguments Aquinas develops in pursuing these questions. First, when Aquinas argues in article 4, question 1 of the *Prima secundae* that there must be an ultimate end of human life, he stakes his claim on the fact that for human action even to get up and running, whether in the order of intention or of execution, there must be a *per se* order of ends culminating in an absolutely first, absolutely ultimate, end. And when in the next article Aquinas proves that the absolutely ultimate end must be single, he tells us that the hierarchy of “for-the-sake-of” relationships must culminate in a final end that is never for the sake of some other good, and thus regulates every other good in the hierarchy which is, in some respect (though not in every respect) instrumental to it. In the *sed contra* of article 5 Aquinas glosses Matthew 6:24 (“No man can serve two masters”) as a way of saying that no one can pursue two final ends not ordered to one another; that is, not situated within a network of for-the-sake-of relationships.

Apropos of this latter text Germain Grisez has argued that “Of course, in choosing, one seeks a good loved for itself. In this sense, one always acts for an ultimate end—that is, an end not pursued as a means to some ulterior end. But an ultimate end in this sense need not be the complete good of the human person, as Thomas assumed when he tried to prove that one’s will cannot be directed simultaneously to two or more ultimate ends” [Grisez’s citation is then to *ST* I-II, q. 1, a. 5].^[xxiii] But it is not the case that Aquinas didn’t understand that there could be many final ends, each one imperfectly fulfilling of the human person. It is rather that he understood these less-than-absolutely final ends as existing in a *duplex ordo* to one another and to an absolutely ultimate end, in the absence of which no pursuit of any final end would ever occur. For what gets human action up and going is the pursuit of complete fulfillment of desire.

Human happiness is thus best defined as a unity in multiplicity, and this in more than one sense. As governed by the precepts of the natural law, our

pursuit of happiness is always for something that is, in some sense, common. But as there are degrees of finality or perfection in goods in general, so there will be degrees of perfection in common good. There is only one common good that most perfectly satisfies the criteria of human happiness, and that is, strictly speaking, God himself. Accordingly, in the most perfect sense happiness is union with God in the next life; far less perfectly, it is contemplation of God in this life. But because we are not angels but embodied souls, this latter, mundane happiness must include the exercise of the moral and artistic virtues as ordered to the happiness of contemplation. This brings out the fact that a more perfect sense of happiness always subsumes that below it: all the happiness we seek in natural goods is taken up into and perfected in God^[xxiv]; while all the happiness we seek in the practice of moral and artistic virtue is taken up into and perfected in the life of contemplation.

Observations such as these customarily elicit two objections. The first objection I shall call, borrowing a phrase from Russell Pannier, the “personal destinies” objection. Does this objective hierarchy of goods leave any place for personal predilection and native talent in determining one’s happiness? What the good obliges me to do is structure my commitments according to the hierarchical framework of goods, rules and virtues. However, the basic framework can be instantiated, can be determined by the judgment of prudence, in myriad ways. I may possess neither the desire, talent nor opportunity to be a statesman, but justice will still be a good that I am bound to pursue. I may have neither the talent nor opportunity to study philosophy in a rigorous way, but I can still make contemplative activity the highest and best good that I pursue, perhaps by reflection on works of art, or conversations with friends, or by prayer. This solution to the problem does not deny—indeed, it does everything to affirm—a hierarchy of offices and duties that is not the production of individual choice. The wider a common good a particular office or duty looks after, the more divine-like and honorable it is.^[xxv] Yet again, this

does not mean that the lives of those who occupy lower offices are diminished. They are perfect in their own order, and in their perfection make a necessary contribution to the common good of the whole.

But what then of the related, “domination” objection? If contemplation and religious observance are the best goods, why shouldn’t I spend all my time with them? To answer this we need to recall that higher goods in a hierarchy do not undermine the intrinsic goodness of the goods subordinate to them. My obligation to honor my parents, for instance, binds me to the goods of family life in a way that is constitutive of my happiness. My other obligation to honor God in the practice of the virtue of religion is not a rival to this obligation, even while it remains the more important obligation. The natural law in no way requires that I pursue religious acts to the exclusion of all other obligations. The natural law only demands that the religious obligation is given foremost respect in the tailoring of the hierarchy to my individual circumstances. In fact, it would be contrary to the proper understanding of my religious obligation if I did not understand the way in which it depends upon my lower obligations. The honoring of parents and the enjoyment of the goods of family life not only have their own requirements, but the intellectual and moral education one receives in participating in these goods is required if the religious good is to be fully achieved.

Particular Obligations

None of this discussion has yet identified any particular obligations. So in this final section I want to consider a bit more fully how the hierarchy I have been discussing issues in particular obligations, and in particular, I want to look at three obligations that arise at different levels of specificity in the order of practical reason. Begin with the example of the golfer torn between his golf game and saving a drowning child. George’s contention is that there is a moral

rule that clearly says what one must do in such circumstances, and that rule is the Golden Rule. But what is the nature of this rule? What justifies it? George invokes it without explanation in the essay concerned with this golfing example. Finnis says more, at least about the rule itself: “The principle of love of neighbor-as-self,” he argues, “and its specification in the Golden Rule, immediately capture one element in integral directiveness: the basic goods are goods for any human being, and I must have a reason for preferring their instantiation in my own or my friends’ existence” (note: Finnis, *Aquinas*, p. 140). But why doesn’t our golfer have a reason to prefer his life, and his golf, to that of his neighbor? The reason can only be explained in terms of hierarchy, and in the following way.

It is not at all contrary to my pursuit of a hierarchy of common goods to pursue some goods that are not in any immediate sense shared with the other members of my community. To go back again to the first *lectio* of the *Commentary on the Ethics*, Aquinas says that the whole which the polity or family constitutes has only a unity of order (as opposed to an absolute unity of composition, conjunction or continuity). [xxvi] A family or polity is not a substance in the strictest sense, where every operation of a part is necessarily an operation of the whole. As a unity only of ordered parts, existing in “for-the-sake-of” relationships, one member of the order may have an operation that is not the operation of the whole, just as a soldier may have an activity (a furlough) that does not belong to the army as a whole. Nonetheless, the activities of the individual members of a unity of order are necessarily subordinated to the good of the whole. The soldier’s furlough is ultimately for the sake of the army’s victory over the enemy, insofar as the furlough refreshes the soldier for his duties. Indeed, the good of the whole demands that at times an individual seek a personal good both for his sake and for the sake of the whole. In the same way, our golfer’s leisurely round is both for his sake and for the sake of his common pursuits with other members of his family and of his polity. But in those circumstances where a neces-

sary feature of the common good is in jeopardy, as when a fellow citizen's life is in danger, a clear principle is invoked: the inferior, individual good must be abandoned for the sake of the higher, common good.

This golfing example deals with a moral principle at practical reason's highest level of generality, the principle that obliges us to love others as we love ourselves based upon the hierarchy of individual to common goods.[xxvii] Let's look now at another obligation, this one from practical reason's middle range. In the argument against polygamy that we find in the Supplement to the *Summa*, Aquinas sets down this principle: ["All that makes an action unfitting to the end that nature intends by a certain work, is said to be contrary to the natural law."][xxviii] Aquinas then distinguishes that an action may be unfitting either in regard to the principal or secondary end of an action. First, on account of something which wholly hinders the end, as a very great deficiency in eating hinders both the health of the body (the primary end of eating), and the ability to conduct our business (the secondary end of eating). Secondly, an act may be disproportionate to either the primary or secondary end of an action by making its attainment difficult, or less satisfactory. I take this distinction to be a restatement of what we read at *Prima secundae* q. 99, article 1: our obligations under natural law bind us to whatever is absolutely necessary or expedient for the sake of the ends to which nature directs us. Any action out of line with this necessity or expediency is unfitting to the end, and therefore illicit. According to Aquinas, the principal end of marriage is procreation, and its secondary end is, in a word, the *bonum fides* shared between the spouses. Marriage also has a third, sacramental end, namely, the signification of the union between Christ and the Church.

Now when it comes to the question of polygamy, a plurality of wives in no way hinders or makes inexpedient the primary end of marriage. A man can just as well beget children from one wife or many. But it's a different story when it comes to the secondary end of marriage, the *bonum fides*.

A plurality of wives, Aquinas says, while not wholly hindering the shared life of the spouses, hinders it greatly, as a man cannot easily satisfy the requests of several wives, and because the sharing of many in one office causes strife. And when it comes to the sacramental end of marriage, polygamy destroys the signification altogether. So, polygamy as a means for the sake of the primary end of marriage is not against the natural law, and clearly this conclusion arises out of the way in which the means of polygamy is a perfectly suitable instrument for the begetting of children. But polygamy is against the secondary principles of the natural law because it greatly hinders the secondary end of marriage. For these reasons Aquinas concludes that polygamy both is and is not contrary to the natural law. Interestingly, however, the case of polygamy also helps us round out the argument by providing an example of where obligation arises out of the deliberations of prudence. In the succeeding article in this question of the *Supplement*, Aquinas goes on to discuss whether polygamy was ever lawful. Polygamy, he says, does not trespass against the first precepts of the natural law, because it does not hinder the primary end of marriage. But again, it does trespass against the secondary precepts, precepts that Aquinas says hold not always but in the majority of cases, because it greatly hinders the secondary end of marriage. Aquinas affirms that this secondary precept is framed by God and even written on the human heart, but that it was dispensed by God through an inward inspiration to the holy patriarchs at a time when it was expedient to dispense with the secondary precept. Why? Because the end of the primary precept, the begetting of children necessary for building up the kingdom of God, was, at that time, of over-riding necessity. So here we see how the decisions of prudence, in this case divine prudence, depend upon the discernment of hierarchy: the primary end of marriage regulating the pursuit of the secondary end of marriage in circumstances where the primary end is in jeopardy. The understanding, moreover, of the primary good's being in jeopardy depends in turn upon seeing how the primary end of marriage is for the sake of, and thus regulated by, religious observance.

Conclusion

In this essay I have depended upon some central texts of Aquinas on obligation in order to show how the concept of a hierarchy of goods gives real direction to human choice. According to Aquinas, obligation arises first of all out of the recognition of an intrinsically valuable good to which we are naturally ordered, and secondly out of the recognition of means that either are necessary or expedient to the attainment of that good. Hence obligation depends upon recognition of hierarchy among goods.

Three features of this hierarchy have been particularly important for this discussion. First, that hierarchy fundamentally consists in asymmetrical causal relationships, in which a lower good is for the sake of a higher good in an efficient causal sense, but which also is regulated by that higher good in regard to the whether and how of its pursuit. Second, that this hierarchy of for-the-sake-of relationships culminates in an absolutely ultimate end that is not merely ultimate in an inclusivist sense, but which gives overriding direction to human choice by being the best good that we desire. Third, and perhaps most important for the debate with George, is the fact that in this hierarchy there is a wide range of ultimate ends that manifest intrinsic value while still being in certain respects for the sake of intrinsically more valuable ends, and most of all for the absolutely ultimate end. The instrumental aspect of these goods is an integral part of their nature as goods, even though it is not the only part of their nature. Still, when it comes to choices between these less-than-absolutely ultimate ends, between what George calls basic goods, the order brought into being by their instrumental relations is indeed what makes possible non-arbitrary direction for choice. ✠

NOTES

[i] Robert P. George, *In Defense of the Natural Law* (Oxford University Press, 1999), Chapter 2, note 125, pp. 81-82.

[ii] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

[iii] *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

[iv] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

[v] "Invenitur autem duplex ordo in rebus. Unus quidem partium alicujus totius seu alicujus multitudinis adinvicem, sicut partes domus adinvicem ordinantur. Alius est ordo rerum in finem. Et hic ordo est principalior, quam primus. Nam, ut Philosophus dicit in undecimo *Metaphysicorum*, ordo partium exercitus adinvicem, est propter ordinem totius exercitus ad ducem." In *I Ethicorum*, lectio 1, no. 1.

[vi] See especially *ST* I-II q. 99, a. 1, and II-II q. 44, a. 1.

[vii] The incommensurability between what he calls "agent-relative" and "agent-neutral" reasons for action is defended by Mark C. Murphy in *Natural Law and Practical Rationality* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), esp. p. 186.

[viii] *ST* II-II q. 26, a. 1: "prius et posterius dicitur secundum relationem ad aliquod principium. Ordo autem includit in se aliquem modum prius et posterius. Unde oportet quod ubicumque est aliquod principium, sit etiam aliquis ordo."

[ix] A problem discussed by Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, Chapter 2, especially pp. 73ff.; and Benedict M. Ashley, O.P., "What is the End of the Human Person? The Vision of God and Integral Human Fulfillment," in Luke Gormally, ed., *Moral Truth and Moral Tradition: Essays in Honor of Peter Geach and Elizabeth Anscombe* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1994), pp. 68-96.

[x] Murphy, *Natural Law and Practical Rationality*, p. 192.

[xi] EN I.6 1096a17-23. Cf. In *I Ethicorum*, lectio 6, nn. 79-80. On this point I have learned from Kevin L. Flannery, S.J., *Acts Amid Precepts* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), Chapter 4. It is interesting to relate Aristotle's argument to Aquinas's analysis of the goodness of the human act. The species, or substance, of a human act, according to Aquinas, is a form/matter composite. This composite is considered formally in terms of the end (the object of the interior act of the will), but materially in terms of the object of the exterior act. The circumstances of the act accrue to the substance of the act as accidents of it. Thus in the human act there is an order of priority and posteriority, the substance of the act being prior. See *ST* I-II, q. 18, a. 6 and q. 7, a. 3. [xii] Murphy, *Natural Law and Practical Rationality*, p. 192. Here Murphy also references John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, pp. 100-105. See also Russell Pannier, "Finnis and the Commensurability of Goods," *The New Scholasticism* 61 (1987): 440-461, esp. 443. Unlike Pannier, and for the reasons already given, I do not think it accurate to refer to a hierarchical ordering of goods as a commensuration of those goods, except perhaps in a very loose sense.

[xiii] *Ibid.*

[xiv] In *I Ethicorum*, lectio 1, no. 1.

[xv] Henry S. Richardson has a nice discussion of the way Aristotle uses counterfactuals in distinguishing final ends from instrumental ends, as well as from final ends that are also instrumental ends. See his *Practical Reasoning About Final Ends* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 53-57.

[xvi] Richard Kraut, *Aristotle on the Human Good* (Princeton University Press, 1989), Chapter 4.

[xvii] In *I Ethiconum*, lectio 1, no. 27.

[xviii] This kind of argument is developed in Alasdair MacIntyre's defense of a teleological, as opposed to a functionalist, account of virtue in his "Sōphrosunē: How a Virtue Can Become Socially Disruptive," in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy XIII* (1988): pp. 1-11.

[xix] George, In Defense of the Natural Law, p. 96. See also Russell Hittinger, "After MacIntyre: Natural Law Theory, Virtue Ethics, and Eudaimonia," *International Philosophical Quarterly* (December 1989): pp. 449-461.

[xx] John Finnis, *Aquinas: Moral, Political and Legal Theory* (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 85- 86.

[xxi] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[xxii] These remarks can also be taken as a partial rebuttal of J. L. Ackrill's inclusivist understanding of Aristotle's view of the good. See Ackrill's "Aristotle on Eudaimonia," reprinted in Amélie Rorty,

ed., *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1980).

[xxiii] Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus, vol. I, Christian Moral Principles* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), pp. 809-10, quoted and discussed in Ashley, "What is the End of the Human Person? The Vision of God and Integral Human Fulfillment," pp. 68-69, especially.

[xxiv] It is interesting to note in this regard that for Aquinas even the moral virtues endure after this life, albeit in their formal, rather than material nature. See *ST I-II*, q. 67, a. 1. Something analogous holds with the intellectual virtues, including, I assume, the virtues of art (*ST I-II*, q. 67, a. 2).

[xxv] Cf. In *I Ethiconum*, lectio 2, no. 30.

[xxvi] *Ibid.*, lectio 1, no. 5.

[xxvii] Key Thomistic texts concerning this principle are *ST I-II* q. 99, a. 1; q. 100, a. 3, ad 1, and a. 11.

[xxviii] *ST*, Supplement, q. 65, a. 1.

John Gother: Good Advice in Times of Persecution

by Anne Barbeau Gardiner

John Gother is one of the most important Catholic writers of the 18th Century. In the recently published bibliographies of English Catholic authors, there are 42 works listed under his name for the 17th Century and 117 for the 18th Century. These are impressive numbers; they show that he was popular in his lifetime and for a century after. Gother, a convert from Presbyterianism who served as a secular priest in England from 1682 until his death in 1704, left behind two sorts of writings, polemical and spiritual. In the polemical he gave advice to the Church of England clergymen who misrepresented Catholics in the pulpit; in the spiritual he gave advice to English Catholics who wanted to preserve their identity in the face of legal, financial and social pressures to conform. His polemical works, which number around twenty, were so important they were answered by major spokesmen for the Church of England like Tillotson, Wake and Stillingfleet. His spiritual works, which fill 16 volumes, were cherished by English Catholics. Dryden was said to

have admired him for his style, which Charles Butler compared to the "nervous simplicity of the best writings of the Dean of St. Patrick's."

Gother's first polemical work *A Papist Misrepresented and Represented* appeared as soon as the Catholic king was crowned in 1685. In this pamphlet, which provoked many answers, Gother argued that the persecution of Catholics in England was based on misrepresentation, and he listed in two columns, first how English Protestants depicted a Catholic, and second how he really was. Protestants depicted the Catholic as

a perverse, malicious sort of Creature, Superstitious, Idolatrous, Atheistical, Cruel, Bloody-minded, Barbarous, Treacherous, and so Prophane, and every way Unhumane, that tis in some manner doubted, whether he be a Man, or no.

Gother added that there was "nothing borrow'd from the wild Africans, or barbarous Americans" that could increase the "deformity" of this Catholic as imagined by English Protestants.

Thus, the misrepresented Catholic in Gother anticipated the Yahoo in Swift, four decades later, for Swift's Yahoo is the Christian misrepresented as deformed and subhuman by the Atheist Horses and their disciple Gulliver. Gother claimed that English Catholics were misrepresented exactly as Primitive Christians had been by ancient Pagans – “cloathed” with the “skin” of a “Beast” and made to look like monsters to provoke “greater fury” in persecution.

In this same work, Gother singled out the Church of England clergy as guilty of misrepresentation; he pointed out, but without naming names as yet, that they had preached “Recorded Perjuries” against Catholics from the pulpit as “Gospel Truth” and had tarred all Catholics with the deeds of a few. If it was reasonable to impute guilt to an entire Church for the deeds of a few, then by the same token no Church could escape condemnation, and “there never was, nor ever will be, any Religion or Church of God upon the Earth.” Gother may have been the first in James II's reign to use this argument against collective guilt, an argument then taken up by others in defense of toleration. In 1686, to defend *Papist Mis-represented* against the many replies by the Church of England clergy (who still claimed that the Catholic was as bad as they represented him), Gother made this witty retort, that he could now shake hands with his antagonists, because he would gladly have died with Fox's martyrs to disown such a monster. And besides, every other English Catholic would join him to suppress “this kind of Popery.” Their strife, he assured them, was about “artificial Monsters,” not real people.

By 1687 King James II was trying to restore civil rights to religious minorities in England. He wanted to push through a repeal of the sacramental Test for public employment, a test which required a candidate to receive communion in the Church of England and take an oath against Transubstantiation. The Test limited civil employment to those who conformed to the established religion. Many Church of England preachers rose in defense of that Test in 1687 and began to misrepresent Catholics in sermons in order to halt the King's push towards toleration. At this juncture, Gother came

forward to support the royal policy by publishing his pamphlet *Good Advice to the Pulpits*, and this time he boldly named the names of those Anglican clergymen who had exhibited a shameful prejudice in the pulpit within the past decade. He cited the sermons they had given at the start of the imaginary Popish Plot, and he charged that those same incendiary sermons had been a driving force behind the persecution of English Catholics from 1678 to 1681. He quoted them exhorting Commons and Lords to hate Catholics for “Conscience's sake,” and in particular Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury, Tillotson and Stillingfleet preaching up the “Calumnies” of Titus Oates “as if they had been deliver'd by the Evangelists,” and all this in 1678, before any trial had occurred. These spiritual “Guides” had fallen in “with the mob,” pronounced Catholics “Guilty of the blackest of Crimes” on a bare presumption, and called loudly for the “Halter and Ax.” Tillotson, later Archbishop of Canterbury, had even complained to the House of Commons in 1678 that “no Violence” had yet been visited on Catholics, and Archbishop Sancroft had called on the Lords to mete out severe punishment from “Solomon's Rod,” comparing Catholics to the dragon of the Apocalypse. Only Bishop John Williams answered this pamphlet. He recognized that this anti-defamation writing was a new thing, but he dismissed it as whining and womanish outcries.

Strangely enough, the title of Gother's work was misprinted in the *Short Title Catalogue* as *Good Advice to the Papists*, instead of *Good Advice to the Pulpits*, as if it were advice to his fellow Catholics. This might be the reason such an important anti-defamation work has been neglected. Gother was bold in charging numerous spokesmen for the Church of England with having incited the persecution of Catholics in 1678-1680: for besides Sancroft, Tillotson, and Stillingfleet, he also impugned Tenison, Pelling, South, Sherlock, Calamy, Jane and Sharp by name. Not only did he give the dates and the places at which they had filled the judges and lawgivers with “Fury and Vengeance,” he also provided the page numbers of their printed sermons as evidence. Gother anticipated Zola's *J'Accuse* by charging the

moral leaders of his society with instigating the persecution of a religious minority by embracing “Forgeries.” Besides the forty or so Catholics who had died on the scaffold in the Popish Plot, there had been many others who, like the dramatist Matthew Medbourne, had died of disease in prison during those years, when 2,000 Catholics were incarcerated just around London.

In *Good Advice* and another anti-defamation work called *Pulpit Sayings*, Gother explained how the English clergy deluded themselves about Catholics: they refused to accept a Catholic interpretation of the doctrines of the Church of Rome, such as Bossuet’s *Exposition*, which had been translated and published in England, and instead insisted on interpreting Catholic tenets themselves. They would “immediately fall to the making Inferences and deducing Consequences, then down go these for so many articles of Popery.” And so, they would present as Catholic beliefs what no Catholic had ever taught, such as that the Pope gave dispensations to “Lie, Swear, Forswear” when dealing with Protestants. That this was a misrepresentation Gother proved by the Popish Plot years, when “several might have saved their Estates, and Lives too, would they have subscrib’d to, and own’d but one Lie, and yet refus’d it.” Another way the English clergy blinded themselves about Catholics was that they would pick out “the Abuses of some, the Vices and Cruelties of others, the odd Opinions of particular Authors, and hold these forth for the Doctrine and Practice of our Church,” thus creating a misrepresentation from their own “Opinions, Interpretations and Consequences.” As a result of such a proceeding, Calamy could preach that Catholics did not believe killing was murder.

Gother’s polemical works were set aside after the Revolution of 1688, but his spiritual works held sway for another century. In these, Gother was no less bold in giving advice to the persecuted, advice that would stiffen their spine. He exhorted his flock to patience, meekness, steadiness, resignation, and courage when faced with “humiliations, corrections and contempts” or “loss of goods, parents, children, or friends.” Such experiences, he assured

them, were the proper “exercises of a soldier of Christ.” His homilies warned them against yielding to dejection in time of persecution, because dejection would throw one “into darkness and chains.” To avoid this pit, he recommended the use of force: since man’s fallen nature was averse to suffering, one had to “force *nature* and *inclination* to yield to *duty*.” In his “Devotions for the Dejected” and his homilies he spoke of embracing “affronts, reproaches, and poverty” with a “joyful heart,” and he constantly held up the Primitive Christians as examples for English Catholics to imitate, calling it a glory for them to walk “in the highway of the cross.”

A dangerous effect of yielding to dejection, Gother observed, was that it might lead one to abandon both “religion and reason” and give way to immorality. But a Catholic leading a bad life was in league with the persecutors of his Church and put “stones into the hands of her enemies to fling at her.” The more eminent the degree he held in the Church, the more he was “instrumental in this unnatural cruelty.” Gother often exhorted his flock not to injure by their “ill morals” the faith for which so many Primitive martyrs had “laid down their lives.” He warned them they were accountable for every soul lost by their example, exclaiming: “How many are averse to the church, through the ill lives of its members?” While lamenting the “blindness” of English Protestants toward the Real Presence in the Eucharist, he reminded his hearers that to take Christ into “a sinful soul” was “as great a sacrilege, as casting him to dogs.”

To avert dejection Gother offered the persecuted Catholics two considerations. The first was that even if one’s persecutors were “guilty of injustice,” they were still instruments of Divine Providence and their actions at least “permitted.” To complain about persecution, therefore, was “for dust and ashes to set itself up against the Almighty.” If the world were “truly crucified” to me, he urged, I would be “content to be despised and humbled.” And so, he prayed: “I desire to accept all as from thy appointment; and I now fall down prostrate under thy scourge, and bless thy name.” The second consideration was that persecutors might be “men of principles and piety”

and “very sincere” in thinking they maintained the truth, because “piety and zeal are subject to great delusions” and a “mistaken zeal” can result from “erroneous education.” Such deluded men deserved “compassion,” not the anger that would lead to dejection. Gother’s reflections on delusion in his spiritual works parallel his reflections on misrepresentation in his polemical works, where he speaks of the English clergy’s “groundless inferences” from Catholic texts that enabled them to create an artificial monster. However, there is a lot less of *J’Accuse* in Gother’s spiritual works, which come after the Revolution of 1688, when Catholic hopes for a toleration had been dashed. Now the emphasis had to be on patience, courage and fidelity.

The danger of delusion and self-delusion was often on Gother’s mind. Asking for prayers for England, he would add, “let all deluded souls partake of thy charity.” He would urge his flock to fast, pray and weep for their countrymen, “so many souls carried away by vice and error.” He composed this public prayer against self-delusion in which he beseeched God

that the impressions of education may not make me obstinate against thy truth; that neither interest or compliance, or any other human respect whatever, may bias me in my choice; but that looking for thee with all sincerity, I may be raised above all these considerations, and suffer nothing on earth to put me out of the way to heaven.

It was very hard, Gother conceded, “to possess the mind with a true idea of things” while living in such a “corrupt world.” Interior conviction and a satisfied conscience were not sufficient to protect one against delusion, and it was dangerous to presume one had been born into the true faith, like a Jew or a Turk. So one had to seek instruction, whether one was a master or a servant. He would tell masters that their servants needed time for “their instruction,” saying, God has “work for them to do; some of thine is to be omitted, that his may not be left undone; it is better thy house sometimes should not be clean, than that they should live and die in ignorance, or go to the Sacraments

unprepared.” He even wanted servants to read, or to have read to them spiritual books like those of Francis de Sales.

Besides dejection and delusion, another danger Gother repeatedly warned against was cowardice in the face of family, friends, or neighbors. As a convert from Presbyterianism, Gother might have recalled his own suffering when he spoke of children exposed to the “cruelty” of parents opposed to their faith and to the “more dangerous temptations of their flattery and love.” He often asked for prayers for those who endured “persecution from their relations and parents.” While he encouraged English Catholics to go to the “burials or christenings” of their friends and relations in the Church of England, he warned that when it came to the “religious part,” the “solemn prayer” and the “sacrament,” they had to withdraw, even if some would “revile” them for it. Better to endure “reproof and anger,” he said, than take shelter in a lie. Where others had been martyred for the faith, they were not to be afraid of “displeasing.” He also urged them constantly to be bold in speaking out in support of truth and holiness, even to the point that others should wish their lips “fastened with a lock.” And he asked poignantly, “What if thou lovest a friend? Is not this loss to be embraced, rather than to see the cause of God betrayed?” He called this boldness of speech a charity to those in “spiritual distress” who might otherwise perish for lack of a plain-dealer.

Gother regarded worldly advantage as an even greater threat to the fidelity of English Catholics than pressures from family and friends. He saw the world as “a torrent” which one was “bound to stand against,” and this could not be done without “perpetual resistance.” To stop resisting was to be “carried down,” forsake “the church of Christ,” and become a disciple of the world. In his homilies, Gother made apostasy for the sake of the world look repulsive by picturing contemporary England as a place almost entirely filled with “corruption.” He verged on satire whenever he touched on the “general decay of religion and piety” in his country. Like Swift in the *Argument Against Abolishing*

Christianity, Gother saw the faith still remaining to be only a “ceremonial profession” without any effect on men’s lives. He mentioned the “blasphemies” of Arius and Socinus, i.e. their denial of Christ’s divinity, as widely promoted in that “unbelieving age,” both in the “speculative” and in the “practical” sense, lamenting that “All now tends to liberty, pride, intemperance, and self-love; the common business is to seek this world and please ourselves.... And what is all this, but *practical Arianism*?”

Catholics, who were excluded from universities and law schools, could take comfort from Gother’s saying that these “places of learning” were now so “corrupt” that those who went there risked renouncing the Gospel and the law. And since Catholics were also excluded from the army, they could take comfort from his saying that English soldiers ventured their lives very cheaply, lived in “universal corruption,” and were unprepared to die. Gother’s bleak vision of the English as a people thoroughly self-deluded and corrupt, a vision which anticipates Swift’s in *Gulliver’s Travels*, is well summed up in this passage: “we see a world almost entirely corrupt,” he says, where “great numbers of those who pretend to salvation” live “in the practice of daily frauds, injustice, and oppressions; in the most notorious disorders of prodigality, pride, self-love, and intemperance; and yet all generally persuading themselves that things are well enough; and thus blind and deluded they go on, till the entrance into eternity opens their eyes.” We seem to hear Swift when Gother adds, “think that so much of misery, weakness and sin, as thou art, should be capable of such intolerable and universal pride.”

But how were English Catholics to live unscathed amid such universal corruption? Gother suggested they might live like the desert fathers of the Primitive Church, without actually withdrawing into a hermitage. All they needed to do was use “violence” and cut themselves off from the dangers around them: “There is no need of finding a desert, the world may be a solitude” if only one is “resolute enough” to forsake all “unnecessary dangers.” He exhorted English Catholics to avoid, in particular, all conversation with Arians, though

he credited these with intellectual gifts: “show thy zeal against all abettors of the *Arian* heresy,” he says, “Let no agreeableness of society, parts, or wit, draw thee into such company; thou hast little zeal for truth, if thou canst bear their blasphemies.” Whereas he urged his flock to reprove other sinners boldly in and out of season, he warned them to flee the company of Arians as too seductive.

Gother often used the word *violence* when telling his flock to cut themselves off from what might tempt them to apostasy. He held up the Primitive martyrs as models of how to use “violence to nature, affection, inclination, or custom” and renounce all for Christ:

Company, conversation, and entertainments being corrupt, hence friends too are to be forsaken, as far as they lead us from Christ. Parents too, by their passion, blindness, or ill example, being often a hindrance to salvation, are so far to be forsaken: Employments and professions, through an injustice, which is almost inseparable from too many, are so far to be forsaken: Riches, honours, pleasures, and diversions, as far as they immoderately engage the heart, and either wholly draw it, or considerably divert it from God, are so far to be forsaken.

What is astonishing about this passage and much of his spiritual works is that Gother was addressing lay Catholics in England, yet he spoke to them as if they were monks and nuns under vows. He constantly gave them counsels of perfection and expected them to strive for, and attain, as Primitive Christians had, a transcendent holiness in the midst of engulfing corruption.

Some of Gother’s spiritual works are directed at servants and laborers. Suffice it to say that he taught them to strive for heroic virtue, too. Remarkably, he urged servants to disobey their masters rather than concur in sin: “He that carries messages, or conveys letters, for the accomplishing a wickedness, and knows what he does, is guilty of whatever crime it be, to which he directly concurs; and I cannot but think, that he who carries drink to his master, when he knows it is to make him drunk, might with as much colour of innocence fetch poison to one, who seems resolved to

drink it.” Among their fellow-servants, too, they were boldly to rebuke “immodest jesting, filthy discourse, or too much freedom in action.” If a rebuke was useless, they might add threats of “informing those to whom it belongs,” and then, if this did not work, they would be obliged “to seek remedy by changing place.” He thought servants were bound to be realistic about the cost of discipleship: “they who work so hard for bread, and a poor salary, are not to wonder, if heaven is to cost them some pains.”

In conclusion, Gother’s polemical works are unique in that he wrote anti-defamation pamphlets when few had ever raised this issue of group stereotyping and defamation as the basis of continued persecution of Catholics, when they were down

to one or two per cent in England. But Gother’s spiritual works are even more important than his polemical because they were written to encourage English Catholics to maintain their identity at a time when laws and penalties made it tempting for them to conform. The popularity of his spiritual works in the 18th century shows that they provide a window into the psychology of the Recusants of that era. Evidently, those English Catholics shared Gother’s bleak view of our fallen human nature and the near universal corruption of contemporary England, and they welcomed his uncompromising advice about heroic resistance to the world, saintly “violence” to unlawful affections, and a joyful embrace of the counsels of perfection. ✠

REVIEWS

Dr. Donald DeMarco, **Virtue’s Alphabet: From Amiability to Zeal**, Central Bureau, St. Louis, MO, 2003, pp. 112, \$10.00 U.S, \$15 Cdn.

Reviewed by Douglas P. McManaman

One of the problems with the more contemporary approach to the teaching of ethics is its tendency to focus almost exclusively on whether or not a given course of action is morally permissible. This often lends the impression that ethics is primarily about “what not to do.” Although drawing boundary lines is a necessary part of moral philosophy, a more ancient approach to ethics focuses principally on “what to do”, that is, on the positive qualities or dispositions (virtues) that constitute noble character. Consequently, this latter approach will fix its attention on what Aristotle refers to as the *kalon*, which is best translated as the morally beautiful, noble, or attractive. This is a far more effective approach to the teaching of ethics today because it gives young people

in particular—raised as they are in an atmosphere of nihilism—something towards which to aspire.

What exactly, though, does the morally beautiful look like? The difficulty today is finding genuine illustrations of moral nobility. However, this is just what Donald DeMarco has done in *Virtue’s Alphabet: From Amiability to Zeal*. DeMarco points out that love passes through three stages: “It is attentive, appreciative, and affectionate” (p. 48). In this light, DeMarco’s book can certainly be described as a work of love. *Virtue’s Alphabet* is the fruit of his attention to the morally beautiful (*kalon*) as it has been embodied in the lives of noble human beings. Written in a beautiful narrative style that cleverly blends story and principle, it awakens in the reader an appreciation and affection for virtue, that is, for human beings of great character. Each chapter brings to light “the extraordinary” that lies hidden in the apparently ordinary lives of people, such as Brooklyn Dodgers’ Gil Hodges, George Washington Carver, Franz Jagerstat-

ter, Jerome Lejeune, Monique Dostie, King Boudewijn of Belgium, and Cardinal John O’Connor.

Youthfulness, writes DeMarco, “is the readiness to receive, deep within the heart, appeals to lofty ideals. Young people are most receptive to images of virtuous conduct and are eager to pay the price their embodiment exacts” (p. 97). Not only does this book offer to young people images of virtuous conduct, it has the further advantage of awakening the adult reader to a re-discovery of his own youthfulness through a re-discovery of the appeal of lofty ideals, embodied in noble human beings. This book is an ideal complement to a moral philosophy or theology course that relies heavily on an analytical approach to the study of morals. The chapters are short, easy to read, inspiring, and typical of DeMarco’s style, each chapter evidences a clever and rare grasp of the intricate nature of truth that touches our sense of humor and tweaks our sense of wonder at the splendor that adorns both truth and virtue. ✠

John M. Rist, *Real Ethics: Reconsidering the Foundations of Morality*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. vii + 295 pp. Cloth, \$65.00; paper, \$23.00

Reviewed by Jude P. Dougherty

R*éal Ethics* is a hard-hitting critique of contemporary moral theory from a realist point of view by John M. Rist, Professor Emeritus of philosophy and classics at the University of Toronto. His previous works include *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*, *The Mind of Aristotle*, and *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*. Addressing what he calls the deception, equivocation, outright lying, and humbug that pass for contemporary moral discourse—humbug that extends from the universities into the marketplace, legislative assemblies, and juridical bodies—Rist offers a defense of traditional Christian morality grounded in classical metaphysics. In rather forceful language he writes that there is “no need to look in the public lavatory for the lowest common denominator.” The habits of what was low life morality have become the norms of moral and political discourse. “In the wake of any clear sense of what ‘low life’ might suggest, intellectuals are becoming ‘downwardly mobile’ and while losing their grip on an overall concept of virtue, often see such a direction as in itself virtuous and high minded or sentimentally as solidarity with the marginalized or dispossessed.”

Despairing of any principled agreement on the foundations of morality between theist and non-theist, Rist takes the position that upholders of the realist tradition must recover its history, learning from the skills and insights of those who advance it and from those who reject it. “Those who reject it must be forced to acknowledge their own Nietzschean parentage, a lineage that gives license to *force majeure*, lies, hypoc-

ris, and intellectual dishonesty or triviality which make it palatable to a credulous and largely pre-philosophic public.” For Rist the realist tradition begins not with Aristotle but with Plato, a tradition unashamedly theological. Platonism or deception are the only moral and political alternatives available. If morality is to be more than enlightened self-interest, it has to be rationally justified, that is, established on metaphysical principles. Rist believes that in Western societies we are confronted with ubiquitous and ill-defined appeals to the priority of choice, freedom, and human dignity, all unanchored in a coherent account of nature and human nature. Moral obligation, the only obligation clearly separable from prudence or self-interest, remains a utopian dream apart from an acknowledged theistic context. A theistic or religious context and its accompanying moral sense can only be achieved by regaining a perspective which lays bare its classical and Christian roots. Appeals to comradeship, fraternity, and community are illusory apart from an inherited culture, symbolized for Rist by attachment to “land, village and the local churchyard where one’s ancestors have lain for generations.” Community entails a common commitment to the rule of law and all that such law entails—viz., due process, habeas corpus, and trial by jury. Absent an historical sense we are prisoners of our own time. One who is ignorant of the past, is likely “to assume the persona put upon him by the current fashions and pressures, which in the present age will most often mean reduction to economic man.”

Rist foresees a bleak future for the West. In losing its grip on its Christian past and in the absence of a clear sense of civic virtue, Western society is preparing itself for a totalitarian democracy. Unable to choose between conflicting claims to the good and the resulting propensity to tolerate all, it is subverting the prin-

ciple of toleration itself. Unfortunately, recovering a sense of the past may not be an easy task. The past can be clouded by the authoritarian or ideological mentality of academics and humanists or be rewritten or invented to promote a political agenda. Moreover, history is only one vehicle for transmitting the inherited. Whatever wisdom a society has acquired can be passed on only if it is instantiated in institutional structures designed to maintain inherited practices, beliefs, and intellectual acumen. As for the individual caught in an unrooted modernity, those apt to keep their wits in a godless future are those who possess a knowledge—however acquired—of their roots, that is, their own past and traditions.

The overarching thesis of *Real Ethics* is that God cannot be excluded from discussions about the foundation of morality. Rist offers a brief discussion of “natural law” as a common ground between theist and non-theist but discounts its rhetorical effectiveness. Clearly for him Platonic realism is the same thing as natural law, “for there is no doubt that Aquinas is a Platonist in that he believes in an ‘external law’ which is roughly the Platonic Forms seen in an appropriate manner as God’s thoughts.” Rist is suspicious of claims that natural law can be defended without reference to the existence of God. Here he stands in contrast to contemporary philosophers such as Henry Veatch, Alexander d’Éntrèves, and more recently Anthony Lisska, all of whom have presented natural law stripped of its religious and realist associations as a common ground for discourse with the secular mind. Rist holds that anyone who maintains with Aquinas that natural law participates in the eternal law must necessarily acknowledge its theistic roots and that such an acknowledgment matters. “Natural happiness” in the Aristotelian sense is not the “perfect happiness” of Aquinas that is to be found in the contemplation

of God as the ultimate end of human life. In considering two possible versions of natural law theory, secular and theistic, Rist argues that “making room for knowledge of God will affect our understanding of the nature and ordering of other goods which right reason can discover.” If there is no God, one is not mistaken in the pursuit of natural good without reference to the eternal.

Anyone who holds for a natural order to which man is accountable, theist or not, will recognize the force of Rist’s trenchant criticism of contemporary moral theory and agree with him about the cultural malaise to which it leads. To say that this work is profound is almost an understatement. *Real Ethics* is the work of a mature scholar steeped in history who is also an acute observer of contemporary manners and morals. ❧

“We can read the Gospels any way we want and need to”

Jean Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene: Legends, Apocrypha, and the Christian Testament*.

New York and London: Continuum Press, 2002. 375 pp. \$35.00

Reviewed by Anne Barbeau Gardiner

Here’s an author and a book that provide the best evidence of why the directives of *Ex corde ecclesiae* should be carried out speedily. Here’s proof of how urgent it is that theologians and biblical scholars who lecture on religion at Catholic colleges should be held accountable when they deliberately subvert the doctrines and moral teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. In *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene* Jean Schaberg calls herself a Catholic and says she teaches in religious studies at the University of Detroit Mercy. Yet as far back as 1986, she published a book which attacked the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Virgin Birth, entitled, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: a Feminist*

Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke. In it she claimed that Jesus had been conceived “normally, not miraculously,” and “possibly by a rape,” and so his birth had been illegitimate and his mother “misrepresented” as a virgin. Despite her casting aspersions on the sublime mysteries of our Faith, here she is in 2002 still teaching religion at a Catholic university.

Has she repented in sackcloth and ashes? Nothing of the sort. In fact, she complains bitterly about the reviews she got. She laments that she was made the “target of popular and academic anti-feminist backlash, some of it violent, for daring to meddle with the powerful icon of the Virgin, belief in the virginal conception, [and] Roman Catholic emphasis on that belief as central to an understanding of woman as well as of Jesus” (14). Her word *violent* insinuates that the negative reviews she got were misogynist hate speech. She even calls herself a *victim*: “Yes, I was ‘victimised’ a bit, and yes it set me back,” but as a result I became “intensely interested in the process of censorship and silencing.” Censorship? Silencing? How come she’s still casting aspersions on the mysteries of the Faith under Catholic auspices sixteen years later?

The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene is a belated response to the reviewers who, Schaberg thinks, attempted to “silence” her. Here she accuses the early Church of having silenced the following “tradition” – that the original “successor” of Jesus was Mary Magdalene, not Peter. Note her use of *tradition*. This word usually means something transmitted from age to age, but not found in Holy Scripture. Schaberg uses it to mean something purely hypothetical which she constructs by taking passages found in Gnostic texts and inserting them into the Gospel of John. She claims, but only half-heartedly, that these passages were suppressed by the circles that “produced” the

canonical Gospels. I say *half-heartedly*, because she confesses that if “these claims” for Mary Magdalene are only “legendary,” it doesn’t matter since “We [feminists] can read the Gospels any way we want and need to” (350). Yes, *any way we want and need to*.

Why Mary Magdalene? Why has she become a rallying cry for feminists? Schaberg informs us that she “represents resistance to gender subordination,” while Our Lady (whom she calls Mary of Nazareth) “represents that subordination” (127). If we replace the cant phrase *gender subordination* with the Christian term *humility*, we can see that what she says is untrue, because Magdalene is a model of humility in Holy Scripture. But in the Gnostic texts condemned by the Church Fathers long ago, she does lack humility: she is a woman claiming to have spiritual knowledge superior to that of the Apostles, and she is engaged with Peter in a struggle for authority. Now that’s precisely why the feminists see this Gnostic Magdalene as their model.

A virtual industry has arisen around Magdalene as an icon of feminism. In *Time* magazine, a recent feature article about her pointed out that her Catholic followers “see in her a potent female role model and a possible argument against the all-male priesthood.” Besides dozens of books published on her in recent years, two Catholic organizations (FutureChurch and Call to Action) have, since 1998, promoted services on July 22 to honor her – their avowed goal being the ordination of women. But Schaberg shows the strange kind of “priesthood” they have in mind – egalitarian, visionary, mystical; a troop of wild-eyed seers in a Church without vertical structure. She muses: “I see Magdalene Christianity as disconcerting, demanding, and horribly vulnerable” (349).

Schaberg frankly acknowledges that “My interpretive framework and presuppositions are feminist” and feminist criticism “does not pretend

to be objective” (259). Indeed, feminism is the shrine at which she sacrifices the sacred mysteries promulgated by the Catholic Church. And she seems to have sacrificed herself there, too. For on a visit to the ruins of Migdal, where Mary Magdalene once lived, she ponders: “I am looking for something, maybe for what used to be called my spirit or my immortal soul” (63). At the end of this book, she expresses the hope that she has at least managed “to destabilize ‘authoritative’ readings” of Scripture and encouraged “the desire to continue undermining and trespassing” (352). This is like the futile hope of Moloch, Satan’s counsellor in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Moloch declares, “we feel

Our power sufficient to disturb
His Heaven,
And with perpetual inroads
to Alarm,
Though inaccessible,
his fatal Throne:
Which if not Victory is yet
Revenge. (2: 101-5)

Schaberg and Moloch hope at the very least to disturb and destabilize what God has ordained, which is as much to say, they realize they can’t overthrow it.

Astonishingly, Schaberg declares that she is a “Roman Catholic” on page 14, but three pages later she protests she has no regard for “religious affiliation.” Then she adds tellingly: “I also do not deny being a Catholic, or an American citizen, as long as I continue to benefit from the wealth of either institution, and as long as I responsibly, even loyally oppose their institutional injustices.” Note the word *loyally*. To act *loyally* here means simultaneously to benefit from lecturing under the auspices of Catholicism and to strive to subvert that religion.

What are the “institutional injustices” she so “responsibly, even loyally” opposes while she continues “to benefit from the wealth of [this] institution”? She explains that

the Church is unjust in condemning contraception, abortion, and homosexuality. But what especially arouses her righteous indignation is the Church’s alignment with Muslims, Evangelicals, and other “anti-choice groups” to stop the forced implementation of contraception and abortion in the Third World – which she calls in cant phrase, to “restrict access of the poor to reproductive health care and family planning” (17-18). So there you have it: since her religion is feminism, she has no qualms about using a post at a Catholic college to denounce the Catholic Church’s teachings on sexual morality and to promote the international culture of death, her own creed. And she’s not one; she’s legion. Isn’t this proof that *Ex corde ecclesiae* must be quickly and firmly implemented?

Schaberg devotes her first chapter to Virginia Woolf, calling her “the mentor I never had” and praising her for her “feminist subversion of a patriarchal social order” (45). Until now, she notes, Woolf’s influence has not been felt in religious studies. Little wonder! Woolf was an atheist who “regarded Christianity as ‘the chief enemy’ of intellectual freedom” and the Bible as a source of “violence and oppression” in need of “total deconstruction” (10, 26). A haunting, pervasive presence, Woolf is cited here not only at the head of each chapter, but throughout the text. Schaberg even invokes her spirit for protection: “To lessen anxiety about our own attacks on the patriarchy, our efforts to destructure and restructure – for which there is always retaliation – I imagine some connection between Woolf’s spirit and the Magdalene of history, so that the past might offer some protection as well as some precedent” (37). A strange tutelary spirit to summon up! Woolf could not even protect *herself* against depression and suicide.

Feminists usually blame the Latin Church Fathers for identifying the

sinful woman who anointed Christ’s feet as Mary Magdalene. Schaberg moves the blame farther back, accusing Luke (she doesn’t call him, or anyone else, “Saint”) of having “downgraded the anointing woman in Mark 14 from prophet to ‘sinner’” (Luke 7) and having implied that her sin was “prostitution.” This and the claim that Magdalene was freed from seven demons, she says, led to the silencing of this female prophet: “the powerful woman [was] disempowered, remembered as a whore or whorish” (76, 78). Later, Schaberg blames John, too, for having “deliberately suppressed” the so-called “Elijah christology.” Let me explain what this means: Schaberg imagines an original narrative, now lost, that was used to produce John 20. This original story supposedly had Mary Magdalene being named the successor of Christ, just as Elisha was named the successor of Elijah in 2 Kings 2. Both were supposedly given a “double portion” of the departing prophet’s spirit. Schaberg gives two reasons why John suppressed the “Elijah christology”: first, he wanted to replace it with “the christology of eternal preexistence, expressed initially in the figure of the logos, and then dominantly in the figure of the descending and ascending Son of Man” (343); and secondly, it was associated “with the leadership of Mary Magdalene and other women; and/or with a corporate understanding of the Human One” (348). Note that the “inclusive” *Human One* replaces *Son of Man*.

Schaberg grieves that “The empowering of Mary Magdalene was a tradition that apparently did not stand a chance of surviving fully and openly in the circles in which the canonical materials were produced” (319). Not only does she use words like *produced*, *suppressed*, and *erased* to insinuate that the Gospels were man-made constructions, rather than divinely inspired, she charges that those who made them felt *murderous*

toward the memory of Mary Magdalene: "The memory of claims made for and perhaps by her was not only downplayed; it was murdered." (350). The implication is that such hatred of women must obviate any claim to divine inspiration.

Schaberg nowhere in this book acknowledges the divinity of Jesus Christ. In fact, I cannot recall that she calls him Christ except when she tells of how a woman supposedly "made" Jesus the Christ: "Jesus, the Anointed One (*Christos*) is anointed (that is, literally made the Christ or Messiah, not just recognized as the Christ) only by a woman in the Christian Testament narratives" (75). She demotes Jesus to a *wo/man*, using "Schüssler Fiorenza's term that includes all women, and oppressed and marginalized men" (103) and finds a "reasonable presumption of egalitarianism" among those who wandered with him around Galilee, healing and exorcising. She thinks they all saw themselves "as wisdom teachers, prophets of Sophia reaching out to the oppressed" (267-72). So Jesus here is just another prophet of "Sophia."

Despite the effort of some biblical scholars to dismiss the empty tomb as fiction, Schaberg holds on to it, but mainly to preserve the role of Mary Magdalene and other women in launching the Church. She sees the empty tomb as "compatible with a lost or stolen corpse," but claims that the empty tomb witnessed by the women "was the trigger of the resurrection faith," rather than the appearances of the risen Jesus witnessed by the male apostles (284). By *resurrection*, she doesn't mean that sacred mystery handed down by the Church, but something merely figurative: the "vindication of the executed Jesus and of all others who live this alternative way of life" (291) and the democratic challenge to "structures of domination" (302).

In her fourth chapter, Schaberg quotes and analyzes at great length the moldy Gnostic texts about Mary Magdalene that were condemned by Church Fathers nearly two thousand years ago. She finds the Gnostic Magdalene very "flawed" as a "symbol of egalitarianism," but recommends her anyways as a cudgel with which to beat up the hierarchical Church: this Magdalene can still "detabilize canon and imperial church. She can teach us to read the canonical texts in new ways, and to work to transform oppressive structures" (203). Schaberg yearns to erase the line between orthodoxy and heresy, informing us that "The terms 'gnosticism,' 'heresy,' 'marginal,' 'heterodoxy' and 'orthodoxy'... are all increasingly unsatisfactory to the scholar, implying as they do that the lines between various Christian groups were clear" (123). Never mind that since the days of St. Peter and St. Paul, the line between orthodoxy and heresy was drawn clearly in the sand!

In Catholicism, one is saved by being humble like a little child, but in Gnosticism, one is saved by having secret and superior knowledge. The Gnostic Magdalene is "the most spiritually mature" of Jesus's followers, the one who has absorbed secret, superior knowledge from his "kisses." Such a figure would appeal to a feminist's intellectual pride. When dealing with Gnostic texts, Schaberg shows the kind of respect I wish she would accord to the canonical Gospels. Her reason is not far to seek: she notes Mary Magdalene's "divinization" in those texts, her "correlation" with divine Sophia, and her giving instruction to the risen Jesus (133, 140, 146). But the chief drawing card for feminists is that the Gnostic Mary Magdalene engages in a struggle for authority with Peter.

Schaberg sifts through the few details of this quarrel over and over as if this were pure gold. But little comes of it. In the fifth chapter she examines previous attempts by biblical scholars to reconcile the Mary Magdalene of the Gospels with the one depicted by Gnostic writers, and none of that is persuasive.

In the final chapter Schaberg herself tries to reconcile the two Magdalenes by way of the "Elijah christology," the succession narrative supposedly lurking between the lines of John 20. This hypothesis, which I discussed above, is far-fetched. And Schaberg knows it, too. She admits that Elisha's "empowering is explicit" in 2 Kings 2, while Mary Magdalene's is not in John 20. She admits that "we have no account of Jesus being told to anoint Mary Magdalene, or of Jesus calling her by throwing his mantle over her as Elijah does" (316). Even so, she vaunts that her claim for Mary Magdalene as successor of Jesus is enough to empower women: "If Mary Magdalene was a fictional, literary character, and these claims for her legendary, she could still empower and be a resource for contemporary wo/men. We can read the Gospels any way we want and need to" and thus "participate in their seemingly inexhaustible capacity to bear many meanings" (350).

Again, note well: *We can read the Gospels any way we want and need to.* Is a bishop at liberty to allow a person with a principle like this one to teach religious or biblical studies at a Catholic university under his aegis? A hundred fifty years ago Newman pointed out that a Church that will not enforce its authority is not a Church at all. Bring on the Mandatum! It's time and past time to implement *Ex corde ecclesiae!* ❖

Consecration of Fr. Julian Porteous and Fr. Anthony Fisher, O.P.

St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney 3 September 2003

Lk 22. 24-30, 2 Cor. 4. 1-2.5-7, Jeremiah 1. 4-9

The ordination of a priest is always a happy occasion. Years of preparation and testing flower into the prospect of a life-time of service. The consecration of bishops produces different reasons for rejoicing. The friends and parishioners of the bishops-elect rejoice that their years of hard work have been recognised. They pray that the leadership of the Church is being entrusted to wise hands as the wheel of apostolic succession turns slowly and inevitably into the future.

I welcome Fathers Porteous and Fisher into the college of bishops, united around the successor of St. Peter, Pope John Paul II. They have both been at the head of life-giving institutions, the Good Shepherd Seminary and the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and the Family. They are both Sydney men, baptised Catholic priests. Otherwise there are significant differences. One, a priest of Sydney archdiocese, refused the chance of further study after ordination to continue working in a parish and has been involved with the New Communities which have sprung up unbidden in the Church since Vatican Two. The other belongs to a medieval order of preachers, who has devoted much of his life to study and teaching. In different ways they have both struggled for years to make God's light shine in the darkness; have preached Jesus Christ, not themselves, in season and out of season and shown themselves to be slaves for Christ's sake as Paul recommended.

Six weeks ago when their appointments by the Holy Father

were announced there was a flurry of local press comment, unusual even by contemporary standards, for its misunderstandings and misrepresentation.

One account announced them as new archbishops. Another account spoke of shock, worst nightmares and an atmosphere of tyranny; then worked up to a crescendo, where, almost breathless with dismay, it was announced that one of the appointees was opposed to contraception, abortion and euthanasia. Actually the situation is worse, because both bishops-elect hold these positions. In fact these truths express official Catholic teaching, taught by all bishops in communion with Rome and are not personal idiosyncrasies held only by Wahhabi Catholics.

We celebrate this ordination on the feast of St. Gregory the Great, Pope Gregory the First, who died in 604 A.D. From a rich senatorial family of Rome, possibly even the grandson of Pope Felix III (the clergy were then allowed to marry), Gregory entered the civil service and became prefect of Rome. They were evil and disturbed times. Even the centre of empire at Constantinople was embattled while Western Europe was regularly overrun by "barbarians" such as the Lombards. At the death of his father Gregory became a monk and turned the family home into a monastery. At different times he was one of the 7 deacons of Rome and Abbot of his monastery.

He then served as papal legate (*apocrisarius*) at the Imperial Court in Constantinople, before election to the See of Rome in 590.

In 591 he wrote his classic work on the duties of bishops *Liber Regulae Pastoralis*. His experiences entitled him to recommend that an office holder should have learnt the required virtues, such as humility, before he assumes office (part 1.c9). I am not sure how often this was achieved.

The work itself was soon translated into Greek by Anastasius the Patriarch of Antioch; the Roman missionary Augustine whom Gregory sent to convert England took it with him where three hundred years later Alfred the Great (+ 899), King of Wessex, who defeated the Danes, had it paraphrased into West Saxon, sending a copy to each bishop in his kingdom. In ninth century France Charlemagne the first Holy Roman Emperor ordered that each bishop receive a copy during his consecration ceremony.

Many images have been used over the years to bring together the personal inadequacies of all bishops on the one hand and the high sacramental dignity, the mightily important works of service bishops must perform on the other; to capture the competing imperatives in the first reading from Jeremiah; the duty to be a prophet to the nations, speaking God's word and the realisation of personal inadequacy, inexperience and lack of eloquence. Cardinal Ratzinger quotes St. Augustine meditating on Psalm 72, and comparing his work as a rural bishop in Hippo to that of a beast of burden, an ox. (*Milestones. Memoirs 1927-1977*, pp154-6). The well known Cardinal Sin of Manila has often publicly compared himself to the donkey Our Lord rode on his entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. St. Gregory thought that God leaves rulers imperfect so they will not inflate their own importance, not glory in their performances. He himself felt like a poor quality painter portraying a handsome man (part 4).

The Bishop aspires to be a conduit, an open channel for the light and grace of the Son of God to flow through his works of sacrament, word and service. He aims neither to distort, nor to hinder this building up of the Body of Christ.

Many Australians think of the Catholic Church as a source of many things: nearly everything, in fact, except genuine religion, worship, prayer and spiritual wisdom. For too many their instinct is to look elsewhere, e.g. to New Age trickery or Asia for such qualities.

Gregory was disconcertingly blunt about the bishop's obligations here. A man who is caught up in the darkness of everyday life and blind to the light of contemplation should not be a bishop. A person who is not in good standing with God can make the situation worse through his intercession (part 1c 10-11), he claimed.

The Second Vatican Council describes the first duty of the good shepherd, bishop and priest, as teaching the good news of Jesus Christ.

Gregory understood this is no easy task and listed the characteristics of forty different types of person who had to be reached in different ways. He was a splendid psychologist.

Our task in this age of change, technology and advertising is to explain the apostolic tradition to an Australian society which yearns for the consolations of religion but is hesitant or hostile to restraint and sacrifice: to a society which still turns to the Church at times of tragedy and even at Christmas, but which is also partly tone-deaf to the call of the Spirit.

Bishops, priests and teachers also have to compete against an influential minority which either denies God's existence or denies the need for God if He happens to exist. With this cast of mind there is no possibility of truth, much less

of revelation; certainly no need for redemption.

For them, all communities, and especially institutions, are reduced to exercises in power politics. Teaching is propaganda to protect the power brokers. The Church is not seen as a means to eternal life; the sacraments are not seen as worship of the Transcendent One, not seen as channels of spiritual energy for the worshippers, but as superstitions at best, or at worst, as cynical and pretentious pageants.

None of this is entirely new, but there are contemporary particularities. Christian confidence has been weakened by the spread of irreligion, the decline of regular worship and clerical scandals. Pope Gregory lived in a more confident Catholic age, despite its political turmoil. While he acknowledged that his listeners were like a harp which had to be played correctly (part III prologue) he also warned that the bishop would be assailed by a lust for pleasing people; by a desire to put a cushion under every elbow (part 2. c8). This was as objectionable to him as excessively rigid censures.

Cardinal Avery Dulles put the contemporary question very well. "In the face of dissent it might seem that the Magisterium should mute its voice. Does it not weaken its own authority when it teaches doctrines that many practising Catholics will predictably reject?"

His reply is uncompromising and encouraging to bishops. The Magisterium "would forfeit all credibility if it taught only what people wanted to hear. The first and indispensable task is to bear witness to the deposit of faith". (*America* 178/21. 1998 p.16). Pope Gregory believed that "the government of souls is the art of arts". Isn't it true that man's thoughts, sinful or mistaken, are more hidden than the sores in our bowels, he wrote. He laments how often spiritually ignorant men profess to be physicians

of the human heart. The idiom is not ours, and the language is self-confidently hierarchical. But all in all there is an important kernel of truth here. Even in the most healthy religious organisation leadership is not superfluous and incompetent leaders can cause damage more easily than good leaders can encourage growth.

Even in the most healthy religious organizations, leadership is not superfluous. Incompetent leaders can cause damage more easily than good leaders can encourage growth. Every leader needs a clear set of beliefs; to know the direction in which he is heading. So does the bishop. Without these a bishop cannot inspire hope, encourage prayer, service, personal and community initiatives. In this way the young especially, but also outsiders as well as regular parishioners will realise that the Church community is serious about its supernatural claims and hard at work. Something good is happening. Community confidence and a sense of identity are essential foundations for enduring personal conversion; a necessary protection for the flame of faith. May our new bishops be leaders in this mould.

I ask you tonight (and for once I feel this is a genuinely superfluous request) to pray for our new bishops, that they may be worthy successors of the apostles, true shepherds knowing and loving their priests and people, faithful stewards of those mysteries which carry us to judgement in eternity and, above all, bishops who practise the lesson outlined in the gospel text they have chosen tonight from St. Luke; that Christ Our Lord came among us as one who serves, and we, all of us, are to do likewise. ✠

George Pell
Archbishop of Sydney

Excerpted from the 2003 Commencement Address at Hillsdale College, Michigan,

given by Robert P. George, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence, Director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions, Princeton University

Freedom, Truth and Virtue

True freedom consists in the liberation of the human person from the shackles of ignorance, oppression and vice. Thus it was that one hundred and fifty years ago this July 4, Edmund B. Fairfield, president of Hillsdale, speaking at a ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone of a new college building, declared that education, by lifting a man out of ignorance, disqualifies him from being a slave. What overcomes ignorance is knowledge, and the object of knowledge is truth empirical, moral, spiritual. Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.

True freedom, the freedom that liberates, is grounded in truth and ordered to truth and, therefore, to virtue. A free person is enslaved neither to the sheer will of another nor to his own appetites and passions. A free person lives uprightly, fulfilling his obligations to family, community, nation and God. By contrast, a person given over to his appetites and passions, a person who scoffs at truth and chooses to live, whether openly or secretly, in defiance of the moral law is not free. He is simply a different kind of slave.

The counterfeit of freedom consists in the idea of personal and communal liberation from morality, responsibility and truth. It is what our nation's founders expressly distinguished from liberty and condemned as license. The so-called freedom celebrated today by so many of our opinion-shaping elites in education, entertainment and the media is simply the license to do whatever one pleases. This false conception of

freedom—false because disordered, disordered because detached from moral truth and civic responsibility—shackles those in its grip no less powerfully than did the chattel slavery of old. Enslavement to one's own appetites and passions is no less brutal a form of bondage for being a slavery of the soul. It is no less tragic; indeed, it is in certain respects immeasurably more tragic, for being self-imposed. It is ironic, is it not, that people who celebrate slavery to appetite and passion call this bondage freedom?

Counterfeit freedom is worse than fraudulent. It is the mortal enemy of the real thing. Counterfeit freedom can provide no rational account or defense of its own normative claims. It speaks the language of rights, but in abandoning the ground of moral duty it provides no rational basis for anyone to respect the rights of others or to demand of others respect for one's own rights. Rights without duties are meaningless. Where moral truth as the ground of duties is thrown overboard, the language of rights is so much idle chatter fit only for Hollywood cocktail parties and faculty lounges. Hadley Arkes, the great contemporary theorist of natural rights, has observed in relation to the movement for unfettered abortion that those who demand liberation from the moral law have talked themselves out of the moral premises of their own rights and liberties. If freedom is to be honored and respected, it must be because human freedom is what is required by the laws of nature and nature's God; it cannot be because there are no laws of nature and there is no God.

The Danger of License

But counterfeit freedom poses greater dangers still. As our founders warned, a people given over to license will be incapable of sustaining republican government. For republican government—government by the people—requires a people who are prepared to take responsibility for the common good, including the preservation of the conditions of liberty.

Listen again to President Fairfield, speaking words at that ceremony on July 4, 1853, that are, if anything, still more urgent today: Unrestrained freedom is anarchy. Restrained only by force and arms, is despotism; self-restrained is Republicanism. Wherever there is wanted the intelligence and virtue requisite for [self-restraint], Republicanism expires. Slaves to appetite and passion, wanting in the understanding and virtue requisite for self-government, they will surely lose it. They will look not to themselves but to government to provide for the satisfaction of their desires. Where counterfeit freedom prevails, the republican principle of limited government is inevitably sacrificed as people surrender personal and, ultimately, political liberty to whatever power promises to protect them from predation and supply the appeasement of their appetites. People are reduced from citizens to subjects to slaves. They trade their birthright of freedom for a mess of pottage. Yet, so long as the big-government-provided pottage functions as a suitable narcotic, they imagine themselves free.

At the same time, the want of virtue creates a counterfeit idea of equality that parallels the counterfeit conception of freedom. True equality—equality under the law, equality of opportunity—is displaced by the demand for equality of results, as envy, like every other passion, commands requital. Distinc-

tions, grounded in such intrinsically retributive ideas as personal merit, are cast aside.

Ultimately, the counterfeit of freedom is a counterfeit because its view of the nature, dignity and destiny of man is a false view. Men and women are not mere bundles of appetites. Our destiny is not to be, as David Hume supposed, slaves of our passions, rational only in the purely instrumental sense of being capable of employing

our intellectual powers to, in Thomas Hobbes's words, range abroad and find the way to the things desired.

On the contrary: Men and women, made in the very image and likeness of the Divine Ruler of the Universe, are possessors of an intelligence more profound, and, correspondingly, a freedom more God-like, than that.

We are, to be sure, creatures, and fallen creatures to boot; dust of the earth; sinners every one. Yet, the di-

vine image, the icon of God Himself, is not destroyed. And commensurate with the dignity of creatures fashioned in God's image, we are indeed, as the Declaration of Independence says, endowed by [our] Creator with certain unalienable rights. True freedom is, as President Bush recently had occasion to remind us, God's gift to mankind. The self-government that is the right of free men and women is truly a sacred trust. ✠

The Institute for Saint Anselm Studies

Founded in 2001, the Institute for Saint Anselm Studies is an academic research center conducted by Saint Anselm College (Manchester, NH) and established to promote and encourage the study of the life, thought, and spirituality of Saint Anselm of Canterbury, the patron of the college. By means of its resources, facilities, and programs, the Institute offers to the college's faculty and students and to the larger scholarly community the opportunity and means to bring Saint Anselm into living contact with the culture of the twenty-first century. While the philosophical, theological, and ecclesiological accomplishments of Saint Anselm have historical value that the Institute seeks to explore and articulate, it is a further goal of the Institute to uncover their perennial value for the nourishing of Christian wisdom, the stimulating of reflection on critical issues, and the deepening of personal spirituality.

An Advisory Committee comprised of members of the Saint Anselm College community assists the director, Rev. John R. Fortin, O.S.B., with the development and operation of the Institute. A Board of Consultants represents the international scholarly community and is comprised of Anselm scholars from many prestigious institutions of higher education. The Board offers counsel

on Institute programs and plans. The members of the Board are: Stephen F. Brown, Boston College; Brian Davis, O.P., Fordham University; G. R. Evans, Cambridge University; Hugh Feiss, O.S.B., Monastery of the Ascension, Idaho; Stephen Gersh, University of Notre Dame; Thomas A. Losoncy, Villanova University; Ralph M. McInerny, University of Notre Dame; Katherin A. Rogers, University of Delaware; Eleonore Stump, St. Louis University; Benedicta Ward, S.L.G., Oxford University.

The Institute is located on the second floor of the college's Geisel Library. Scholars and students have access there to primary and secondary sources in both print and non-print media necessary for research on Saint Anselm. The Institute houses and maintains the Saint Anselm Studies Collection, the largest endowed collection in the library. The Collection maintains and continuously adds books and scholarly articles about Saint Anselm, his origins and his continuing influence on contemporary philosophy, theology and spirituality. The Institute sponsors a variety of programs. First and foremost is the Saint Anselm Conference that is held in the spring of even-numbered years. The conference provides an opportunity for scholars from Canada and Great Britain as well as from across the United States to come to-

gether to present and discuss issues in the life and thought of Saint Anselm. The Conference is interdisciplinary by design and welcomes papers that range in topic from Anselm's famous Ontological Argument to his literary style to his role as archbishop to his influence on modern and contemporary philosophers and theologians. The next conference will be held April 23-24, 2004, at Saint Anselm College. The keynote speaker is Thomas A. Losoncy (Villanova University) who will give an address entitled: "Anselmian *Ratio*: Handmaiden to or Measure of Religious Faith?"

The Institute also hosts annually the Saint Anselm Metaphysics Colloquium. The Colloquium was inspired by Pope John Paul II who in his encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio* spoke of the need for continuing philosophical speculation in order to come to an understanding of the Catholic faith. The Colloquium invites philosophers and theologians from the New England area to discuss and debate issues in metaphysics with a view to offering the ecclesiastical and scholarly worlds insights and principles upon which to ground their work. In June 2003, Rev. Donald Keefe, S.J. (emeritus, Fordham University) gave the principal address, "Freedom and Contingency in St. Thomas: A Metaphysics of Creation." The next Colloquium will be held

in June 2004 with Prof. Oliva Blanchette (Boston College) as the principal speaker.

In addition to these academically oriented pursuits, the Institute promotes the spirituality and piety of Saint Anselm. It organizes and conducts retreats and days of reflection based on the prayers and meditations of Saint Anselm for students, staff, and alumni, as well as for outside groups.

The Institute will soon make available free of charge *The Saint Anselm Journal*, an e-journal of original articles, discussion papers, and book reviews that examine the life, thought, teachings, and influence of Saint Anselm of Canterbury. Submission information can be found at <http://www.anselm.edu/library/SAJ/SAJindex.html>.

The Institute webpage is [http://](http://www.anselm.edu/administration/)

[/www.anselm.edu/administration/ISAS](http://www.anselm.edu/administration/ISAS). The page provides information about the Institute, its programs and publications, as well as providing links to other sites about Saint Anselm. The Saint Anselm Studies Collection and *The Saint Anselm Journal* can be accessed through the Institute's page or through the Geisel Library page. ✕

John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, Melbourne Director

The John Paul II Pontifical Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family was founded by Pope John Paul II in 1982. The Institute has a special relationship with the Pontifical Lateran University. It has campuses in each continent, including campuses in Italy, USA, Spain, Brazil, India. The Melbourne campus was founded in 2001 and is fully accredited by the State of Victoria and the Commonwealth Government of Australia. It expects soon to receive ecclesiastical accreditation for full membership of the worldwide Institute. The Institute has currently 170 students.

The Institute offers a full range of post-graduate degrees in the areas of marriage and family, and bioethics. Full time and sessional staff engage in teaching and research, and collaborate with the Institute's small administrative team.

The Institute is seeking a new Director to succeed Prof. Anthony Fisher, OP who has been appointed Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Sydney.

This is a senior academic appointment equivalent to a full Professorship at an Australian University. The successful applicant will be a significant scholar with a doctoral degree in theology, philosophy, the human sciences or pastoral studies. He/she will have the ability to teach, supervise, research and publish in some of these areas. In addition he/she will have: relevant management experience at senior level; ability to lead a team of full and part-time administrators, teachers and students; thorough knowledge of the

vision, purpose and particular charism of the Institute; and ability to interact effectively with ecclesiastical and civil authorities, other educational institutions, and the Catholic and wider communities.

The appointee will understand and have a personal commitment to Catholic teaching on the person, marriage and family. He/she will manage the day to day business of the Institute and will coordinate the academic program together with the Dean and Registrar. He/she will chair meetings of the Academic Board, liaise with other Archdiocesan agencies, and arrange guest and international lecturers and conferences. Initially, the appointment will be for a period of four years.

An appropriate remuneration package will be negotiated, and will reflect the applicant's status as clerical, religious or lay person.

For further information and a position description please contact the Deputy Director at the address below or telephone 61-3-9412 3371.

Applications, with full details of qualifications and experience, together with the names of three referees, should be forwarded by Friday, 24th October 2003 to the Appointment Committee, John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, P.O. Box 146, East Melbourne VIC 3002 Australia.

Approval by the General Council of the Institute and the grant of an ecclesiastical mandate is required before the appointment can be confirmed.

Send \$5 for shipping & handling to
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Calihan Research Fellowship

The Acton Institute is pleased to announce the Calihan Research Fellowship for the 2004 spring semester. The Research Fellowship provides fellowships of up to \$3,000 to students who show outstanding promise in integrating religious ideas with core principles of the classical liberal tradition, such as: the recognition of human rights and dignity; the protection of rights through the rule of law; and freedom in economic and political life.

Seminarians and graduate students in theology, philosophy, religion, economics, or related fields, who are pursuing degrees at any accredited domestic or international institution, are encouraged to apply. For further eligibility and entry requirements please visit: www.acton.org/programs/students. The deadline for applications is October 31 and recipients will be notified on November 28.

News from the Canadian Fellowship of Catholic Scholars

The Canadian Fellowship of Catholic Scholars plans a lecture series on the issue of Same-Sex Marriage. These short talks will be given at parishes in the Toronto area to help parishioners come to a better understanding of what is at stake in this issue. These talks will be given by Dr. Donald DeMarco and Father Tom Lynch during the first week of November.

The Canadian Chapter of the FCS will be listed in the Canadian Catholic Directory 2004. Many thanks to John Stone for bringing this about.

The Canadian FCS invites all members of the FCS to consider sending articles to the Canadian FCS for publication in their Journal. Send them to Doug McManaman (President) dougmca@enoreo.on.ca OR to John Stone (Editor and Treasurer) stopax@globalserve.net.

Email if you would like to receive and review one of these books.

Carroll, Michael P.

The Penitente Brotherhood: Patriarchy and Hispano-Catholicism in New Mexico

The Johns Hopkins

University Press

2002

260 pp hardcover

ISBN 0-8018-7055-0

Compagnon, Olivier

Jacques Maritain et l'Amérique du Sud: Le modèle malgré lui

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2003

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University of Toronto Press

2001

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de Prada, Andrés Vázquez

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Sophia Institute Press

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In late September I was in Rome for a conference of the Pontifical Academy of Saint Thomas Aquinas – PASTA – and spoke briefly to Georges Cottier, OP who, as it turned out, was soon to be named a cardinal. Of more interest to the fellowship is the elevation of Archbishop Pell of Sydney to the College of Cardinals.

Cardinal Pell has attended meetings of the Fellowship and many have had the opportunity to hear this extraordinary man. When some years ago Monsignor Michael Wrenn organized a special meeting in honor of Monsignor George Kelly in New York, Pell made the long trip from Australia to be there. His talk on the priestly vocation, while anything but autobiographical, seemed to convey something of the depths of his own priestly life. And his tribute to Monsignor Kelly was obviously heartfelt, priest to priest, *cor ad cor loquens*.

As this issue of the Quarterly goes to press, Monsignor Kelly is ailing. Fellows will want to

remember him in their prayers. It is impossible to imagine the Fellowship without the ebullient influence of Monsignor Kelly. Would it even have survived its early years without his irrepressible conviction of its necessary role?

Of course, the Fellowship was founded on the belief that our bishops simply needed shoring up and to be reminded of the vast number of papal troops eager to rally to them. They must not be cowed by dissenters. The assumption that the bishops would welcome our support did not survive the test of time, alas, and it was the rare prelate who dared to be seen among us.

Perhaps things are changing. The elevation of George Pell to the cardinalate is a reassuring sign. Is he *papabile*? He would make a magnificent and strong pope. But then, George Kelly and many other clerical members of the Fellowship would have made wonderful bishops. That did not happen. Nonetheless, one can hope.

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