

# FELLOWSHIP OF CATHOLIC SCHOLARS QUARTERLY

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# Fellowship of Catholic Scholars

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

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**Reminder:** Membership dues will be mailed out the first of the year and are based on a calendar (not academic) year.

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

*Because of health reasons Dean Bernard Dobranski has asked me to write this column on his behalf. He has also asked me to inform you that he is stepping down from the presidency of The Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, so that you may be better served during his convalescence. He asks for your prayers and assures you of his. He considers his tenure as president to have been a unique honor. He believes that The Fellowship's contribution to the Church and to America is of incalculable worth. Dean Dobranski has expressed to me his pleasure at the candidacy of Sarah Palin for Vice-President of the United States. The following essay is dedicated to him.*

John McCain's choice of Sarah Palin as his vice-presidential running mate has energized America's family values-oriented voters. Governor Palin's unqualified pro-life stand (as well as her personal story as a wife and mother of five children, one with Down syndrome), testifies to her commitment. The family is the basic unit of society. Its traditional structure and cohesiveness are vital for human well-being, as well as for the strength of our nation. And Sarah Palin is a true champion of family.

Not unexpectedly, the mainstream press has been quick to point out that the Palin family is less than perfect. *The New York Times* (the paper that has long touted its commitment to reporting "All the News that's Fit to Print") is taking an especially salacious interest in the out-of-wedlock pregnancy of the 17-year-old Palin daughter, Bristol, smearing it all over the front page. Yet, even this story is uplifting, because it shows how the Palins have dealt with a difficult situation that is not unfamiliar to many American families. The support given by the governor and her husband to their daughter, to the father of the baby, and to their soon-to-be-born grandchild may well set a pattern for other families similarly challenged by unexpected pregnancies.

It is wonderful to have a candidate (and perhaps a future vice-president) who can empathize with the crises that confront human beings "where they live," as it were, and demonstrate good life-affirming choices. This is pro-life principle in action, a lesson from which the entire nation can benefit.

Sarah Palin is *real*. She is a role model for family values, for women, for motherhood and for good citizenship. Her candidacy squarely challenges some of the social deviancy that has crept into our culture (abortion and same-sex marriage, to name just two varieties). Her common sense and personal faith also stand as an indictment against the *legal positivism* which, unrestrained by natural or divine law, has been used to legitimize behaviors

that are less than human. To have such an advocate for moral causes so close to the President's ear would be invaluable for the nation's welfare and for each of us as individual citizens.

Another bonus which Palin's candidacy offers America is a recognition of the vital role women need to play in a healthy political system. Palin got her start as the proverbial "soccer mom." That basic life experience gave her an appreciation of the need for local community organizations and the importance of service on the part of every citizen, and it imbued her with the civic-mindedness that moved her to run for political office. Her innate understanding of the need for fairness and justice (untainted by the compromises often endemic to professional politicians) has enabled her to be a bipartisan reformer in Alaska politics. Such simplicity of vision, purity of motives, and instinct for what the common good requires are truly refreshing and are, as the saying goes, "as American as motherhood, baseball and apple pie."

Far from shying away from the femininity exemplified by her role as wife and mother, Palin presents this quality as a means by which women can achieve fulfillment. For too long, women's domestic roles have been looked down on as barriers to gaining power in a man's world (the "glass ceiling" that figured so prominently in Hillary Clinton's campaign). As Palin put it—without excuse or rancor—in her acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, "This is America, and every woman can walk through every door of opportunity."

The general reaction of women to Palin's experience and attitude was perfectly summed up by one of her female constituents from Alaska: "She is a strong woman who can wear a skirt and be proud of it." No doubt many other women will be inspired by Palin and imitate her in their service to God, family and country.

This historic candidacy can be an especially valuable "teaching moment" for people of faith. It provides an opportunity to reinforce the Church's rich teaching on the dignity of women and their role in the world. To this end I encourage our members to read Pope John Paul the Great's Apostolic Letter, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women* (1988) as well as

his *Letter to Women* (1995). Both documents should be referenced in homilies and taught in our schools and universities. Far from discouraging women to participate in civic life, John Paul says the Church has always encouraged application of the "feminine genius" for the full humanization of society. In a very poignant passage at the end of the 1988 document the pope writes:

"In our own time, the successes of science and technology make it possible to attain material well-being to a degree hitherto unknown. While this favors some, it pushes others to the edges of society. In this way, unilateral progress can also lead to a gradual *loss of sensitivity for man, that is, for what is essentially human*. In this sense, our time in particular *awaits* the manifestation of that 'genius' which belongs to women, and which can ensure sensitivity for human beings in every circumstance: because they are human!—and because 'the greatest of these is love' (cf. 1 *Cor* 13:13)."

He reminds us that the ideal use of women's unique talents is not for power, but for service. He also insists that those gifts are most effective when exercised in a way complimentary with the particular attributes of men.

A good nation is like a well-functioning family. Individual dignity must be respected. The common good must come before individual rights. Problem solving must begin at the basic level of the home, before the authority of the state is invoked. And the need for humility—that is, recognition of our responsibility to a higher authority (God)—is essential. These conditions are prerequisites for humane life and civic well-being.

Sarah Palin brings all of these values, in a very real way, to this year's election. She is a role model for women. She and her husband provide a role model for marriage, for the family, and for the cause of life. As members of *The Fellowship of Catholic Scholars*, we cannot fail to mine this rich moment in our nation's history. Palin's candidacy has enormous potential, no matter what the outcome of the election. ✠

Fr. Michael P. Orsi

# Another Anniversary Comes and Goes: 40 Years of *Humanae Vitae*

by Kenneth D. Whitehead

## I.

One anniversary unlikely to be too widely observed this year of Our Lord, 2008—certainly not widely celebrated!—beyond certain limited circles with a special interest in it is the anniversary of Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* ("Of Human Life"), subtitled "On the Regulation of Births." July 25, 2008, marked 40 years since the official issuance of this encyclical, one of the most important yet controverted and controversial documents of our times, a document which has come to loom even larger in importance with the passage of years.

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of *Humanae Vitae*, in fact, especially since we have now actually witnessed over the past 40 years the harmful consequences of our society's near universal recourse to the use of the modern contraceptives which Pope Paul VI tried to warn us against. At the time that he wrote, Paul VI still saw these consequences only as threatening possibilities. Nevertheless, he did not fail to predict, quite presciently and prophetically as it turned out, that the acceptance of contraception by society would lead to "conjugal infidelity and a general lowering of morality"; to a lessened respect for women, tending to reduce them to "mere instruments of selfish enjoyment"; to placing "a dangerous weapon...in the hands of those public authorities who take no heed of moral exigencies"; and to exposing the mission of "generating life...to the arbitrary will of men" (HV #17).

All of these predictions have been rather spectacularly verified in our society in the forty years since 1968. "Conjugal infidelity and the general lowering of morality," especially as regards sexual behavior, have surely descended to levels probably

unimaginable at the time the pope was writing. Today's veritable plagues of such phenomena as promiscuity, co-habitation, no-fault divorce, out-of-wedlock pregnancies, legalized abortion on demand, so-called "same-sex marriages," and the current epidemic-levels of sexually transmitted diseases all testify to a decline in personal morality perhaps unprecedented in human history. Although it cannot be said that all these plagues have been "caused" by the general acceptance of contraceptive use, it has certainly without any doubt greatly facilitated them.

With regard to the tendency to reduce women to "mere instruments of selfish enjoyment," we need think only of today's widely accepted "hook-up culture"—not to speak of that other great contemporary plague of ours, namely, "fatherless families"—in order to verify the moral decline in this regard that has taken place over the past couple of generations. Other examples could be cited.

As for the "dangerous weapon" placed in the hands of governments heedless of morality, we cannot ignore today's massive and increasingly coercive so-called "family planning" programs, both at home and abroad, sponsored by the government on a simply massive scale. To cite only one single statistic: Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider, in 2005-2006 received more than \$300 million "in government grants and contracts," a sizable portion of which goes to subsidize birth control services to teen-agers, usually without the knowledge or consent of their parents. Over the past two decades the federal government has supported Planned Parenthood, today an eminently respectable "charity" fashionably promoted by society women, in the amount of around four billion dollars.

Finally, in the department of exposing the mission of "generating life to the arbitrary will of men," we have seen in the past decade how the removal of moral restraints on reproductive behavior has helped fuel our current biotechnological revolution which has brought us such questionable benefits as wholly

unregulated artificial insemination and in-vitro fertilization, embryonic stem-cell research, and even cloning—and which imminently threatens further evils of the same kind.

Although Pope Paul VI could obviously not have foreseen all of these developments in detail back in 1968, he quite presciently did understand what was entailed generally in the acceptance of the principle that human beings are fully in charge of their sexual and reproductive lives without regard to any governing or restraining moral principles. Nevertheless, the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, in which he set forth in outline form this understanding of his, was greeted when it appeared, as it is mostly remembered today, not as any kind of salutary caution or warning of the Brave New World to come, but rather as perhaps the prime contemporary example of the failure of the Catholic Church to keep up with the times.

While most of the world was moving towards a near total acceptance of and reliance on modern contraceptives, both as unalloyed social goods, and as the supposed answer to the perceived problems of unwanted pregnancies and alleged overpopulation, the Church was instead seen as simply going back and blindly and stubbornly insisting on her traditional teaching that what had long since popularly become known as “birth control”—any willed interruption of the human generative process—was morally wrong and seriously sinful.

The principal teaching of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* is that the marriage act necessarily involves what the encyclical calls “an inseparable connection, willed by God, and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act, the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning” (HV #12). The popular (and as far as it goes correct) understanding of this papal language is that the use of modern methods of birth control, which had already become practically universal at the time Paul VI was writing, would continue to be condemned on moral grounds by the Catholic Church.

Contrary to this negative judgment by the Church, however, the modern world believed that for the first time in human history mankind disposed of the practical and effective means of controlling human fertility, that is, mankind was now quite happy and content to be able to separate the procreative

potential of sexual intercourse from its love-making, or unitive aspects. Henceforth love making, it was thought, could be engaged in without fear of the possible pregnancy that had always hung over it before. This was and is perceived as a self-evident good. That it meant separating what the Catholic teaching considered “inseparable,” namely, the unitive and procreative aspects of the marital act, was the least of anybody’s real worries. This Catholic teaching was considered to be arbitrary, absurd, and outmoded anyway, and the appearance of *Humanae Vitae* was thus greeted with a greater or lesser degree of incredulity and even scorn, which has not diminished down to the present day.

So overwhelming was the modern conviction that human fertility could and should be “controlled” by taking advantage of the now available means of contraception that even huge numbers of Catholics abandoned the traditional teaching of the Church, almost from one day to the next, when the encyclical came out. No doubt the sentiment against the teaching, as well as the actual use of contraceptives, had been growing among Catholics for some time before the encyclical was issued. Once it appeared, public dissent by Catholics against the pope’s teaching quickly became massive, both on the part of married couples who were supposed to live the Church’s teaching in their married lives, and on the part of what was almost certainly a majority of the Church’s trained theologians at the time. The latter had always been expected to explain and uphold the Church’s teaching, and to provide reasoned and convincing justifications for what, after all, the Church had always taught. In this instance, however, they balked.

What had the Church always taught? It had been correctly summarized by John T. Noonan, Jr., later to become a federal judge. In his authoritative 1965 study of the Church’s teaching, a book entitled *Contraception*, Noonan wrote:

The propositions constituting a condemnation of contraception are, it will be seen, recurrent. Since the first clear mention of contraception by a Christian theologian, when a harsh third-century moralist accused a pope of encouraging it, the articulated argument has been the same. In the world of the late Empire known to St. Jerome and St. Augustine,

in the Ostrogothic Arles of Bishop Cesarius and the Suevian Braga of Bishop Martin, in the Paris of St. Albert and St. Thomas, in the Renaissance Rome of Sixtus V and the Renaissance Milan of St. Charles Borromeo, in the Naples of St. Alphonsus Liguori and the Liège of Charles Billuart, in the Philadelphia of Bishop Kenrick, and in the Bombay of Cardinal Gracias, the teachers of the Church have taught without hesitation or variation that certain acts preventing procreation are gravely sinful. No Catholic theologian has ever taught, “Contraception is a good act.” The teaching on contraception [was] clear and apparently fixed forever.

This conclusion did not prevent John T. Noonan himself from later joining the ranks of the dissenters from *Humanae Vitae*, after the appearance of the encyclical. His judgment as a historian, however, had been absolutely correct: the Catholic Church in her long history had never deviated from her condemnation of contraception as a moral evil.

Nor was this moral condemnation of contraception a peculiarity of the Catholic Church. The entire Christian tradition once unanimously held the same negative view of the practice. Luther and Calvin both held this view, for example, as the Eastern Orthodox Churches have more or less also done down to the present day—until the Church of England, at its Lambeth Conference in 1930, broke ranks and began to allow the practice in the case of married couples faced with difficult marital conditions, that is, in “hard cases.”

But, as the saying goes, “hard cases make bad law.” If an act considered wrong can be allowed in hard cases, why not in other cases as well? To allow it is, in fact, tacitly to judge that it is *not* wrong. This is exactly how things developed. In March, 1931, a committee of the Federal Council of Churches, predecessor to the present National Council of Churches, announced its positive approval of the use of contraception, and most Protestant denominations then followed suit in fairly short order. The narrow exception to the general condemnation of contraception allowed by the Church of England thus proved to be the proverbial hole in the dike; the dike itself was quickly breached and collapsed nearly everywhere, leaving the Catholic Church henceforth almost alone in upholding what had once been the universal

Christian teaching against contraceptive practices.

As one example of how times and minds have changed, it is interesting to note the reaction of the *Washington Post* to the action of the Federal Council of Church’s committee. On March 22, 1931, the newspaper opined editorially that “carried to its logical conclusion, the committee’s report, if carried into effect, would sound the death-knell of marriage as a holy institution by establishing degrading practices which would encourage indiscriminate immorality.” Pope Paul was evidently not alone in thinking that the acceptance of contraception would help bring about a general lowering of morality!

The reaction of Pope Pius XI at the time to the relaxation of the traditional teaching by the Church of England—just as in our day it was the Church of England that relaxed the traditional teaching precluding female ordination!—was immediate and peremptory. In his encyclical entitled *Casti Connubii* [“On Chaste Marriage”], issued on the last day of the year 1930, Pope Pius XI declared that:

...the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and purity of morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims anew: any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin” (CC #56).

While the language of Pope Paul VI was neither as strong nor as colorful as that of his predecessor, this formulation of Pope Pius XI was the specific magisterial teaching which was expressly upheld more than a generation later in *Humanae Vitae*.

Thus, the contrast could not have been greater between what the Catholic Church continued to teach, and what huge numbers of Catholics had decided they now believed instead, contrary to the Church’s teaching—though certainly they were in harmony with the philosophy and practice of the modern world. Very soon various polls and studies would show that contraceptive use by Catholics had

become almost indistinguishable from that of others. Forty years after the promulgation of Pope Paul VI's controverted encyclical, then, the Church goes on teaching one thing officially—and unalterably—while a majority of the “faithful” go on believing and practicing something very different.

Can such a state of affairs continue without undermining the Church's teaching and Catholic practice across the board?

## II.

What was little noted at the time that so many Catholics decided to abandon the Church's teaching and reject centuries of undeviating Christian belief and practice, was that certain things necessarily *follow* from adopting the favorable position of modern society on contraception. One of the things that follows is that lovemaking is no longer necessarily related to the married state itself, the binding relationship agreed upon by a man and woman expressing their will to form a *family* within which the future children who issue from their mutual love will be welcomed and cared for. Contraception is the sign as well as an unmistakable declaration that these children are precisely *not* to be welcomed. And if marital intercourse thus bears no necessary relation to possible children, then it bears no necessary relation to marriage either; for the pleasure and satisfaction of the love-making relationship between a couple can just as easily be realized outside the marriage bond as within it, at least for the short term—as popular culture now regularly affirms by the kinds of sexual behaviors that are presented today as commonplace if not equally normative.

And the basis of this affirmation, of course, is that contraception is always supposed to be there to insure that there will *be* no unwanted consequences from today's untrammled sexual practices. The stable marriage necessary to take care of the possible children is obviously not necessary if there are not going to be any children. The very large number of Catholic theologians who publicly dissented from *Humanae Vitae* in 1968 argued at the time that married couples needed to be able to avail themselves of contraception precisely in order to help enhance the unitive,

or lover-making, aspects of their marriage; it was assumed that they simply could not have the “threat” of another baby hanging over them all the time (for in the meantime a baby had indeed often come to be seen as a “threat” and not as a “blessing”).

At the same time, however, virtually no thought at all was given to the freedom *from* marriage itself that the widespread recourse to contraception was going to provide. This only began to be evident with the spectacular rise from around 1970 on of all the phenomena that we have mentioned earlier such as divorce and co-habitation and the veritable explosion of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and births (and abortions) that soon became evident.

Another consequence that logically follows from separating the unitive meaning of sexual intercourse from its procreative meaning was that lovemaking was no longer necessarily limited to a man and a woman employing their complementary genital faculties (themselves naturally ordered to possible procreation). Now sexual intimacy, pleasure, and gratification could be sought and realized by individuals acting alone, acting with a member of the same sex, or even resorting to an animal. If there is no necessary connection between sex and procreation, it is no longer possible to condemn on moral grounds such acts, formerly regarded as “unnatural” and sinful, as masturbation, homosexual acts, or even bestiality.

Many today have been surprised at the ease at which behaviors only yesterday considered deviant, unnatural, and shameful have today come to be approved of (or at least no longer strongly disapproved of) but now recognized and even encouraged as “alternative lifestyles.” Even though many people may dislike, or at least be uneasy about, some of today's sexual practices or alternative lifestyles, they nevertheless often find themselves unable to articulate any adequate *reason* why these behaviors should not be accepted and even encouraged. It is no longer clear to many people that such behaviors should not be sanctioned in the interests of the health of both the individuals involved and society itself. And, in fact, there really is *not* any adequate reason to disapprove of them, if there is no necessary connection between the active use of the sexual faculties and the commitment of a man and woman in marriage that includes acceptance of the possible consequences of such

activity, namely, the procreation of children.

People are actually being very *logical*, to speak only of the logic of the thing, in tolerating and accepting so-called “gay marriage,” if there is truly no longer any natural or moral purpose of sex which limits it to a marriage between a man and a woman. Social science may belatedly have discovered that children are better off with both a mother and a father—as common sense knew all along—but if there is no requirement that there *be* any children, then that consideration clearly does not carry much weight.

Then, of course, there is the reverse process of separating the procreative from the unitive meaning of marriage. This has also become endemic in our society over the past decade or so. It is in this way that we have already arrived at such evils already referred to above as artificial insemination, in-vitro fertilization, test-tube babies, surrogate mothers, embryonic stem-cell and fetal experimentation, and, finally, even possible human cloning. Many people obscurely sense that we may have taken a very wrong road in the case of some of these Frankenstein-monster practices, but in the absence of any clear understanding of the truth that procreation and sex are necessarily related and linked to each other in the original scheme of things established by God, most people are unable to put their finger on exactly what it is that is wrong with these practices and procedures. These same unsavory and indeed often horrendous practices thus end up being tolerated and encouraged as yet other features of our now established Brave New World that divorces sexual and reproductive behavior from any governing moral standards.

In addition to all this, there is yet another very deleterious consequence of separating lovemaking from baby making: it is our current plague of legalized abortions. Pope Paul VI actually mentioned and warned against abortion in *Humanae Vitae*, but hardly anybody at the time saw any connection between contraception and abortion. In fact, the connection is quite dramatic. Once the Supreme Court legalized the lethal practice of abortion with its *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973, the incidence of abortions in the United States quickly rose to around 1.5 million abortions per year. In very recent years, this figure has declined somewhat to around 1.3 million abor-

tions each year, but this still means that more Americans are currently being killed by abortion *each year* than were lost *in all the wars of American history* (1.2 million in all, according to the *World Almanac*). If this is not a major plague, it is not clear what a plague might possibly consist of.

The idea that contraception has anything to do with abortion is nevertheless commonly denied. Even those honest enough to admit that abortion kills a living child typically rejoin that contraception merely prevents the conception of a child; in no way does it kill a child already conceived. This is true enough on one level, of course. But it is also true that contraceptives, which are supposed to guarantee that untrammelled sexual activity will not result in any unwanted pregnancies, do not, as a matter of easily verifiable fact, always succeed in guaranteeing this.

Every available type of contraceptive works only some of the time. The failure rate of the contraceptive pill, for instance, can be as high as six percent; it is twelve percent for the condom; eighteen percent for the diaphragm or cervical cap; and thirty percent or higher for foams or gels. When we add to these contraceptive failures, the failures that come about because of accidents or carelessness, or in the course of the abandonment of one method of contraception for another because of the undesirable side effects of the original method chosen—and the evidence for the undesirable effects of the pill as well as of some other contraceptives is quite substantial—what we are left with is a very large population of contraceptors who are not always able to contracept successfully, and who are consequently in need of a reliable “method” to achieve the “control” that they have already been antecedently decided they need. Since they are already using contraceptives, these people are surely firmly convinced beforehand that pregnancies must be “planned” and children “wanted.”

Many of these disappointed contraceptors turn to sterilization. As many as forty percent of couples of child-bearing age in the United States today at some point turn to sterilization of either the woman or the man in order to avoid unwanted pregnancies. Nevertheless, sterilization too is a procedure that is often accompanied by harmful effects on the health and bodies of those who undergo it; and it is also not easily reversible.

Unsuccessful contraceptors, therefore, almost inevitably turn to the “method” that our Supreme Court has so conveniently provided for unplanned pregnancies and unwanted children. They turn to legalized abortion, now indeed widely considered to be just another “method” of birth control. The statistics on abortion only too amply bear this out. The common-sense intuition that recourse to contraception might somehow prevent recourse to abortion is not borne out by the American experience. Who, after all, is getting all the abortions in America today, except those who have already decided not to accept a pregnancy even though they have also elected to engage in sexual activity?

Studies have shown that well over half of all the women undergoing abortion were practicing contraception in the month in which they became pregnant. Abortion is *not* resorted to only by those who have no knowledge of, or have failed to avail themselves of, contraceptives; it is resorted to by large numbers whose contraceptives have failed. Currently one in four of all pregnancies in the United States ends in abortion (more than forty percent of teenage pregnancies).

Nor does this—rather dramatic, it would seem—connection between contraceptive use and the incidence of abortion take into account those methods of so-called contraception which are themselves abortifacient—which themselves in their action may cause an early abortion: that is, they do not prevent ovulation but rather they prevent the implantation of an embryo already conceived. Such abortifacient methods include some of the pills, implants, and injections in common use today (as was also the case for the intrauterine device (IUD), now taken off the market because of the harm and injuries associated with its use and the many and costly law suits that resulted from some of those injuries). The fact that some of these methods of so-called contraception are actually abortifacient, however, does not seem to have deterred the use of them by anybody.

Abortion in the United States was legalized in 1973 on the basis of a legal precedent found in a prior 1965 Supreme Court decision, *Griswold v. Connecticut*, which claimed to have discovered in the Constitution a “right to privacy” that entitled married couples to use contraceptives, which were

at the time banned by the Connecticut law that was being challenged. No such “constitutional right” is specified anywhere in the text of the Constitution, of course, but that did not deter or bother the justices, who were determined to nullify a bad law. Another Supreme Court decision, *Eisenstadt v. Baird*, shortly afterwards extended the ersatz right to use contraceptives supposedly discovered in the Constitution to *unmarried* couples, signaling thereby that the high court was faithfully following the logic inherent in the moral acceptance of contraceptive use.

The lamentable and misbegotten *Roe v. Wade* decision then followed; it simply extended the newly discovered “constitutional right” to employ contraceptives to allow a woman to terminate, not merely to prevent, a pregnancy. The child conceived was not deemed to enjoy any constitutional right to life.

In 1992, in its *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* decision upholding the legality of abortion as established by *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court expressly ruled that abortion had to be kept legal in the United States in order to provide a suitable remedy “in case contraception should fail.” Yes, these were the exact words of the high court: abortion was necessary “in case contraception should fail.” Should anyone still be inclined to doubt the organic connection between contraception, a supposed merely preventive method, and abortion, a plainly lethal method, they are plainly not thinking in harmony with the Supreme Court of the United States.

Thus, those who continue to deny the existence of the link between contraception and abortion are denying the evidence. The United States moved effortlessly and without a break in stride from being a society which believed in birth control—or, more precisely, in fertility control—a society which had decided that henceforth pregnancies must be planned and children wanted—to a society which accepted abortion, that is, killing, as a legitimate means of making effective the fertility control that was desired.

There is, then, a very real and true sense according to which we can say that the plague of the more than 1.2 million abortions in the United States each year came about as a consequence of the nation’s rejection of God’s and nature’s link between the unitive and procreative meanings of marital intercourse—a rejection aptly signaled and symbolized

by the vociferous public dissent from and rejection of Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968. This dissent was unprecedented in the history of the Church, of course. Never had a papal teaching been so completely and publicly rejected by what was probably a majority of the Catholic people, as well as by the world at large.

### III.

In his 1995 encyclical on the Gospel of Life, *Evangelium Vitae*, Pope John Paul II employed a line of argument similar to the one employed here to the effect that a society's determination to exercise dominion over human life and to control fertility without regard to the conditions demanded by the moral law—indicated by the acceptance of contraception—necessarily and inevitably leads to the acceptance and use of abortion as well by that same society.

“It is frequently asserted,” the pontiff wrote in *Evangelium Vitae*, “that contraception, if made safe and available to all, is the most effective remedy against abortion. The Catholic Church is then accused of actually promoting abortion because she obstinately continues to teach the moral unlawfulness of contraception.” However, “when looked at carefully,” John Paul II continued, “this objection is clearly unfounded. It may be that many people use contraception with a view to excluding the subsequent temptation of abortion. But the negative values inherent in the ‘contraceptive mentality’—which is very different from responsible parenthood, lived in respect for the full truth of the conjugal act—are such that they strengthen this temptation when an unwanted life is conceived. Indeed, the pro-abortion culture is strong precisely where the Church's teaching on contraception is rejected” (EV #13).

This conclusion is exactly what can be verified from our experience in the United States over the past forty years: the absolute imperative of effective fertility control that is demanded came to outweigh the fact that with abortion we are actually taking the life of a child in order to make that control effective. “Certainly from a moral point of view,” Pope John Paul II pointed out further in *Evangelium Vitae*, “contraception and abortion are specifically different evils:

the former contradicts the full truth of the sexual act as the proper expression of conjugal love, while the latter destroys the life of a human being; the former is opposed to the virtue of chastity in marriage, while the latter is opposed to the virtue of justice and directly violates the divine commandment, ‘you shall not kill.’ But despite their difference of nature and moral gravity, contraception and abortion are often closely connected, as fruits of the same tree” (EV #13).

The truth of what the pontiff said here has only too tragically been verified by the actual experience of the United States in the years between the world's rejection of *Humanae Vitae* in 1968, and the evil manifestations of what John Paul II called “the culture of death” (EV #87) which still crowd upon us so insistently today. *Roe v. Wade* followed the rejection of *Humanae Vitae* by less than five years. “The close connection which exists, in mentality, between the practice of contraception and that of abortion,” the pope explained further in *Evangelium Vitae*, “has become increasingly obvious”; and he also pointed out what we too have indicated here, namely, that “chemical products, intrauterine devices and vaccines...distributed with the same ease as contraceptives really act as abortifacients” (EV #13), that is, they destroy the life of a human being already conceived and growing even while they go on being considered and called “contraceptives.”

In view of all these same facts, Pope John Paul II clearly saw in his encyclical that it is really impossible in practice to try to maintain the distinction between prevention and killing which is too often used to defend and justify the use of contraception.

### IV.

If the dissent from and rejection of Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* truly had such consequences as those set forth in the foregoing account, then the Catholic theologians who originally dissented from *Humanae Vitae* back in 1968, and who along with their students and disciples and followers have continued to make such dissent from the Church's authentic teaching thinkable and justifiable for Catholics up to the present day, bear a very heavy responsibility. Similarly, the Catholic bishops

who apparently decided that the Church's teaching about contraception was a "non-essential" doctrine, and hence dissenters from *Humanae Vitae* holding official Church teaching positions need not be either removed or corrected, also bear a very heavy responsibility.

For what "theological dissent" by Catholic intellectuals, teachers, scholars, and theologians, along with the toleration or at least the "benign neglect" of this dissent by the Church's shepherds, succeeded only too effectively in doing, was to undermine, and quite fatally so, the authentic teaching of the Church, both in the public mind generally, and in the minds of too many of the Catholic "faithful"—and all this at the very moment when a world gone so seriously astray morally needed the teaching and witness of the Church more than ever before.

As the modern world moved inexorably towards the present "culture of death," which we are experiencing today with gale-force winds, the Catholic Church remained practically the only major entity or organization left in the world officially opposed to both contraception and abortion. However, this opposition has counted for little at a time when the Church's own theologians and members of the educated Catholic elites were themselves calling the Church's teaching into question if they were not rejecting it outright. These same people show few or no signs even today of recognizing the stark lesson of the past forty years, and most of them will no doubt persist in their dissent from and dismissal of the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* in the face of all the contrary evidence that has continued to accumulate. Neither the "consequences" of rejecting the encyclical's teaching, which we have only briefly reviewed here, nor perhaps even the depopulation (or Islamization!) of formerly Christian Europe, will probably suffice to get them to admit how wrong they have been all along in preferring the "magisterium" of the modern world to that of the Church.

The Church, which in God's plan and intentions was placed in the world in order, among other things, to stand against such evils as today's culture of death and its attempted usurpation of God's dominion over human life, has over the past forty years found herself weakened internally, and at times almost paralyzed, by dissent from within on the part of her theo-

logians and by the practical abandonment of important teachings of hers on the part of large numbers of her faithful—not to speak of the apparent inability of the American Catholic bishops even to recognize the need for, much less to carry out, an effective teaching strategy to help close the gap between the official teaching of the Church and the continuing contrary belief and practice of so many Catholics.

The popes, of course, have not failed in their basic duty by the very fact of issuing such teaching documents as *Humanae Vitae* and *Evangelium Vitae*. The Catholic bishops have for the most part continued to uphold the correct teachings, at least in theory. Indeed, abortion is one of the issues on which, increasingly and quite notably, the American Catholic bishops have been unwilling to accommodate the secular culture. Unfortunately, though, both the popes' encyclicals and many of the bishops' fine statements against abortion and other anti-life evils have too often become virtual dead letters almost before the ink was dry on them: people had long since ceased to listen to or heed teachings of the Church they did not like. The whole world, meanwhile, has been witness to the disarray within the Church brought about by this widespread dissent from Catholic teaching. The secular media rarely fail to cite the latest polls pointing to the high level of rejection by self-identified Catholics of what everybody knows is the Church's real teaching.

Looking back to the issuance of *Humanae Vitae*, one notes that the Catholic bishops of the day at least nominally supported Pope Paul VI and his teaching. Most of the bishops' conferences around the world even issued statements in support of the encyclical. Some of those same statements, however, particularly those in some Western European countries and Canada, were actually so ambivalent in what they said as almost to damn the encyclical with faint praise rather than provide effective support for it. The world did not fail to get the message: Catholics were no longer going to be the obstacle that had been feared they would be in the path of the determined birth controllers.

The bishops of the United States, while upholding *Humanae Vitae* strongly enough in words, themselves effectively undermined it by issuing a pastoral letter in November, 1968, entitled "Human Life in

Our Day,” in which they laid out what they called “Norms of Licit Dissent.” Although these “norms” set forth by the bishops were no doubt intended to limit the extent of the existing theological dissent by laying down some strict conditions for it, scarcely any dissenting theologian ever really complied with the conditions the bishops laid down, and so the effect was once again to help undermine the teaching of the encyclical. It was only in 1990 that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith finally got around to issuing its Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian, *Donum Veritatis*. This Instruction effectively cancelled out the American bishops’ “norms” allowing “licit” dissent, the existence of which over so many years allowed theological dissent to become practically institutionalized in the United States.

From 1968 on, in fact, uncorrected dissent has been a continuing and sometimes salient fact of life in the Church, not only in the United States, but in most of the Western world. Open dissenters have rarely been corrected or disciplined by Church authority; many of them have been able to go on tranquilly and all too effectively espousing their views in books, journals, classrooms, and pulpits—and, we may be sure, confessionals. Bishops and pastors have generally been no more ready to require adherence to the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* as a condition of being able to teach, preach, or speak in the name of the Church than our ostensibly “pro-life” Republican presidents have been willing to require explicit opposition to *Roe v. Wade* to serve as a litmus test for appointment to the federal judiciary. Apparently the decision was made back in 1968 that the Church’s continuing moral condemnation of contraception was not going to be insisted upon in practice as an “essential” of the faith, and non-observance or even rejection of it by Catholics was not going to affect their “good standing” in the Church. For the most part, this remains the case today.

Even the Holy See itself was for a long time unwilling to insist on strong disciplinary measures against dissenters. It is said that this position was adopted because of Roman fears of possible schism, but the practical consequences of what has amounted to an on-going “internal schism” within the Church was that the poisons of the contraceptive mentality

would continue to circulate, with a greater or lesser degree of subtlety or explicitness—as they circulate without any impediment in the culture at large.

But it was impossible that such an infusion of an alien belief into the minds of the faithful would not have had serious and far-reaching consequences. If you need not accept the Church’s prohibition of contraception in order to remain a Catholic in good standing—in other words, if, in effect, you no longer need to form your conscience in accordance with what Vatican II’s Declaration on Religious Liberty, *Dignitatis Humanae* #14 called “the sacred and certain teaching of the Church”—then quite logically you need not necessarily accept *any* other Church teaching in particular, either. You decide. Private judgment in practice becomes a new Catholic norm. The Church is no longer necessarily “the teacher of truth” (DV #14). The “cafeteria Catholic” then becomes inevitable—and numerous. Moral relativism is the new norm.

In this new situation, it should not really surprise anybody that, for example, self-identified Catholic politicians and other public figures today should quite self-righteously assert that their pro-abortion advocacy should not raise questions about or affect their good standing in the Church.

This new situation is nothing else but the inescapable result of the failure of the post-*Humane Vitae* Church authorities to insist on integral Church teachings or to discipline dissenters in positions where they continue to preach, teach, or speak for the Church. In point of fact, few such dissenters have been disciplined, either by the Catholic bishops or by Rome itself. Father Charles E. Curran, formerly of the Catholic University of America, of course, was a well-known exception to the contrary. Father Curran was initially called to Rome more as a theoretician and fomenter of dissent, rather than merely as a dissenter as such, although he was eventually disciplined and removed from the university because of his refusal to adhere to and present the Church’s authentic teaching. The then Cardinal Ratzinger himself at one point emphasized that responsibility for disciplining dissenters from Church teaching normally resided with the local Catholic bishops, but that Rome also had a responsibility to call to account leaders and fomenters of dissent from authentic

Church teaching such as Fr. Curran.

Few of the 600-odd signers of the anti-*Humanae Vitae* statement that Father Curran helped draft back in 1968 were ever disciplined in any way, and, meanwhile, many public dissenters have continued to occupy official positions within the Church and to teach, preach, and write against the magisterium with something close to complete impunity. This has continued to be the situation, at least in the United States, down to the present day: dissent from *Humanae Vitae* has simply not been considered disqualifying in practice by today's Church authorities.

## V.

So where are we, then, forty years after the issuance of the pope's anti-birth control encyclical, and the decisive rejection of it, both by the world at large, and by what appears to be a majority of Catholics as well? Are we as the people of God any closer to understanding and acting on the truth and wisdom that the pope was trying to provide for us back in 1968?

Maybe. There are more than a few growing signs of rejection of the culture of death today now that we have undergone the baneful experience of learning what it is really like and what it really entails. One of these signs is the growing strength of the pro-life movement. Another is the evidence in the up-coming generation that established traditions really cannot be thrown over with the same impunity that was thought possible in the 1960s and 1970s. There is a widespread further realization that the modern world has gone seriously astray in the areas of marriage and sex, as all the current talk about "family values" indicates, even if many people are still often unable to identify the root causes of our continuing troubles in these areas. Nevertheless, many married couples have increasingly discovered by experience that being faithful to the moral law is essential for both the health and happiness of their marriages. At the same time there appears to be a growing public unease in the face of some of the developments of the current biotechnological revolution.

Then there is the important fact that the teach-

ing of *Humanae Vitae* remains intact and alive. It has not been quietly set aside, as was expected (and hoped) in more than a few quarters. Its teachings have been specifically reaffirmed by the Church's magisterium in such documents as John Paul II's 1981 apostolic constitution *Familiaris Consortio* as well as in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. John Paul II's 1993 encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* masterfully upheld the truth that there exist absolute negative moral norms, as was taken for granted by *Humanae Vitae*; some acts such as acts to contracept may never morally be performed, whatever the circumstances.

In other words, the effort of the dissenting theologians, extending over an entire generation and more to discredit and destroy the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*, has failed. All of the arguments originally brought against the teaching of the encyclical—that it depended upon a no longer defensible natural law tradition, that it was unduly "physicalist" and too dependent upon biological considerations, that it failed to take personalist values into account, that it ignored family economic and emotional problems and supposed world population pressures, that it neglected women's health problems, that it was nowhere to be found articulated in sacred Scripture—all these arguments have been competently and completely refuted and answered by writers and theologians loyal to the magisterium of the Church. Meanwhile, the dissenters, for their part, have mostly failed even to engage the answers formulated by these loyal writers and theologians, much less respond to them.

And one of the most remarkable of all the defenses of the teaching of the encyclical, of course, came in a long series of Wednesday papal audiences delivered by Pope John Paul II himself between September, 1979, and November, 1984. In this long series of Wednesday audiences, the pope undertook not only to defend the teaching of his predecessor; he developed at the same time his remarkable "theology of the body," which still remains to be properly assimilated by the Church. According to this theology of the body, not only does the use of contraception violate the procreative meaning of marital intercourse by forestalling the possibility of conception; it violates the unitive meaning as well, since it constitutes a false or dishonest use of the what the pope called "the language of the body" in what is supposed to be primarily a communion of

persons and a nuptial gift to each other between husband and wife.

The complete series of the pope's talks on the theology of the body is now available in a number of different editions, and is increasingly being studied and explained and applied. It is salutary to reflect that John Paul II's theology of the body would perhaps never have come into being if it had not been for the original dissent against Pope Paul VI's encyclical. So in that sense, we can perhaps consider the theological dissent against the encyclical to have been some kind of *felix culpa*, or "happy fault."

Thus, although the grave consequences and manifestations of our present culture of death based on contraception and abortion remain only too dismayingly present before our eyes today, one thing definitely has *not* happened, something that ought to be reassuring for Catholics: the gates of hell have not managed to prevail in spite of everything. Peter remains at his post, confirming his brethren (cf. Mt

16:18; Lk 22:32). If we cannot exactly "celebrate" the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, perhaps, we can at the very least be grateful that there proved to be in the world a teaching voice capable of issuing this encyclical, as well as subsequent teaching voices able to uphold, amplify, explain, and defend it. Indeed, men of good will might well speculate, and perhaps even marvel, how it was that virtually the whole world got it wrong about contraception, while the Vicars of Christ got it right! ✠

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## REVIEW ESSAY

## The Many Faces of Happiness

*Happiness: Classic and Contemporary Readings in Philosophy*, edited by Steven M. Cahn and Christine Vitrano. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. pp. 272. Paperback.

Review Essay by D. Q. McNerny  
*Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary*

Steven M. Cahn and Christine Vitrano, the editors of this book, explain in the Preface that it is designed "to demonstrate how the history of ethics can be viewed as a set of variations on the theme of happiness and how the concept continues to be a key to contemporary debates about utility, welfare, and well-being." (vii) The book very effectively meets the purpose for which it was designed, offering clear demonstration of how central a role the idea of happiness has played in ethi-

cal thought down through the ages.

In the Introduction to the book, Daniel Nettle provides an overview of the subject, giving brief descriptions of what he identifies as three levels at which the idea of happiness can be understood. Level one happiness represents the notion that equates happiness with pleasure of some sort or another, happiness as having essentially to do with emotion; level two happiness "is a hybrid of emotion, and judgment about emotion" (x); the level three understanding of happiness relates to all ideas about happiness which are rooted in the seminal notion of *eudaimonia*.

*Happiness* is divided into two parts, the first, entitled "Historical Sources," the second, "Contemporary Theories." In this review I will treat each of them separately. The contributors to Part One—which certainly qualify as a star-studded cast—are the following: Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Seneca, St. Augustine,

St. Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Hobbes, Joseph Butler, David Hume, Jeremy Bentham, Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, John Stuart Mill, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Jean-Paul Sartre.

Whitehead's famous quip that all Western philosophy is a footnote to Plato might be especially apposite when one considers what Plato had to say about happiness. The selections from Plato in this anthology all come from the *Republic*, specifically, from Books II, IV, and IX, and are so judiciously chosen that the three separate selections fit together to make up what comes across as a single, unified essay. Plato is the first to forge the link between happiness and virtue. There is an insuperable incompatibility, then, between happiness and the kind of immorality represented by injustice. The unjust man may be a "success" in purely material terms but he cannot really be happy. Happiness is not simply a state of satisfaction at one's achievements, irrespective of the quality of those achievements or of the manner in which they were effected, but represents an integral way of being a human person. Socrates (a.k.a. Plato), after hearing Glaucon and Adeimantus, playing devil's advocates, make a strong case for the superiority of injustice over justice, offers, in response, a detailed account of just how radically imbalanced the unjust man is in terms of his psychology, thus rendering him incapable of happiness. The unjust man is an unhappy man because he is a disordered man, his life being governed by his passions rather than by reason. Because he is under the oppressive thumb of his passions, his personal world is topsy turvy. He is a man at war with himself. Such a psychological state can have nothing to do with happiness, because happiness can only result from the order brought about by a virtuous life, a life in which reason reigns supreme.

The selections from Aristotle are taken from his *Nicomachean Ethics*, and once again in this case they are very effectively chosen. Relentlessly pursuing his teleological mode of thinking, Aristotle asks if there is a final end for man, something that can comprehensively account for all human action. He answers that there is, and that end is happiness. And what is happiness? It is a life lived according to virtue. A life lived according to virtue, in turn, is simply a life that perfectly accords with man's rational nature. Because to live virtuously is good in itself, it is self-sufficient, and thus meets a key qualification for happiness. One does

not live virtuously for the sake of something beyond living virtuously. Though man has a natural proclivity for becoming virtuous, he is not naturally so. Virtue (i.e., happiness) is something that is achieved only by concerted effort. But how? Simply by performing those acts which are peculiar to this or that particular virtue, thus habituating oneself to them, much as one habituates oneself to various physical skills: "men become builders by building, and lyre-players by playing the lyre." (24) Accordingly, "we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts." (24) With habituation comes permanency, another key feature of happiness. An examination of the structure of any particular virtue reveals that it represents a mean between two extreme ways of acting, one excessive, the other defective. The notion of excessive or defective action calls attention to the fact that there are certain modes of behavior that are intrinsically disordered, and therefore never permissible. There can be no mean for what is already extreme. The essence of happiness, for Aristotle, is activity, specifically virtuous activity, and because the contemplation of the truth is the highest activity in which man can engage, "perfect happiness is a contemplative activity." (33)

In Epicureanism we have a philosophy that provides the first systematic defense of the notion that the essence of a happy life is the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. Epicurus (d. 271 B.C.), the founder of the philosophy, taught that the ideal to be sought for in life was inner tranquility (*atarachos*), a state in which one remains placidly unperturbed by all the tumultuous goings-on in the outside world. The Epicureans recommended withdrawing from the fray insofar as that was possible, maintaining a low profile, and, in a sense, going along in order to get along. This was a thoroughly materialistic doctrine, and advocated its own peculiar brand of atheism. This life was all there is; after death, nothing. However, there was no cause to fear death. It was simply to be ignored, according to the logic that, so long as we are alive, death does not exist, and when death exists, we don't. So, not to worry. Though the Epicureans paid deference to the virtues, it is clear that their understanding of them was not consonant with Aristotle's. They were in fact moral relativists, and, as Epicurus calmly explains, "the good on certain occasions we treat as bad and conversely the bad as good." (36) (Little wonder that

there are so many latter-day Epicureans who fit so comfortably into contemporary culture.) But there is inconsistent rigidity in the position that “no pleasure is a bad thing in itself.” (38) Whatever works on behalf of *atarachos*—that’s the ticket.

In this collection, Seneca (65 B.C.) is the spokesman for the Stoic position, and an eloquent spokesman he is. The pivotal notion for Stoicism is that one is to live harmoniously with Nature, which means living virtuously, leading a life ever under the guiding control of reason. Like the Epicureans, the Stoics would have put a premium on *atarachos*, but very much unlike the Epicureans, they would have disavowed any connection between that state of inner tranquility and the pursuit of pleasure, though Seneca himself believed that it was a serious misinterpretation to read Epicurus as a crude hedonist. For Stoicism, “the day a man becomes superior to pleasure, he will also be superior to pain.” (44) As did Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics saw the life of virtue as characterized by the rule of reason over the emotions, but Stoicism tended to take a harshly negative attitude toward the emotions, and, at least according to some of them, the idea was not simply to control the emotions but effectively to extirpate them. Two emotions that they found especially problematic were desire and fear. However, the principal focus was on virtue, for “true happiness is founded upon virtue.” (51)

It would not surprise us to learn that for St. Augustine the essence of happiness is the possession of God. This implies, then, that perfect happiness is not to be attained in this life. That is the experience reserved for heaven, where God is seen *facie ad faciem*, face to face, and thus fully possessed. While still in this life, it could be said that the pursuit of happiness amounts to the pursuit of wisdom, that virtue by which we draw progressively closer to God.

In the moral philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas we have the fullest expression, and richest development, of the basic principles laid down in the ethical thought of Aristotle. But St. Thomas’s treatment of Aristotle was transformative in several very important ways, a principal one of which was how the Common Doctor, though following his great mentor in fixing happiness as the ultimate end of man, saw that ultimate end as not simply an activity, albeit the highest form of activity we are capable of, but God Himself. Or perhaps we could put it this way: the activity

is inextricably bound up with Him who is the object of the activity.

It comes as somewhat of a shock to move from reading the ancients to reading the moderns, in the person of, say, Thomas Hobbes. (d. 1679). Hobbes was a materialistic and a pessimist—perhaps the two are inseparable. For a Romantic like Rousseau, original sin doesn’t exist; for Hobbes, the atonement doesn’t. Happiness, for Hobbes, is simply obtaining everything that one desires. The question as to whether what man desires is good or bad is easily resolved: all man’s desires are good, simply for the fact that he desires them. Thus we have a pretty blatant form of moral relativism, for there is no “common rule of good and evil, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves.” (69) Man becomes the measure of all things moral. Power is the chief good for which man must strive in order to have a happy life, for power protects him from the rapaciousness of other men. What Hobbes does in developing his moral philosophy, such as it is, is simply rewrite the natural law. In this he is at least consistent with his own principles. Joseph Butler (d. 1752), the Anglican bishop of Durham, offered an alternative to Hobbes’s cynical notion that, underneath all the niceties, life was essentially a war of every man against every man. Butler proposed the thesis that self-love, if rightly understood, is fully compatible with, even supportive of, benevolence toward others. Happiness, then, should be regarded as necessarily involving altruism.

For David Hume (d. 1776), happiness is reducible to positive emotional responses to objects the worth of which is assigned by the one who is doing the emoting. And here we have another form of relativism, for there is “nothing, in itself, valuable or despicable, desirable or hateful, beautiful or deformed.” (88) One man’s meat is another’s arsenic. Hume sings in tune with the materialist Hobbes in fostering the Protagorean dictum that man is the measure of all things. But there are interesting differences. Hume, for reasons he leaves up to the reader to guess, lays it down rather categorically that emotions, to qualify as being happy, must be moderate, must be socially acceptable, and must be cheerful and gay. To be happy you must be happy in the right way. But Hume is not big on consistency, and later he is implicitly acknowledging, all over the place, what he earlier has told us doesn’t exist—intrinsic worth. Reading him, one has

the impression that one is listening to a conventional eighteenth century high society moralist. And on that matter of intrinsic worth, he does not think that life itself can lay much claim to it, and thus “is not worthy of so much concern.” (97)

If we were to trace philosophic lines of descent, we could rightly conclude that Jeremy Bentham (d. 1822) has an ancient ancestor in Epicurus. Bentham is the recognized father of utilitarianism, a moral philosophy which is essentially consequentialist in commitment and which represents an attempt to update Epicureanism by supposedly providing scientific underpinnings for it. There are, Bentham oracularly declares, but two fundamental motives for human behavior, pleasure and pain, in that through all of our actions we are either trying to gain and/or increase pleasure, or trying to avoid pain. Pleasure and pain are therefore to be considered the two basic principles of morality. A happy life, for the individual, is one that, on balance, contains more pleasure than pain, and, for collective man, happiness would consist in the greatest pleasure for the greatest number. In a brave display of hedonistic accountancy, Bentham endeavors to provide a calculus by which pleasure can be “objectively” analyzed, so that it can then be “scientifically” applied by the social engineers to ensure happiness, if not for all, at least for the majority. Democracy at work. His efforts along these lines are singularly unconvincing.

John Stuart Mill (d. 1873), to whom the torch of utilitarianism had been passed, responded rather testily, but in elaborate Victorian prose, to the accusations made against the doctrine to the effect that it was little more than a crude hedonism, promoting pleasures that were more appropriate to swine than to men. Mill insists that it is with the higher pleasures that utilitarianism is principally concerned, which would seem to be, as one reads his descriptions of them, the pleasures of a highly educated, socially refined, British upper class. Mill’s smooth, complex prose has the advantage, for him, of muting, if not completely disguising, the several inconsistencies with which his arguments are fraught. What is especially noteworthy are the numerous non-utilitarian principles he implicitly relies on in the effort to defend utilitarianism. So prominent a feature of his thought is this move that one is tempted to wonder if, in the end, John Stuart Mill was really a utilitarian after all.

There is something at once both very refresh-

ing and very frustrating about the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant (d. 1804). It is refreshing to witness the emphatic and definitive way he can give the comeuppance to ethical systems inclined toward hedonism or consequentialism. Kant is dismissive of happiness as a pivotal idea in ethics, and somewhat carelessly so. (My own view is that he tends to think of it too much in hedonistic terms.) But he is surely right in holding that, whatever value we might appropriately attach to happiness, it cannot be based on an understanding of it that equates it with pleasure. Duty is of course the hallmark of Kantian ethics. One does not place conditions on one’s moral behavior. If one determines that X is the right thing to do, then X must be done, period. This is admirable as far as it goes, but there is a serious problem with just how the rightness, or goodness, of X is determined. As it turns out, it is the individual, possessed of a seemingly autonomous will, a will which is “good without limitation” (104), who does the determining. Now, only God has a will that is good without limitation, and Kant’s ethics, impressive as it in so many ways is, is at bottom fatally subjective, and opens the door to moral relativism.

“Whatever one may say,” Arthur Schopenhauer (d. 1860) writes, “the happiest moment of the happy man is the moment of his falling asleep, and the unhappiest moment of the unhappy that of his awaking.” (118) And what else would you expect to hear from a man who maintained that it was better not to be than to be, that the happiest life would be one that had never been lived? The Cambridge philosophy professor Henry Sidgwick (d. 1900), in his dense analysis of the relationship between duty and happiness, leaves the reader in a state of uncertainty because, among other problems, he fails to tell us precisely what he means by those two important terms. He offers the tentative conclusion, based on “empirical evidence,” that there is not a very close bond between happiness and morality. Although I might be entirely missing the point, it seems that what he is essentially saying is that man is a sinful creature, and does not consistently practice the moral principles that he professes.

Friedrich Nietzsche (d. 1900) seems to be suggesting that if we want to be happy, it is best that we divest our minds of all things having to do with the past, and immerse ourselves permanently in the warm, soothing waters of the Now. Part One ends with

Jean-Paul Sartre's (d. 1980) contribution to the discussion. Atheistic existentialism, which, he tells us, he represents, cannot offer us anything that could pass for happiness. To the contrary. Because existence precedes essence, man, devoid of a nature, must define himself. He has only himself to rely on for everything, including a moral code. In that respect, he is totally free, but that freedom is a terrible burden, for everything depends upon himself. And that, far from making him happy, leaves him forlorn, which is to say, hopeless, abandoned, forsaken. There is at least this advantage to so somber a doctrine: an existentialist is not likely to burden you with the "Have a happy day!" banality.

Part Two of the Book, "Contemporary Theories," is divided into four sections, "Happiness as Pleasure," whose contributors are Wayne Davis and Daniel Haybron; "Happiness as Satisfaction," whose contributors are John Kekes and Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz; "Happiness as More Than Satisfaction," whose contributors are Richard Kraut, Richard Taylor, Robert Nozick, and Julia Annas; and, "Happiness and Virtue," whose contributors are Julia Annas, Steven M. Cahn, Jeffrie G. Murphy, and Christine Vitrano.

In "Why Hedonism is False," Daniel Haybron argues that hedonist theories are too inclusive, and they fail to distinguish between deeper and shallower forms of happiness. Pleasure is episodic, has to do only with the surface of our lives, and thus lacks any compelling explanatory force. Our pleasures, in other words, cannot really reveal all that much about ourselves. Happiness, on the other hand, is something that is deep and enduring. It is "a substantially dispositional phenomenon" (176) of lasting quality, and therefore has the capacity to tell us, not simply what a person experiences, but something of the kind of person we are dealing with. John Kekes, in "Attitudinal and Episodic Happiness," makes a convincing case for the thesis that genuine happiness cannot be episodic, but must take the form of a stable, and rationally justifiable, sense of satisfaction for one's life as a whole. What this implies, among other things, is that happiness cannot be simplistically associated with pleasure. Kekes would part company with the Platonic, Aristotelian, and Christian view "that there are certain kinds of life proper to man." (187) He wants to reject the notion that there are "objective standards for happiness," (187) but is all for "the rational appraisal of subjective standards." (187) Certainly the latter is pre-

cisely what we should be trying to do, but how can that be done without an appeal to objective standards? Otherwise we find ourselves caught up in infinite regress. Although Kekes sees no necessary connection between happiness and morality, he does not close the door to possibly production explorations of that question.

Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz's "Happiness and Time" is an intriguing piece that is replete with provocative psychological insights. He has a way of delving into very common experiences and modes of thinking and showing them to be not so common after all. "Two Conceptions of Happiness," by Richard Kraut, applies close and productive comparison and contrast analysis to the dominant contemporary understandings of happiness, on the one hand, and Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, on the other. He defends Aristotle's term against various modern misconceptions of it, taking special aim at translations such as "flourishing" and "well-being." The best translation remains "happiness." Kraut does not accept Aristotle's notion of happiness as an objective ideal to be realized. "Our judgments of happiness," he writes, "rely on a subjective standard." (211) For him, "a person is happy only if he meets the standards *he* imposes on his life. Even if many others consider his standards too low..." (208) But this overlooks the possibility that the person's standards can in fact be too low, not simply because they are judged to be so by others, according to *their* subjective standards, but because there are objective standards to which all rational agents can appeal. Indeed, if there were not such standards, at least of the broadest kind, we would not be able even to disagree with one another on key ethical issues. In any event, Kraut is no closed-minded advocate of subjectivism. He writes: "Perhaps with more work we can provide objectivism with the philosophical foundations it requires." (213) May one modestly suggest that that work has already been done.

Richard Taylor, in "Virtue Ethics," presents a lively and wide-ranging discussion of the central importance of virtue for ethics. Though I am not convinced that he has fully captured the essence of virtue, at least as Aristotle understands it, he misses none of its salient accidental features. The article is filled with poignant observations, such as: "Most people seem to think they know what happiness is, which is unfortunate, for this prevents them from learning." (223) Taylor's

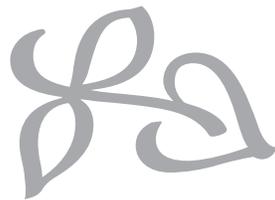
discussions of “externals,” those several things that have been commonly mistaken for happiness (e.g., wealth, honor, pleasure, etc.) is one of the best I’ve come across. He makes an interesting case for the idea that human fulfillment, happiness, consists essentially in the development of our creative powers.

The two articles written by Julia Annas, “Happiness and Achievement,” and “Virtue and Eudaimonism,” are especially substantive and insightful, displaying impressive comprehensiveness of vision and balance of judgment. She contends that “one of the best places to seek understanding of happiness is the study of ancient ethical theories and of those modern theories which share their eudaimonistic concerns.” (239) She formulates any number of telling arguments to back up that contention. She cites the danger of “shrinking happiness to something where only I am authoritative,” (240) and the need to look for it in “the search for the best way to live, the best way to understand our *telos*.” (242) I think she is quite right in claiming that, whereas we have rediscovered *arete* (virtue), *eudaimonia* remains a problem for us. (Not that we have no problems with virtue, however, for “our conception of virtue is unorganized, indeed something of a mess.” (246) ) We have to learn to appreciate the inseparable connection between virtue

and happiness, and, more importantly, to recognize the sufficiency of virtue for happiness. The signal value of virtue is that it can transform our lives, making it possible, to paraphrase Pindar, to become what we are, that is, rational creatures with a transcendent *telos*.

The above provides only a sketchy, but I hope reasonably accurate, account of a limited number of the essays to be found in the second part of the book, and is intended to serve as a sampler. All of the essays are heartily recommended to the reader. Not only does each make for stimulating reading, but, taken together, they represent a convincing demonstration of the richness and diversity of contemporary thought on the important concept of happiness, and in this they successfully meet the purpose for which they were assembled.

This is a very fine book. It is clearly meant to do service as a college textbook, for which it is ideally suited; it would work quite well, I think, either for a general course in ethics, or for a specialized graduate seminar. The book’s particular strength lies in its unity and coherence, deriving from its being structured around the single, and very important, concept of happiness. ✕



# The First Act of Obedience

by James V. Schall, S. J.  
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“*The first act of obedience* on the part of the creature is that of coming into existence in conformity with the divine *fiat* that calls one into being. Such obedience reaches its full expression in the creature free to recognize and accept him or herself as a gift of the creator, to say ‘yes’ to coming into being from God. This constitutes the first real act of freedom which is also the first and fundamental act of authentic obedience.”

—Franc Cardinal Rodé. “The Service of Authority and Obedience.”<sup>1</sup>

“Man experiences himself as tending beyond his human imperfection toward the perfection of the divine ground that moves him.”<sup>2</sup>

—Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis*.<sup>3</sup>

## I.

The 2008 Olympics in China leave most people with memories, not always happy ones. The almost complete control of everything, including the Church, by the Chinese state was both visible and invisible. I recall watching the American men’s and women’s 400x4 relay teams both dropping the batons on the same night to disqualify themselves. It was embarrassing perhaps but not a crime. Anyone can imagine himself doing the same thing. Also, I read that for a Chinese athlete to get a silver medal was a form of disgrace, while for most of the athletes there, any medal was an accomplishment, even when there is some suspicion that several Chinese gymnasts were underage. If so, this gave American girls silvers, not golds. Whether we were watching sports or politics was often problematic.

But I think my most vivid impression of the Olympics, besides the often almost empty stands for many of the events, was watching the Chinese spectators in the Birds Nest Stadium when it was full. As far as I know, no Chinese athlete in the Games has a brother or a sister. To have had any, those in the stands had to be much older than the athletes. Ev-

eryone is familiar by now with the “one-child family” political policy that China brutally instituted to cure, so it thought, its economic problems. In effect, it got rid of a lot more girls than boys. But of course, we know that the same methods of birth control are practiced among us; only, we think, ours are more voluntary, not just as a state policy, even though making the means available is a public policy.

But what interests me here is something more ultimate. When we see the Birds Nest Stadium filled with cheering Chinese, we also witness our not seeing those who are absent. When a teacher begins a semester at a college here, he not only sees the students who have made it to nineteen to be able to attend school, he also witnesses the absence of the million or so of the same cohort who were eliminated. This absence is not just something that happens in China or the United States. There seems to be something like fifty million abortions per year in the world by official counting. This number is no doubt low. But I am not interested in accurate numbers here or even in abortions.

Let me approach this topic from another angle. An abortion only kills an already incipient human being; it does not finally get rid of the same human being so aborted. Like the rest of us, aborted human beings remain unto eternity, as do the crimes that eliminated them and the ones who performed them. This conclusion is a consequence of our understanding of what each human being is. Our existence is a function of our final destiny, the ultimate cause of our existing in the first place.

No existing human being does not reach the destiny God intended for him unless he so chooses not to reach it. This result is the deepest and most important meaning of human dignity. Killing another human being does not prevent that killed person from achieving the destiny God intended for him, though it may prevent the one who killed him from doing so if the crime is not repented. The problem is not with those who are aborted. It is with those who caused the killing. And that act too will be judged, as the Pope says in *Spe Salvi*.

The way we deal with dead human beings can

vary. Almost all cultures have a normal way to do so, be it cremation, burial, depositing the corpse in a river or at sea, leaving it for birds, or giving it to scientific experimentation. Even cannibalism, in the minds of its practitioners, could serve this purpose. Though cremation has gained grounds among us, we are used to cemeteries for both coffins and boxes of remains. A cemetery is an official place of burial and remembrance. We leave a stone on the grave on which something of the person who died is recorded, a name, a date, a picture, a phrase from Scripture, perhaps a memento, “Beloved Father” or “Rest in Peace.”

Even though cemeteries themselves are ephemeral and do not legally last for an overly long time, at least they make the effort to acknowledge and pay some reverence to an actual human life once lived. When we visit the graves of our relatives, we are not superstitious. We know about body and soul, death and life. The place where our Aunt Helen or our great-grandfather is buried reminds us to pray for each, to recall both as real persons who really lived in this world.

We have, moreover, some cemeteries that are more important than others. Surely Arlington Cemetery in Washington, or Pere-Lachaise in Paris, or the English Cemetery in Rome is an example. In these cemeteries are buried the famous or the heroes of a country. They are the ones that we want to remember in order to help define what we are, what we stand for.

The Church, of course, makes a special effort to honor the dead. Saints and popes are buried in Churches or near-by grounds. We celebrate All Souls day as a conscious recognition of those many from among us who have died. Again the point is that we make an effort both to honor what it was to be a human being, even if dead. We recall the name of the dead, what he did, what he stood for, even if known only to his family. We even have “unknown soldiers.” Cemeteries also can recall dishonor, as we remember in reading of the burial of Judas.

In any case, the living population of the world is given as something like seven billion people. Estimates suggest that something like a hundred billion human beings have lived on this planet since the inception of human life on it. “Why?” we ask. What percentage of these people died either naturally or by

killing before being born or before reaching the use of reason is open to guesswork. While the length of human life remains more or less the same, we can say that all human beings have something in common. They all are human beings no matter at what stage in life they died or what the condition of their living, whether happy or sad, in suffering or in good health. We say that we “pursue happiness” and that we live in a “vale of tears.” But why do we exist at all?

Moreover, we are familiar with Augustine’s “two loves built two cities.” This startling division indicates that a separation is found within the one mankind. This division depends, not on what each person already is, but on what one does with what he is. Once we have counted up all the statistics on the number of actual people who have been conceived and who have later lived and died on this planet, including those still alive, we are still in the realm of facts. We might also count up the total number of horses or cattle or whales or guppies, for that matter.

Why the count of human beings is different is because human beings *are* different. Horses do not wonder about the total number of horses who have lived on this planet or what happened to them. But we human beings do wonder, especially about ourselves. It is a wonder we cannot quite let go of. And the reason we wonder not only about the numbers but about the fate of each member of the race is what interests me here. We might conceivably ask about the fate of all horses, but of human beings we want to know about Mary, John, and Sarah, not just what happens to all human beings, but what specifically happens to them.

## II.

**T**his essay began with two citations. One was from a Slovenian Cardinal; the other from a German philosopher. Both, in their way, said the same thing, or made the same point. This is the point that I wish to deal with here. Voegelin speaks of our experience of ourselves as we are consciously aware of our existence itself. How odd it is, in a way, that we actually are. We cannot but be aware of our imperfections in this existence that we possess or that possesses us. This very experience points us to what is not imperfect. How

can we think of what is not imperfect?

Voegelin often used the phrase the “divine ground of our being.” Concern with this ground or basis in being began with the awareness that we are not causes of our own existence.

The first fundamental act of self-reflection that we make, if we are honest, is precisely the understanding that we do not cause ourselves to be. We are already there, as we are, before we think of this fact that we exist. What does not exist does not think of why it does not exist. But since we exist, whether we like it or not, we cannot but be drawn to whatever it was that caused us to stand outside of nothingness. All serious human philosophy has to address this question, that of the ground of our being. Voegelin, in a remarkable phrase, says that this “ground” actually draws us to itself.

Cardinal Rodé’s remarks were written in a document that is specifically devoted to religious vocation in the formal Catholic sense, yet it has broader significance. The religious life is considered to be precisely a “vocation,” a “calling.” This means that those who are “called” have first to be listeners to see or examine whether they are called and by whom. Like the rich young man in the Gospels, those called also have to decide whether they will follow the call if given. We might say that, in the Catholic tradition, the religious life is a “calling” within a “calling.” Christianity itself is a “calling.” Sanctity as such exists outside of a religious vocation, though there too. But not everything spiritual is holy. This fact too needs to be known and acted on.

The religious life was never conceived by the Church to be a life for everyone, while the call to be converted was intended for all, if many were called, but few chosen. None the less, Voegelin’s happy phrase that everyone “tends” to the “divine ground” that “moves” him expresses the same point that Augustine made famous when he said that our hearts are made for God and will not rest until they find what they are made for.

The word “vocation” has been broadened so that every task, not just the religious life, is considered a “calling.” Whatever be our worldly occupation, “doctor, lawyer, or Indian chief,” we stand equally before the Lord. Everyone is called to that for which he was made. This end was not merely something in this

world, though this world is the arena of final decision of our destiny. Those called to be carpenters, athletes, or merchants “tend” to the same divine ground as any other existent human being.

### III.

**T**he first act of obedience on the part of the creature,” Cardinal Rodé writes, “is that of coming into existence in conformity with the divine *fiat* that calls one into being.” The word “*fiat*” in this sentence, of course, also recalls the scene in Luke in which the Angel announces to Mary that she is “called” or chosen to be the mother of God. After listening to the Angel and making him clarify what it is she is asked to do, Mary says “*fiat*”—let it be done unto me. I take this analogy to be intended here.

Mary does not “ambition” to be the mother of God. It is the last thing in her mind, but she is called, not someone else. She has to answer “yes” or “no.” She is free to do either, but the whole world, in a sense, depends on her answer. In our case, we do not choose our existence. It is, like Mary’s “call,” given to us. Rodé indicates that, like Mary, we are asked to be obedient to something we cannot really imagine, namely, in our case, human existence itself.

We should note also that each person is called into being by precisely a “divine fiat.” When each human being is formed, however the union takes place, God affirms of this new life “fiat.” Let it be. If we go back to what I said earlier, this “fiat” includes every one of the billions of human beings who have been conceived and lived, for however long, on this earth. The scope of what is said here is breathtaking. But we remember that humanity is not saved collectively. Each person reaches or does not reach his chosen destiny by his own path.

Why the word “obedience” is used here by Cardinal Rodé may seem odd at first. Obviously, we already exist whether we like it or not. We know certain philosophers denied the goodness of their own existence. They sought to defy the Lord. Yet, it is difficult to think of another word besides obedience that would be appropriate in this context. The fact of our existence as the result of a divine “*fiat*” or “tendency” within our being invites some response on our parts.

We are, in a sense, asked to believe that we are brought into existence for this “perfection” of which Voegelin speaks. This perfection of *what it is we are* is what God has in mind for us, even if, amidst the imperfections, we have a difficult time seeing it. And, what is even clearer, we will not see this perfection in this life. This caution about the location of perfection is why the “obedience,” that existence itself calls for, needs to be responded to on our part. Existence, our particular existence, needs to be affirmed as the good that it is. Existence, paradoxically, awaits affirmation.

Each human personal existence needs to be articulated from its own “inside,” from its own heart. It is not just “existence” in the abstract that needs affirming, but “my” existence-- that is the good that needs to be affirmed and freely affirmed. God cannot do this affirmation for us. It would not mean anything if He did. Our obedience thus “reaches its full expression in a creature free to recognize and accept him- or herself as a gift of the Creator.” Thus, the key to understanding existence is not “necessity” but “gift.”

The very idea of a gift takes us to the most profound reaches of the Trinity itself. The Holy Spirit is “Gift.” All that proceeds from God that is not God does so under the sign of a “gift,” something freely given to be freely received. In a beautiful phrase, we are invited to say “yes” to our “coming into being from God.” Plato himself recognized that what is not God cannot be complete as a whole cosmos unless there is someone within it to wonder at it, appreciate it. In the case of human beings, each is invited to see his own existence as good, for its goodness is not complete unless it is received by the one who possesses this existence as itself good.

This “yes” is a free act of obedience. It obeys, as it were, its own being called into being. What moves us “constitutes the first real act of freedom which is also the first and fundamental act of authentic obedience.” Thus, the first “real” act of “freedom” is predicated on an act of “obedience.” What is this obedience? It is the confidence that our unique individual existence, however it looks in our allotted time, is grounded in a “calling” that is designed to reach nothing less than the cause of existence itself. As such it is and always will be “good,” even if we, as we can, reject it.

## IV.

Let me now return to the billions of actual human beings who have existed on this earth. Each person is grounded in this being that, of its very nature, seeks the source of being itself. This grounding is in fact the ultimate basis of human dignity even in this world. We have to ask how it is that we freely reach this source. Or perhaps we might ask, “How it is possible to miss reaching this end, as seems to be the case?” The answer is that we were not “obedient” to what it is we already are. We do not make ourselves by ourselves. We are given what we are. And within this givenness, we find the calling to affirm what we are given, especially that which is most intimate to us, namely our own existence.

This reflective look at our givenness as human beings and not some other kinds of being is possible because we are given, within our being, reason and will. These are the powers that allow us to know and to choose. The way we are disobedient is to deny that we have received a “calling” into existence in order to reach an end that seeks a perfection that we cannot give ourselves. We are to reach this end by acknowledging that what we are includes directions for action. We are “called” not just in our very being, but we are also “called” in revelation which explains to us in more detail where this initial existential calling leads.

In *Spe Salvi*, we find a moving passage near the beginning in which Benedict XVI addresses himself to the grounds of hope. He recalls what happens when parents bring their child for baptism. The pope recites the dialogue that goes on between the parents and the priest at the baptismal rite. The parents are asked what they want for the child. Initially they say “Faith.” The next question is “What does faith bring you?” The answer is precisely “eternal life” (#10). Benedict points out that this response is not just a pious wish on the part of the parents. They are not just repeating what the Church teachers. They wish to achieve for their child the actual results that are requested and asked for. This rite is not just a kind of “welcoming” ceremony into a new club. It is the hope for eternal life for this child being baptized.

“The parents expect more for the one to be

baptized; they expect that faith, which includes the corporeal nature of the Church and her sacraments, will give life to their child—eternal life,” Benedict explains. The parents, as the pope pictures them, seem quite impatient with explanations of the baptism of their child that promises anything less, good fellowship or membership the local community. We might extrapolate their impatience to God Himself when anything less than eternal life is offered. This eternal life is what each of us is given existence to achieve. When we try to conceive of some alternative, as we do, especially our thinkers, we are all in trouble and achieve something less.

Voegelin remarked that the sense of imperfection we find about us almost naturally orients us to seek the perfection of existence, whatever it might be. Thus, it is possible to propose to us, in our freedom, some pseudo-eternal life that absorbs our attention and denies the “eternal life” that is actually promised to us. “Our contemporary age has developed the hope of creating a perfect world that, thanks to scientific knowledge and scientifically based politics, seemed to be achievable,” Benedict explained. “Thus, Biblical hope in the Kingdom of God has been displaced by hope in the kingdom of man, the hope of a better world which would be the real ‘Kingdom of God’” (#30). What the pope proceeds to show, as have not a few philosophers, is that the social, psychological, and political alternatives to eternal life, as the latter is understood in Christian revelation, invariably end by creating something monstrous and inhuman for the human beings that choose them.

“The great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain,” Benedict continues.

The fact that it comes to us as a gift is actually part of hope. God is the foundation of hope: not any god, but the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the end, each one of us and humanity in its entirety. The Kingdom of God is not an imaginary hereafter, situated in a future that will never arrive; his Kingdom is present wherever he is loved and wherever his love reaches us (#31).

Here we see that eternal life, like being, is given to us as a gift, the only one that completes our actual existence. It is not something “owed” to us. When

we think of the destiny of every actual human being who has lived on this earth, we are not thinking about something “imaginary.” Eternal life is a product of realism, not myth.

Benedict speaks of a love that “reaches” us. Voegelin had spoken of the perfection of the divine ground of being that itself moves anyone who exists to seek it. We have a twofold movement here. One is from ourselves seeking to account for our existence in whatever causes existence; the other is from God who seeks us. The modern popes, as here, often say, following scripture, that we seek the face of God. This is what eternal life is about.

In the case of those who die or are killed before they are born or live any length of time, we can be confident that the divine plan to associate all human beings in the divine community works out as intended. The purpose of God in the creation of the world was not the world directly, but the free beings within it. They were “called” to be “obedient” to the goodness that they found in their own existence. They wanted to know why it was and what it was. Without this obedience, Creation would not be complete for it exists primarily that human beings might, in their own way, say “*fiat*” to the fact that they exist. They already exist but their existence awaits that its own gift-nature be freely recognized for what it is. An unrecognized gift is an incomplete gift. In the case of human existence, as in the case of nothing else in existence but the angels themselves, the gift can only be recognized by the being that is, at bottom, himself gift. What constitutes the being of the human person is the result of a gift and a love. The Kingdom of God is present “wherever He is loved and where His love reaches us.”

In conclusion, I will return to those absent at the Olympics and at the first day of school, those who have existence but did not reach the point where they could be “obedient to” the call in their existence. We do not have to worry about their fate. They will reach the end for which they were each created, even if they did not live long enough to receive a name or a tombstone. As to those who prevented such beings from coming into the fullness of their being, there is a final word in *Spe Salvi*.

We are tempted to think that it makes no difference what we do. The one-child policy and what

it involves, after all, is a decision of state, carried out efficiently for a “good.” The girl babies who are sacrificed serve the good of a worldly economic policy. It is all very “reasonable,” however lethal. See the results. The absences make a “happy” people.

Speaking of precisely those who do evil in the name of good, Benedict states: “Evildoers, in the end, do not sit at the eternal banquet beside their victims without distinction, as though nothing had happened.” He explains the principle: “Grace does not cancel out justice. It does not make wrong into right. It is not a sponge which wipes everything away, so that whatever someone has done on earth ends up being of equal value” (#44). These are remarkable words.

“Man experiences himself as tending beyond his human perfections toward the perfection of the diving ground that moves him.”

“The first act of obedience on the part of the creature is that of coming into existence in conformity with the divine “*fiat*” that calls one into being.”

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## Endnotes

- 1 Franc Cardinal Rodé, Prefect, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, “The Service of Authority and Obedience: ‘*Fidem tuam, Domine, requiram*,’ Instruction, *L’Osservatore Romano*, Special Insert, August 20, 2008, #7.
- 2 Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis*, translated by Gerhart Niemyer (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, [1979] 1990), 103.

# Responsibility: *Recognition and Limits*

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by Jude P. Dougherty  
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**A**cknowledging that global economic integration is moving at an unprecedented pace, the chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve System, Ben S. Bernanke, in a 2006 address urged policy makers to ensure that the benefits of globalization are widely shared. Although his statement was almost a literal quotation from John Paul II, Bernanke’s motive was purely financial, a desire to stem protectionist sentiment in the disadvantaged trading partner.<sup>1</sup> One cannot fault his reasoning, exploitation may not pay in the long run. When F.A. Hayek addressed the phenomenon of globalization almost 75 years ago, he feared the power and exploitation that usually flowed from foreign investment.

Economic and other data show clearly the gap between the “developed world” and the so-called “developing world,” between rich nations and poor nations. The poverty and misery characteristic of the latter are shown daily on worldwide television. The data recognized, the moral judgment is made; those that have, should do something to alleviate the lot of

the have-nots. Churchmen talk about a fair distribution of the earth’s goods without reference to how those goods are produced, let alone how they might be distributed. Responsibility of the first world to the third world is taken for granted. “Rich nations,” “first world,” “developed world” are abstractions, yet they support the notion that somehow one collective is responsible for or to another collective.

On the occasion of the 2006 meeting of the G-7, the Center for Global Development released data to show that the commitment of rich countries to the world’s poorest nations is slipping. The center maintains a “Commitment to Development Index” and ranks nations according to a set of criteria that reflects national policies and the amount of aid preferred in proportion to the size of the donor’s economy. In the judgment of Dennis Roodman, designer of the Index, all nations including the highest could do better. The United States judged in absolute terms with respect to the amount of aid rendered ranks last on the environmental component of the Index because of low gasoline taxes that purportedly encourage consumption and because of per-capita greenhouse gas emission that are second only to Australia’s among rich nations. Speaking of the G-7, Roodman

says “From what was needed to what was promised, the results are disappointing.”<sup>2</sup> Whatever one thinks of Roodman’s index, the underlying assumption is that the rich nations have a responsibility vis-à-vis the poor nations of the world and should feel guilty for not doing more.

Readiness to accept the notion of “collective responsibility” and its correlative “collective guilt,” no doubt, stems from discussions following a number of egregious cases where societies taken as a whole seem accountable. The 20th century provides numerous examples of societies’ acting, if not as a whole, at least with sufficient unity, to implement morally unacceptable policy, i.e., Germany under Hitler, the Soviet Union under Stalin, both governments systematically eliminating so-called “enemies of the state.” One thinks also of South Africa’s limiting full civic participation to whites, of the ante-bellum American South enslaving the black, and the post-bellum American South enacting segregation laws. To what extent are we willing to blame the German or Soviet peoples for the atrocities committed within the borders of their nations? Can the 19th century immigrant cooper working within his shop in Minneapolis be blamed for slavery or for post-bellum statutes enacted with the South? The way we talk about these matters may contribute to misunderstanding. We speak of “sharing in the greatness of a nation,” we may say that “we take pride in belonging to a scholarly family,” but we must be careful not to hypostatize abstractions or make them bearers of a value. Linguistic devices that make for succinctness of expression are to be recognized for their metaphorical and elliptical meaning and not taken for literal truth.<sup>3</sup> A family group or nation, I am willing to argue, cannot be the bearer of guilt: in neither is there sufficient unity or participation in the deliberative process to warrant accountability.

Corporations are different. They are not mere aggregates of people but have a metaphysical-logical identity. Otto van Gierke has suggested that the law in conferring on the corporation the status of a legal person is merely recognizing a prelegal, social condition. The corporation is the result of certain social actions and possesses a de facto personality that the law declares to be a juridical fact.<sup>4</sup> Brian Tierney traces the notion of corporate personality to medi-

eval canon law and its doctrine of agency. “In Roman law,” writes Tierney, “an individual or group could appoint an agent to negotiate with a third party, but the result of the transaction was to establish an obligation between the third party and the agent, not directly between the third party and the principal. In canon law, when a corporate group established a representative with *plena potestas*, the group was directly obligated by the representative’s acts even when it had not consented to them in advance.”<sup>5</sup> The ancient Roman principle, *Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus approbatur* (what touches all is to be approved by all), was to be replaced by one that allowed a representative to act on behalf of all. Thus commitments made in the name of an organized group may persist even after the composition of the group or its will changes. If a group reneges on a commitment, the fault may be that of no individual member, yet the liability for the breach of contract, falling on the group as a whole, will distribute burdens quite unavoidably on faultless members.

Peter A. French, in an extended analysis of corporate responsibility, maintains that for a corporation to be treated as a moral person, it must be possible to attribute to it a corporate intention. This is different from attributing intentions to biological persons who comprise its board of directors or its top-level management.<sup>6</sup> Corporations, at least major corporations, have internal decision-making structures, and this arrangement is reflected in their organizational charts and in their established methods of reaching corporate policy. French believes that in many cases one can infer the basic beliefs of a corporation by examining its actions over a period of time. The moment policy is sidestepped or violated, it is no longer the policy of the company. Maverick acts cannot be described as having been done for corporate reasons. Thus it is possible to distinguish between individual staff negligence and corporate negligence. Executives voting to adopt certain objectives when required by the corporate structure to vote, in fact, constitute the corporation’s deciding to do something. A corporate officer who ignores corporate policy, possibly in the name of expediency, may be morally accountable without moral blame being attached to the corporation, although corporate civil accountability may be unavoidable. These principles apply to the military occupation of Iraq and to famous cases such as the *Exxon*

*Valdez* oil spill and more recent oil spills off the coast of France and Spain. In the aftermath of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, the U.S. National Wildlife Federation urged prosecutors to go after the individual at the top of the corporation who was responsible for the accident. In due course the former skipper of the *Valdez* and its owner Exxon itself were criminally charged.

It is not surprising to find that following the close of World War II there were numerous discussions of collective responsibility and guilt as the Allied officials debated humanitarian policy vis-à-vis a fallen foe. The literature, of course, is enormous, but a few examples will illustrate the dominant American position at that time that has some bearing on the present discussion. Judge Robert H. Jackson, the American member of the team prosecuting the Nazis at Nuremberg, in his address at the opening of the trial, repudiated the notion of collective responsibility.<sup>7</sup> “Jackson, made it clear, writes Suzanne Brown-Fleming, that “it would be unjust to indict all German people, women and children who had no voice in domestic politics, as well as to indict the countless number of anti-Nazis, many of whom suffered years in concentration camps.”<sup>8</sup> General Robert A. McClure took a similar approach. The U.S. Army, he thought, should approach the German people not on the basis of guilt and punishment, but rather on the basis of cause and consequence.<sup>9</sup> General Dwight Eisenhower condemned a policy of vengeance and called for a fair dealing with a fallen foe.<sup>10</sup> Bernard Baruch, an advisor to Franklin D. Roosevelt, had taken the opposite view. Many thought that a distinction had to be made between guilt and responsibility, one that would permit a claim for reparations without the necessity of establishing guilt on the part of the German populace as a whole. I will return momentarily to the distinction between responsibility and guilt.

Other examples imputing collective guilt may be offered. When the New World was celebrating the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus’s 1492 voyage, dissident voices emerged to condemn the colonization that followed. It was not uncommon to find not only Christopher Columbus but also European civilization as a whole condemned for all the ills that befell the native population in the years following the discovery of America. The “affirmative action” movement

in the United States may be taken as an example of one generation’s assuming responsibility for the sins of another. Peoples, generations, classes, races, industries and religious bodies are often held accountable, not in some vague, “public opinion sort of way,” but before courts of law. From tort law as practiced in the United States to affirmative action policy, blame is often assigned to groups no longer in existence and sometimes to mere conceptual entities. Restitution is not infrequently extracted from groups or from heirs of groups without any responsibility for harm’s being established.

To cite one notorious example from the United States that may have its counterpart in Europe. Consider the concept “market share” where corporate defendants may be assessed damage even after proving that they could not possibly have caused the harm. Courts in several states have employed market share in cases where several corporations that are marketing essentially the same product are held responsible for harm done to a plaintiff who does not remember whose product was used. Damages are in such cases distributed among the manufacturers on the basis of their percentage of the market, with no concrete responsibility having been established. Broad notions entertained in the framing and implementation of law are almost always the byproduct of previous academic discussion. Before the concept of market share could have become current, certain philosophical discussions of collective guilt, collective responsibility, and punishment had to take place. While this is not the place to examine the history of all of these concepts, little inquiry is needed to show that the notion of collective guilt is an ancient one. In fact, discussions of that notion can be found in ancient and medieval texts as well as modern and contemporary literature.

The ancients no less than we recognized that societies are generated out of collective beliefs and traditions that are passed unconsciously by individuals. Emile Durkheim, the influential social theorist of the late 19th century, was convinced that traditions can exist in groups even when they are not instantiated by any individual. In his *Rules of Sociological Method* (1895) he even accords ontological status to social traditions and social relations independent of individual members of the group.<sup>11</sup> In an influential

volume written shortly after the close of World War II, Karl Jaspers attempted to deal with guilt of the German nation.<sup>12</sup> The horrors perpetrated in the concentration camps were by then generally known. What was suspected had become graphically illustrated. Jaspers raised the question of guilt in the context of demands for restitution. To what extent were the German people as a whole culpable, and to what extent could one expect atonement? The issue was not that of the responsibility of the German state. No one questioned national accountability or the requirement of “reparations.” Jaspers was probing much deeper. In a section entitled “Scheme of Distinctions,” Jaspers, like the Allied Command, was aware that the vast majority of German-speaking peoples were not morally responsible for the atrocities committed under the Third Reich. If the vast majority of the German people were neither legally nor morally guilty, could the German-speaking peoples yet be held accountable? In an effort to sort things out, Jaspers introduced the notion of “collective guilt at the psychic level.” He reasoned that insofar as the German people shared a common language and a common culture and insofar as they were nourished by a common literature, common music and distinctive patterns of civic behavior, they could be said to be a collective. In Jaspers’s analysis there existed enough solidarity to produce a national psyche that in some sense could be held accountable such that one generation could make claims on another. Jaspers recognized the difficulty of defending a notion of psychological guilt apart from criminal, political, or moral guilt. He preferred to call it “metaphysical guilt.” Having distinguished the four concepts of guilt,<sup>13</sup> Jaspers, in the concluding pages of his book, writes, “A crime is atoned for; a political liability is limited by a peace treaty and thus brought to an end. . . . But moral and metaphysical guilt, understood only by the individual in his community, are by their very nature not atoned for. They do not cease. Whoever bears them enters into a process lasting all his life.”<sup>14</sup> “There exists,” he believed, “a solidarity among men as human beings that makes each co-responsible for every wrong and every injustice in the world, especially for crimes committed in his presence or with his knowledge. If I fail to do whatever I can to prevent them, I too am guilty. If I was present at the murder

of others without risking my life to prevent it, I feel guilty in a way not adequately conceivable either legally, political or morally.”<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere in a puzzling remark, that undermines his theses, he concedes, “There is no such thing as a people as a whole.”<sup>16</sup>

Jaspers was only one among many theologians who in the aftermath of the war began rethinking the notions of “responsibility,” “guilt,” and “restitution.” On the American side of the Atlantic, Aloisius Muench, Bishop of Fargo, North Dakota, devoted his Lenten Pastoral Letter in 1946 to the European situation.<sup>17</sup> In his pastoral letter entitled “One World in Charity” Muench objected to official policy, “official inhumanity,” he called it, “which does not permit the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration to ship relief supplies to either Germany or Japan, and besides does not even allow private relief agencies to send and distribute food, clothing, and medicine to war-stricken people living a pitiable life in the ruins of their bombed-out cities.”<sup>18</sup> In Europe, policy dictated that refugees from the East were to be taken care of first. The needs of the German people were to be considered last, and only then was aid to be given to avoid disease or the possibility of insurrection.<sup>19</sup> Muench was equally critical of Nazism and Communism, as well as the Allied bombing responsible for the holocaust inflicted on the German populace.

Reflecting on the issues raised by the foregoing, we have laid bare a number of distinctions and assumptions. No one denies that guilt implies responsibility. Responsibility in turn presupposes freedom to act or not to act. In speaking of freedom, it is necessary to distinguish (1) between freedom in a moral sense and freedom under the law, and (2) between the legal sense of guilt and the moral sense. One can be accountable before civil law without being morally responsible for harm. Civil law itself recognizes this when it takes into consideration motivation and extenuating circumstances and sometimes allows them to mitigate guilt. The continuity between the moral and the civil is so connected that in practice the distinction is often blurred or ignored. Moral outrage is not infrequently thought to be immediately translatable into law. Appeals for the creation of law typically invoke danger to health or damage to the environment or cite other material or social dis-

advantage if action is not taken, but they are, nonetheless, appeals to the moral order.

Another aspect to keep in mind is that action follows judgment and that judgment is made necessarily within a cultural context. How one views a proposed course of action is in part dependent on one's education, i.e., the distinctions one has learned to make and the principles one invokes habitually. Certain courses of action may be acceptable in the West that are unthinkable in the East. In the West some may see nothing wrong with the merchandising of pornography, with divorce, or with abortion. The same is not true in a strict Islamic society. It would be precarious to attribute moral guilt to those who act in the light of conscience, even if that conscience, when judged by a time-transcending moral code, seems to be ill informed. But this does not mean that holders are unaccountable for their beliefs in all respects. From any point of view one has an obligation to form a correct conscience.

Also recognized is the principle that not all law binds in conscience. Good civil law, as we have suggested, tends to explicate or elaborate the moral order. Thus building codes, traffic regulations, and rules governing securities trading are in some sense moral dictates before they become statutes. Law that flouts common perceptions of right and wrong is not regarded as morally binding. The distinction between civil law and moral law, although sometimes challenged from the academy, is universally recognized. The distinction cuts both ways. A corporation that operates wholly within the law may be guilty of moral infraction. The sale of pornography, the creation of advertising that deliberately manipulates the truth, or media distortion on behalf of partisan causes are examples to the point. One can make the claim that the manufacturing of faux merchandise, merchandise that mimics the genuine article and is usually marketed to the ill-educated or unsuspecting, is a kind of moral infraction. Some would extend guilt to those who manufacture tobacco products or distilled spirits or make clothing from animal pelts. No one would hesitate to attribute moral guilt to a corporation that knowingly manufactures a defective and potentially dangerous product, quite apart from any civic penalty that might be inflicted.

To come to the point: granted immorality on

the part of a corporation, where does moral guilt lie? Are all who are associated with the corporation collectively guilty? If not, how far down the corporate ladder does responsibility extend? To the worker on the assembly line? To the wholesaler? To the retailer? To the shareholder? If guilt follows knowledge, it may be that only a few in the testing laboratory or in the executive suite are privy to the information that a given product is potentially troublesome or could be modified with additional cost to diminish risk. Although the corporation before the law can be held accountable for negligence, it is difficult to believe that the average worker in the plant or billing office, unless the company has a record of dubious performance, has the knowledge that would imply criminal complicity. There are exceptions of course. Complicity may be much more widespread or deeper than is sometimes thought. We have all read stories of whistle blowers who, rather than be complicit, have brought to light questionable practices, sometimes to the gratitude of management. Where corporate guilt is determined, it is not likely that all workers would be held accountable either by an irate group of shareholders or before a court of law. When a specific individual, in violation of corporate policy, has been guilty of harm, it makes little sense to hold the corporation criminally liable, subject to punitive damages that are ultimately shared by innocent shareholders.

Jaspers, in his treatise on German guilt, would likely recognize all of these principles, yet he held that the German-speaking populace could not avoid what he called "metaphysical guilt." The currency of this notion does not date to antiquity, and it is certainly not found in the tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas. Psychological or metaphysical guilt in Jaspers's sense is something self-inflicted, subjectively generated, known only to God and to the sinner. It is not accountable to some universally recognized moral order. Theologians may speak of the "stain of sin," but the Calvinist and the Catholic may have different things in mind when talking about punishment due to sin. If there are no outside standards by which the conscience can be measured, metaphysical guilt becomes an indelible ontological disposition that not even therapy can remove. The Catholic may confess, repent, do penance and leave it all behind. Subject-

tively imposed guilt is indelible and can be exploited by others to gain concessions both of an ideological and material sort.

Returning to the notion of responsibility apart from the guilt question, in what sense are “those who have” responsible for “those who have not?” Indeed, what are the obligations or responsibility of rich nations to poor nations? As I write, one encounters daily appeals for the poor of Somalia and Darfur. The Christian may recognize an obligation in charity that the agnostic may not. Cardinal Muench, in condemning allied policy in the aftermath of World War II, could explicitly invoke Christian principles of compassion, mercy, and charity to positive effect. The vengeful Morgenthau Plan was rejected by President Truman, and Morgenthau’s resignation was immediately accepted when precipitously offered on the eve of the Potsdam Conference.<sup>20</sup> Social philosophers, such as Emile Durkheim and John Dewey, have long recognized the motivating power of religion in confronting the difficult good. In a largely secular milieu, are appeals to charity possible? Dorothy Sayers would answer, “yes.” In her 1947 Oxford lecture, “The Lost Tools of Learning,” she noticed “that many people today who are atheist or agnostic in religion are governed in their conduct by a code of Christian ethics which is so rooted (in the culture) that it never occurs to them to question it.” She then adds, aware of the Enlightenment’s influence on Western intellectuals, “But one cannot live on capital forever.”<sup>21</sup>

When “obligation in charity” cannot be invoked, we find pragmatic appeals on the basis of self-interest; that and emotional appeals accompanied by graphic depictions of need that beg for remedy. Acknowledging that both pragmatic and emotional appeals often fail, the United Nations has sought the power to tax to alleviate recognized need. Whereas charity is rational, imposing its own limits, emotional appeals tend to be unrestrained and often impulsively lead to inappropriate action and squandered resources.

The gap between the “developed world” and the “developing world” is not likely to be bridged anytime soon.. Chairman Bernanke’s call to avoid exploitation is nothing other than a call for justice, a call for responsible behavior, but apart from treating them justly, the question remains: does that make rich nations responsible for poor ones? In spite of the so-

cial determinism favored by the political left, we still recognize the principle of self-reliance, a principle that analogically may be applied to nations.

If we have reached any conclusion, it is this: responsibility cannot be assigned willy-nilly. There is an objective, ontologically grounded moral order in the light of which responsibility is both recognized and limited. All responsibility is determined on the basis of causality. Of the various senses of responsibility, that fostered by charity is not to be equated with legal or moral responsibility. And finally, no sense of responsibility can engender, as Jaspers would have it, an indelible metaphysical guilt. ☒

## ENDNOTES

- 1 *Wall Street Journal*, August 26, 2006, p. A-3.
- 2 News release, Southasia.oneworld.net, September 4, 2006.
- 3 Cf. Hywel David Lewis, *Philosophy* XXII (84), January 1948, p.47. See also Joel Feinberg, “Collective Responsibility,” *Journal of Philosophy*, LXV (21), November 1968, pp.674-688 and Virginia Held, “Can a Random Collection of Individuals be Morally Responsible,” *Journal of Philosophy*, LXVII, July 1970, pp.471-481.
- 4 Otto Von Gierke, *Political Theory of the Middle Ages*, trans F.W. Maitland (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1900).
- 5 Brian Tierney, *Religion, Law and the Growth of Constitutional Thought, 1150-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 23.
- 6 Peter A. French, *Collective and Corporate Responsibility* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984, p. 39).
- 7 Jackson said, “We know the Nazi party was not put into power by a majority of the German vote. We know that it came to power by an evil alliance between the most extreme of the Nazi revolutionaries, the most unrestrained of the German reactionaries and the most aggressive of the German militarists,” in: Suzanne Brown-Fleming, *The Holocaust and the Catholic Conscience: Cardinal Aloisius Muench and the Guilt Question in Germany* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), p. 149.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 148.
- 11 Emile Durkheim, *Rules of Sociological Method*, trans. S. Soloway and J. Mueller, ed. Carlin (New York: Free Press, 1964), p. 7.
- 12 Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961). (First published by Dial Press, Inc., 1947.)
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- 17 Muench was subsequently named Apostolic Visitor to Germany in 1946 at the request of the American occupation forces, and in 1959 he was appointed Papal Nuncio to Germany. In 1959 he was named Cardinal. Cf. “The Cardinal Muench Papers,” Catholic University of America Archives.
- 18 “One World in Charity,” A Pastoral, Lent 1946, p. 9. Text provided courtesy Jordan Patty, Archivist, The Catholic University of America.
- 19 Secretary of State, James F. Byrnes, in his statement of December 11, 1945, defining official policies for Germany. “In terms of world supply, liberated areas must enjoy a higher priority than Germany throughout this first postwar winter,” quoted by Muench, p. 9.
- 20 Margaret Truman, *Harry S Truman*. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1973. P. 265.
- 21 Dorothy Sayers, “The Lost Tools of Learning,” 1947 Lecture at Oxford University, p. 12. Available at [www.brccs.org/Sayers](http://www.brccs.org/Sayers)

# Is Death Evil?

## *A Question for Father Peter Ryan, S. J.*

### Part II *The first part of Fr. McDermott's article appeared in Vol. 31, No. 2.*

By Father Michael McDermott, S. J.

#### b) *Calvin*

John Calvin rejected Trent's distinction of sin and concupiscence. Like Luther, he argued that since righteousness demands the love of God with one's whole heart, mind, and strength and since any repugnance to God's law is sin, concupiscence is sin. "The same with their mind, indeed, serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin and live not without sin."<sup>1</sup> The saints live always with sin, i.e., "depraved concupiscence" opposed to righteousness. For Calvin regarded it as "sin when man is tickled by any desire at all against the law of God; we label 'sin' that very depravity which begets in us desires of this sort." Adam's guilt was passed on to all his children. "Guilt is of nature." For, "whatever is in man, from the understanding to the will, from the soul even to the flesh, has been defiled and crammed with this concupiscence. Or, to put it more briefly, the whole man is of himself nothing but concupiscence." Fallen nature is "destitute and empty of good." Hence the soul "has not only been wounded, but so corrupted that it needs to be healed and to put on a new nature as well.... The whole man is overwhelmed... so that no part is immune from sin and all that proceeds from him is to be imputed to sin." Yet man's "natural vitiation," which corrupts him, "did not flow from nature."<sup>2</sup> "It is an adventitious quality which comes upon man rather than a substantial property which has been implanted from the beginning. Yet we call it 'natural' in order that no man may think that anyone obtains it through bad conduct, since it holds all men fast by hereditary right." Nonetheless, insofar as men are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3), "it is right to declare that man, because of his vitiated nature, is naturally abominable to God... naturally

depraved and faulty."<sup>2</sup>

Calvin's position on concupiscence is clarified by his view of original sin's effects upon Adam and his world. Adam was created good and upright by God, and the image of God was located in the immortal soul, which enjoyed communion with God. Along with the image, he possessed the natural virtues and supernatural gifts: wisdom, faith's light, righteousness, charity to God and neighbor, and holiness. This image, differentiating man from the animals, penetrated also his body, affecting "the soundness of all the parts." With this integrity Adam "had full possession of right understanding, ... his affections kept within the bounds of reason, all his senses tempered in right order, and he truly referred his excellence to exceptional gifts bestowed upon him by his Maker" (I, 15, 3-4; II, 1, 5.10; 2, 12). Adam's will was "completely amenable to the guidance of the reason" so that he could "direct the appetites and control all the organic motions." Moreover Adam enjoyed the freedom "to be able not to sin"; "because his will was capable of being bent to one side or the other, ... his choice of good and evil was free." "Therefore Adam could have stood if he wished, seeing that he fell solely by his own will." Hence "in this integrity man by free will had the power, if he so willed, to attain eternal life." Eternal life was his hope "so long as he ate of the tree of life." All those blessings were lost for himself and his progeny, when Adam, unfaithful to God's word, disobeyed and revolted against God's authority. Indeed his weakness consisted in his ability to choose evil as well as good since he was not given the constancy to persevere (II, 3, 13; 1, 4; I, 15, 8).

The fall radically changed man's condition. Adam became "alienated from God," "hateful and abhorrent to God," "naturally abominable to God," and incapable of attaining creation's end (I, 15, 4; II, 1, 3.8.11). His intellect was darkened with regard to knowledge of divine things – "the greatest geniuses

are blinder than moles” – and the proper regulation of conduct (II, 5, 11–15; II, 1, 5; 2, 18–19). Particularly perverted was the will: “The will is so utterly vitiated and corrupted in every part so as to produce nothing but evil” (II, 2, 26–27). Adam’s fall also “perverted the whole order of nature in heaven and on earth” (II, 1, 4–5; 3, 2). Along with the destruction of God’s image in man Calvin affirmed the destruction of nature by sin and the consequent need of a re-creation, of “the new creation, which sweeps away everything of our common nature.” For “the Lord corrects our evil will, or rather extinguishes it; he substitutes for it a good will from himself” (II, 1, 5.10; 3, 6–7).

With the fall death arrived. Since “it would be most unfitting for God to be made the author of death,” following tradition, Calvin apparently took for granted that physical death along with bodily corruption “takes its origin from the fall of man” (II, 1, 6; III, 25, 7). He described it as “a curse and, as it were, a corruption of nature, a change of God’s order,”<sup>3</sup> but, unlike Luther, he never developed the theme at any length in the *Institutes*. The one section in the *Institutes* discussing Adam’s loss of “life” joined it immediately to righteousness without distinguishing physical from spiritual life and death: “If it is beyond controversy that Christ’s righteousness, and thereby life, are ours by communication, it immediately follows that both were lost in Adam, only to be recovered in Christ; and that sin and death crept in through Adam, only to be abolished through Christ.” Christ’s resurrection reopened the door of life to the regenerated. In contrast, Adam’s estrangement from God had brought about “the death of his soul” as “the heavenly image was obliterated in him” (II, 1, 5.6).

Calvin’s commentary on Genesis explains his view of death and its coherence with his wider vision. When, after forming a dead body, God breathed into Adam’s nostrils (Gen. 2:7), He infused an animal soul to receive vital motions; then “upon this soul God engraved his own image, to which immortality is annexed.” This image he designated as “the perfection of our whole nature.” Its chief seat was in the mind and heart but it permeated man’s entire being. Its principal part comprised righteousness and holiness, including knowledge of God; it also incorporated right judgment, will and affections in harmony

with reason, and sound, well regulated senses. “In [Adam’s] body there was no defect, wherefore he was wholly freed from death.” After a certain time on earth he would have passed to heaven without corruption, violent change, or death, the separation of soul from body. The exemption from death is amazing since, formed from dust, man is by nature mortal. Yet “as soon as he had been raised to a dignity so great, that the glory of the Divine Image shone in him, the terrestrial origin of his body was almost obliterated.”<sup>4</sup> All creation was perfect, made to serve man: the animals obeyed him, the earth produced fruits and herbs to gratify his palate, and labor was pleasant, “entirely exempt from all trouble and weariness.” All was in order since “direct communication with God was the source of life to Adam.” This communication was established in faith since “faith alone unites us to God” and “God does not manifest himself to men otherwise than through the word.”<sup>5</sup>

With sin, i.e., disobedience rooted in pride and unbelief, man lost the Spirit’s gifts, reason’s light, justice, and rectitude. “Prone to every evil,” he became “devoid of all good, blinded in understanding, perverse in heart, vitiated in every part, and under sentence of eternal death.” “That we are also lost and condemned, and subjected to death, is both our hereditary condition, and, at the same time, a just punishment which God, in the person of Adam has inflicted on the human race.” Sin’s depravity pervaded all parts of body and soul, leaving no integrity. Original sin, alienation from God, caused both spiritual and physical death.

Under the name of death is comprehended all those miseries in which Adam involved himself by his defection; for as soon as he revolted from God, the fountain of life, he was cast down from his former state, in order that he might perceive the life of man without God to be wretched and lost, and therefore differing nothing from death. Hence the condition of man after his sin is not improperly called both the privation of life, and death. The miseries and evils both of soul and body, with which man is beset so long as he is on earth, are a kind of entrance into death, till death itself entirely absorbs him; for the Scripture everywhere calls those dead, who, being oppressed by the tyranny of sin and Satan, breathe nothing but their own destruction.<sup>6</sup>

Such a view explains why Adam and Eve did not physically die immediately upon their trespass of God's command. Physical death was a gradual process. Correspondingly "the world gradually degenerated from its nature." Man's punishment overflowed on the earth which was intended to bear fruit for him but which God cursed in order to remind man of his sin's atrocity. Thus "the whole order of nature was subverted by the sin of man," and such annoyances as "fleas, caterpillars, and other noxious insects" were created by God to avenge sin.<sup>7</sup>

Calvin's exegesis of the tree of life supports his interpretation dynamically linking man's well-being and life to faith. A first reading of Scripture might suggest that the tree of life bestowed life: Adam's expulsion from Eden was intended to deprive him of access to it, lest he live forever. But, Calvin opined, the tree had no "intrinsic efficacy." "Man would not have been able, had he even devoured the whole tree, to enjoy life against the will of God." The tree was a "symbol and memorial" – similar to Calvin's sacraments – established by God to remind Adam, "as often as he tasted the fruit, ... whence he received his life." That reminder should have brought him to acknowledge God's kindness. For "life is not ... an intrinsic good, but proceeds from God." "God, out of respect to his own institution, connects life with the external sign. ... God made it life-giving, so far as he had sealed his grace to man in the use of it, as, in truth, he represents nothing to us with false signs, but always speaks to us, as they say, with effect."<sup>8</sup> Clearly God's power is bound to no mediating instance: He gives life to whom He wills, to those obeying his will. Although he does not explicitly state it, Calvin seems to apply Scripture's affirmation, "The just man will live by faith" (Gal. 3:11; Rom. 1:17, Heb. 10:38, citing Hab. 2:4), to the entirety of man's life, both natural physical life and the life of grace.

The same dynamic linking of man's life and destiny to faith most probably explains why Calvin stressed spiritual death as sin's result more than physical death. Sin effects, most profoundly, spiritual death and leads to physical death. If spiritual death were overcome, physical death would also be vanquished. With sin "Adam [was] consigned to death, and death began its reign in him, until supervening grace should bring a remedy." Since God's "grace is more

abundantly poured forth, through Christ, upon the world, than it was imparted to Adam in the beginning,"<sup>9</sup> one might rightly expect corporeal death also to be undone in time by the resurrection. That suspicion is confirmed in Calvin's Pauline commentaries.

Despite many passages in Paul's letters that refer to death, Calvin spent little time exploring its significance. As the separation of soul from body, death is sin's punishment. Contrary to man's natural feelings, it naturally arouses horror and of itself will never be desired. Nonetheless believers can hasten toward it with alacrity and joy since for them it means a "deliverance from the bondage of sin, and an introduction to the kingdom of heaven." From such a perspective the body can be seen as a prison. For "the essence of the soul is immortal."<sup>10</sup> Calvin concentrated primarily on the spiritual death due to sin, "alienation from God." The cause of death consists in trespasses and sins. "The life of sin is the death of man." Sin gives power to death. "Death has no power over men except on account of sin; so sin executes its power by death." Oppressed by sin's bondage and their own licentiousness, men are subject to death's dominion. If sin were removed, death could no longer injure man. This death Christ destroyed for believers; through His grace and regeneration Christians receive newness of life from Christ's life-giving Spirit and are delivered from the peril of death.<sup>11</sup>

Though the believer's soul enjoys Christ's presence after death, Calvin was aware, perfect felicity depends on the resurrection. Indeed, the final resurrection occasions the resolution of an apparent contradiction in Scripture. St. Paul said that all must die (Heb. 9:27; 1 Cor. 15:36), yet some will still be alive at the final resurrection (1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thes. 4:17). So Calvin distinguished "ordinary death," i.e., the separation of soul from body, from "a kind of death," viz., the "destruction of corruptible nature" when the mortality of those remaining on earth will be swallowed up by life (cf. 2 Cor. 5:4). This "sudden change will be like death."<sup>12</sup> Despite the soul's spiritual death, Calvin recognized that death does not entirely possess man's soul, which is capable of receiving a newness of spiritual life. There is a basis in fallen man at which grace might arrive. The *Institutes* further developed that tension in man, fallen, yet not entirely obliterated. The soul, God's image, continued in life

despite the loss of God's supernatural life.<sup>13</sup>

Like Luther, Calvin wavered in his characterization of nature after the fall. His language of destruction and hatefulness was moderated at times. God's image in man was "not totally annihilated and destroyed"; it was "vitiating and almost blotted out" (I, 15, 4; II, 2, 17). Sparks of reason and a residue of will remained. "I say that will is effaced; not in so far as it is will, for in man what belongs to his primal nature remains entire. I also say that it is created anew; not meaning that the will now begins to exist, but that it is changed from an evil to a good will" (II, 2, 12; 3, 6; 5, 16). God is "hostile to the corruption of his work [i.e., human nature] rather than toward the work itself." That distinction between nature and its corruption not only allows God to love the nature and decide to save man (II, 1, 11; 16, 3-4; 17, 2) but also explains the powers still remaining in fallen nature. Reason "could not be entirely destroyed." On its own reason still searches for truth and discovers truths in inferior, earthly objects not pertaining to true knowledge of God's salvation (II, 2, 12-16; 5, 19). Moreover, not only is a sense of God indelibly inscribed in every human heart where, with an idea of Him, belief is naturally engendered, but also the wonders of creation, from the heavens' majesty to man's own constitution, prove God's existence even to the dullest and most illiterate mind (I, 3, 1-3; 4, 4; 5, 1-6.9; 16, 1). The principles of natural law, implanted in man's nature, are knowable. But all this serves only to render man inexcusable in his sin (I, 3, 1; 5, 4-5.14-15; II, 2, 13.22.24). The natural desire for happiness remains, even if ruled by the appetite for comfort and sensible satisfaction (II, 2, 6. 26). As nature persists, so does the will remain, even in its perversion. Man "was not deprived of will, but of soundness of will... simply to will is of man; to will ill, of a corrupt nature; to will well, of grace" (II, 3, 5; 5, 14).

The Genesis commentary manifested some of the same tensions. Calvin wrote, "The image of God in which [man] had been formed, was obliterated." Yet he also distinguished, "Although some obscure lineaments of that image are found remaining in us, yet are they so vitiated and maimed, that they may truly be said to be destroyed." He needed those lineaments to uphold the good of marriage and refute

the opinion that woman is a necessary evil. "Amidst many inconveniences of marriage, which are the fruits of degenerate nature, some residue of divine good remains; as in the fire apparently smothered, some sparks still glitter." Moreover the tension between fallen nature and grace can be traced back to nature itself. On the one hand, death is considered natural to man formed of dust; on the other, "we dread death, because dissolution, which is contrary to nature, cannot naturally be desired." This allowed Calvin, like Thomas, to maintain that death "is both our hereditary condition, and, at the same time, a just punishment."<sup>14</sup> Consequently, however much Adam's communication with God overcame death, even in unfallen nature there was an internal tension. It would almost seem that God had to give grace lest natural man be a contradiction to himself and naturally open to temptation. Calvin apparently did not concern himself overly with this difficulty since his starting point was fallen man in need of redemption and he knew the limits of human intelligence. Baius would draw such a conclusion.

The tension between intellectual perception and voluntary freedom was more radical in Calvin's theology than in Luther's probably because the former's notion of predestination went beyond God's exercise of an Augustinian final causality to His efficient causality as omnipotent will (I, 17, 1.8; 18, 1-3; II, 2-3, 7). The Reformer of Geneva affirmed a double predestination to hell as well as to heaven (III, 21, 5-7; 22, 1-11). Despite Adam's freedom of choice, God "meted out" his fall from Paradise (III, 23, 7).<sup>15</sup> The intellectual part of nature, however, retained a greater soundness than the voluntary part. Nature could perform natural acts. Nonetheless, due to Augustine's influence, which oriented man by creation directly to the final possession of God, concupiscence was interpreted as a revolt against God, and man's supernaturalized nature was essentially frustrated by sin, the soul's death which condemns to hell. In all of this Calvin exhibited a commonality with Aquinas and Luther insofar as all three agreed that human nature is doomed to perdition without Christ while they sought to uphold its value lest Christ's salvation be useless.

### c) *Baius*

In his devotion to Catholic truth and the Holy See Michel de Bay, professor of theology at Louvain University and later its chancellor, desired to refute Protestants. Returning to Augustine, he discovered a new vision of man. Where Luther and Calvin supernaturalized the natural order, Baius took the opposite tact. He naturalized the supernatural.<sup>16</sup> Moreover his tendency to interpret the economy of salvation in terms of juridical norms of justice not only resulted in a shift in emphasis from God's omnipotent, gracious mystery to man's claim for justice but also produced an anthropology that was almost Pelagian regarding the paradisiacal Adam and a mitigated Protestantism for post-lapsarian man. Seventy-six propositions of Baius's theology were condemned by Pius V in 1567. The first sixty were taken from his published works; the other sixteen derived from the books of his disciples, dictations to student, or *viva voce* disputations.<sup>17</sup> To understand grace and sin Baius found it necessary to describe the paradisiacal relation between God and man. In that primordial state man, God's image and likeness, enjoyed perfect integrity, the lower powers submitted to the higher faculties, and immortality as well as all virtues, the Holy Spirit's indwelling, and freedom of choice. Since they belonged to man and could be communicated integrally to Adam's progeny Baius considered them natural gifts, not graces (9, 23, 24). The Spirit's indwelling and charity were considered merely external conditions allowing merit, not as providing man's entitative elevation; charity was attributed to a transitory divine impulse (32, 72, 73). These "gifts" are demanded by nature at least in the sense that their absence would be an evil, the privation of what is natural to man. Baius distinguished "natural by constitution" from "natural by exigence." As de Lubac explains, "It is not an integral part of [man's] nature, but it is nonetheless something necessary for that nature's integrity and consequently essentially demanded by it."<sup>18</sup> Without those helps man could not attain his end.

Adam was obliged to obey God, and since God bestows the power to perform what He commands, the fulfillment of the divine law could have been accomplished with ease. Such obedience merited as a just recompense eternal life, the immediate vision

of God (1-5, 7, 11). The Fall, however, demolished pristine justice and introduced ignorance, rebellion of the lower powers, and eternal death; moreover, besides destroying freedom of choice and rendering the fulfillment of God's law impossible, it brought down God's wrath (49, 54). Because all voluntary acts are considered free, man's indeliberate, inoperative desires, i.e., concupiscence, are mortal sins worthy of eternal punishment insofar as they transgress God's command in Ex. 20:17, "You shall not covert" (20, 39-41, 48-51, 66, 69, 74-76).

Redemption consists in a renewal of the primordial God-man relation; Baius considered it "supernatural" only in a weak sense insofar as the "natural" order of merit is restored (13, 62). No neutral ground exists between charity and concupiscence (34, 46, 38). Justification becomes the process whereby man obeys God's law, performs ever more good works, grows in virtue, gradually conquers concupiscence, and merits eternal life (14-18, 42, 69). In this progress toward the full remission of sins, justification is the will of love effected through deeds in obedience to the law. Though concupiscence or, equivalently, original sin remains in the baptized, resulting in sin, such sins are not imputed since the Holy Spirit reigns in them (66).

While much ink has been spilled over the condemned theses, to whom they should be individually attributed and the import of the condemnations delivered – the famous *comma Pianum* is involved<sup>19</sup> – they set out the subsequent parameters of Catholic theology. Relevant for our study are the following condemned statements:

6. By the law of nature it was established for man that, if he had persevered in obedience, he would have passed over into that life, in which he could not die (*mori non posset*) (cf. also 4, 5: DS 1904-06).
21. Human nature's elevation and exaltation into a participation in the divine nature was owed to the integrity of the first state; hence it should be called natural and not supernatural (DS 1921).
26. The integrity of the first creation was not an exaltation unowed to human nature, but its natural condition (DS 1926).
55. God could not have created man from the beginning such as he now is born (DS 1955).
73. Aside from Christ no one is free of original sin;

hence the Blessed Virgin died because of the sin contracted from Adam, and all her afflictions in this life and those of other just people were punishments for actual and original sin (DS 1973).

78. The first man's immortality was his natural condition, not a favor of grace (cf. also 79: DS 1978-79).<sup>20</sup>

Since their contraries are taken to be valid, Baius's condemnations contributed to the firm establishment of a natural order in Catholic theology. Moreover, the condemnations intimated that by nature man is mortal as well as affected by concupiscence. Later theology therefore characterized as preternatural such gifts as immortality and integrity. Pius VI's rejection of the Jansenist Synod of Pistoia repeated these essential condemnations of Baius's position (DS 2616-17). That leaves a problem for Fr. Ryan. If death is natural, how can it be evil? God made every nature good, and if death belongs to the natural order, death must be good. In addition, the wide acceptance of the theory of evolution augments the difficulty in modern times: if man stands in developmental continuity with the lower animals, how should he, an animated body like them, have escaped death? Yet according to Fr. Ryan's theory, by creating man mortal, God would be responsible for bringing about an evil. In such a case would not Adam's and Eve's fault be at least partially justifiable? In seeking life, a good, they were only attempting to overcome an evil, death, and thus contribute to the perfection of God's creation. So our circuitous journey through history has led us back to Augustine's initial conundrum: how can God be exonerated of all blame for man's sin if a physical evil, mortality, was built into creation?<sup>21</sup>

#### *Toward a Solution*

A complete answer to the mystery of mortality must escape us insofar as we have no way of controlling empirically our hypotheses about the primordial state of our first parents. Furthermore our hypothesizing about the pristine state without sin is extravagant since *de facto* all men have sinned and need Jesus Christ as the sole savior of our race. God knew from the beginning that men would fall and He preordained that their redemption would be attained only in His Son (Col. 1:11-20; Eph. 1:3-12). Nonetheless some justification for suggesting an hypothesis can be

offered insofar as God did not predestine man to sin, but his Fall was freely willed. In the New Testament God only predestines to salvation (1 Cor. 2:7; Rom. 8:30; Eph. 1:5.11). So the question naturally arises: how would Adam have lived if he had not sinned? Although Augustine, Thomas, Luther, Calvin, and Baius did not agree among themselves, their attempts encourage us to dare an hypothesis that might overcome traditional difficulties.

Can we imagine an Adam living perpetually on this earth? Augustine imagined an Adam in Paradise. He would have avoided the fate of Tithonus who attained immortality without perpetual youth and thereafter desired only to die.<sup>22</sup> For the tree of life would have refreshed and renewed his body. Would Adam have escaped the doom of Swift's Struldbruggs, i.e., the immortals in the land of Luggnagg, who were condemned to age endlessly, experiencing the gradual withering of their spiritual faculties: memory, intelligence, will power, etc.? They wandered in a perpetual daze, most melancholy at "the dreadful prospect of never dying."<sup>23</sup> Even if their faculties were retained in full vigor, how long could they hold out under the monotony of unending repetition of the natural patterns of life? Tolkien's elves, endowed with immortality and perpetual vigor of mind and body, grew weary and freely migrated from Middle Earth to the Blessed Isles.<sup>24</sup> As the meaning of man Nietzsche imagined a Superman potent enough to create his own values, face the ultimate trial of his finitude, and in that test of self-transcendence, child-like, forgetting everything in "a new beginning, a game, a self-rolling wheel," will his own will. Of course Nietzsche wound up in the madhouse as must anyone who seeks consistently to absolutize the relative, or infinitize the finite. His Superman is reduced to affirming himself without past and without future, a timeless point, which exists only in abstraction, a paltry imitation of God's infinity, while the real man faces death alone without the "encouragement" of a Zarathustra who has forever passed from the scene.<sup>25</sup> Even aside from the debilitating monotony of absolute finitude, an immortal, perennially youthful Adam would be condemned to frustration. As long as he lives in an ongoing world, he would never reach final happiness. His freedom, separated from God's eternal beatification, would always be subject to temptation,

and a contingent happiness, constantly imperiled, mutates into torment. The prize, fulfilling beatitude, would always be out of reach. Such an Adam would with Tantalus strain for fulfillment and with Sisyphus strive for achievement, but in vain. As J. Ratzinger wrote, “The continuance *ad infinitum* of life as it is cannot appear desirable to anybody.”<sup>26</sup>

Doubtless to exclude such delusions Christian theologians postulated a transition to a better state where in union with God Adam might enjoy secure felicity. The type of transition was not further explicated, but can it not be called “death,” understood as a departure from the conditions of this world? It is not the death introduced by sin, of which St. Paul spoke in Rom. 5. Once sin destroyed the original union in love between God and man and among men, demolishing marriage, which John Paul II named creation’s primordial sacrament,<sup>27</sup> the world no longer clearly reflected God’s beauty and goodness. With sin’s advent death, instead of being a joyful transition to a more intimate, permanent union with God, became something fearsome. It threatens the despoliation of man’s earthly property, pleasures, and powers. In a world without love, it wields ultimate dominion, depriving men of life, that which is most precious to them, without which none of earth’s other bounties can be enjoyed. As Aristotle wrote, “Death is the most feared of all things; for it is the end, and to the dead nothing seems to be good or bad any longer” (*Nic. Eth.* III, 6; 1115a 26–27). This type of physical death, experienced as perdition by those who do not acknowledge God’s love, is the result of sin. It also drives men on to sin since they do all in their power to postpone it. This is death, the last enemy to be overcome in Christ’s renewal of the universe. It is also the death which Christ conquered by dying and rising. Thereby, He assured men entrapped in the bonds of selfishness that they need no longer fear death but can offer their lives in love for God and their fellow men (1 Cor. 15:12–28.53–58).

Our present horror in the face of death would be non-existent if sin had not warped human perceptions of reality. The transition from this world to the next would be painless and fulfilling. For throughout their lives men would experience and know God’s love in their love for fellow men.<sup>28</sup> His presence

would penetrate ever more men’s whole existence and prepare them for greater union. Men would assimilate ever more profoundly love’s lessons. For love demands a forgetfulness of self and a concern for the one loved; only through that loss does one find oneself returned with superabundance. The losing of self in death would be the final joy of self-sacrifice, a commending of oneself into the paternal hands of God, the thorough penetration of divine love into a human nature.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless there would be a real break, a disruption of continuity, which might be understood in one of two ways. First, it would bring about a fundamental change insofar as the conditions of this world, in which human nature is striving for fulfillment and freedom of choice is exercised, would be transfigured into a terminal condition of perfection guaranteeing freedom’s accomplishment in the possession of unlimited goodness.<sup>30</sup> Jesus’ resurrection shows the perfected state of human nature. This immediate conquest of death, however, God might have reserved uniquely for the second Adam who is also Son of God. His triumph over death was needed as a powerful witness to fallen men, whose perceptions are enfeebled by sin. So another manner of understanding a paradisiacal death is possible. Second, the change in the conditions of freedom arriving with the termination of the possibility of choice might entail a real separation of the soul from the body—“death” as usually understood by tradition (St. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae* III, 50, 3, 4; 4c; 52, 3c). Though the body would be consigned to the earth, just as in the case of all other animal bodies subject to corruption, the human person would remain in God’s sight, enjoying His presence forever;<sup>31</sup> the body meanwhile would await the transfiguration of the whole universe after all human beings accomplish their destiny. Then nothing material would be lost. That salvation of the material universe seems necessary to God’s plan of creation because human beings are fully who they are in their relations to others and this relationality is mediated by matter.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, because all that was created is fundamentally good, God, loving His creation, would not have anything be lost, even matter in its multiple transformations.

This second type of “afterlife,” which is more in accord with man’s evolutionary heritage and present fallen experience, involves neither a temporal con-

tinuation of life in a more pleasant mode of existence nor a vague spiritual subsistence; it entails rather entrance into the full possession of God's eternity. It is possessed by the individual person, i.e., an individual, free, spiritual reality. In classical philosophy individuality was attributed to matter, but at death matter is apparently left in the grave. What provides spiritual individuality after death is the person, i.e., the individual center of knowledge and freedom beyond the natural faculties of intellect and will; the person is the center from which one speaks "I" and in which the fundamental choices of life are made.

Paradoxical as "spiritual individuality" may sound, one finds a basis for it not only in Paul's *soma pneumatikon* (1 Cor. 15:44) but also in St. Thomas's anthropology. The Angelic Doctor recognized that, like other material beings, man is composed of body, soul, and existence, to which correspond his ways of knowing in terms of sensation, abstraction, and judgment. These sensible and intellectual faculties, though distinguishable, nonetheless contribute to the one act of knowing, which is completed in judgment, the conscious appropriation of truth. Consequently there must be a unity in man. Only such a unity can explain the judgmental apprehension of being. "Being" (*esse*) is not perceived as such in the senses nor by the abstractive intellect; rather the whole man knows. There must be a center in which existence is recognized and affirmed. Thomas accordingly postulated an "essence of the soul" from which emanate man's various spiritual and sensible faculties. Knowledge consists, therefore, in a continuous movement from the center into the faculties, animating and unifying them, and a return movement from faculties to the center, carrying the impressions of the senses, the abstractions of the intellect, and the attractions of the will (*Summa Theologiae*, I, 77, 4-7). This center is the self-conscious point of freedom, the point of moral conscience, where man responds to God in His call to love other human beings, His images. Though person can be distinguished from human nature, person is also completely one with nature, embracing it as its enveloping totality. Although St. Thomas never called it "person," it was so considered by Maximus Confessor, John Paul II, Pierre Rousselot, and Jean Mouroux.<sup>33</sup> After death such a spiritual individual center exists with the soul. In a paradisiacal order, one might

easily imagine, communication persists between the state of personal fulfillment for the blessed and those remaining in the condition of spiritual choice and growth. The bodies of deceased ancestors would be respected in anticipation of the final resurrection when creation's union with God would be fully accomplished.

## On Nature and Person

When over centuries many bright people cannot resolve a theological difficulty despite multifarious ingenious contortions of their speculative imaginations, one suspects that the difficulty has been improperly formulated. Such may be the case with the natural-supernatural relation, which has provided not only the stumbling block in Catholic-Protestant ecumenical dialogue but also the dilemma dividing twentieth century Catholic theologians and occasioning post-Vatican II upheavals. Since the Middle Ages theologians have presupposed a human nature to which freedom was ascribed as a function of the natural will. To that nature supervened supernatural revelation and grace. How nature and grace were to maintain their diversity in unity and unity in diversity spawned multiple Catholic theologies indebted to Augustine. But the Doctor of Grace never clearly formulated the distinction; his Adam was created in grace for the beatifying vision of God. Lest the fall utterly disrupt human nature, depriving it of the freedom to accept and cooperate with Christ's redemption, Aquinas and other Scholastic thinkers allowed for a nature that, though wounded, might freely respond to God's offer of grace. Lest the remnant of Adam's nature permit man an alleged autonomy whereby his freedom might glory in God's sight for cooperating with grace, Protestants insisted on sin's utter devastation of Adam's nature. Created for God, capable of living forever, his original perfect nature has been rendered subject to concupiscence and death, incapable on its own of pleasing God. They restored the unity of Augustine's vision but with the danger of denying any meaningful distinction between natural and supernatural orders. To insist upon the supernatural's preeminent superiority to such a

degree that the natural order is eviscerated of significance or value in itself not only undermines the meaning of “super-natural” but also renders Christ’s redemption of nature meaningless. So Protestants sought to uphold nature’s meaningful status while defending without stint grace’s utter gratuity, just as Catholics insisted on nature’s fundamental soundness while proclaiming Christ as our race’s sole, necessary Savior. Unfortunately the theological standoff resulted in perpetuation of the Catholic-Protestant division and contributed, within the various confessions, to the growing theological pluralism that threatens to destroy the basic unity of confessional faith.

In this theological predicament perhaps a shift from the primacy of nature to that of personal freedom may be of some avail. By locating the fundamental disruption in the order of persons, not of natures, and by recognizing that true freedom is actuated only in response to a divine call, one need not postulate a natural order to which a “supernatural” order is added and then worry how they can be conjoined, whether human nature can be fulfilled apart from the beatifying vision of God, and whether man has by nature a claim for such a fulfillment. God’s love establishes personal relations, is always a gift, and actuates human freedom, preserving even the “independence” of the creature in the greatest unity. Then there is no need to have recourse to an almost angelic Adam whose will completely controls his sensible nature and is completely subordinate to his intellect. As long as freedom is located in the person above the nature, there the mystery of God’s love summons the person to a corresponding response. The divine call actuating personal freedom need not be warped or overcome by lower sensible faculties. God can augment the strength of His call as He wills, and only He knows the ultimate freedom and responsibility of sinners. As long as freedom is mediated by the intellect and will, the will must feel the attraction of various finite goods; yet none of them can be ultimately compelling since they are only finite. God’s call to Adam’s conscience would have made itself felt in his personal freedom, and he was free to reject the call. Why that rejection occurred resists, as indicated earlier, every attempt at human explanation; it is irrational.

Concupiscence is natural to man – a truth consequent upon Baius’s condemnations (DS 1926; 2616)

– and Jesus Christ’s perfect humanity was tempted. Indeed, Jesus’ temptations were fiercer since they were mediated by a human world soaked in sin. In the world of fallen humanity desires are disorientated and their perversion affects others. Here concupiscence results from sin and inclines to sin; it was appropriately called “sin” by St. Paul (DS 1515; Rom. 6:12–14; 7:7–25). Jesus was battered by the sins of others, and His human will, naturally seeking fulfillment, naturally sought to avoid the cross’s torments. But it struggled in vain against the bit of love which His divine person assured. By contrast, the first Adam lived in a world in which human relations still mediated God’s love. He was challenged – every divine call is a challenge – to help his fellow human beings, to contribute actively to the world’s humanization and divinization for future generations as well as to God’s glory, and to develop virtuous habits that would let love ever more thoroughly penetrate the entirety of his nature in preparation for the death consummating his self-surrender to God.

The distinction of nature and person may also help to resolve conundrums dividing Catholics and Protestants. Sin’s real wound affected primarily man’s personal relations with God and others, because man separated himself from the love of God and his fellows. His finite nature desires a fulfillment which nothing finite can provide; every finite pleasure or good, if absolutized, disappoints and is soon exhausted. Yet his finite nature can on its own never attain the infinity of God.<sup>34</sup> God, who is tripersonal Love, comes to Him as a gift. He came as a gift at the beginning of the human race when His love to our first parents was mediated to each through the other in the sacrament of marriage. He came and comes still in Jesus Christ’s humanity and the Eucharist: the Absolute is in history. It is only a question whether or not fallen man will right his freedom in accepting the offer of God’s self-gift and then live his life according to God’s life. Nature, though deeply wounded, plays the role it played at man’s creation; it points him to a fulfillment beyond himself, a fulfillment that must be accepted as a gift. Thus the world need no longer be understood theologically in terms of nature, integral, fallen, and elevated supernaturally. The world can be better understood in terms of historical states of freedom: pristine, fallen, and

redeemed.<sup>35</sup> One can agree with Luther and Calvin in interpreting nature in itself as subject to futility, yet they had to see something persistently good in nature to which God's redeeming love came. One can also agree with Catholics who see nature as basically good, pointing man to God, yet incapable without Christ of attaining its end. Freedom is God's gift – on that Protestants and Catholics agree – and it is in the force of that gift that men respond freely. Love engenders love. The recent *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* helps Catholics and Lutherans to overcome past misconceptions and see themselves as emphasizing each a different pole of the mystery: Catholics never attributed any pure initiative to man, who is only saved by grace, much less a right to grace, and Lutherans never considered man merely passive under grace because the free man is really saved. Just as God's infinity does not crush finite beings but makes them be, so also God's omnipotence does not overwhelm human freedom but calls forth its response.<sup>36</sup>

Finally the distinction of person and nature allows the justification of ascetical practices in the Catholic tradition. Obviously fasting, curtailment of sleep, self-castigation, and other forms of self-denial go against man's natural tendencies, which look for satisfaction, not frustration. Were "nature" the sole norm of moral practice, such traditional practices of piety would be outlawed, not praised. Martyrdom would also be difficult to justify since the giving of one's life entails the loss of a natural good. Fr. Ryan would certainly not disavow centuries of Catholic practice that contributed to the sanctification of many. Though nature is fundamentally good, the state of sin into which all men are born disrupts the normal functioning of nature. Passions push men to extremes. Fallen nature has to be tamed to accord itself to the discipline of love. That requires strong measures, often denying nature what would otherwise correspond to its natural functioning and fulfillment.<sup>37</sup> Yet that is possible because the order of freedom surpasses the order of nature, and to personal freedom the demand of love for total self-sacrifice comes. It is in freedom that man encounters God, the true Absolute, and that relativizes all other orders.

## Conclusion

Fr. Ryan's somewhat peripheral comments in his fine article have occasioned these reflections on death in the tradition of Western Christianity. Although Scripture proclaims that death is due to sin, death is also natural to a creature composed of body and soul. As such it seems to be a good, indeed a desired transition to perfect union with God, and Jesus used it to accomplish the Father's will for mankind's salvation. Our study has sought to account for both aspects of death, the individual human nature's felt repugnance to its termination, and its remarkable quality of serving God's ends and effecting man's salvation. Indeed only in conforming himself to Christ's death does a Christian attain the salvation of the resurrection (Rom. 6:3-10; Phil 3:10-11). Both aspects can be maintained in balance once it is recognized that the order of nature is subordinate to the order of personal freedom in which God's gift of His own life of love is to be accepted by human freedom. Then the divine paradox is realized: one gains oneself only in losing oneself. That is the law of love and the law of life, for in God's plan love and life were meant to be as identical in His creatures as in Himself. Sin hindered the immediate paradisiacal completion of that plan but called forth a Redeemer whose death on the cross brought divine life again to all those believing in Him. From this point of view reconciliation not only between God and man but also between Catholic and Protestant can be contemplated. ✠

## Endnotes

- 1 J. Calvin, "Acts of the Council of Trent," in *Tracts and Treatises in Defense of the Reformed Faith*, tr. H. Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 3, pp. 87-88; ----, "The Adultero-German Interim," in *ibid.*, p. 197.
- 2 J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. J. McNeill, tr. F. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), II, 1, 7-9.11; II, 8, 58; III, 3, 10; 4, 11; IV, 15, 11. Further references in the text not otherwise identified are to the book, chapter, and paragraph of the *Institutes*.
- 3 Quoted in W. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford, 1988), p. 247, n. 84, citing Calvin's sermon 98 on Job.
- 4 J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 1, tr. J. King (1847; rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), pp. 94-95, 112, 118, 127, 180.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 98, 125, 153, 184.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 127, 151-53, 155, 162.
- 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 104-05, 173, 176.
- 8 *Ibid.*, pp. 117-18, 184. Unlike Irenaeus, Calvin, p. 182, does not have God clothing Adam and Eve, "as if God had been a furrier," but directing

- them to cover themselves. He counseled animal skins, more degrading than linen or woolen, in order to remind them of their sin.
- 9 Ibid., pp. 128, 158.
  - 10 J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, tr. J. Owens (1849; rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), p. 200; ----, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, 2, tr. J. Pringle (1948; rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), pp. 20, 53, 58-59, 61, 216-17, 219; ----, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, tr. J. Pringle (1951; rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), pp. 43-44.
  - 11 Calvin, *Romans*, pp. 204, 207-10, 215, 255, 273, 277; ----, *Corinthians*, pp. 29, 64; ----, *Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, p. 199; ----, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians and Ephesians*, tr. W. Pringle (1854; rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), p. 219.
  - 12 Calvin, *Corinthians*, pp. 21, 53, 58-59; ----, *Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, pp. 44, 283-84.
  - 13 Throughout his biography, W. Bouwsma emphasizes Calvin's existential anxiety, allegedly rooted in fear of death (ibid., pp. 40-41). R. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin* (New York: Oxford, 2000), pp. 79-98, rejects that modern existentialist interpretation (cf. esp. pp. 90-91 on death). In view of the evidence of the *Institutes* and the commentaries here consulted Muller would seem to be correct. R. Marius, *Martin Luther: The Christian Between God and Death* (Cambridge: Belknap-Harvard, 1999) finds more evidence for such a characterization of Luther, who is paradoxically more a medieval thinker than Calvin, but Marius is often not precise in his theological expressions.
  - 14 Calvin, *Genesis*, pp. 95, 129-30, 139, 155-56, 180.
  - 15 Cf. also ibid., pp. 144-45, 158, where God's "permission" is discussed. Calvin seeks to uphold man's responsibility, to defend God from causing evil, yet also to maintain that Adam's fall was not without God's ordination and will. He remits the explanation to God's mystery, their reconciliation.
  - 16 Cf. de Lubac, p. 32.
  - 17 X. Le Bachelet, "Baius," *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, ed. A. Vacant and E. Mangenot, 2/1 (Letouzey: Paris, 1910), 65.; our presentation of Baius's thought depends on de Lubac, pp. 15-37; Le Bachelet, 64-110; P. Donnelly, S.J., "Baius and Baianism," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Bernard Mathaler (Detroit: Gale-Thompson, 2003), II, 18-21; V. Grossi, "Bajus," *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. G. Kruse and G. Müller (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 133-37. The numbers in parentheses indicate the numbered theses condemned by Pius V (DS 1901-79) insofar as they reflect Baius's theology.
  - 18 De Lubac, p. 18.
  - 19 E. van Eijl, "L'interprétation de la bulle de Pie V portant la condamnation de Baius," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 50 (1955), 499-542; J. Orcibal, "De Baius à Jansenius: le Comma Pianum," *Revue de Science Religieuse* 36 (1962), 115-39; Le Bachelet, 64-65; Grossi, 136-37.
  - 20 Le Bachelet, 71-73, noted that although Baius denied his authorship of such propositions, they can be found as implied at least "under a torturous form" in his texts. However moot may be the inclusion of such theses in Baius's actual intention, the condemnations formed Catholic theology's future.
  - 21 K. Flannery, S.J., "Capital Punishment and the Law," *Ave Maria Law Review* 5 (2007), 414-21, points out the distinction between nature's primary and secondary intentions excogitated by Aristotle and adopted by Thomas to explain both celestial retardation, allowing the "naturalness" of an unnatural irregularity, and death as natural to animals, man included, insofar as their complexity causes an "unnatural" incapacity to sustain continuous life. Although this distinction from *1 Sent.* is not applied to Adam in the later *Summa Theologiae*, it illustrates in another way the need for a double notion of nature. Cf. also Flannery's employment of the distinction in moral questions: "Moral Taxonomy and Moral Absolutes," in *Wisdom's Apprentice: Thomistic Essays in Honor of Lawrence Dewan, O.P.*, ed. P. Kwasniewski (Washington: Catholic University, 2007), 237-59, esp. 252-59.
  - 22 T.S. Eliot placed Tithonus's endless lament, *thelo thanein*, "I wish to die," at the beginning of his poem "The Wasteland" to indicate the hopeless predicament of a society that continues to live without a reason for living.
  - 23 J. Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726; rpt. London: Folio Society, 1965), pp. 187-93.
  - 24 J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, ed. C. Tolkien (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), pp. 298, 304. It is said of the sons of men, "Death is their fate, the gift of Iluvatar, which as time wears, even the Powers shall envy" (p. 42; cf. also pp. 187, 261, 265-66). Death becomes evil to them only with sin (pp. 263-65, 273-75, 281); thus death, the Gift of Men, became the Bane of Men: J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955), pp. 315-16. God's gift, be it elfish immortality or human mortality, like all things short of God Himself, can be misused and misinterpreted.
  - 25 F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, tr. T. Common, in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), pp. 33-34, 43-45.
  - 26 J. Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, tr. M. Waldstein, ed. A. Nichols (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University, 1988), p. 94; cf. also *Spe salvi* 10, in which Benedict quotes St. Ambrose, "Without the assistance of grace, immortality is more of a burden than a blessing."
  - 27 John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline, 1997), pp. 333-36, 339-41 (general audiences of Oct. 6 and 20, 1982). In this essay we prescind from questions about original sin's essence and transmission, including polygenism. We treated original sin and polygenism briefly in the publication of Sacred Heart Major Seminary, *Mosaic* (Summer, 2007), 8-11: "Original Sin and Our Original Parents." We hope to return to the question in a more scholarly setting.
  - 28 For the union of love of God and love of men cf. our "demonstration" of God's existence, "Faith, Reason, and Freedom," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 67 (2002), 307-32, esp. 327-31.
  - 29 A similar view is found in Z. Alszeghy, S.J., and M. Flick, S.J., "Il peccato originale in prospettiva evoluzionistica," *Gregorianum* 47, 215-19. But where they foresaw humanity as a whole conquering concupiscence over time and thus actualizing what was virtually present in humanity as a progressive disposition, our hypothesis allow for such a conquest by our first parents from the beginning. Alszeghy and Flick are still tied to nature as the locus of freedom and accept the strange hypothesis of pre-Adamites. But there can be no human beings without freedom. Of course, this speculation is overtaken by the actual history of a fallen race which God foresaw. K. Rahner, S.J., *Zur Theologie des Todes* (Freiburg: Herder, 1958), ch. 2, also postulated the possibility of Adam's total self-giving to God in death and compared it with our fallen experience of death. His later article, "Zu einer Theologie des Todes," *Schriften zur Theologie*, 10 (Zürich: Benziger, 1972), 186-99, is very illuminating. It finds a basis, even in a fallen world, for understanding death as a completion of one's free self-emptying into the mystery of God's preserving love. (Cf. also Ratzinger, pp. 94-100.) Rahner's early "Zum theologischen Begriff der Konkupiszenz," *Schriften* 1 (1954), 377-414, proposed a distinction between natural concupiscence and personal freedom. His thesis deserves a proper treatment, but that would vastly exceed the limits of this essay. Unfortunately Rahner never consistently elaborated the relation between person and nature in his opus: cf. J. McDermott, S.J., "Karl Rahner in Tradition: The One and the Many," *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* 3/2 (2007), 1-60, esp. 30-34, 36-45, 58-59, n. 112. Cf. also W. Rewak, S.J., "Adam, Immortality and Human Death," *Sciences Ecclésiastiques* 19 (1967), 78: "Adam's death would have been light and not darkness; it would have contained in perfect summation all the grace and joy of a life lived in communion with a kind and loving Father."
  - 30 As long as man is on earth, composed of form and matter, he cannot be content. The combination of body and soul, of potency and act, involves an imperfection to be overcome by change as the inherent form seeks to realize itself in its goal. Heaven, consisting in permanent loving union with the triune God, effects man's natural perfection in which his nature's desires find fulfillment. The natural basis for freedom of choice, which weighs the attraction of finite goods in view of man's final end and God's call, is subsumed into freedom of accomplishment, the attainment of the will's end. Cf. J. Maritain, "The Thomistic Idea of Freedom," *Scholasticism and Politics*, tr. M. Adler (1940; rpt. Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), 117-138, for the relation between freedom of choice and terminal freedom which he also calls freedom of exultation and freedom of autonomy.

- 31 For man's existence beyond this life cf. McDermott, "Faith, Reason, and Freedom," 330-31.
- 32 The paradoxical non-intelligibility of matter manifests itself as both principle of individuation and principle allowing contact among material essences. Cf. J. McDermott, S.J., "Why Matter Matters," *Proceedings of the Sixty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the Jesuit Philosophical Association*, ed. J. Koterski (New York: Fordham University, 2006), 19-46.
- 33 G. Bausenhardt, "In allen uns gleich ausser der Sünde" (Mainz: Grünewald, 1992), pp. 110-182, esp. 147-182. K. Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, tr. A. Potocki with A. Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: D. Riedel, 1979), pp. pp. 118, 125-128, 134-143, 147; J. McDermott, S.J., *Love and Understanding* (Rome: Gregorian, 1982), pp. 266-90; --- and G. Comandini, "The Problem of Person and Jean Mouroux," *Sapientia* 52 (1997), 75-97. B. Ritzler, *Freiheit in der Umarmung des ewig Liebenden* (Bern: Lang, 2000), pp. 409-93, 507-19, has well argued that Maritain was close to the same insight; so was Maréchal according to D. Moretto, *Il Dinamismo intellettuale davanti al Mistero* (Milan: Glossa, 2001), pp. 337-64, 374-75. N. Clarke, S.J., *Person and Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette U., 1993) also joins relation and subsistence.
- 34 This insight was well developed by H. de Lubac, S.J. Even if he was still caught in the naturalistic presuppositions of his time, he sought to understand man and grace from freedom: cf. John McDermott, S.J., "De Lubac and Rousselot," *Gregorianum* 78 (1997), 741-58.
- 35 P. Rousselot came to such a renewed understanding from his late notion of person: cf. J. McDermott, S.J., *Love and Understanding* (Rome: Gregorian, 1983), pp. 241-51, 282-90.
- 36 Cf. our "Faith, Reason, and Freedom," 329-31, where God's omnipotence is the condition and cause of human freedom.
- 37 Cf. J. McDermott, S.J., "Asceticism: The Language of Love," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 74 (Dec., 1973), 10-18.

## Reply to Fr. Michael McDermott, S.J.

I am grateful to Fr. John McDermott for his kind comments about my article in his learned "reflections on death in the tradition of Western Christianity." I wish, however, to reply to the objection he registers to the argument I made that elicited those reflections. I argued that death is evil in itself.<sup>1</sup> Fr. McDermott responds: "If Jesus saved us by His death, death cannot be evil in itself." He establishes that Scripture teaches that Jesus did indeed save us by his death, assumes I deny that teaching, and concludes that my position "contradicts Scripture."

In this brief response I explain and affirm the premise. "Jesus saved us by his death." However, I deny that Fr. McDermott's conclusion "death cannot be evil in itself" follows from that premise. I argue that his conclusion is both untenable and at odds with Scripture.

There is no need to belabor the point that Jesus saved us by his death, for Scripture repeatedly affirms that truth, and the Church's sacramental practice confirms it. As Fr. McDermott reminds us, believers "are baptized into Christ's death" and saved through communion with Christ in the Eucharist "by drinking his blood, poured out on the cross."

If we accept the truth that Jesus saved us by his death, are we compelled to conclude that death cannot be evil in itself?

That conclusion would follow only if, as Fr. McDermott seems to assume, death were the object of Jesus' choice—for if Jesus chose what is evil in itself, we must conclude, against faith, that his choice would be morally wrong. But none of the evidence Fr. McDermott presents to establish that Jesus saved us by his death shows that Jesus chose death itself. Rather, it shows that Jesus freely laid down his life, meaning that he chose to remain true to his mission despite knowing it would cost him his life. He went to Jerusalem to preach the gospel and celebrate the Passover—the first Eucharist—with his friends, even though he knew he would be handed over to his enemies and crucified. As I noted in my article, "Jesus does not intend his death; he freely accepts it. The second Eucharistic Prayer makes that clear: 'Before he was given up to death, a death he freely accepted, he took bread and gave you thanks.'" Jesus accepted his death because he knew that in doing so he would make salvation available to us.

The fact that death is evil in itself and therefore cannot be the object of Jesus' choice is evident in a passage Fr. McDermott himself quotes: "God did not make death nor does He enjoy the destruction of the living. For He created all things for existence" (Wis 1:13-14). Everything God created is good, and nothing is good other than God and his creation. Since

God did not make death, it cannot be good—cannot be a positive reality. Death can only be a privation, the absence of bodily life.

Why does Fr. McDermott overlook the significance of the passage from Wisdom? He assumes that what is evil in itself cannot contribute to the realization of good. However, if what is evil in itself could not contribute to the realization of good, then God, who intends and causes only good, would not permit any evil whatsoever. But he does permit evils, and out of them brings goods that otherwise could not have been. So, the good results of Jesus' death do not show that it was not in itself an evil.

Jesus' death is good, not in itself, but in the great love with which he freely accepted it and in its salvific effects. His obedient acceptance overcomes Adam's disobedience; reconciles the human race to the Father; and reveals Jesus' divine and human love, so that, lifted up on the cross, he draws everyone to himself.

To support his claim that death is not evil in itself, Fr. McDermott recalls that Christian theologians, hypothesizing about Adam's destiny had he never sinned, "postulated a transition to a better state where in union with God Adam might enjoy secure felicity." Fr. McDermott suggests that this transition can be "called 'death,' understood as a departure from the conditions of this world." Such a death, he argues, would not be evil, but rather "the final joy of self-sacrifice, a commending of oneself into the paternal hands of God, the thorough penetration of divine love into a human nature."

Though he says it would involve "a real break, a disruption of continuity," it is not clear whether or not Fr. McDermott means that such a death necessarily would involve the human rational animal ceasing to function as a complete organism, with the result that the soul no longer informs the body. If he does not understand the death of a hypothetical unfallen Adam in those terms, then his suggestion is utterly irrelevant, and nothing he says about such a "death" supports his claim that death, in the sense at

stake, is not evil in itself.

But even if Fr. McDermott does understand such a death in the relevant sense, his suggestion would not support his claim. For that death would have been good, not in itself, but in the great love with which Adam would have accepted it, and in God's responding with the gift of union with himself. Death would not have been a transition in itself but only in virtue of God's response to Adam's lovingly accepting it.

As I shall now show, however, there is a more basic reason why speculation about an unfallen Adam cannot help Fr. McDermott's case. Toward the end of his article, he makes the point that the death of human beings is natural, in the sense that bodily creatures are naturally mortal. That point, however, does not argue against the passage from Wisdom quoted above. As Scripture and Church teaching make clear, had Adam not sinned, God would not have permitted human beings to die.<sup>2</sup> But because human beings sinned, God permits death as a medicinal, educative punishment. Though death is evil in itself, it is good for God to permit it after the fall, because death makes it clear to people that they cannot be fulfilled unless they live and die in friendship with God.

In sum, although death is evil in itself, God permits it for the same reason he permits other evils—because it can and does contribute to the realization of good. The Father permitted Jesus to die so that he could save us, not by choosing death but by freely accepting it. And God permits us to die so that we will recognize the need to hold fast to the salvific graces Jesus offers us through his death. ✠

## Endnotes

- 1 To avoid suggesting that death in itself is a moral evil, I said in my article that "death in itself is bad." In this response, I follow Fr. McDermott in using the word "evil," but I do not mean to suggest that death in itself is a moral evil. I mean only that death in itself is the privation of bodily life—and therefore that the choice of death would be a moral evil.
- 2 See Rom 5:12 and DS 222/101; 1511/788; 1978/1078. St. Thomas also affirms this truth: See *S.t.*, 1, q. 97, a. 4; 2–2, q. 164, a. 1.

*The Person and the Polis: Faith and Values within the Secular State*, edited by Craig Steven Titus, Vol. 1 of the JOHN HENRY CARDINAL NEWMAN LECTURES. Arlington VA: The Institute for the Psychological Sciences Press, 2006. 187 pp., \$29.95, pb.

*On Wings of Faith and Reason: The Christian Difference in Culture and Science*, edited by Craig Steven Titus, vol. 2 of the JOHN HENRY CARDINAL NEWMAN LECTURES. Arlington VA: The Institute for the Psychological Sciences Press, 2008. 155 pp., \$24.95, pb.

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

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

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

The inaugural volume concerns the relations between personhood and the political community. The

essay by Paul Vitz ("From the Modern Individual to the Transmodern Person") is representative of the high quality of these essays. After distinguishing between the approaches within modern and postmodern psychology that consider personhood primarily in terms of relationships to others (parents, siblings, etc.) from those approaches that tend to ignore relationship in the effort to promote individuation, Vitz analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches and then outlines what psychology lost as it grew increasingly secular and what it needs to recover from the Christian understanding of person and individual.

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

The essays by Daniel Robinson ("In Defense of Moral Realism") and Robert P. George ("The Concept of Public Morality") are invaluable for making clear some of the most important issues in contemporary debates about morality. Robinson analyzes the forms of argumentation that tend to reduce moral opinions to feelings and sentiments. Like John Rist's magnificent exposé of the incoherence of moral arguments that do not have a transcendental ground (*Real Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 2002), this essay is a *tour de force* that will be of particular help in exposing the inconsistencies of much of what passes for serious aca-

demical argument about ethics despite question-begging assumptions. Similarly, George provides a hard-hitting review of a number of the strategies frequently employed by modern liberalism in the effort to disenfranchise any religious position from participating in moral discussions in the public forum.

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

The title of the second volume alludes to John Paul II's *Fides et Ratio*, and its contents are much in the spirit of that encyclical. Both Jude Dougherty's essay ("Wretched Aristotle") and that of Richard John Neuhaus ("Newman's Second Spring—Once Again") have a rhetorical flair that make for delightful reading. They stress the evangelization of culture, including intellectual culture, that was always a crucial part of John Paul II's program for the "new evangelization." Edmund Pellegrino, M.D., who is clearly the dean of Catholic scholars in the area of bioethics, also makes use of Newman in his account of the prospects for Catholic medical education ("Medicine and Medical Education in Newman's University").

Two of the essays in this volume

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

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

The final pair of essays in this volume have a refreshingly evangelical outlook. In "Christ, the Redeemer of Culture," John Haas, the president of the Na-

tional Catholic Bioethics Center, considers various practical ways to promote John Paul II's theme of the evangelization of cultures. And with his characteristic wit and wisdom, Peter Kreeft treats the Beatitudes to show how utterly different and infinitely more profound Jesus's concept of happiness is than any secular substitute notion.

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

***A History of Natural Philosophy: From the Ancient World to the Nineteenth Century***, by Edward Grant. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Xiv + 361 pp.

*Reviewed by Jude Dougherty,  
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In an opening page, defining the scope of his enquiry, Grant reminds us that for the Greek "natural philosophy encompassed all natural phenomena of the physical world. It sought to discover physical causes and all natural effects and was little concerned with mathematics. By contrast, the exact mathematical sciences, such as astronomy, optics, and mechanics did not involve physical causes." Natural philosophy and the mathematical sciences functioned independently of each other. The most profound changes in natural philosophy did not occur until the seventeenth century. It was only then that there came to be a union of the exact sciences and natural philosophy.

To begin with the pre-Socratics, only meager fragmentary writings have been left to posterity. As a result, they will forever remain a shadowy group, but this much is clear. Greek philosophy was

advanced because of Pre-Socratic emphasis on rational analysis of problems and their avoidance of appeals to divine intervention for the explanation of natural phenomena. As they studied the operations of the physical world, their objective was not to control nature but to understand and explain it. Astronomy had reached its greatest height in Babylon and Assyria in the period approximately 500 B.C., and that work was available to the Greeks. Although Plato is known for his emphasis on a mathematically structured world, Plato did not believe that we could arrive at a precise description of the material world. Thus he stressed reasoned abstract analysis rather than observation and reliance on sense reports. Plato's analyses and explanations are largely teleological, given that he viewed the world as the work of divine intelligence. Grant muses, "We may well ponder whether a tradition of serious natural philosophy could have been derived from Plato's approach to the world."

The idea of carrying out a systematic study of nature is one that the West owes to Aristotle. Known as a careful and objective student of nature, he is regarded as the founder of biology itself. Some of his classifications of plants and animals were not superseded until the nineteenth century. Scholars today continue to marvel at his accuracy. Speaking of Aristotle's treatise, *On the Generation of Animals*, the naturalist George Henry Lewes has written: "It is an extraordinary production. No ancient, and few modern, works equal it in comprehensiveness of detail and profound speculative insight." Aristotle is also acknowledged to be the inventor of formal syllogistic logic. As Grant notes, Aristotle constructed a system of the cosmos that endured for almost two thousand years in three different civilizations and cultures.

Differentiating among natu-

ral philosophy, mathematics, and metaphysics, Aristotle identifies the proper object of each. Natural philosophy, or what we today call physics, has as its proper object bodies that undergo change and motion. Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, *De Anima*, *Politics*, and the *Nicomachean Ethics* are still introductory texts studied by students throughout the West. The tradition of writing commentaries on Aristotle's works began immediately after their recovery and cataloging by Andronicus of Rhodes. We have some that date to about the middle of the first century B.C. Most of the commentaries in late antiquity were written by Neoplatonists, notably by Alexander of Arodisias, Themistius, John Philoponus, and Simplicius. When the Roman Emperor Justinian in 520 A.D. closed the Neoplatonic school in Athens to strike a blow against paganism, scholars, including Simplicius, moved eastward. The story of how Aristotle entered the Islamic world is told in Grant's chapter four, "Islam and the Eastward Shift of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy." The final stage of Aristotelian translations occurred in Baghdad between 900 and 1220 A.D. In the final phase the translations were usually revisions of older translations. When the process was completed, there were Arabic versions of all of Aristotle's works on logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics. The reception of natural philosophy in Islam is a story in itself and illustrates a cultural divide between Islam and the West and its implications for the growth of science.

Grant offers extended discussions of the work of al-Kindi, al-Razi, al-Farabi, ibn Sina, and ibn Rushd, and goes on to describe the suspicion and often outright hostility accorded the natural philosophers within Islam. To say the least, they were not popular because they employed logic and natural phi-

losophy in the search of truth for its own sake quite apart from their theological commitment. Given their emphasis on reason and logical argumentation, they made the proponents of traditional theology look old fashioned and unsure of themselves. The philosophers were careful not to rile the religious authorities, but as a result of their disfavor, natural philosophy never took root in Islam.

Grant tells us: "Aristotle's natural philosophy and Greek science generally did not begin to enter Western Europe until the middle of the twelfth century. Before that time only a minuscule part of Greek science and natural philosophy was available in the West." There follow chapters on natural philosophy before and after the Latin translations and one illuminating chapter on the form and content of late medieval natural philosophy. Grant addresses at chapter length the relations between natural philosophy and theology and moves the story to an account of the transformation of medieval philosophy from the early modern period to the end of the nineteenth century.

A brief review can only intimate the richness of this volume. Grant's encyclopedic knowledge, remarkable in itself, is complemented by a lifetime of scholarship that makes him a worthy guide to a fascinating history. It is perhaps not out of place to say that this book would make an excellent text for an upper-division college course in philosophy.

***Islamic Imperialism: A History***, by Efraim Karsh. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. 284 pp. Cloth, \$30; paper, \$17.

*Reviewed by Jude Dougherty,  
The Catholic University of America*

In his epilogue to this volume, Karsh concludes, "Though tempered and qualified in different places and at different times, the Islamic longing for unfettered suzerainty has never disappeared, and has resurfaced in our own day with a vengeance." He goes on to say, "If today America is reviled in the Muslim world, it is not because of its specific policies but because as the preeminent world power it blocks the final realization of this same age-old dream of regaining the glory of the caliphate."

In successive chapters Karsh provides a fascinating account of Islam from the Warrior Prophet to Osama bin Laden, providing the reader with an historical survey of the Umayyad Dynasty, the Abbasid Dynasty, and finally that of the Ottoman Empire. The first Islamic dynasty was that of the Umayyads (661-750). Although overthrown by the Abbasid caliphate in 750, the Umayyads were nevertheless to rule Spain for more than 300 years. During those years the Umayyads achieved, by all accounts, a level of political, economic, and cultural greatness, unknown elsewhere in the Islamic world—in Karsh's judgment, largely because they were divided from the rest of the Islamic world. The indigenous Christians remained loyal to the Church and to their native culture and language. By the end of the Umayyad era less than ten percent of the empire's subjects had adopted Islam. The Umayyads, in Karsh's judgment, were first and foremost imperial monarchs for whom Islam was but a means to shore up their credentials. Islam was a handy façade behind which they could fully enjoy the fruits of their imperial expansion accomplished in the name of Allah. The Abbasids, no less secular than the Umayyads, held the caliphate until it was destroyed by the Mongol invasion of 1258. Under the Abbasids the basis for the authority of the caliphate shifted from Arab nationality to international member-

ship in the community of believers. The Ottomans, who began their rule at the beginning of the fourteenth century, at the peak of their power had conquered southeastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa and were to rule in the name of Allah for centuries before the empire disintegrated at the time of World War I.

Karsh interprets the history of Islam in the light of its steadfast goal of “world domination,” the creation of a universal umma. He defends his perspective by citing the declared objectives of Islamic leaders through the centuries, from the Prophet himself, through Saladin, Khomeini, and finally Osama bin Laden. Mohammad, in his farewell address (March 632), told his followers: “I was ordered to fight all men until they say, ‘There is no god but Allah.’” Saladin, in January 1189, repeated the mandate: “I will cross this sea to their islands to pursue them until there remains no one on the face of the earth who does not acknowledge Allah.” Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, in 1979, similarly inspired his followers: “We will export our revolution throughout the world... until the calls, ‘there is no god but Allah and Mohammad is the messenger of Allah’ are echoed all over the world.” And Osama bin Laden, within the memory of most, proclaimed: “I was ordered to fight the people until they say there is no god but Allah, and his prophet Mohammad.” It cannot be denied, as Karsh points out, that as a universal religion, Islam envisages a global political order in which all humankind will live under Muslim rule and the law of Shari’a, either as believers or subject communities. In order to achieve this goal the House of Islam insists that it is incumbent on all free male adult Muslims to carry out an uncompromising struggle in the path of Allah, or jihad. Those parts of the world that have not been conquered are to be considered permanent battlegrounds. Karsh reminds his reader

that Mohammad initially devised the concept of *jihad*, “exertion in the path of Allah,” as a means to entice his local followers to raid Meccan caravans and thus, Karsh comments, “instantaneously transformed a common tribal practice into a supreme religious duty and the primary vehicle for the spread of Islam through the ages.”

Karsh is insistent upon his interpretative key to the rise and fall of the House of Islam. “No matter how hard the caliphs professed their commitment to the pursuit of a holy war against the unbelievers, theirs was a straightforward act of empire building.” Karsh challenges the view that there is or need be a “clash of civilizations” between Islam and the West. With some justification he can say that throughout its history the Islamic faith did not prevent Muslims from appropriating the intellectual property as well as the material holdings of other cultures and religions. The absorption of the conquered civilizations was often thorough and comprehensive. Indian medicine, mathematics, and astronomy were studied; Iranian administrative techniques borrowed; so too Iranian social, artistic, and economic traditions were adopted. The greatest borrowing was undoubtedly the wholesale incorporation of Hellenic science and philosophy.

Be that as it may, Karsh does not deny the Islamic threat to Europe. Uncontrolled immigration and population projections point to Islamic domination in Europe by the end of the present century, given Europe’s unwillingness to defend its inherited culture. The drive for world domination remains an integral part of the Islamic creed. “The fuel of Islamic imperialism remains as volatile as ever,” Karsh concedes. In spite of the growing adoption of Western ideals and practices, Islam has not abandoned the notion of Allah’s universal sovereignty. Karsh finds considerable sympathy throughout the Muslim

world for the motives, if not the deeds, of those who carried out the 9/11 attacks and the London and Madrid bombings.

Karsh brings his study to a close with this judgment: “Only when the political elites of the Middle East and the Muslim world reconcile themselves to the reality of state nationalism, foreswear pan-Arab and pan-Islamic dreams and make Islam a matter of private faith rather than a tool of political ambition will the inhabitants of these regions at last be able to look forward to a better future free of would be Saladins.” That may be true, but it is also true that with the eclipse of Christianity and the threatened loss of national and cultural identity among the member states of the European Union, Saladin’s dream of conquering the Continent may yet be accomplished, not by military means but through population growth favorable to Islam.

*Science and Scientism in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, by Richard Olson. Champaign-Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008. ix+349 pp. Cloth, \$80.00. paper, \$27.00.

*Reviewed by Jude Dougherty,  
The Catholic University of America*

Making a distinction between “science” and “scientism,” Olson defines science as “a cultural institution characterized for each particular time and place by a set of activities and habits of the mind aimed at contributing to an organized, universally valid, and testable body of knowledge about phenomena.” With that definition in mind, Olson then offers detailed discussions of several nineteenth-century traditions of natural science associated with a revival of Hippocratic approaches to medicine, with the term “positivism” in France, and the term, “naturphilosophie” in Germany. He subsequently explores some of

the mechanism by which scientific ideas and attitudes became common intellectual currency within different segments of the population. Sections on the “religion of humanity” follow. There is a treatment of Saint-Simon’s socialism, Auguste Comte’s positivism, Kant’s critical philosophy, and lesser treatises on Goethe, Schelling, and the German romanticism of the period. The work of Fichte, Feuerbach as well as that of Darwin, Mill, and Spencer come in for discussion.

Olson is convinced that throughout the early years of the nineteenth century, every major tradition of natural science spawned efforts to extend scientific ideas, methods, practices, and attitudes to social and political issues of contemporary concern. To provide one example, the analytic strategies associated with mechanics generally led to a presumption that society could be treated as an aggregate of individuals, with the result that it came to be assumed that the happiness of those individuals could be understood in terms of some kind of pain-pleasure calculus.

Another example is taken from the field of medicine. The presumed inherent equality of all human beings was challenged by medical studies. Recognition of the division of labor, which had been so important for economic progress, now seemed grounded in the innate differences among people rather than in the way they had been socialized. Medical education came to be transformed when causal accounts of physiological phenomena and diseases in terms of mechanical and chemical causes were questioned because they proved to be of no value for therapeutics.

Early chapters entitled, “Saint-Simonism and the Birth of Socialism,” and “Auguste Comte and Positivism,” offer a prelude to an insightful chapter five, wherein Olson accounts for the rise of ma-

terialism and its impact on religion and politics. Much of his narrative is well known. Kant, in robbing religion of its foundation in natural theology, not only deprived religion of the support of natural science but also deprived the material world of moral significance. David Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach further undermined the legitimacy of Christianity. Olson quotes Feuerbach, who claimed that the overarching purpose of his *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* was “to cancel above all the old cleavage between this side and the beyond in order that humanity might concentrate on itself, its world, and its present with all its heart and soul.” Olson makes the link between “scientific materialism” and political liberalism. Absent belief in God, immortality, and divine sanction, the traditional standards of morality are weakened, with consequences for the social order.

Olson suggests that the success of materialism as an ideology is linked to the marvelous achievements of the physical sciences in the early nineteenth century. “If the status of science had not been rapidly on the rise in Germany during the 1840s, the materialist appeal to scientific authority in the name of humanistic religion and liberal politics would have had little impact, but such was not the case.” Olson is quick to point out that “the overwhelming majority of German scientists had certainly become fed up with religious and philosophical controversies and simply wanted to get on with their work without committing to any particular metaphysical or religious position. They had no more use for the secular dogmatism of materialism than the religious dogmatism associated with Christian conservatives.” Viewed from the perspective of those outside the sciences, the polemical zeal of the materialists often made it seem as if they spoke

with the authority of the scientific community itself. In a concluding chapter, Olson writes: “The more radical thinkers, together with the German appetite for popular scientific writings, combined to make it seem to many sympathizers and opponents alike as if the scientific enterprise promoted both atheism and liberal to radical politics.”

Olson comes to this study with considerable credentials. He is the author of *Science and Religion, 1450-1900: From Copernicus to Darwin*; and *Scottish Philosophy and British Physics, 1750-1850: Foundations of the Victorian Scientific Style*, among other authoritative works. No brief review can do this book justice. Suffice it to say that both the student and seasoned scholar will find his synthesis and insight compelling.

***The Catholic Experience in America***, by Joseph Varacalli. Westview, CT. Greenwood Press, 2006. xxii + 341, hardcover, \$57.95.

Review by John F. Quinn,  
Department of History,  
Salve Regina University, Newport, RI

When addressing the bishops during his American tour, Pope Benedict XVI lamented the decline of the “Catholic ghetto.” The pope noted how helpful this extensive network of Catholic institutions and organizations had been in passing on the faith from one generation to the next. Joseph Varacalli stresses the same point in his bracing and insightful study, *The Catholic Experience in America*. A sociologist, Varacalli prefers to speak of a “Catholic plausibility structure” rather than a “Catholic ghetto.” He points out that from the 1830s until the 1960s the Church operated a vast array of schools, colleges, hospitals and orphanages. There were also a host of associations for Catholics to join from the Knights of Columbus to

the CYO to the Catholic Anthropological Conference. These structures made it easier for Catholics to keep their faith intact in a largely Protestant society.

In the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, this separate Catholic world began to crumble. Progressive Catholics, spurred on by what they took to be the spirit of the Council, urged their coreligionists to enter the American mainstream. Some liberals, like Mary Perkins Ryan, wondered whether parochial schools were necessary any longer. Catholic professional organizations were similarly questioned. Was it not divisive to have associations of Catholic doctors, lawyers and sociologists? Financial pressures also weighed on Catholic institutions. With large numbers of sisters abandoning the religious life and others leaving the teaching profession for other types of work, many school administrators had difficulty paying the salaries for laypersons.

Of course, many Catholic institutions weathered the tumult of the 1960s and are still operating today. Indeed, Varacalli notes that as of 2003 there were 230 Catholic colleges, 1374 Catholic high schools and 7142 Catholic elementary schools in the United States. He believes these statistics are somewhat misleading, though, because a sizable number of these schools have undergone what he terms "secularization from within." Such institutions continue to identify themselves as Catholic and retain some of the trappings of Catholicism, but are "hollowed out" and are no longer animated by a Catholic vision.

In Varacalli's view, what transpired in the 1960s has profoundly damaged the Church in America. Catholics entered the mainstream of American society at a time when the dominant culture was shifting from Protestantism to secularism. Consequently, many have abandoned Christianity and the moral values associated with it. He notes, for example, that only

21% of Catholics born since Vatican II are regular churchgoers and that only about 50% of all American Catholics are pro-life.

Most orthodox Catholic commentators would agree with Varacalli that the Church experienced a severe crisis in the years following Vatican II, but some would argue that the situation improved significantly after the election of Pope John Paul II in 1978. These optimists would emphasize that the pope appointed more traditional bishops, issued a new catechism and encouraged the founding of new religious communities and Catholic colleges.

Varacalli is not persuaded by these claims. While he deeply admires Pope John Paul II, he feels that the pope was hesitant to rein in the many dissidents who held important positions in the Church. And while he is pleased to see communities such as the Sisters of Life expanding and colleges like Franciscan University flourishing, he is quick to note that the number of people involved in all of these "neo-orthodox" endeavors is relatively small. Varacalli concludes his work on a more upbeat note, predicting that Pope Benedict XVI will prove to be a more forceful advocate of orthodoxy.

Readers interested in the changing fortunes of the Catholic Church in America will find Varacalli's work of great interest. He has managed to produce a study that is both scholarly and accessible to a general audience. To assist readers, he has included a timeline, glossary and other useful appendices. Some readers may not agree with Varacalli's generally pessimistic judgments, but all should acknowledge the validity of his central thesis about the disappearance of the "Catholic ghetto." Without strong Catholic institutions and organizations, the challenging task of passing on the faith becomes much more difficult.

***Roman Catholicism and Modern Science***, by Don O'Leary. New York. Continuum Books. New York and London. 2006

*Reviewed by Peter E. Hodgson,  
Corpus Christi College, Oxford*

Scientific research continually increases our knowledge of the natural world and its history, and this raises many theological questions, particularly concerning the interpretation of the Bible and the morality of new medical techniques. The Galileo case is frequently quoted as a clear example of the teaching authority of the Church opposing a scientific discovery. Galileo, a loyal Catholic, became convinced by his astronomical discoveries and by the logical coherence of the Copernican heliocentric system that the earth rotates on its axis and circulates around the sun each year. This struck at the heart of the Aristotelian-Ptolomaic cosmology that had stood for nearly two millennia and was thoroughly integrated with Catholic theology. This naturally alarmed theologians and philosophers who strongly opposed Galileo, without however refuting his arguments. They therefore sought to discredit Galileo by maintaining that the heliocentric theory was contrary to the Bible. Galileo, who wanted to prevent the Church condemning a scientific theory that might subsequently be shown to be true, was therefore forced to defend himself. He did so, following Augustine and Aquinas, by saying that the Bible is concerned with our salvation and not with teaching science. Nevertheless, to settle the controversy, the Church set up a Commission to enquire into the truth of heliocentrism, and concluded that it was false. This was a great mistake, as the Church should never attempt to decide a scientific question. Centuries later it was admitted that Galileo's views on theology were sounder than those of the theologians who opposed him.

The unsatisfactory result of the Papal Commission established by Pope John Paul II to study all aspects of the Galileo affair (see *The Church and Galileo* ed. Ernan McMullin, Notre Dame Press 2005), and the Paschini scandal illustrate continuing difficulties.

O'Leary discusses in detail the problems raised by the interpretation of the Bible, particularly the six days of creation, the universality of the Flood, the historical accuracy of the story of Adam and Eve, and implausible stories such as the ark with pairs of all the animals and of Jonah and the whale. Himself a neuroscientist, he also discusses the moral problems raised by modern medicine. Apart from the Galileo case, the physical sciences have raised fewer problems. Among these he discusses the ill-judged attempt to use the big bang theory to support the belief in creation by God. It is surprising and disappointing that he makes no mention of the extensive and authoritative studies by Duhem, Crombie and Jaki.

The Church teaches that the Bible is the inspired word of God and so its truth is unquestionable. However it has always been obvious that this does not necessarily hold for the surface literal meaning of the text. This is shown for example by expressions such as the right hand of God and the mountains leaping for joy. The voyages of discovery in the sixteenth and subsequent centuries revealed so many new species of animals that they obviously could not all fit into the ark. In the nineteenth century the evidence of evolutionary processes taking millions of years became overwhelming and showed that the six days of creation must be a literary artifice. These problems were extensively discussed in the nineteenth century. Modern studies of DNA seem to rule out the origin of mankind in a single pair. If so, then theologians have to reconcile it with the doctrine of original sin.

In the early nineteenth century liberal anticlericals tried to eliminate religious faith, and Catholics were polarised between moderate liberals and ultramontanists. The Papacy was politically, economically and socially conservative, while Enlightenment rationalism encouraged distrust of authority and tradition. "The findings of biblical scholars demolished many traditional beliefs about the historical accuracy of the scriptural narratives," and "scepticism and anti-clericalism became widespread." Reacting to this, Pope Pius IX "asserted the primacy of faith over natural science. Newman considered that the Church was unjustly interfering in scientific studies. To reassert his authority Pius issued the Syllabus of Errors "condemning many of the principles applied by scientists, social scientists and non-Catholic biblical scholars," and rejecting the proposition that "the Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself and come to terms with progress, Liberalism and modern civilisation." In addition, there was much religious opposition to evolution.

To strengthen the papacy, Pius convened the first Vatican Council. There was little freedom of debate, and much time was spent on the definition of papal infallibility and the affirmation of the inerrancy of Scripture. His successor Pope Leo XIII established the Vatican Observatory in 1891 to show that "the Church and its Pastors are not opposed to true and solid science, whether human or divine, but that they embrace it, encourage it, and promote it with the fullest possible dedication." Nevertheless, he still tended to see scientists as the enemies of the Church. Theologians had the difficult task of defending the Bible as the inspired word of God while at the same time showing that it is consistent with scientific discoveries. They also had to respect the decrees of the Church authorities who were understandably reluctant to depart from traditional

interpretations. O'Leary recounts the efforts of Headley, Clifford, Leroy, Zahm, Newman, Mivart and Loisy and their interactions with the Church authorities. In 1893 Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Proventisimus Deus* condemned the higher criticism of the Bible, and laid down strict guidelines for Biblical interpretation. In 1902 he established the Pontifical Biblical Commission to judge biblical questions and to ensure the observance of these guidelines. Later on, Pope Pius X issued the encyclical *Pascendi Gregis* condemning the errors of modernism. In the twentieth century, further studies were made by Dorlodot, Messenger, Teilhard de Chardin, Fothergill and Martindale. In 1936 Pope Pius XI founded the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, dedicated to "serving the faith by searching for truth," and encouraged biblical studies by his encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. After the second world war there was a notable expansion of Biblical studies, which Pope Pius XII guided by his encyclical *Humani Gregis* on evolution. Further advances were made at the Second Vatican Council, particularly by *Gaudium et Spes* and by the rehabilitation of Galileo. This work was continued by Pope John Paul II who on many occasions expressed his support for science. Recently there has been much discussion of intelligent design in nature. Over time, many of the earlier decisions were quietly retracted. As Dom Cuthbert Butler wryly remarked, alternative interpretations of the Bible stories were first rejected as heretical, then in turn erroneous, rash, tolerable and finally freely accepted. In the process many loyal scientists and theologians suffered greatly, as Pope John Paul II admitted in the case of Galileo.

The disputes were not just between scientists and theologians, but existed within each community. Other scientists were often the strongest opponents of the new scientific ideas, and theologians were also

divided into progressives and conservatives. Both groups were subject to the authority of the Church. Adding to the tensions, theologians seldom welcome criticism from scientists, and scientists deeply resent interference from theologians especially when, as is often the case, they are insufficiently familiar with the science they criticise. Further difficulties arose in Britain in the nineteenth century due to the general aversion to Catholicism, and the aggressive attacks by Darwin's supporters such as Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer who saw religion as an enemy of progress and used science as a weapon against it. This view was given some plausibility by the poor level of scientific teaching in Catholic universities and seminaries.

O'Leary's book is a dispassionate and detailed account of these interactions between scientists, theologians and the Church authorities. He is not out to attack the Church, but nevertheless many of the events he recalls make sorry reading. It must be realised, however, that the task of the Church is not an easy one. The Church has the awesome responsibility to preserve the faith and defend it against error, while recognising the steady development of doctrine. It can be said that if a scientific result is established, then the interpretation of the Bible must be reconsidered. However, it is not easy to be sure when some scientific results are really established; there are many instances when a result once considered as established is later shown to be false. Examples are provided by the aether and the nature of light. Theologians are in a difficult situation: if they immediately accept a scientific result, then they can be criticised as gullible and look foolish when the result is withdrawn. On the other hand, if they are cautious they can be criticised as hidebound and unresponsive to progress. It is hardly surprising that many scientists and theologians decide to keep quiet on these questions,

a stance that does not help further studies. The essential harmony between faith and science does not mean that there is exact concordance at any one time. Scientists and theologians should therefore, in the words of Newman, "go on quietly, and in a neighbourly way, in their respective lines of speculation, research and experiment, with full faith in the consistency of that multiform truth."

***Before I Go: Letters to Our Children about What Really Matters***, by Peter Kreeft. Rowman and Littlefield Publishing MD, (2007, hardcover, 255 pp., \$14.95.

*Reviewed by Rev. Leonard Kennedy, Toronto.*

**P**eter Kreeft is probably the most productive Catholic writer in the United States. He is the author of more than forty-five books. In this present book he tells his children all the important matters about which he should instruct them before he dies. The publisher of the book says that "most parents have no trouble telling their children how to dress, drive, or study," but some parents "struggle to talk with them about how best to live—about real love, faith, integrity, values, true enrichment, and success." And the publisher promises the reader "readable... heart-to-heart chats that present priceless truths to live by." And the reader is presented with 162 of these chats, some longer, some shorter.

The reader should not be too ready to imagine that the chats are all simple. They are all well written, and important, but most of them require a second or third reading, and then pondering. And very often the pondering, to be effective, involves a knowledge of oneself, and a fresh look at human nature. This book is not for young children. Most of it requires maturity. And it would be best used for readers who understood it well enough to explain its points to parents or teach-

ers. Indeed, it would be excellent for a teacher instructing a class.

Perhaps two short "chats" should be used as samples.

*1. Number 22: What to do with time (Some practical advice).*

Amazing how a simple thing like time management can make such a big difference to everything in life. Imagine how a simple, obvious rule can make such a big difference to time management. The rule: first work, then play. That way, the work will be done well, unhurried, and without deadlines and time pressures. And the play will be guilt-free and worry-free because your work is done. You know you *deserve* to play now, so that you will enjoy it more. Otherwise, if you play first and then work, the play is full of worry and the work is full of hurry.

*2. Number 77: Peace.*

Unless you are already at peace with yourself, you can't practice the road to peace that is forgiveness. Instead, you will project the war you have within yourself out onto the other.

Thomas Merton says we are not at peace with each other because we are not at peace with ourselves, and we are not at peace with ourselves because we are not at peace with God. That's the whole problem of conflict in two sentences.

Why do you have to bring God into it? I don't bring God into it; He *is* in it, in the very center of it, because He touches us at the very center of the self, where we are subject, not object, "I," not "he" or "she." Augustine calls Him "the One who is more intimately present to me than I am to myself." *That's* why Merton was right.

These "chats" are worth reading or re-reading for a lifetime. That's why Peter Kreeft has fulfilled his paternal obligation "before he goes."

*Saints for Sinners: Nine Desolate Souls Made Strong by God*, Alban Goodier. Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 2007, 160 pp. Softcover, \$12.95

Review by Marie I. George,  
St. John's University, NY.

**S***aints for Sinners* contains nine biographies about 15–20 pages long, agreeable reading for someone who does not want to read a whole book on one saint, but who wants more detail than is given in the typical page-per-saint book. For the most part the stories are well told and salient details concerning the spiritual life are brought out. Who would have ever guessed that Francis Xavier never manifested any interest in being a missionary or that Claude de la Colombière was a melancholic soul who found life long?

One minor complaint that I have with the book is its misleading title. Usually when we think of sinners we think of public sinners, like Augustine with his mistress. On this criterion Augustine, Margaret of Cortona, St. Camillus, St. John of God fall neatly under the book's title. If we add St. Claude de la Colombière to the list on the grounds that his writings witness to his struggles with vanity and other sins, we are still left with four saints who don't fit the bill. St. Francis Xavier was less successful than we imagine him to be; St. John of the Cross was persecuted by members of his community. St. Joseph Cupertino was a dunce, and St. Benedict Labre failed to gain entry to the religious communities he applied to. None of these things, however, qualify these individuals as sinners.

The preface tries to convince us of the legitimacy of the title by telling us that the word "sinners" is being taken in a broad sense: "For besides the actual consciousness of sin, and the sense of weakness that comes of it, there is also a kindred

consciousness of failure, and ineffectualness, and other hard things in the spiritual life that makes us realize our utter nothingness, and compels us sometimes to wonder whether we are not ourselves their cause." I am not sold, and think that a more accurate title would simply have been the subtitle: *Nine Desolate Souls Made Strong by God*. This being said, upon reflecting on whether there really was any central theme to the book, it occurred to me that the saints who didn't have an obvious struggle with sin were nonetheless "challenged." People do sometimes tend to think that their non-sinful limitations and failures mark them as unlikely candidates for sainthood. What some of the saints featured in this volume show is that being a "loser" or even a bit crazy is not an obstacle to sainthood. This is not surprising, as God uses the weak to confound the strong. In some cases, the weak in question were morally weak, like Margaret of Cortona who acceded to a nobleman's advances or Camillus who was addicted to gambling. In other cases, the weak in question were dumb or mentally unstable or lacked the ability to persuade their confreres of the manifest good of what they were doing. In this category are saints like Joseph Cupertino who was initially turned out of the Franciscans for his denseness and John of the Cross who was imprisoned by his own community. Their stories attest to a God who seeks us in all of the various trials of life, and who will, if we only let him, make something great of us despite our shortcomings, moral and other.

After having written this review, I happened to look at the back cover only to discover that the blurb coincided with my own thoughts about the book: "Christ came not to call saints but to make them—often out of weak, stupid, and sinful men. That's why the saints are not only models of holiness for us to imitate; they're reminders that God's grace

can outshine ever human flaw." The stories recounted in *Saints for Sinners* indeed offer hope for those who feel challenged in various ways.

*Worthy is the Lamb: The Biblical Roots of the Mass*, by Thomas J. Nash. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004, 248 pp. Paperback, \$15.95.

Reviewed by Marie George  
St. John's University, NY.

**W***orthy is the Lamb* focuses on the Mass as a communion sacrifice. Its goal is not to provide the scriptural background for individual Mass prayers, as does Fr. Peter Stravinskis's book, *The Bible and the Mass*. *Worthy is the Lamb* appears to be addressed to an adult study group, judging from the "questions for reflection and discussion" found at the end of each chapter. The author is not a scripture scholar, and the book falls closer to being a catechetical work than a theological treatise. The book in fact has an index to the passages in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which it cites. At the head of each chapter is a list of the pertinent Bible readings. The book's goal, then, is to bring the average parishioner to a better understanding of the Eucharistic liturgy by means of Scriptural exegesis that is largely derived from the interpretations of Scripture found in Church documents. As such, I think that on the whole it is successful.

Two general criticisms I have is, first, there is a certain amount of redundancy which could have been eliminated by better organization of the text. This would have had the added advantage of keeping the length down—it takes a dedicated study group to make it through fourteen chapters. Secondly, the author, in an attempt to lighten the tone for the sake of its intended audience, at times devolves into corniness (e.g., "Mass Appeal: Living off the Lamb").

The book is divided into three sections, the first on the genesis of the Eucharist, the second on the Old Covenant prefigurations of the Eucharist, and the last part on the Mass.

The first chapter focuses on our need for redemption by going back to the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis. Chapter two raises the question of why Christ is referred to as the Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29). As Nash points out, lambs would seem more to be in need of saving than having the capacity of saving others. Chapter three focuses on the sacrifice of Abel. Chapter four addresses the mysterious priesthood of Melchizedek, for Christ was designated by his Father: “a high priest after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 5:9-10). Part of the chapter is devoted to explaining the OT references to Melchizedek, the rest being primarily an exegesis on Hebrews, chapter seven. Chapter five discusses the covenant God made with Abraham. It also explains how Isaac prefigures Christ. Here Nash brings in Jewish biblical commentary on Abraham’s intended sacrifice of Isaac. According to Nash the ancient Jews regarded this event, which they referred to as the Aqedah or “binding,” as the “sacrifice of Isaac,” for Isaac could have resisted his elderly father, but willingly submitted to him. The parallel with Christ is easy to see.

The next section (Part II) is devoted to discussing the prefigurations of the Mass during the time of the Sinai covenant (and the time immediately before). The first chapter explains the story of the Passover, and brings in interesting material from ancient Jewish writings which relate the Aqedah of Isaac to the Passover, and ultimately, both these events with the Messianic redemption of Israel. Chapter two advances one of the central theses of the book. Nash here is seeking to answer the following question: “The Church teaches that the Mass miraculously re-presents Christ’s one Sacrifice under the appearances of bread and

wine, and yet we know that Jesus died only once. How can we reconcile these two realities, which apparently conflict?” (77). Nash notes that OT sacrifices involved two things: slaughtering the victim and offering it. Nash maintains that even though Christ was plainly slaughtered on Calvary, he did not offer himself in the heavenly sanctuary until his Ascension. He cites 1 Cor. 15:17-22 to support his thesis; this passage says that if Christ didn’t rise from the dead, we would still be in our sins. Thus, Christ’s death alone is not the completed sacrifice of atonement that reconciles us to God. On the other hand, the Creed says that Christ descended into Hell, and it is understood that he did this to admit the just to heaven. Yet this occurs before his Ascension. But then again, the passage from Hebrews that Nash quotes (and of which I only quote a part here) certainly seems to support his thesis: “Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf” (Heb. 9:23-24). I wondered whether Nash’s position that Christ’s sacrifice was only completed upon his Ascension at which time it took on an eternal character was original with Nash. In Part III, chapter 3, Nash comes back to this point, this time providing us with quotations from two theologians (see 169, 170), as well as excerpts and references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which support his position (see 167; CCC 659-64). Chapter 3 in Part II compares the Passover as a communion sacrifice with the Eucharist. The Passover meal consists of the paschal lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. Although not mentioned in Scripture, Jewish tradition attests to four cups of wine as being part of the Passover meal. In the case of the Last Supper, however, “the traditional lamb is conspicuously absent from [the evangelists’] accounts...because the focus

is on the Passover Lamb of God, who sacrifices himself for the sin of the world (see Jn 1:29; I Cor 5:7-8)” [94]. Of course, on the basis of Christ’s own words, Catholics believe that he changed the Passover bread and wine into his very self. Nash notes how Christ’s use of bread corresponds to other Old Testament motifs. The manna which was bread from heaven that fed the Jews in the desert finds its counterpart in Jesus, “the true bread from heaven” (Jn 6:32). “Thus, Jesus became not only the perfect Passover Sacrifice for our sins, but also the perfect Passover meal to sustain us spiritually unto heaven (see Jn 6:54-58)” [*Worthy is the Lamb*, 99].

Chapter 4 addresses a number of other OT liturgical practices which foreshadow or in some other way relate to the Eucharist: the sealing of the Old Covenant on Mount Sinai with blood, the wilderness tabernacle, the twice daily offering of lambs, and the day of atonement ceremony. Just to touch on one of these themes: The covenant between God and the Jews made on Mt. Sinai was ratified by Moses’ casting half the blood collected from sacrificed animals on the altar (representing God) and half on the people. Nash goes on to note that, aside from Hebrews, the only places in the NT where “blood” and “covenant” are used together are passages speaking about the Eucharist.

Part III is on the Mass. Most of chapter one is devoted to examining the “bread of life discourse” found in Jn 6:26-71. Nash gives the standard Catholic exegesis of that discourse, and in doing so rebuts the claim that we are to take figuratively Christ’s words: “anyone who eats my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life” (Jn 6:54).

Chapter two is devoted to explaining the OT prophecies concerning the Messiah and the New Covenant, and showing how Christ fulfilled them. Central to Nash’s exposition are the words of our Lord at the Last Supper, recounted by

Luke and Mark which link the shedding of Christ's blood with the New Covenant: "And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Mt 26:28-29)." Nash notes: "The ancient ritual of covering the people with animal blood would be fulfilled by a much more intimate communion: drinking his Eucharistic Blood" (153).

In chapter three Nash comes back to the topic of Christ's eternal priesthood, and basing himself on Heb. 8:3 which says that a priest must have something to offer, concludes that Christ's eternal priesthood can consist in nothing other than his offering the single sacrifice of himself continually to the Father. The celebration of Mass on earth renders present to us this very same sacrifice. Nash then addresses two questions concerning statements which form part of Catholic liturgy and which seem to pose a problem as to a proper understanding of Christ's eternal priesthood. The first is a prayer after the consecration which "asks our heavenly Father to 'look with favor on these offerings and accept them as' he once accepted the offering of Abel, Abraham, and Melchizedek" (*Worthy is the Lamb*, 176). The Father has already accepted Christ's sacrifice, and so how is it that the priest appears to be offering it again? The second question concerns a mysterious line in the first Eucharistic prayer: "Almighty God, we pray that your angel may take this sacrifice to your altar in heaven." If Christ, the eternal priest, offers himself continually in heaven, what need is there to bring the self-same sacrifice there? Nash also raises the question of how Christ can be present in heaven and in the Eucharist all over the world. I will leave it to the reader to discover how Nash handles these interesting questions.

The final chapter is on the Mass in the early Church and beyond. Nash does not make a particularly strong case that the Mass from the beginning consisted not only in the liturgy of the Eucharist, but also in the liturgy of the Word. He refers to the story of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, in which Christ first explains the Scripture to them, and then breaks bread with them—Nash takes this to be the prototype for the Mass. He also mentions a passage in Acts where Paul after "breaking bread" (an expression used for offering the Eucharist) gives a lengthy sermon (see Acts 20:7), but that incident includes no reference to Scripture readings (granted the sermon is part of the liturgy of the Word). Nash predictably also comments on Paul's admonitions to the Corinthians concerning the Eucharist in I Cor 11:17-34.

Nash covers many more issues concerning the biblical roots of the Mass than I have mentioned. He has done a service by providing a book on this topic that for the most part can be readily followed by a non-theologian. The former use of Latin is often said to have posed an obstacle to the laity's participation in the Mass. If, however, one doesn't know who Melchizedek is or anything about the Old Covenant sacrifices, many of the things said during Mass might as well be in Latin. Too many Catholics cannot even explain the meaning of prayers said at every Mass such as the *Agnus Dei*, much less explain what the Mass is. They would profit greatly by reading *Worthy is the Lamb*.

DVD

*Apostolic Fathers: Handing on the Faith*, Filmed on location with Stephen Ray, Ignatius Press: San Francisco, October, 2007, \$29.95 (120 minutes, including special features).

Reviewed by Kevin G. Rickert,  
St. Mary's University of Minnesota

In this DVD, Stephen Ray takes the viewer back in time to meet five of the early Church Fathers: Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, and Justin Martyr. The program is somewhat of a cross between a work of apologetics and a travel video for children. In the course of ninety minutes, the viewer is taken to various locations in Israel, Turkey, Italy, and France. We see the landmarks at the places where these early fathers lived and died. We see churches that commemorate them and house their relics. This visual tour, including places like the catacombs of Rome and Jacob's well, is interesting, and the producers of this video deserve credit for mapping out and documenting these historic sites.

The central content of the script, the telling of the stories of these important Christian figures, has a value in itself. Viewers are introduced to a timeline that illustrates the proximity of these fathers to Jesus and the apostles. The main difficulty with this DVD is that it is not easy to determine the target audience. Some of the material is suited to fairly mature adults, but much of the tone and the mode of presentation would seem to appeal primarily to children and adolescents. For adult viewers, this presents a significant distraction from the content.

At several points in the DVD, Stephen Ray mentions, and reads from, the letters and other written works of these Fathers of the Church. At the end of the program there is an advertisement for a number of books by Ignatius Press, in which one can find these writings. I can definitely

agree with Ray in his enthusiasm about coming in contact with the minds of these heroes of the Christian faith by reading these ancient texts.

## DVD

### *Lost Gospels or False*

*Gospels?* Ignatius Press: San Francisco. 56 minutes. October 2007.

Reviewed by Kevin G. Rickert, St. Mary's University of Minnesota

The point of this DVD, as Fr. Mitch Pacwa states in the beginning, is to show that the so-called lost gospels, i.e., the Gnostic gospels that were found near Nag Hammadi, Egypt are “false in every sense of the word.” The program is a fifty-six minute discussion of the issue by a group of experts in the field.

The video production quality is relatively good. For a low-budget project, they made a good effort to approximate the style of high-budget documentaries as one might see on the *History Channel* or *A&E*. This makes an hour of talking heads into a much more viewable program.

The team of experts does a good job of introducing the viewer to the Gnostic gospels (primarily the gospel of Thomas and the gospel of Judas) and the Gnostic/Christian sect in Syria that most likely produced them. They give a brief but informative summary of Gnosticism and explain how it is intermingled into the texts in question.

The strongest argument presented, and the one that the experts on the DVD come back to repeatedly, is the issue of the time frame for the production of these documents. It seems that the Gnostic gospels, unlike the four canonical gospels, were produced after the first century A.D. The gospel of Thomas, according to the experts, was produced in the mid- to late second century. This is nearly a hundred years after the latest

canonical text and well removed, by several generations, from anybody who witnessed the life and teachings of Jesus. The gospel of Judas also seems to have been written after the century cut-off point, but the approximate date of this document becomes a point of confusion for the viewer of this DVD. Gary Habermas speculates that it was written about 150 A.D., and he mentions that it was referred to by Irenaeus “some thirty years after that,” near the end of the second century. Ben Witherington, another expert on the same DVD, says, “the Gospel of Judas, the best we can tell, is a document that comes from the third or fourth century A.D., probably the third century A.D.” If Witherington is right, then Habermas is not only wrong about the date, but he is also wrong about Irenaeus having had access to it.

Another argument that the experts present against the Gnostic gospels is that they contain things that do not seem to fit in with the four canonical gospels and the rest of Scripture. From a purely logical point of view, this seems to be an instance of *petitio principii* (begging the question). The question at hand is whether or not these lost gospels can teach us something that is not contained in, or does not fit with, the four canonical gospels, and the reply from these experts is, “no, because they teach something that is not contained in, or does not fit with, the four canonical gospels.” This argument may work with traditional Christians who already accept the content of the four canonical gospels as *The Gospel*, but it holds no weight, by itself, for a person who is doubting the completeness of the canonical four—a person who is seriously considering the possibility of other legitimate gospel accounts.

The experts on the DVD also discuss other extra-canonical writings and differentiate them from the Gnostic gospels. They mention other works by men such as Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, which

were produced around 100 AD but were nevertheless not included in the canon. These and other works are not considered to be in conflict with the canon as are the Gnostic gospels. Instead these writings are seen as a friendly exploration of issues not made clear in the canonical texts.

Toward the end to the DVD, the viewer is given a list of criteria by which the early church made its judgment about the legitimacy of the canonical texts. In this context, they make the point clear that most of the canon was in place long before the reign of Constantine, thus refuting those who say that Constantine and his ecclesiastical henchmen demoted the Gnostic gospels by their imperialistic fiat. Once again, the timeline seems to be the strong hand that clearly differentiates the canonical gospels from the Gnostic ones.

Early in the DVD, some of the experts refer, several times, to the “scholars” who are putting these Gnostic gospels forth as legitimate gospels on a par with the canonical four. As I was watching, I was thinking that I would like to hear their side of the story. At minimum, I would like to know who these “scholars” are. At no time in the DVD do the experts identify the “scholars” to whom they are responding. I find it interesting that Fr. Pacwa (in the interview in the bonus features) gives the same complaint against people in the media who speak of the unnamed “scholars” who are promoting the “lost gospels.” Fr. Pacwa says the following: “they won’t name the scholars, they won’t give you the footnotes...” It seems that Fr. Pacwa’s criticism should apply equally to his own DVD.

This DVD has a lot to offer. The video production quality is good. The content is informative and clearly presented. If the problems mentioned above were addressed, the DVD would certainly merit a positive recommendation.

*Chance or Purpose? Creation, Evolution, and a Rational Faith*, by Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, H. P. Weber, ed., San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007.

Reviewed by Thomas W. Woolley

Many academics are aware of Christoph Cardinal Schönborn's op-ed piece entitled, "Finding Design in Nature," published in the *New York Times* in July of 2005. The article ignited a firestorm of mostly critical responses from individuals suggesting that the Cardinal believed the theory of evolution to be irreconcilable with Catholic faith. The failure to recognize the fundamental distinction being made, that between the science of evolution and the ideology of neo-Darwinian evolutionism, was nearly universal. This experience led Cardinal Schönborn to recognize the depth of confusion concerning matters of creation and evolution, design and purpose. As such, he decided to devote his monthly 2005–2006 academic year catechetical lectures in the cathedral of Saint Stephen in Vienna to the topic of creation. This book is the result.

The essence of the book is captured succinctly in the forward by its editor, Verlag Herder: "Cardinal Schönborn repeatedly distinguishes a scientific interest in the way that life evolved from an ideological view that attempts to understand the world as a whole, starting from the theory of evolution. [He] refers to this latter as 'evolutionism' and consciously distances himself from it." In the Cardinal's way of thinking the conflict is not between science and Christianity but rather between scientism and faith, scientism being the ideological position that science can and should be applied in all fields

of investigation, without exception. In making the case, the Cardinal delves deeply and thoughtfully into the interface between science and Christianity by challenging science to recognize the self-limitation of its research perspective. That is to say, as he pointed out in a lecture at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology in Berkeley, California on February 15 of this year, science must not forget that its methodological limitations are an act of free will and intelligence and science must not pretend that it can answer any question put before it. Admiration and awe are alternative approaches to science and not illusions. Passing beyond the methodological limits of the natural sciences to address matters of ethics, mind and thought, for example, lead science not simply into the realm of speculation but more dangerously in the direction of ideology, a point made unequivocally in his *New York Times* piece.

It is clear that Cardinal Schönborn rejects the neo-Darwinian model of unguided and purposeless natural processes; rather, he sees value and validity in interpreting evolution as faith-informed reason guiding nature. Further, however, (and more interestingly) Cardinal Schönborn promotes the thesis that the meaning and purpose of human existence in the universe is intelligible only in light of the incarnation. Robert John Russell, in the same Berkeley event referenced earlier, insightfully documented the several themes developed by Schönborn in support of this argument: 1) properly understood and interpreted through the powers of reason, Darwinian evolution, in particular, and the natural sciences, in general, have much to offer to the Church's understanding of humanity; 2) the Church's insight into human nature exceeds that of science; and

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3) for the very reason that theology transcends science, our theological understanding of human nature cannot be reduced to fit within the confines of science. In light of this discussion and the contemporary predominance of neo-Darwinism, how should God's guidance in evolution be viewed? Cardinal Schönborn contends that neither reliance on 'God of the Gaps' arguments to account for our ignorance nor God's intervention through the breaking of natural law are viable. Many in the American intelligent design community have adopted these positions; interestingly, many in science believe that this type of extrinsic God is the only option for divine action in the world. The Cardinal insists, however, that Christianity has abandoned an unassailable theology of creation and needs to return to the concept of immanent action by a creator God; in other words, creation is continuous and God, though transcendent, is interior to the process.

*Chance or Purpose?* is a welcome and an extremely valuable contribution to the wide-ranging science and religion dialogue, particularly if one is interested in a faithful, Thomistic Catholic perspective. Cardinal Schönborn forcefully and unapologetically addresses the inherent limitations of science and the all too prevalent misconceptions by scientists of Christian positions on creation.

## NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

**A**s the new President of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, I would like to thank you and the Board for the trust that you have placed in me, and I look forward to working with the Board in order to serve the Fellowship in this capacity.

Let me begin by offering a word of thanks to Dean Bernard Dobranski, who is now stepping down as the President of the Fellowship after years of generous service, especially because of some health issues. I would ask that the members of the Fellowship keep him in prayer for a full recovery and return to health. Dean Dobranski, we thank you for all that you did for the Fellowship!

Over the years I have always been impressed at how our organization has lived up to its name. It is an association of fine scholars and it has provided a forum for truly outstanding papers that have transmitted real wisdom, important research, and reliable analysis. The discussion of ideas that has tended to take place at our conferences has regularly been very inspiring. Likewise, our organization has been deeply Catholic, in its membership, in the speakers who have graced the podium, and in the writers who have contributed to the pages of our proceedings and our journal. It has been an honor to belong to an association of individuals who have been so dedicated to Christ and His Church, and who have dedicated their scholarly lives to the promotion of the faith and to the investigation of important questions and problems that are of concern to the Catholic Church. Third, our organization has been the source of a wonderful fellowship. The opportunity to see old friends and to make new ones, to be in the company of like-minded colleagues, and to be renewed and refreshed in our intellectual vocation has been a tremendous blessing.

We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Bill Saunders, who has served as the program chair for the 2008 convention and who has accepted election

as Vice President of the Fellowship. He and his committee prepared a wonderful conference on a topic of exceptional interest. The challenges to living our faith today include numerous situations where we need to show great prudence and great courage. To have a conference dedicated to the scholarly examination of these questions of conscience is a privilege. Thanks also to Kenneth Whitehead, who has edited the proceedings of our conference and to Brian Benestad who edits our quarterly. Their tireless efforts have been invaluable for our work.

As we move ahead in the work of the Fellowship, it is very important that we reach out and invite others to join our ranks. Let me take this occasion to encourage you to recommend to interested colleagues that they join the Fellowship. I would be very happy to contact personally anyone whom you would care to recommend to me. Please feel free to send me the name and contact information of anyone whom you think might be suitable.

I am also happy to inform our membership that the Fellowship has recently received a challenge for a matching grant of \$10,000, intended for the purpose of supporting the travel and lodging arrangements for speakers at our future conferences. Receiving these funds is contingent on raising \$10,000 from other sources for these purposes. I would be very happy to hear of anyone who might be able to assist us with this challenge and with our other development needs.

God bless you all.

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## BOOKS RECEIVED

*If you would like to receive a complimentary copy of one of the books below in order to review it for a future issue, please email your request to Alice Osberger at osberger.1@nd.edu*

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

**Basile Moreau and the Congregation of Holy Cross**, James T. Connelly, C.S.C., University of Portland, Garaventa Center for Catholic Intellectual Life and American Culture: Portland, OR, (2007) Paper, 83pp.

**Christian Humanism: Creation, Redemption, and Reintegration**, John P. Bequette, University Press of America: Lanham, MD, (2007) Paper, 178 pp.

**Danny Gospel: A Novel**, David Athey, Minneapolis: Bethany House, (2008), Paper, 269 pp.

**Escape and Return: The Search for Identity, A Cultural Journey**, Anne Paolucci, Griffon House Publications: Middle Village, NY,

**Fit for Eternal Live: A Christian Approach to Working Out, Eating Right, and Building the Virtues of Fitness in Your Soul**, Kevin Vost, Psy.D., Sophia Institute Press: Manchester, NH, (2007), Paper. 227 pp. (2008), Paper. 460 pp.

**The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement**, Charles Edwin Jones, The Scarecrow Press: Lanham, MD, (2008), Hardcover, 500 pp.

**The Language of Poetry as a Form of Prayer: The Theo-Poetic Aesthetics of Gerard Manley Hopkins**, Francis X. McAlloon, The Edwin Mellon Press: Lewiston Queenston Lampeter, (2008), hardcover, 245pp.

**A Mended and Broken Heart: The Life and Love of Francis of Assisi**, Wendy Murray, Basic Books: New York, (2008), hardcover, 251 pp.

**On Love and Charity: Readings from the "Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard"**, St. Thomas Aquinas, trans Peter A Kwasniewski, Thomas Bolin, O.S.B., and Joseph Bolin, intro by Peter A Kwasniewski, Catholic University of America Press: Washington, D.C., (2008), softcover, 404 pp.

**Sacrilege: Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church**, Leon J. Podles, Crossland Press: Baltimore, MD, (2008), Hardcover, 675 pp.

**The Tripods Attack!**, John McNichol, The Young Chesterton Chronicles, Book I, Imagio Catholic Fiction, The Sophia Institute Press: Manchester, NH (2008), Paper, 365pp.

## Archbishop Charles Chaput's New Book

**D**oubleday recently published the archbishop's new book, *Render Unto Caesar: Serving the Nation by Living Our Catholic Beliefs in Political Life*. The sub-title is really the theme of the book. Archbishop Chaput argues that Catholics need to live their faith in their personal lives and in the public square. This is not happening on a wide scale because most Catholics either do not know their faith or do not accept it. They pick and choose which teachings to accept as if they were in a cafeteria rather than in a church founded by Jesus Christ. As a result, Catholics in America, about one quarter of the entire population, are not a distinctive presence in the United States. For example, "Catholics get divorced, have abortions, and use contraceptives at roughly the same rates as their neighbors" (p. 180).

One could look at Chaput's book as a long commentary on this quotation from Vatican Council II's *Declaration on Religious Liberty*: "society itself will benefit from the goods of justice and peace which result from people's fidelity to God and his holy will" (no. 6). In other words, the Catholic Church cannot really expect to transform American society if great numbers of Catholics are no longer committed to understanding and practicing their faith. Both Vatican II and Archbishop Chaput are teaching that there will be more social reform if the Church is successful in motivating people to know and practice their faith. In the archbishop's words, "... the most powerful 'political' act Catholics can make is to love Jesus Christ, believe in his Church, and *live her teachings*: not just in word, but in all of their choices, decisions, and actions--public and private" (p. 73-74).

The separation of the Catholic faith from Catholic involvement in the public square has several causes. Perhaps the most obvious reason is the tendency of Catholics to practice, in the words of Avery Dulles, "an excessive and indiscreet accommodation" (p. 177), that is to say, "to go along with fashionable opinion," to be silent on their understanding of the common good. In other words, Catholics are often guilty of "kneeling before the world." In Jacques Maritain's famous words" (p. 191). Instead of Catholics evangelizing the culture, the latter evangelizes them. People abhorring the influence of religion on public life intimidate and silence Catholics by the use of such slogans as "separation of church and state" and "don't impose your beliefs on society" (p. 9).

A second less obvious reason for divorcing faith from public life stems from the Catholic tendency to

believe that "structural reform" in society is the key to reforming society rather than the practice of virtue in one's personal and political life. Catholics have actually misinterpreted Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes* to mean that "the Christian engagement with the political world" now supersedes personal reform as the road to justice in society (p. 132).

The bad example of prominent Catholic politicians has also misled Catholics. John F. Kennedy "created a model of Catholic public service that sorted personal faith and public service into separate compartments" (p. 168). While Kennedy was trying to show that Catholics were good citizens, he ultimately contributed to the opinion that they did not have to bring a well-formed Catholic conscience into the public square. Influenced by Kennedy's approach, Governor Mario Cuomo defended the legalization of abortion, arguing that he would not impose on others his Catholic beliefs on the evil of abortion. Cuomo refused to see that his belief about abortion, just like his belief about homicide or grand larceny, is not a private matter. A democracy or society respecting the dignity of the human person cannot tolerate private decisions to murder, steal or to end the lives of the unborn.

To motivate Catholics to take their place in the public square Archbishop Chaput tells us about St. Thomas More, Governor Robert P. Casey, Archbishop Joseph Rummel, Archbishop Raymond Burke and Martin Luther King. For example, Bishop Chaput quotes from Casey's 1995 address at the University of Notre Dame: "And so, it is for me the bitterest of ironies that abortion on demand found refuge, found a home--and it pains me to say this--found a home in the national Democratic Party. My party, the party of the weak, the party of the powerless. ...[L]egalized abortion ... is inconsistent with our national character, with our national purpose, with all that we have done, and with everything we hope to be" (p. 173). Governor Casey revealed the courage to take on the gross aberration of the Democratic Party.

Archbishop Chaput has done a great service for the Catholic Church and his country by the publication of his book. The Catholic Church and the United States need Catholics who know and practice their faith in all aspects of their lives. Bishop Chaput would need a second volume to explain why Catholics know so little about their faith and what can be done about it. ✠

*J. Brian Benestad*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**J**oseph A. Varacalli, Ph.D., Director of the Center for Catholic Studies and sociologist at Nassau Community College, has recently been appointed by the State University of New York Board of Trustees as a S.U.N.Y. Distinguished Service Professor, signifying an academic rank above that of Full Professor. The appointment was made, in part, in acknowledgement of Dr. Varacalli's work in co-founding the Society of Catholic Social Scientists in 1992, in founding the Center for Catholic Studies at his home institution in 2000, and in

publishing extensively in the field of Catholic studies. His latest two publications are his co-edited volume, the *Encyclopedia of Catholic Social Thought, Social Science, and Social Policy*, 2 Volumes, Scarecrow Press, 2007, [www.scarecrowpress.com](http://www.scarecrowpress.com) and his authored volume, *The Catholic Experience in America*, Greenwood Publications, 2006, [www.greenwood.com](http://www.greenwood.com) Dr. Varacalli, a long time member of the Cardinal Newman Society, has twice been a Board of Directors member of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars.

**O**n September 20, 2008 the Culture of Life Foundation held its annual conference titled "The Culture of Life vs. the Culture of Death: from *Humanae Vitae* to Cloning and Assisted Suicide." At this meeting in Washington, DC His Excellency, Archbishop Donald Wuerl presented the Foundation's first annual "William E. May Award for Promoting Ethics and the Human Person" to **Dr. William E. May**. The Fellowship congratulates Bill for deserving to receive this prestigious reward.

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### Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly

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Fellowship of Catholic Scholars. Is In SKOS Scheme: <http://id.worldcat.org/fast/ontology/1.0/#fast>. "Carpaccio's Mysterious Painting," Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly (2015): TBA. "Dante and Eschatology," Proceedings of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, vol. 37, ed. Elizabeth Shaw (Notre Dame IN: Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, 2015), pp. 75-89. 20. "The Upcoming Extraordinary Synod" President's Letter in Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly 37/1-2 (2014): 2-3. 19. "Reading the Pope" President's Letter in Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly 36/3 (2013): 2-4. 18. "Munus Petri," President's Letter in Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly 36/1-2 (2013): 2-4. 17. "The Right to Be Wrong," President's Letter in Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly 35/3-4 (2012): 2-4. Fellowship of Catholic Scholars has selected their winning logo design. For \$375 they received 171 designs from 26 different designers from around the world. Find out how LogoTournament works. Catholic university professors and administrators, but also others with a similar interest in Catholic higher education. Color Preferences. We have no preference for colors, as long as they are deep and rich.