

# WHY I AM PRO-LIFE AND NOT POLITICALLY CORRECT



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***Why I Am Pro-Life and Not Politically Correct***

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*This book is gratefully dedicated to Fr. Harry Reitzel, C.R.,  
a priest who has fought the good fight with humility, docility,  
and unwavering fidelity.*



The painting on the front cover, *Winter Scene with Skaters and Bird Trap* by Pieter Brueghel (c. 1525-30 – 1569) and the painting on the back, *Balsam Avenue after a Heavy Snowfall* by William Kurelek (1927-1977) have much in common. The two “message painters,” though living in radically different eras, provide pictorial evidence that Winter’s cold cannot subdue the joy of life. Life is insuppressible. The challenges of nature bring out the life-affirming values of community, cooperation, and courtesy. In Kurelek’s words, “The big-city distance between neighbours breaks down completely when nature presents a novel challenge – such as a heavy snowfall.” Brueghel places a bird trap in the lower right of his painting symbolizing the perils that await the unwary, those we might refer to in today’s climate as “politically correct”. It should not be surprising that Brueghel was Kurelek’s favorite painter. Both artists were keenly aware of the eternal drama of good and evil that plays out in the human heart, and how life can emerge with even fuller vitality when faced with challenging obstacles.

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# INTRODUCTION



**T**he title of this book represents an extended response to two questions: “Why I am pro-life?” and “Why I am not politically correct?” By answering the first question I am more than half way toward answering the second since it is not logically possible that being pro-life can be consistent with being politically correct.

There are two basic reasons why I am pro-life, though these reasons are intimately linked with each other. First, life is what distinguishes us from non-existence. It is the gift without which we could do nothing. Without life, we could not love, learn, hope, experience joy, discover meaning, or ever know the thrill of accomplishment. In fact, without life, there would be no “we”. A dark void would prevail, forever lacking any point of consciousness. Therefore life must be treasured for it stretches out from nothingness and opens the way to everything that is good for us.

Secondly, my life is not something that I alone possess. Others have life and their lives should be equally treasured and cherished. Invoking the Golden Rule, I must acknowledge the value of all human life and not act against the lives of others as I would not want anyone to act against mine. I am grateful that I was not aborted. Consequently, I cannot approve the abortion of others. I express my gratitude for the gift of life by honoring its presence in everyone else who is living.

I cannot espouse political correctness since it is incompatible with valuing life. Moreover, its inspiration does not lie in gratitude, but in convenience. It does not honor the Golden Rule but desperately seeks rationalizations to justify whatever it commends. It is not the basis of a universal morality. Rather, it is willing to bend to the preferences of those who are in a position of power. Therefore, it places morality on the flimsy and unreliable basis of political views that blow in the wind and grant preferences to some and not to others.

Political correctness is marketed on the basis of its simplicity, immediacy, and expediency. It does away with serious thinking, frees us from the need to struggle for more humane ethical solutions, and promises practical results. Life, however, is not simple, nor does the quick fix always provide the best results. We need to take the time needed to find solutions that are humane and not necessarily expedient. As the poet Friedrich Hölderlin has reminded us, “The mindful God abhors untimely growth.”

This book contrasts the personal, social, and intrinsic values of life with political views that try to make life easier, but in doing so rob it of its glory. In this regard, I agree with the philosopher Baruch Spinoza who concluded his *Ethics* with these words “All things excellent are as difficult as they are rare.”



*Happiness expresses itself in the desire to reproduce the beautiful.*  
Plato

I  
POLITICAL  
CORRECTNESS  
IN PLACE



*Cronus Devouring His Children*

# ONE COMPASSION AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS



**T**he worlds of philosophy and humour often intersect so that philosophers can sometimes be mistaken for comedians and vice versa. To the age-old question, “If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?” one might not be certain whether to respond with a frown or a smile. A contemporary variant of the question leaves no doubt about the appropriate response: “If a husband says something and his wife is not there to correct him, is he still wrong?”

But there is decidedly nothing humorous about the question, “Does a human fetus feel pain during an abortion if no one is there to verify the pain scientifically?” We like to think that we citizens of the 21st century are compassionate people. And we place this most humane disposition, if not at the top, surely near the top of all human virtues. Being sensitive to the pain of another seems to be a clear sign of one’s humanness. Not to feel the pain of another is considered cold, distant and callously impersonal.

It is rather curious, then, that the subject of fetal pain, rather than activating the springs of compassion that exist in all of us, is often politicized, depersonalized, trivialized and relativized. If a person is truly compassionate, it would seem that his sensitivity to another’s pain would not be subject to ideological compromise. It appears disingenuous to say, “I will feel your pain as long as it is politically correct to do so.”

President Ronald Reagan, in a 1984 address to the National Religious Broadcasters, made a most provocative as well as politically incorrect statement in saying, “When the lives of the unborn are snuffed out, they often feel pain, pain that is long and agonizing.”

In response to the chief of state's remark, a group of professors, including pain specialists and two past presidents of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, wrote a letter to President Reagan in support of his statement: "We state categorically that no finding of modern fetology invalidates the remarkable conclusion drawn after a lifetime of research by the late Professor Arnold Gesell of Yale University. In *The Embryology of Behaviour: The Beginnings of the Human Mind* (1945, Harper Bros.), Dr. Gesell wrote, 'And so by the close of the first trimester, the fetus is a sentient, moving being. We need not speculate as to the nature of his psychic attributes, but we may assert that the organization of his psychosomatic self is well underway.'"

The word "sentient" is the key term here, for it includes the capacity to experience pain as well as other sensations that are transmitted through the nervous system.



Dr. Paul Ranalli, professor of neurology at the University of Toronto, has stated, in reference to the pain felt by premature babies at a particular stage of development, that, "The only difference between a child in the womb at this stage, or one born and cared for in an incubator, is how they receive oxygen – either through the umbilical cord or through the lungs. There is no difference in their nervous systems." Numerous studies have emerged over the recent years suggesting that premature or newborn babies actually feel pain more intensely than do adults. This may not be entirely surprising since, as Dr. Ranalli notes, babies under 30 weeks have a "newly established pain system that is raw and unmodified at this tender age." Nonetheless, research into fetal pain has produced a mixed reaction. The fundamental problem lies in the fact that a fetus cannot tell us that he is experiencing pain. Yet neither can an infant or an animal articulate the experience of pain. Wherever an unambiguous disclosure of pain is not possible, we look for its indications. There are enough indications that when a tree falls, it makes a sound. Ear witnesses do not need to be present to verify this



fact. A rudimentary knowledge of physics and the vibratory nature of sound suffices. We accept the indications as evidence and do not require personal witnesses.

Dr. David A. Grimes, an abortionist, in referring to the issue of fetal pain (especially fetuses younger than 29 weeks), writes: “This is an unknowable question.” Nonetheless, in the face of the “unknowable,” how can he justify a decision to abort? Ignorance is not a justifying basis for performing an act that could cause another great pain. Fetal pain is “unknowable” for him because he limits his avenue of knowledge to a strictly empirical methodology. Compassion begins where empirical verifiability leaves off. How do we know that anyone of us is in pain and either trying to conceal it or merely feigning it?

The Samaritan of the Gospel was compassionately drawn to the plight of the Levite. He did not relativize his neighbour’s predicament by weighing it against his own inconvenience or public opinion. He was “good” because he responded directly to his neighbour’s pain. He did not put compassion on hold to give himself time to question whether his proposed action would be in keeping with the political correctness of his time. He was a human being who came compassionately to the aid of his suffering neighbour.

Fetal pain, especially after 10 weeks’ gestation, is a reality that cannot be relativized into oblivion. Anesthesia may help to reduce fetal pain. But what does one take to counteract the intellectual and moral anesthesia that deadens people’s awareness that even an unborn human being is our neighbour and deserves from us a compassionate response?

It is imperative, however, that we refine our understanding of compassion. Every virtue has its bogus pretenders. Foolhardiness passes for courage, timidity for prudence, apathy for patience, obsequiousness for courtesy. But there is no counterfeit that is more successful in obfuscating the genuine article, especially in the present era, than false compassion. Rita Marker’s book, *Deadly Compassion*, is a perfect illustration of how compassion can be used not as a virtue to express love, but as a rationalization for killing.



*Rhea pretends to give her child to Cronus*

The Russian existentialist philosopher, Nikolai Berdyaev, reflected the correct understanding of compassion when he stated that “compassion means a desire for a new and better life for the sufferer and a willingness to share his pain.” In this proper sense of compassion as a virtue, compassion is obviously pro-life. It is not consistent with true compassion to anesthetize the fetus before killing it. The act of killing can never be construed as helping the sufferer to have a better life.

One hopes that an increased awareness of the fact of fetal pain awakens people to a true compassion that expresses itself not in a painless death for the unborn, as does counterfeit compassion, but in accord with the example of the Good Samaritan who responded to his neighbour’s pain by helping him to secure a better life.

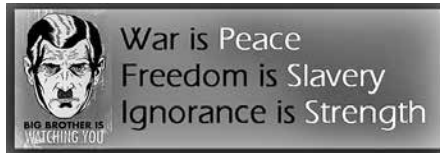
It is worth noting that the Hebrew word for “womb” (*rechem*) is also the root for the word “compassion” (*rechamim*). In this sense, compassion is grounded in intimacy and life. The womb, to the Hebrew mind, is a place where new life is nourished, not a death chamber.

## רַחֲמִים

The world needs to know that compassion is a virtue and, as such, is not an excuse for killing, but an expression of love that unites us with the one who is suffering in the hope of providing a better life for that sufferer.



# TWO MADNESS IN THE WORKPLACE



**V**atican II (*Lumen gentium* 41) **reminds us** that work provides a road to holiness, because it offers opportunities for: a) self-improvement; b) helping our fellow citizens; c) improving society in general; d) imitating Christ in active charity. On the other hand, as Saint John Paul II states in his *Agenda for the Third Millennium*, “What suffering, what hardship and misery unemployment causes?”

Most unfortunately, however, the Christian notion of the dignity and importance of work is currently being displaced by “political correctness”. The distinguished cultural historian, Jacques Barzun, in his compendious work, *From Dawn to Decadence* (2000), makes the blistering comment that “In the United States at the present time the workings of ‘political correctness’ in universities and the speech police that punishes persons and corporations for words on certain topics quaintly called ‘sensitive’ are manifestations of the permanent spirit of inquisition.” Violations of political correctness are not as harsh as those of the infamous Spanish Inquisition, but often lead to opprobrium, loss of employment and virtual exclusion from one’s profession. Nonetheless,



as Barzun maintains, the spirit of the inquisition is very much alive today. Barzun’s point does not set well with liberals who believe that they have carved out a path that is diametrically opposed to the intolerance and punitive mindset associated with the old inquisition.

Political correctness has made an effective transition from universities to the mainstream workplace. We read in the daily press of individuals losing their jobs because they defended traditional marriage, held to the notion that there are two sexes, opposed homosexual acts on moral grounds, and argued in favor of separate rest rooms for men and women. Barzun contends that university professors “injected ‘political correctness’ into the academy and made themselves ridiculous by the antics it entailed.” Nonetheless, society in general saw merit in the ridiculous and deemed it worthy of imitation.

ESPN is a well-known acronym which, supposedly stands for Entertainment and Sports Programming Network. Having adopted political correctness, however, it is, these days, looking more like Executives Sub-serving Political Nonsense. Consider the case of legendary pitcher Curt Schilling. The burly right-hander holds the record for the best winning percentage in post season play with 11 wins and only 2 losses. His charitable organization, “Curt’s pitch for ALS” supports care for sufferers of Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. When he led the Boston Red Sox to their 2004 World Championship season, after an operation on his ankle, he wrote K ALS on his shoe (short for “strikeout ALS”), knowing that the cameras would give his cause invaluable attention. His weekly radio show raised \$100,000 a year for his cause. While he was employed by ESPN, however, he made an unforgiveable mistake and was fired. He offered the politically incorrect opinion that the men’s room is for men and the women’s room is for women. The network executives’ statement reads: “ESPN is an inclusive company. Curt Schilling has been advised that his conduct was unacceptable and his employment with ESPN has been terminated.”



In his defense, Schilling could have said, “If ESPN is so ‘inclusive,’ why is it that I am not included?” Does “inclusive” really mean “exclusive”? What, then, would “exclusive” mean? Under the canopy of political correctness, both thought and language are also victims.

As Barzun remarked, the language of university professors became “the pretentious garbed in the unintelligible.” On the other hand, incomparably more outrageous ESPN activities are simply swept under the rug. James Andrew Miller and Tom Shales have produced a 700+ page book, appropriately titled, *Those Guys Have All the Fun*, which is an

embarrassment to the network giant. Their research exposes the huge sex and drug culture that goes on behind ESPN's closed doors. Moreover, 2015 data released by Ashley Madison, a company that arranges adulterous affairs ("Life is Short, Have an Affair," is its well-advertised slogan), indicated that more than 100 members of the ESPN workforce, including influential executives, had signed up for its service. One ESPN producer is reported to have paid more than \$2,000 to Ashley Madison. In this macabre sense, ESPN proves itself to be truly "inclusive".

The decline of Christian morality is closely tied to the rise of the bogus morality of political correctness. The BBC has dropped the use of BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini), replacing them with "Before the Common Era" and "Common Era". A school in Seattle, WA renamed Easter eggs "spring spheres" so as not to offend anyone who does not believe in Easter. Similarly, in many places, Christmas trees are now known as "holiday trees". A United Kingdom advertisement for a "hard-working" and "reliable" person was rejected because it could offend people who are unreliable and lazy. At the same time, it is deemed unacceptable and inappropriate to refer to anyone as "unreliable" and "lazy". Nonetheless, as the unreliable and the lazy are coddled, the meticulous and the industrious are criticized. It is a topsy-turvy world!

Political correctness has clashed with the Christian notion of work, so beautifully outlined in the documents of Vatican II. How can one survive these days in the workplace? The slightest slip, innocent as it may be under normal standards, can lead to chastisement, sensitivity training, or dismissal. Such an atmosphere is not conducive to happy and productive workers. It may be a sign of progress that most work environments are now smoke free. But it is a clear sign of regress that they, so often, welcome the madness of political nonsense and are poised to punish those who are not in lockstep with their arbitrary demands.





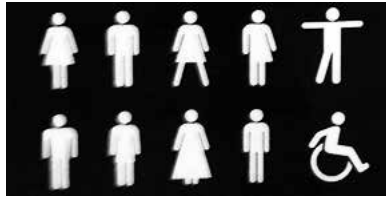
## LOOMINGS

### CHAPTER I

**C**ALL me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the water-part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing gloomy, I always go to sea. It is like the touch of a magnet. Whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul, whenever I have seen those queer lines of snow upon the mountain peaks, whenever I hear the howl of the gulls, and the deep, dull roar of the sea, whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before the portals of every funeral home, whenever I see the old, shaggy, and

# THREE

## CALL ME ISHMAEL



**T**he Ontario Human Rights Commission defines gender identity as “each person’s internal and individual experience of gender. It is the sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum.” The Commission defines gender expression as “how a person publicly presents their [sic] gender,” which can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language and voice, as well as a person’s name and the pronouns he uses. The list of pronouns is extensive, including options such as “ze,” “zie,” “hir,” “xe,” “xem,” “zyr,” “e,” “ey,” “em,” and so on.



How many genders exist along the “gender spectrum”? Individuals living in New York City can choose from a minimum of 31 different gender identities, many of which allow them to fluctuate between some version or combination of male or female identities. Some have estimated that there are at least 63 different genders. Under rules implemented by New York City’s Commission on Human Rights, businesses that fail to respect and accommodate an individual’s chosen gender identity assume the risk of incurring fines of up to \$250,000.

What is rapidly becoming more clear is that holding to a male/female dichotomy can be deemed discriminatory and subject to punishment. The Trudeau government’s Bill C-16, is intended to outlaw harassment and discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression. The Bill would become part of the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code. But is it not more likely, if implemented, to cause more division and more injustice, especially in the workplace?

The most contentious implication of Bill C-16 is the use of pronouns.

“He,” and “she” no longer apply to people who do not see themselves as fitting into a binary system that types them as one gender or another. Rocko Gieselman, for example, who identifies himself as “gender fluid” and was born “female bodied”. Gieselman explained to the New York Times that “Every time someone used ‘she’ or ‘her’ to refer to me, it made this little tick in my head. Kind of nails-on-a-chalkboard is another way you can describe it. It just felt wrong. It was like, ‘Who are you talking to?’” Can society continue to ignore the distress that traditional pronouns are forcing on the Rocko Giselmans of the world?

Dr. Jordan Peterson, a clinical psychologist at the University of Toronto, for one, is critical of the Canadian Human Rights Commission’s terms and definitions. He compares the changes Bill C-16 would bring about with the policing of expression as exemplified in “totalitarian and authoritarian political states”. Being ultra-respectful of some people’s preferences can be extremely disrespectful of those whose crime consists of nothing more than speaking what we might now call “traditional English”. The force of the Bill seems to be saying, “be politically correct, or else”. Professor Jordan Peterson, who taught at Harvard before coming to the University of Toronto, fears that his present school is on the way to becoming a “politically correct institution”. Despite the alleged presence of “academic freedom”, Jordan has reason to fear for his job.

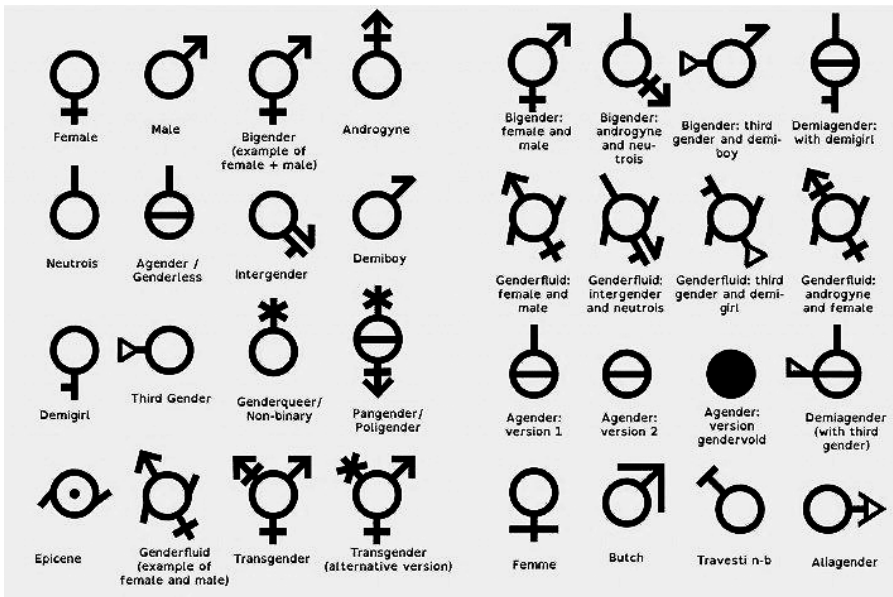
A colleague at the U of T in the physics department faults Peterson for failing to live up to his responsibilities as a faculty member. “All that is necessary to invalidate a faulty claim is one counterexample.” He said: “Here, I am that counterexample. I openly defy Peterson by existing: I am nonbinary and transgender.” He went on to state that he refuses “to stand by and just let him [Peterson] hurt vulnerable genderqueer members of the university community... Academic freedom was never intended to be used as a general-purpose shield against professorial accountability.”

How harmful can it be to a person, one may ask, to be addressed by a politically incorrect pronoun? The injury seems to be novel. Were people in past ages oblivious to how they were harmed by inappropriate pronouns? Does the Bible insult transgendered people, for example, by stating that “God made them male and female”? There is real harm, however, visited upon those who refuse to accept what they regard to be a wholly unnecessary and arbitrary ideology. In addition, the very advocates of those who promote this form of political correctness stand to be harmed. The extreme subjectivization of gender has led some

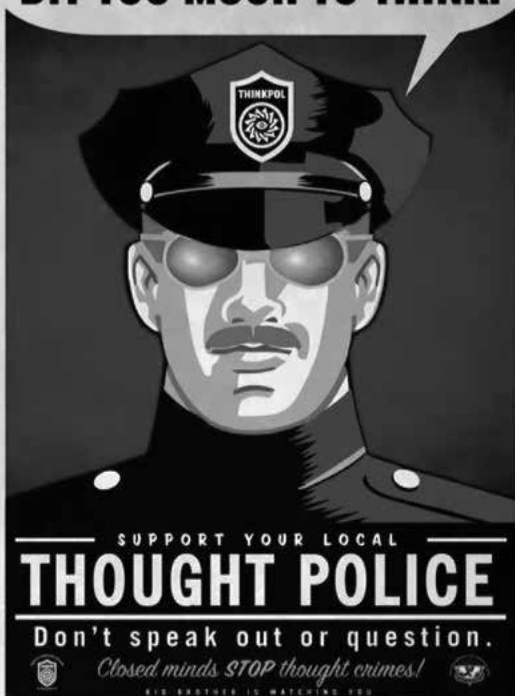


people to feel that they are really animals of one kind or another or even fictional characters. A movement is afoot to address animals by more honorific pronouns since “it” is considered demeaning. At one time, if one declared himself to be Napoleon, his mental health was immediately brought into question. With the new view of personal identity, naming oneself shifts from the objective and socially verifiable to anything goes. “Call me Ishmael” under the new politically correct regime, is supposed to elicit affirmation and applause rather than puzzlement. And expressions of puzzlement are subject to punishment.

Bill C-16 and other attempts to revolutionize how people speak to each other is essentially regressive because it places under a thick fog the age-old question, “Who am I?” We are not anything we want to be. Nor should we require others to cooperate with what is essentially a fantasy. Governmental fiat does not move toward ending discrimination simply by requiring people to employ Newspeak. This is not only totalitarian, but neglects the more realistic ways in which people can respect each other. Christianity still has a better solution through love and recognizing the dignity of one’s neighbor, than by any hare-brained concoction that emanates from governmental bureaucracies.



**LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE HAD A  
BIT TOO MUCH TO THINK!**



FOUR  
THE DIFFICULTY  
WITH  
DIVERSITY



**A** friend and I were enjoying a recreational break by shooting baskets. The fact that we were not keeping score allowed us to engage in a friendly conversation. My friend decided to pick my allegedly philosophical brain and asked me a question that he had trouble answering. He explained that a “diversity expert” had lectured him and all his co-workers that they must all embrace diversity. My friend was uncomfortable about this, but could not put his finger on exactly why he felt this way. This sweet sounding word to our culture-conditioned ears, unfortunately, has become an axiom, and therefore something that cannot be questioned, at least in politically correct circles.

Let us question it, nonetheless. I tossed up another shot while it occurred to me that the interchange of ideas might be my favorite sport. Knowing that my friend trusted me offered hope that my response would be helpful. When we clarify our feelings we are able to live with them more comfortably and are better equipped to share them with others. How does one begin to deal with an issue—such as diversity—that has been sufficiently complex and controversial to baffle some of American history’s most eloquent debaters? What I write below, I am obliged to say, is not exactly a summary of what I said to my friend, but an extension.

The first thing to understand is that diversity is not a moral principle. It merely describes an array of things that happen to be different. This array may be composed of compatible or incompatible elements. Embracing diversity is not necessarily any better than embracing homogeneity. “Diversity” is descriptive, not prescriptive. It is ironic that in today’s world we shun complementarity and champion diversity.

Fine art has been traditionally defined as “diversity within unity”.

This is a good and helpful definition. Without unity, diversity is chaos, like pearls that have been released from their string. On the other hand, unity without diversity is inert, lifeless, uninteresting. Art imitates life in the sense that we are constantly searching for an over-arching purpose that gives meaning to the various episodes of our existence. If diversity is to have any moral significance, it must be wed to unity. To put it simply, the notion of diversity all by itself is incomplete. Diversity in itself is ambiguous and can have opposite interpretations.

Senator John C. Calhoun (1782-1850) believed strongly in diversity, but what he meant by this was the acceptance of slavery and free men as equally constitutive elements. He demanded that the South be recognized for its unique differences, especially its “inequality of condition” that accepted slavery as a fact of life. He rejected the principle expressed in the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal, stating that it was “contrary to human observation”.

Calhoun was hardly alone in acceptance of slavery within the umbrella of diversity. Stephen Douglas, in his debates with Lincoln, denied that a “house divided” cannot stand. He accused Lincoln of being irresponsible for believing that America cannot endure as half-slave and half-free. In rejecting any synthesizing principle, such as the equality of all human



*Lincoln vs. Douglas Debate*

beings, he stated that “our government was formed on the principle of diversity . . . and not that of uniformity.” He rejected the notion that different people could be held to a single standard of truth or morality, commenting that “We must take them as we find them, leaving the people free to do as they please, to have slavery or not, as they choose.” Douglas was also a staunch advocate of being ‘pro-choice’.

Lincoln, however, saw the Declaration of Independence as an “immortal emblem,” one that could endure unchanged throughout time. His *Gettysburg Address* was a rededication to the proposition that “all men are created equal” and the principle of “liberty for all”. Lincoln understood that the diverse groups that make up America could be united on a philosophical basis rather than one that was founded on something that was political and, therefore, contingent. Lincoln understood that

diversity alone is an incomplete concept. America was founded on the principle that diversity must be organized within unity.

At the present moment, the debate continues. Political correctness, however, has tilted the issue in the direction of diversity alone. Very recently (November, 2016), 60 students and an activist with a bullhorn at Providence College demanded the firing of a prominent faculty member for nothing more than his criticism of the diversity ideology. The victim in this case, is Dr. Anthony Esolen, an orthodox Catholic and author of 16 books and another due for publication next year entitled, *Out of the Ashes: Rebuilding American Culture*. Among his many other accomplishments is his translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* into English.



It would be an understatement of considerable magnitude to say that political correctness is not a suitable substitute for philosophical thinking, or that the whole is greater than the part. In his fine book, *On Hallowed Ground* (Yale University Press, 2000), the distinguished historian John Patrick Diggins makes the following comment: “Never before in American history has there been such confusion about the meaning of America and the identity of the American people. Never before have Americans been so deprived of the backward glance of historical understanding unsullied by the idiocy of political correctness.”

Diversity is an appealing word because it conjures up notions of universal brotherhood and world peace. But it appeals to dreamers who may, in fact, be intolerant toward those who prefer a more complete proposition. Diversity, lest it disintegrate into chaos and confusion, must be understood within the context of an agreeable unity. This is the vision to which Lincoln was dedicated. It is a vision of which we are presently losing sight.



# FIVE

## STRICTLY SPEAKING



**S***trictly Speaking* is the title of Edwin Newman's defense of the English language against various assaults coming from politicians, journalists, and other linguistic vandals. "Will America be the Death of English" is the subtitle. "The outlook is dire; it is a later point in time than you think," according to the former NBC house grammarian. But that was 1974 and his fears have not exactly materialized. We now face a far more pernicious language problem: the pervasive use of perfectly good English words that convey the wrong meaning. I describe, very briefly, ten instances that illustrate this problem, one that threatens both communication and the kind of idealism that is necessary to sustain a civilization.

1) **Authority:** It is commonplace for people to reject authority because they misunderstand the meaning of the word. Authority does not necessarily mean giving orders, but offering reasons. This same fear is commonly directed against parents, teachers, the police and the military. Fear of authority, then, is tantamount to a rejection of reason. The absence of reason, however, invites chaos.

2) **Freedom:** It is not true that freedom is enlarged to the extent that it is emancipated from reason. Freedom is not absolute. Nor is it a terminal value. We are free in the most meaningful sense of the term through reason, not from reason. Reason grounds us in realism. We are not free because we can fly, but because our feet are on the ground.

3) **Love:** The most commonplace distortion of the meaning of love is to equate it with approval. This is a stagnant notion of love. But love is transformative because it wills the good of the other. Love, therefore, is not the mindless acceptance of whatever the other person does, but a practical concern that is directed to the other's good.

4) **Education:** It is an error of the highest magnitude to believe that education is imposing views on others. One cannot impose a view on another even if he tried. Rather, education is imparting worthwhile ideas. It is more like ministering to students' need to know things that will benefit them, as sunlight ministers to plants. The word "education" refers to drawing out something that is already there, helping students to become more aware of what is inside them. It is not a form of seduction.

5) **Order:** We need order to regulate our lives properly. But that does not mean that our lives should be regimented. We need the proper ordering of the events in our lives so that we can achieve wholeness. The human organism is magnificently ordered so that health is achieved and maintained. Order, in this positive sense, is far from being a form of arbitrary regimentation. It is a form of artistry that brings the parts into unity. Wisdom depends on the proper ordering of our life's actions.

6) **Virtue:** Many pundits have asserted that virtue is its own punishment because it is a weakness that stifles freedom. The opposite, however, is the case. Genuine virtue is a strength that helps a person do the right thing in the midst of temptations to do the opposite. Virtue is rooted in love and directs people to the good. Without virtue, a person wallows in dissipation.

7) **Judgment:** "Do not judge" has become a tiresome cliché. As a consequence, people retreat into the twilight zone of moral inertia. We cannot get through the day without making innumerable judgments. We can neither escape judging nor judgment. Judgment need not be avoided for fear of being presumptuous. We need sound judgment in order to distinguish right from wrong. Being able to judge is a human faculty without which we cannot behave in a human way.

8) **Peace:** Though peace is universally desirable, it remains elusive. It is not the absence of conflict but is based on the presence of order. In fact, it is the serenity that we experience when our lives are proceeding according to their proper order. If we want peace, we must put our lives in order. Merely avoiding conflict leaves us with a void that is restive and not tranquil. Peace is not a direct object of choice; it is the consequence of a life characterized by moral rectitude.

9) **Knowledge:** Both the cynic and the pessimist agree that knowledge is nothing more than opinion, that truth is subjective and



undiscoverable. Their position, however, is self-contradictory since they believe that their view is the true one. Knowledge is important and should be sought after because it helps us to distinguish between fact and fiction, reason and superstition. Without knowledge that leads to truth, we are left in the dark, hopelessly involved in unresolvable arguments about which opinion is better than another.

10) **Religion:** For many people, religion is restrictive since they believe that it imposes a dogma on people. Therefore, it is seen as contrary to freedom. The truth of the matter is that religion is a revelation, the illumination of truths that most people would not come to realize on their own. Far from being restrictive, religion is actually liberating. It frees us from superstition and the errors that are the inevitable consequences of pride. Religion lifts us out of ourselves without abandoning us.

We need authority, freedom, love, education, order, virtue, judgment, peace, knowledge, and religion. Without these values, chaos reigns and civilization is just a pipe dream. Yet these values will remain elusive as long as we misunderstand their meanings and choose to view them in their distorted forms. These values represent ideals that are worth the effort it requires to make them a real part of our daily life. They challenge us and reward us. But their realization will not come about unless we are willing to pay the price. Strictly speaking, rectitude and education are better than lassitude and dissipation, not to mention blind submission to political correctness.

**Say YES if you mean yes,  
NO if you mean no -  
MATTHEW FIVE  
THIRTY SEVEN  
anything more is from the  
Evil One.**



# SIX

## SETTLING FOR SECOND BEST



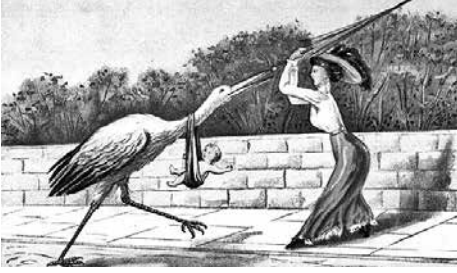
**T**he basic mistake that Adam and Eve made was to opt for the second best. They left a privileged life in Paradise and journeyed east of Eden where they would suffer pain and death. They preferred to sever their tie with God and make it on their own. The gap between the best and second best in this case, however, is wide enough to allow entrance to all the evils of the world. Choosing the second best is not advisable. And yet, we continue to make this egregious mistake. We choose, as did our primal parents, the illusion of autonomy over the reality of transcendence.

Sigmund Freud, as Philip Rieff asserts in his excellent work, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, “proclaims the superior wisdom of choosing the second best”. He advises living on Easy Street rather than embarking on the “narrow road” that Christ mandated. Consequently, he made a comfortable life that demanded few if any sacrifices intellectually respectable. “Life, as we find it,” wrote the founder of psychoanalysis, “is too hard for us; it brings too many pains, disappointments and impossible tasks. In order to bear it we cannot dispense with palliative measures . . . The services rendered by intoxicating media in the struggle for happiness and keeping misery at a distance is so highly prized as a benefit that individuals and peoples alike have given them an established place in the economics of their libido.” Freud was not interested in the Sacraments.

The retreat into the self, however, contradicts the communal nature of the human being. It is tempting and even understandable. Yet it is false to who we are as transcendent beings and bitterly counterproductive. In accordance with the mood established by Freud, Sartre, Nietzsche, and others, Gloria Steinem could say, without fear of embarrassment, “I either gave birth to someone else or I gave birth to myself.” She had an abortion when she was twenty-two and justified it to herself by stating that “I

had taken responsibility for my own life.” She summarily rejected the complementarity of the sexes by promoting the catch-phrase, “A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle”. An advocate of “reproductive freedom,” she ignored the fact that the choice to have or not to have a child does not spring from one’s autonomy.

The illusion of autonomy, of needing no one other than the self, has



become not only attractive, but socially commendable. Hence, Judith Jarvis Thomson, who authored the most widely read article in defense of abortion, can argue that an unborn child has no right to occupy the body of a woman. As she insists, “we are

not morally required to be Good Samaritans or anyway Very Good Samaritans to one another.” We are, in Dr. Thomson’s view, presumably, islands of liberty.

Why settle for second best, we may ask, when the superior choice is incomparably superior? Why settle for the illusion of autonomy when we can attain the reality of transcendence, a life with God. We can “super-exist,” as Jacques Maritain reminds us, through knowledge and love. Here is what Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has to say on the matter in his encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*: “The human being is made for gift, which expresses and makes present his transcendent dimension. Sometimes man is wrongly convinced that he is the sole author of himself, his life and society. This is a presumption that follows from being selfishly closed in upon himself, and it is a consequence – to express it in faith terms – of original sin.”

People continue to be ruled by the weaknesses they have inherited from the first sin, a desire for autonomy and a rejection of God. Having abandoned God, as Saint John Paul II states in *Veritatis Splendor*, the human being “no longer grasps the ‘transcendent’ character of his ‘existence as man.’ He no longer considers life as a splendid gift of God, something ‘sacred’ entrusted to his responsibility and thus also to his loving care and ‘veneration.’” The former pontiff warns of “some present-day cultural tendencies” that give so much reign to freedom that it leads to “a moral autonomy which would actually amount to an absolute sovereignty.”

A full transition of man, who is innately communal, to a post-

communal culture would seem to be unachievable. There are safeguards within the human being that prevent him from denying everything about his nature. Even Gloria Steinem, for example, who has vilified marriage between men and women, applauds same-sex marriage in the name of relational love. Human beings can atomize themselves only so far until that point is reached wherein their philosophy becomes both repugnant as well as unlivable.

Left to their own second best preferences, the Israelites danced around the ark and worshipped Mammon until a furious Moses, the archetype of political incorrectness, came down from the mountain and re-directed their individualities toward a communal purpose. Is there a new Moses on the horizon that will do the same for the current generation? Great encyclicals outlining the nature of man and his transcendent destiny have been largely ignored. In the meantime, as Philip Rieff has observed, modern culture is unique inasmuch as it has given birth to elaborately argued anti-religions, “all aiming to confirm us in our devastating illusions of individuality and freedom.” If the needed reformation is not inspired by sound reason, then it will come about through prolonged suffering.





**THE FEMALE ABORTIONIST.**

# SEVEN

## THE FRAGILE EQUILIBRIUM



**T**he October 23, 2016 football game between the Minnesota Vikings and the Philadelphia Eagles began with an embarrassing series of fumbles and interceptions. The five turnovers in just the first ten minutes of the contest led one sports commentator to describe the proceedings as “ugly”. Then, without having to search for an appropriate comparison, said, “As ugly as the presidential election.” It is a sad reflection on the current world of politics that the campaign for President of the United States can be regarded as a standard by which ugliness is measured.

“Ugly” is an apt term, but it fails to capture the true enormity that characterizes the race to the White House. Ignorance, deception, name-calling, arrogance, and mendacity are only too evident, especially in what are euphemistically called the “debates”. Politics has replaced civility, rhetoric has displaced reason. There is urgency, indeed, but no clear-headedness to provide a remedy; there is a crisis, but there is no vision. We watch the presidential debates and are hard pressed to find an actual debate amidst the whirlwind of accusations and false statements. The abortion issue was presented with exceedingly little grasp of its profound moral and social significance.

The fact that there is such a critical lack of understanding of the scope, the magnitude, and the consequences of the abortion issue among the presidential candidates (one far more than the other) is most disturbing. Saint John Paul II, in his encyclical, *The Gospel of Life* (1995) used the phrase “ubiquitous tentacles” to describe the broad and devastating effect that abortion has on all corners of society, a phenomenon that contributes powerfully to the formation of a Culture of Death (sec. 21). Even if we set aside the evil of abortion, which is the killing of an innocent

human being, the preludes and postludes surrounding abortion should be enough to convince any person of right reason that the abortion issue is as broad as the entire range of culture.

Abortion has become commonplace, claiming the lives of roughly one million unborn Americans per year. And its acceptance is pervasive. Many see abortion, as did the Supreme Court, as a private issue, merely the rightful decision of the mother. And since it is a “right,” it should no longer be contentious. Therefore, pro-life people are stigmatized as being anti-choice, against human rights, and even misogynistic. It is ironic, however, that while knowledge of ecology becomes more and more widespread, an awareness of the ecology of abortion remains virtually non-existent. Yet abortion does, indeed, have far-reaching effects.

Because abortion has become, to a large extent, accepted, so too, has easy sex. As one university student put it, “I hope abortion remains legal since I hate to use the condom.” Casual sex inevitably leads to casualty sex, with its train of heartbreak, disappointment and disease. Political correctness has made it most unfashionable to discuss abortion. The Media has become a champion of abortion and often ridicules anyone who brings any sensible objection to it. Finding suitable marriage partners becomes more difficult in a world where promiscuity is permitted while moral debate is forbidden. The acceptance of abortion has antecedent effects on the act which has adverse effects on individuals, relationships, marriage, and society. It greatly weakens the foundations of culture.

On an academic level, the privatization of abortion along with the deconstruction of any argument against it has contributed to the relativization of all morality. If a person can be pro-choice on abortion, why should he not be pro-choice on any other moral issue? The deconstruction of morality, to rationalize abortion, can hardly prepare graduates to become responsible citizens or dutiful parents.

The aftermath of abortion--its postlude—had contributed to the erosion of marriage. The decision to abort belongs solely to that of the mother. The father is systematically excluded. In addition, there is the negative impact that abortion has on siblings and grandparents. Many women come to regret their abortion. Statistics show an alarming increase of alcohol abuse, depression, and suicide among aborting women. As a result, many women’s groups have formed to protest how they were deceived. Among these groups are WE (Women Exploited), WEBA (Women Exploited by Abortion), Victims of Abortion, Rachel’s Vineyard, Voices, Victims of Choice, and so on. In politically correct



circles, these groups simply do not exist. Helphopeandhealing.org offers a 24 hour national helpline for women who need to recover from their abortion. Abortion has an adverse effect on the unborn child, the mother, the father, the family, and the whole of society. In addition, it adversely affects medicine, law, the Media, and education, as well as the family and all its components. In referring to abortion, author John Updike states: “Death, once invited in, leaves its muddy boot-prints everywhere.” Abortion is as private as the wind.

The moral health of any culture rests on a “fragile equilibrium,” to cite Saint John Paul II once again. The eclipse of God, the attack on innocent life, and the renunciation of love provide an unsettling and perilous tandem. No culture can maintain its equilibrium, or balance, when it depreciates life and love. We are at the mercy of our iniquities. We need leaders who are aware of the extent of damage that abortion brings to society. Despite the urgency of the present situation, and our apparent lack of capable leaders, we need prayer and heroic patience.



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# EIGHT INCURSIONS AND DEMOLITIONS



**A** friend told me a joke recently that is a better example of theological wisdom than knee-slapping humor: Colonel Sanders bribes the Pope to modify the Lord's Prayer so that it reads, "Give us this day our daily chicken." The Pope agrees, once the bribe is too high for him to resist. At this point the joke is based on the unscrupulous incursion of commerce into religion. But there is more. As a consequence of capitulating to Colonel Sanders, the Vatican loses its Wonder Bread account. The Our Father was not, in its original form, a religious prayer at all, but something that was subsidized by a bread company. The initial incursion was only a cover-up for a demolition. Religion had no autonomy. It belonged, heart and soul, to commerce right from the beginning.

The more serious message the joke conveys is that a series of incursions into religion can prepare the way for its demolition. Today, it is politics more than commerce that is eating away at the integrity of religion, especially that of Catholicism. Former vice-presidential candidate Tim Kaine's view that one day the Church will accept abortion is an instance of an incursion that implies a demolition. If the commandment, "Thou Shall Not Kill," and the Church's 2,000 years of clear, consistent and forceful teaching against abortion is wrong, then there is no reason to think that there is anything left in the Church that can resist further incursions.

In discussing the progress of Roman Catholicism in Volume II of his classic work, *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville made the following observation which, as things have turned out, had the quality

of a prediction: “One of the most ordinary weaknesses of the human intellect is to seek to reconcile contrary principles and to purchase peace at the expense of logic. There have ever been and will ever be men who, after having submitted some portion of their religious belief to the principle of authority, will seek to exempt several other parts of their faith from it to keep their minds floating at random between liberty and obedience.” Here “floating is a synonym for wandering, indecisiveness, lack of faith, and fear of moving in any one particular direction.

De Tocqueville was anticipating the emergence of the cafeteria Catholic who picks and chooses what he wants and leaves the rest on the table. Such a Catholic (and they are numerous) justifies his contradictory stance by claiming that he is “liberal”. He does not identify himself with the “doublethink” that George Orwell describes in his novel, *1984*. Typically, he might be obedient to the Church’s teaching on social justice while dissenting from Her teaching on abortion. In order to do this, however, he must not allow himself to realize that in approving the killing of innocent unborn children, he is violating the canons of social justice. Killing the unborn is not consistent with social justice since the unborn have a right to continue living. It is not “liberal,” however, to accept contradictories; it is irrational. Nonetheless, politics has plenty of room for irrationality.

This cafeteria approach to Catholicism is usually the result of a political incursion. It offers an easy way in which a person can claim to be a Catholic and at the same time find peace among his secular associates. It is not the logical result of a careful understanding of Christianity. It is unimaginable that Christ, who was conceived in the womb, would countenance the killing of unborn children. For de Tocqueville, the prevalence of combining the un-combinable flows from a common intellectual weakness in which logic is scrapped for a certain peace of mind. People do not like to be called “old-fashioned,” “religious zealots,” “fundamentalists,” or even “conservative”. Being “liberal” is the popular trend though its magnetic north is the demolition of religion. And this is why Hillary Clinton wants a new religion for America. But what she wants would not emerge from the ashes of an out-of-date Christianity, but, tragically, would be the ashes.

The cafeteria Catholic places himself on shaky ground. When he rejects the integrity of his religion and tries to live a double life, he also rejects logic. For logic demands consistency. As a result, his involvement in secular affairs and his religion are both weakened. But the peace he

seeks by compromising his religion cannot be a lasting one. Human beings cannot live a contradictory life and remain in harmony with themselves for very long.

The Catholic historian James Hitchcock has observed the movement from incursion to demolition in Protestant churches. Accordingly, he states that “in each generation, more and more such surrenders [to political pressures] are demanded, until there is finally nothing left, and surrender itself becomes the chief expectation which liberals must meet.” Robert H. Bork, in *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline* made the politically incorrect, though valid assertion that “The president of Notre Dame would much prefer the approvals of the presidents of Harvard and Yale to that of the pope.” The temptation to compromise one’s faith in adjusting to the demands of the secular world can be very strong even for presidents of Catholic universities.

De Tocqueville expressed his warning to Catholics in the year 1840. Catholics must meet the challenge, perhaps more than ever before, of living in the world without compromising their faith. In the final analysis, compromised faith inevitably leads to compromised effectiveness in all social affairs. The wings of the Holy Spirit do not ride on the winds of the Zeitgeist.





# NINE

## EQUALITY AND IDENTITY



“**M**en and women are equal in dignity, complementary in mission.” In making this comment, Saint John XXIII deftly combines equality with identity. At the same time, he captures three important notions: 1) that men and women are equal in some ways; 2) that men and women are different in some ways; 3) that men and women can complete each other in some ways. The world would be a lot better place and there would be more peace between the sexes if this simple, yet fundamental vision of the sexes would be put into practice.

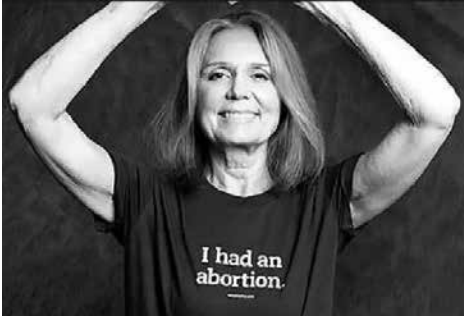
Nonetheless, the reigning view in the world today elevates the first notion to a principle, while trying its best to eliminate the second two. The result is chaos. An artificial ideology cannot square with a natural reality. If the shoe does not fit, we should not try to change the foot.

One reason for according supremacy to equality is the fear that any form of inequality will inevitably lead to injustice. Thus, it is feared that men will use a position of power to oppress women. A second reason is the fear of discrimination. If inequality gives men, for example, an advantage, presumably they will use it to discriminate against women. Nonetheless, philosophy does not begin with fear; it begins with wonder. And wonder is open to the order of reality.

It is evident to virtually everyone that injustice and discrimination are undesirable. What is also undesirable, however, is the secular solution--make everyone equal--that is commonly proposed. Such a simplistic solution fails to honor the reality of one's personal identity. It is not inevitable, though it does occur, that men will be unjust and

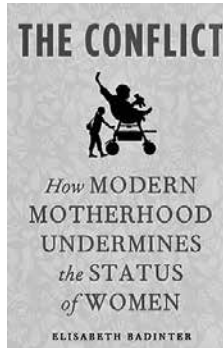
discriminatory toward women. It is possible, and this also occurs, for men and women to complement each other. It is this possibility that society should strive to encourage. This may not be the trendy or politically correct solution, but it is the only realistic one.

When the radical feminist, Gloria Steinem, states that “A gender-equal society would be one where the word 'gender' does not exist: where everyone can be themselves,” she is implying that complementarity and identity are incompatible with each other. Yet, it remains incontrovertible that marriage between the sexes, whose complementarity is proven



by the birth and education of children who spring from marriage, offers sufficient proof that the distinct sexes do, in fact, complement each other. The denial of one's gender is not the path to a person's identity but its prohibition.

Elisabeth Badinter, the intellectual heir to Simone de Beauvoir, based her entire philosophy on the notion of equality. She went so far as to promote the idea that men and women should share the same pregnancy. In her view, complementarity was a “snare” and implied that men



and women were members of different species. Concerning those who opposed the notion of male pregnancy, Badinter stated that “It is hard to grasp the philosophical and moral principles behind the rejection of this hypothesis.” The fact that transferring the uterine child from the woman's to the man's body would lead to the death of both the child and the man, did not seem to shake her enthusiasm for equality.

Victoria Woodhull was the first woman to run for the office of president of the United States. Nominated in 1872 by the newly formed Equality Party, she ran on a platform that included prostitution, birth control, and free love. By the latter, the Queen of the Quill, as she was called, affirmed that “I have an inalienable, constitutional and natural





right to love whom I may, to love as long or as short a period as I can; to change that love everyday if I please, and with that right neither you nor any law you can frame [has] any right to interfere.” In order to achieve the equality she proposed, however, it would have been necessary to obliterate the identities of “wife” and “husband”. Equality without boundaries must necessarily efface all identities. Woodhull was, as expected, unsuccessful in her presidential bid. Nonetheless, her ideology of radical equality lives on. The opera *Mrs. President*, about Victoria Woodhull, premiered in

Anchorage, Alaska in 2012.

“Radical egalitarianism,” writes Robert H. Bork, in his book, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline* (2000), is one of the “defining characteristics of modern liberalism.” On a slightly optimistic note, he closes his study by commenting that “many Americans are becoming restless under the tyrannies of egalitarianism and sick of the hedonist individualism that has brought us to the suburbs of Gomorrah.”

Being a lawyer, Bork has an understandable affinity for the law. The law means that there are boundaries that separate what is lawful from what is unlawful. Bork’s affection for law, however, goes beyond positive law, including constitutional law, and extends to morality. As possessors of individual identities, we all operate within a moral law that distinguishes between who we are in our authentic identity, and who we are not. We are equal under the law, equal in dignity, and equal as human



beings. Yet we also have unique identities. But these identities do not exist for us alone, but are essential aspects of our personalities that should be shared with our neighbors in a loving, complementary way.

The isolation of one value – equality – from a network of interrelated values is not a true philosophy but a one-sided ideology. Equality must be counterbalanced with identity. To be a person means that one is equally human with other human beings, yet serves the community of human beings by virtue of his unique and authentic identity. Equality alone is bankrupt.



# TEN

## THE CASSANDRA SYNDROME AND THE MAGICAL ELIXIR



**C**assandra is a figure from Greek mythology. She was a daughter of Priam, King of Troy, and endowed with exceptional beauty. Apollo provided her with the gift of prophecy. But when she rejected his romantic advances, he placed a curse on her ensuring that no one would ever believe her warnings. Cassandra's frustration, therefore, was to know of dire events in advance of their occurring, but never to be able to convince anyone of their truth.



A number of psychologists have employed the term “Cassandra Syndrome” to characterize patients who suffer a similar kind of frustration experienced by the mythological figure. Melanie Klein, for example, sees Cassandra as representing a moral conscience whose main task is to issue warnings. Warren Buffet earned the title of “Wall Street Cassandra” when he predicted that the stock market surge in the 1990’s was merely a “bubble”. In relation to Asperger’s Disorder, the Cassandra Syndrome is sometimes said to be applied when parents or family members seek help for an Asperger child and are disbelieved. Martha Mitchell, wife of John Mitchell, Attorney-General during the Nixon administration, was labelled the “The Cassandra of Watergate” when she alleged that White House officials were involved in illegal activity.



*Bl. Paul VI  
The Cassandra Pontiff*

The frustrations associated with the Cassandra Syndrome are well known to pro-life advocates. They know, without being blessed with special powers from on high, that the unborn human is a human being, that abortion is harmful to women, that many women are seduced into having abortions which they later regret, and that the pro-abortion machine often operates on lies, deceptions, and distortions. Yet, their references to these realities are often rejected as if they completely lacked credibility. The rhetoric of abstractions

such as “choice” and “women’s rights” prevail in the pro-abortion world over concrete and scientifically verifiable realities.

Cassandra’s curse remained with her to her dying day. There was no magical elixir she could take that would dissolve her Apollonian curse. With pro-lifers, on the other hand, the situation is dramatically different in one important aspect. They now have at their disposal two elixirs. And while these elixirs are not exactly magical, they are effective in getting more and more people to believe realities about the abortion issue that they formerly denied.

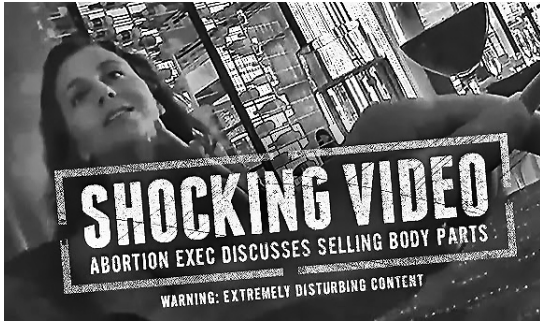


The first of these elixirs is ultra sound. Former abortionist John Randall readily admits to the fact that ultrasound images of the unborn make it difficult for people to maintain the illusion that the unborn is not a member of the human species. The introduction of ultrasound technology in his abortion clinic was followed by high

employee turnover. Randall confessed that he would not allow women to see images of their own children on ultrasound during pre-abortion screening. “We knew,” he stated, “even if they heard the heart beat that many times they wouldn’t have the abortion, and you wouldn’t want that. No money in that.”

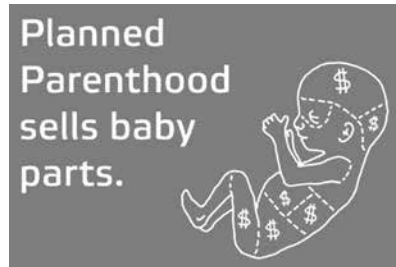
The second elixir comes in the form of video tapes. In September 2015, Kellyanne Conway, who is the President of the Polling Company, Inc./WomenTrend, showed an 11-minute tape to focus groups in Denver,

Colorado. The tape featured a Planned Parenthood abortionist discussing various criteria that, in her view, justified the selling of body parts gleaned



from the unborn children that she and members of her staff aborted. This is just one of many videos on the same theme that has incriminated Planned Parenthood. Conway found that participants in her focus group, including those

who were pro-abortion, undecided, or pro-life, were, across the board, disgusted. All the participants, after watching the video, went as far as to assert that the Planned Parenthood employees caught on camera should lose their jobs. Conway told the *Washington Times* that the videos were “like a magical elixir” allowing viewers to see through the façade that Planned Parenthood had erected. The eye-opening responses of people who viewed Planned Parenthood’s damning videos prompted Kristan Hawkins, President and Executive Director of Students for Life of America, and Lauren Enriquez, a freelance writer and communications consultant, to offer the following hope filled sentence for all who want to have the curse of Apollo lifted: “With mounting evidence of the many ways that abortion betrays women, scientific and technological advancements testifying to the humanity of the preborn child, and young people more pro-life than any



generation since Roe, we have the wind in our sails” (*The Human Life Review*, Summer 2016, p. 29). Wedged between tax payers’ money and the monetary returns of abortionists, human life is lost. Society may be beginning to wake up to this dehumanizing reality. Hillary Clinton’s mantra that “Planned Parenthood should be funded, supported, and appreciated—not undermined, misrepresented, and demonized” is sounding more and more like nothing but hot air.

The Media, to a significant extent, has operated in the spirit of Apollo, cursing the public by making it difficult for people to believe in the reports of the truly horrible things that are actually going on. Technology is a two-edged sword: it provides the armamentaria for abortion, but it also provides the windows that show what is really involved in abortion. The



elixirs that were not available to Cassandra are now readily available to virtually everyone. As the truth becomes more apparent it becomes more believable; as the lie becomes less supportable, it becomes less credible. The truth has a splendor that can never be entirely extinguished. We need a clean windshield in order to drive safely. The artificial façade that obstructs our view prevents us from seeing where we are going.





*Another woman seduced by the ravenous  
Loup Garou of legalized abortion*





II  
POLITICAL  
CORRECTNESS  
DISPLACED



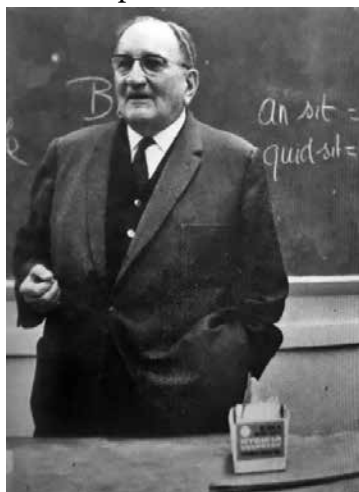
*And the WORD became flesh*

# ONE

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PHILOSOPHY



**T**oward the end of his Harvard lectures, presented in 1936-37, Etienne Gilson warned that “if we lose philosophy itself; we must be prepared to lose science, reason, and liberty; in short, we are bound to lose Western culture itself together with its feeling for the eminent dignity of man.” So quietly stated, Gilson’s warning did not invoke a storm of protest as did Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s Harvard commencement address of 1978. The latter stated that “A decline in courage may be the most striking feature which an outside observer notices in the West in our days. The Western world has lost its civil courage, both as a whole and separately, in each country, each government, each political party, and, of course, in the United Nations.” The author of *The Gulag Archipelago* warned of a “perishing society” in which “the human soul longs for things higher, warmer, and purer than those offered by today’s mass living habits, introduced by the revolting invasion of publicity, by TV stupor, and by intolerable music.” The world longs for philosophy as a love of wisdom that it has unwittingly rejected.



Gilson spoke softly and in the subjunctive. Solzhenitsyn spoke frankly and in the indicative. The latter’s words made those assembled most uncomfortable and provoked many to boo. As a result, and despite telling the truth, the Nobel Prize winner for literature became, virtually

overnight, a non-person, thereby mocking Harvard's motto – *Veritas*. Nonetheless, Gilson and Solzhenitsyn were saying the same thing, namely, that the loss of philosophical values signals the end of Western culture. Without light from the mind, how can we direct our lives?

Philosophy is unique in that its vocabulary can be held in high esteem all the while the words that constitute that vocabulary have been drained of meaning. Philosophical terms are routinely hijacked by those who have no understanding of what they truly signify. Thus, Harvard can pride itself in adopting the motto *Veritas*, but when truth appears in an existential form, it makes many of its denizens squirm with discomfort. *Veritas* is fine as long as it is a word. When it is incarnated, then, the trouble begins.

The vocabulary of philosophy remains pure and ideal. Consider the following seven words: Goodness, Truth, Justice, Freedom, Equality, Rights, and Dignity. No one opposes these words in principle, though many oppose them in practice. Moreover, each of these terms, so rich in promise, so lofty in aim, are often used in today's society to convey the very opposite of what they were originally intended to mean.

Recently, a dozen nurses filed a lawsuit against their employer, the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, which told them they had to assist in abortions or risk losing their jobs. Here is an example of what happens when philosophical values are misunderstood and misapplied. Abortion is considered as something “good”. That is the “truth” of the matter. And since a woman has a “right” to an abortion, she has a “freedom” that, in “justice” should not be thwarted. In addition, since men do not give birth, women, being “equal” to men, should not be compelled to give birth when they have an unwanted pregnancy. Abortion, then, honors the “dignity” of all women. The words remain, but their meaning is perverted.



Western culture has lost philosophy, though it continues to champion its language. What remains is not philosophy, but fragments from its wreckage. Goodness loses its objectivity, truth becomes subjective. Freedom is understood negatively only in term of being unfettered. Equality is confused with identity. Rights are whatever people want them to be. And dignity is no longer a quality of the soul, but

an external and transitory condition.

Real philosophy is complex. In this regard it is a network, an integration of values. Goodness is an objective value and forms the proper object for the will. We should all seek to do what is good. Truth is needed so that justice can be served. There can be no justice without truth. Freedom, in its most important sense, is the opportunity to choose what is good and pursue what is true. Freedom from all restriction leads to the dissolution of freedom. Equality means equal in humanity and equal in the eyes of the law. Rights, in their most fundamental sense, are natural rather than conventional or arbitrary. The unborn have a natural right to continue to live. A woman's legal right to abortion should not override her unborn child's natural right to go on living. And dignity refers to an irremovable and sacred quality of the soul. The phrase "death with dignity" makes no sense because a human being is never without dignity.

It is an odd thing that a society can lose philosophy, the very basis of its civility and coherence, and yet stubbornly cling to its terminology. As long as it calls itself good, it believes it to be so. It can preserve the shadow while rejecting the substance. In this way, it can maintain the illusion that it is still a civilization all the while it continues to decline. Of course, it is far easier for a society to flatter itself, than to roll up its sleeves and actually honor philosophical values in practice.

Solzhenitsyn's words are worth revisiting. He speaks as a surgeon who performs a healing service, but one that is not without some degree of discomfort. "Truth seldom is pleasant," he stated. "It is almost invariably bitter. There is some bitterness in my today's speech too, but I want to stress that it comes not from an adversary, but from a friend." We need the honesty of a friend. We do not need the timidity of the flatterer. Despite his rejection at Harvard, the author of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* continues to widen his audience. He speaks to us. We should honor his wisdom.





# TWO HUNGER FOR THE TRUTH



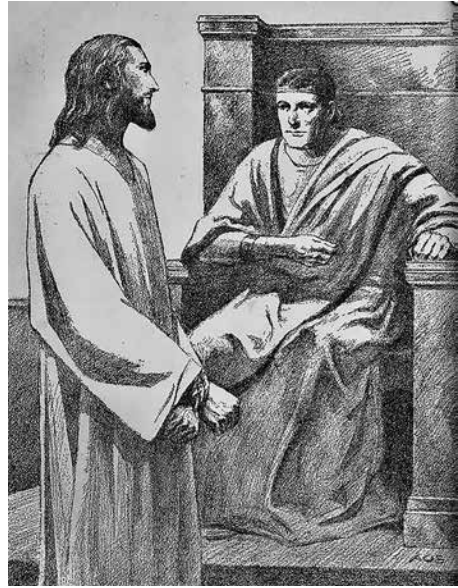
**M**arcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC-43 BC) was a philosopher, politician, lawyer, orator, political theorist, consul, constitutionalist, and translator. He was well equipped by nature and training to gain proficiency in each of these endeavors. His enthusiasm for learning, very much like that of his predecessor, Aristotle, was based on his firm conviction that, “Our minds possess by nature an insatiable desire to know the truth.” Cicero offers us a worthy example of a man whose passion for truth was crowned by his brilliance of achievement.



It is one of the fundamental paradoxes of the human being that alongside of this insatiable desire for truth is a reluctance to accept it when it is found. It is like having a roaring appetite and then losing it at the very moment a mouth-watering plate of food is served. Man is one being, but spends a great deal of his life divided against himself. He is, as the medieval philosophers dubbed him, *Homo Duplex*. We know all too well that in the contemporary world, although there can be no justice without truth, the clamor for social justice is not commensurate with a comparable enthusiasm for truth. Pontius Pilate’s deathless question, “What is truth?” continues to be a shibboleth for modern skepticism. It is a curious thing for the modern secularist to be afraid of the dark when he is young and afraid of the light once he is “educated”. Education is not

always the passage from darkness to light. It is often the path to political correctness that obscures the light.

“Men are most anxious to find truth,” writes the noted philosopher/historian Etienne Gilson, “but very reluctant to accept it. We do not like to be cornered by rational evidence... even though truth is there, in its impersonal and commanding objectivity.” Our passion for truth is natural, but our willingness to accept it, when found, requires two virtues, and we are not born virtuous. First, it requires courage because the truth



often brings challenges that we may find too daunting. We often find ignorance to be more blissful. Secondly, it requires humility, for truth is not “mine” or “yours,” or “ours,” but something that originates outside of any of us. Without humility it is difficult for many people to say “yes” to something that is not theirs, even though it is something that they need. Our passion for truth cools when we realize that it can be demanding as well as humbling. Therefore, as Gilson goes on to say, “Finding truth is not so hard; what is hard is not to run away once we have found it.”



Winston Churchill would have agreed wholeheartedly with Gilson. “Truth is incontrovertible,” he wrote. “Panic may resent it, ignorance may deride it, malice may distort it, but there it is.” The abortion issue offers us a perfect example of what England’s former Prime Minister was saying. A woman may panic when she discovers that she is carrying an unwanted child. At that point, the word “child” is deleted and “unwanted” stands alone, thereby denying the reality of

the unborn child. Harry Blackmun chose to plead ignorance of the nature of the unborn child in his written defense of *Roe v. Wade*. Malice is often directed against those who support life by labelling them as “anti-choice,” “bigots,” and far worse epithets. Yet, the unborn child is



there, in all its “commanding objectivity”.

Winston Churchill was an unbeliever, though he very much believed in the reality of truth and the duty to follow it. This was his strength as a leader in a time of war. But he seemed, in this regard, tantalizingly close to accepting the Christian faith. Truth loses whatever abstract character people may ascribe to it when it is incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ. “I am the way and the truth and the life,” he proclaimed (John 14:6). In the Greek language, “I am” is a very intense way of referring to oneself. It is equivalent to saying, “I myself, and only I, am.” Christ is the embodiment of truth, but He is also the source of all truth. The truth that we can possess leads to the Truth that we can worship.

The step that Churchill did not take, was taken by Eugenio Zolli, the former Chief Rabbi of Rome when he became a Christian. His



first words, appearing in the preface of his autobiography, *Why I Became a Catholic*, are these: “The figure of Christ over the altar symbolizes the greatest sorrow the world knows. Truth is crucified; the highest Wisdom, the Wisdom of God, is crucified. Charity is crucified; love is crucified; God is crucified in His Son.” World War II was a crucifixion of Truth. Therefore, avoidance of war rests on a reverence for truth. Those who oppose war and at the same time deride truth are actually apostles of war,

even if they are unaware of the fact. The war against the unborn serves as a tragic example of how a rejection of truth leads, ultimately, to violence.

Our hunger for truth is inseparable from our hunger for beatitude. But the bridge between the two is constructed of courage and humility. Without these two virtues, the bridge is not crossed and truth lies in shambles.

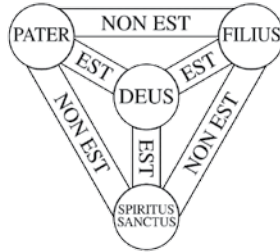
“The greatest among philosophers”, Gilson concludes, “are those who do not flinch in the presence of truth, but welcome it with the simple words: yes, Amen.”



PYTHIA, ORACLE OF DELPHI



# THREE IN PRAISE OF CLARITY



**A** hostess sent out party invitations to her friends that requested RSVPs. When she received a completely illegible response from a particular doctor, she asked her husband what she should do. Upon his advice, she brought the indecipherable letter to a druggist since members of the pharmaceutical profession are reputed to be experts in decoding bad handwriting. The druggist studied the letter for a moment, excused himself, and returned after a few minutes with a small package. “Here you are,” said the druggist cheerfully. “That will be \$125.50, please.”

For many Catholics these days, it’s not difficult for them to preserve the essence of this comedy of errors while changing the identities of the players. The doctor is replaced by a Bishop while a parish priest fills in for the druggist. The distraught woman is the typical confused Catholic layperson.

The point here is that when things are not made clear, we may wind up paying a high price, monetarily or otherwise, for something that we do not want and do not need. When it comes to making our thoughts clear, we cannot be too careful. In Italian, the word *traduttore* means “translator,” while the word *traditore* refers to a “traitor”. The Bible needs translators, not traitors, though the latter have, upon occasion, supplanted the former. In 1631, a printing of the *King James Bible* went horribly astray when the verse “Thou shalt not commit adultery” was misprinted as “Thou shalt commit adultery.” For the want of a three-letter negative, an altogether different message was communicated. The printers were fined £300, which was an exceedingly large sum at the

time, and most of the copies were recalled and burned. This wayward edition, as the result of a single typo, came to be known as ‘The Wicked Bible’ or ‘The Sinners’ Bible’.

In the early Church, a bitter controversy arose concerning how to understand the relationships between the members of the Holy Trinity. A single letter, an iota, the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet, divided two groups of theologians. Some preferred to the term *homoiousios* (*homoios* = similar + *ousia* = substance) which means “of similar substance” to describe the distinctions between the three persons of the Blessed Trinity. Athanasius adopted the term *homoousios*, (*homo* = the same + *ousia* + substance) meaning “of the same substance,” which survives as the correct teaching and is recited during the Mass in the Nicene Creed. Thus, a contentious matter was clarified. Put simply, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not merely similar to each other, but are of the same substance. Therefore, God is One, though at the same time Triune. Clarity can be achieved, but it sometimes requires a protracted struggle.

Church teaching, especially on moral issues, has always been consistently clear. Abortion is wrong, and so is suicide, adultery, slander, and blasphemy. We need to be clear about what is right and what is wrong so that we can dedicate ourselves to doing what is right and avoid the indignity that goes with doing what is wrong. When we are fuzzy about moral issues, we may choose what we will soon regret. One way in which the Church expresses Her charity is by the clarity of Her teaching.



G. K. Chesterton was a man who constantly strove to achieve clarity. His determination in this regard was no doubt abetted by the fact that foggy notions were very popular even in his day. He denounced as “mere weak-mindedness” the “modern habit of saying ‘This is my opinion, but I may be wrong’” and the “modern habit of saying ‘Everyman has a different philosophy; this is my philosophy and it suits me.’” A person’s commitment to clarity is not mitigated by the fear of offending someone or the fear of appearing to be a know-it-all. It overcomes such fears because clarity of expression is simply more important than such disabling fears. When we are clear, we know where we stand. And in knowing where we stand, we are in a better position to know how we are to live. We may not be clear about everything, but

we should strive to clear whenever we can. Intentional cloudiness is not a virtue.

Abraham Lincoln would undoubtedly have been surprised to learn that some of his speeches came to be honored as great literature. His aim was simply to communicate clearly and convincingly. And this he did with superlative mastery, as notably exemplified by his *Gettysburg Address* ("That government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."). His messages were sufficiently clear that millions of his fellow citizens could make them their own. Moreover, he did not cower in the midst of controversy: "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy." Lincoln made it abundantly clear what he meant by democracy.

We can hide behind ambiguity, like the Oracle at Delphi, or bury



ourselves under an avalanche of high sounding phrases, as academics often do. It takes courage to be clear for it reveals something of ourselves. But clarity is also charity for it provides enlightenment for others and assists us in loving them more realistically. As Blaise Pascal has written, "Clarity of mind means clarity of passion, too; this is why a great and clear mind loves ardently and sees distinctly what he loves."



*Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom, pray for us.*

# FOUR ESCAPE FROM CYNICISM



**C**ynicism results when a person believes that he has conquered hope. Since it is a conquest of sorts, though surely a negative and counterproductive one, it can endow the cynic with a certain amount of pride. In a similar way, a younger brother can take pride in knocking over the tower of blocks that his older sibling constructed. In this case it is pride that goes after a fall. So, too, the cynic believes he has achieved something when he imagines that he has caused either philosophy or theology to topple over. In his own strange way, he finds nihilism, the defeat of hope, to be amusing as the following anecdote suggests.

A philosopher and a theologian were engaged in a disputation. The theologian used the old quip about a philosopher resembling a blind man, in a dark room, looking for a black cat – which wasn't there. "That may be," said the philosopher, "but a theologian would have found it." It is presumed that the philosopher is in search of something that is not there, while the theologian boasts that he has found it.



*Norman Cousins*

Its cynicism notwithstanding, this is, in its own way, a good joke. It takes down both the philosopher and the theologian, while making us smile at their alleged pretensions. Here, pride also goes before a fall. But as an afterthought, there is really nothing funny about cynicism. The cynic, as someone has said, is a person who, when he smells flowers,

looks around for a coffin. And as G. K. Chesterton has said, “The cynic is the man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing”.



Diogenes the Cynic, as an historical figure, well personifies cynicism. He became notorious for carrying a lamp in the daytime, claiming to be looking for an honest man. He criticized and embarrassed Plato, disputed his interpretation of Socrates and sabotaged his lectures. He exulted in tearing down anything that was alleged to be noble or important. He was truly an anti-philosopher as well as an anti-theologian. He was the master of the “put-down” the archetype of the modern deconstructionist.

While it is common to poke fun at anything that is pretentious, that demeaning word does not apply to everything that is said to be noble and important. Philosophers were once called “wise men”. Pythagoras, took a more modest view of his profession, observing that in the strictest sense, wisdom belongs to God alone. Thus, he coined the term philosophy, meaning “love of wisdom”. There is considerable wisdom in his modesty since, at best, we can attain wisdom only in a limited way. The philosopher, as Jacques Maritain has said, is merely “a beggar at wisdom’s door”.

Yet, wisdom is worth seeking. As St. Thomas Aquinas has remarked, “Of all human pursuits, the pursuit of wisdom is the most perfect, the most sublime, the most profitable, and the most delightful.” We often appreciate wisdom in times when we are foolish. Poor Othello, who loved “not wisely, but too well,” realized his mistake, but only when it was too late. “Life’s tragedy,” wrote Benjamin Franklin, “is that we get old too soon and wise too late.”

The recognition of foolishness presupposes the existence of wisdom. If foolishness has entered the back door, it is because we have ignored wisdom ringing at the front door. Wisdom is not entirely elusive or incomprehensible. It lies in the proper ordering of things. God comes first, neighbor second, the self comes third. We should think before we speak, look before we leap, and evaluate before we decide. Impetuosity, rashness, thoughtlessness, and carelessness are enemies of wisdom. Cynicism is the philosophy of regret, the painful consequence of choosing things out of order. Therefore, as St. Augustine states, “Patience is the companion of wisdom.”



Our ability to recognize the reality of wisdom is evidenced by the immense satisfaction the “Serenity Prayer,” attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr, brought to a countless number of people, including members of the armed forces and those dealing with alcoholism and other personal problems: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” Wisdom here is recognized as the key that gives order to our lives, so that we can do what we can do and not worry about doing the things that we cannot do. The mind has an important role in discovering wisdom. “Cynicism,” as Norman Cousins maintains, “is intellectual treason.”

The eye is made to see color, the ear is designed to hear sounds, and the lungs are fashioned to breathe in oxygen. So too, the intellect was made to know truth. And truth is a critical stepping stone in the pursuit of wisdom. Again, to quote Aquinas: “The human intellect is measured by things so that man’s thought is called true not on its own account but by virtue of its conformity with things.”

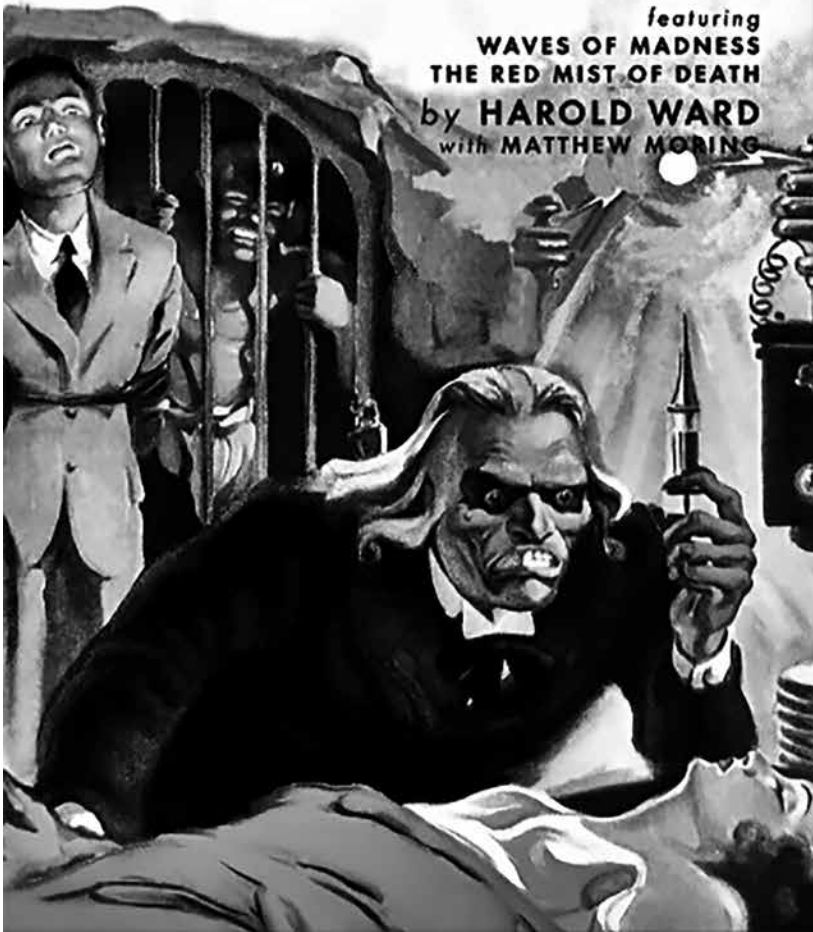
Philosophy is the love of wisdom and is a great aid in opening the door to theology. It is, as its etymology indicates, an act of love. Therefore, philosophy begins with love. But it also requires humility since it is reality that measures truth, and not the ego. Thus, love and humility, together with patience form a buttress against the invasion of cynicism. Cynicism is neither original nor natural. It is the unhappy consequence of a life lived without wisdom. No child was ever born a cynic. We become cynics by default, as the result of not living a life of virtue and, as a consequence avoiding wisdom, the crown of all virtues.



# DOCTOR DEATH

VS. THE SECRET TWELVE, VOLUME 2

featuring  
WAVES OF MADNESS  
THE RED MIST OF DEATH  
by HAROLD WARD  
with MATTHEW MORING



# FIVE LIBERTY WITHOUT FREEDOM



**O**n April 14, 2016, Canada's Liberal government introduced Bill C-14 legalizing euthanasia and assisted suicide. The long-awaited draft is intended to amend two Criminal Code sections that formerly prohibited euthanasia and assisted suicide. The Supreme Court of Canada, in a 9-0 decision on February of 2015, declared these sections to be unconstitutional.

While there will be further discussion before the draft proposal becomes law, the Catholic Bishops of Canada have strongly denounced it, stating that “no matter how it will be amended” it remains a “danger to all vulnerable persons – particularly the aged, disabled, infirm and sick who so often find themselves isolated and marginalized.” Their denunciations were not without a realistic foundation. By the beginning of 2016, 784 patients were euthanized in Canada over a period of just six months.

Of special concern to the bishops was that the proposed federal bill contained no explicit protection of conscience rights. In the original form of the bill, the Liberal government left it up to provincial and territorial governments to decide whether or not publically funded health centers would be compelled to provide euthanasia and assisted suicide. Toronto's Cardinal Thomas Collins implored the government not to “force or compel in any way either an individual or an institution to facilitate their wish against the conscience of the person or the institution”. He stressed the critical importance of making palliative care available for all. “At a time when our priority should be fostering a culture of love, and enhancing resources for those who are suffering,” he

stated, “assisted suicide leads us down a dark path”.

The title of this brief essay, “Liberty without Freedom,” is not meant to be a contradiction in terms, although these two nouns are often used interchangeably. When we take a careful look at “liberty” and “freedom” we find a very important difference between them. “Freedom” is meant to complement “liberty”. But it is possible for an excess of liberty to become freedom’s enemy.

Liberals love liberty far more than they love freedom. In fact, it may be said, observing what has transpired in Canada and the United States over the past decades that liberals hate freedom and are happy to crush it wherever possible. This point may make more sense once we make a careful analysis of the difference between liberty and freedom.

The word “liberty” is derived from the Latin *libertas*, which means “unrestricted, unbounded, or released from constraint”. It is consistent with the notion of being separate and independent. On the other hand, the word “freedom” can be traced to the Germanic or Norse word *Frei*, describing someone who belongs to a tribe and has rights that go with such belonging. Therefore, it contains a communal implication that *libertas* does not have. Moreover, *frei* is the root word for “friend”.

When viewed in this light, it becomes clear that liberty and freedom should be complementary and not antagonistic to each other, just as the individual person should fit smoothly into society.

**LIBERTY CANNOT  
BE ESTABLISHED  
WITHOUT  
MORALITY, NOR  
MORALITY  
WITHOUT FAITH.**



*Alexis de Tocqueville*

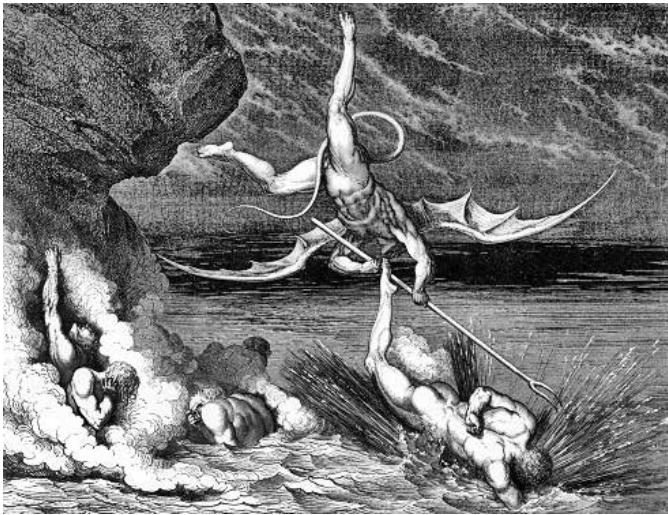
Alexis de Tocqueville, in that most perceptive work of his, *Democracy in America*, warned about an excessive preoccupation with liberty. “I think that liberty,” he wrote, is endangered when this power is checked by no obstacles which may retard its course”. His understanding that too much liberty can crush freedom is made

more evident when he stated that “I hold it to be an impious and an execrable [extremely bad] maxim that, politically speaking, a people has a right to do whatsoever it pleases.” As Dostoevsky once remarked, “Unbounded liberty leads to tyranny.”

De Tocqueville was cautioning young America that removing one restriction after another so that individuals can do what they please,

undermines their freedom to do what is right for their nation. Some restrictions, codified in law, serve as protections. Restrictions on speeding protect motorists and pedestrians. Restrictions on shoplifting protect business. Removing restrictions that really protect the common good constitutes a threat to society. We need liberty (“freedom *from*,” to use Erich Fromm’s terminology), so that we can enjoy “freedom *for*”.

By removing the restriction on abortion, a woman has the liberty to abort. But her liberty comes at the price of destroying the freedom of her unborn child as well as the freedom of the father to protect his unborn child against premature death. As a result of removing the restriction that marriage is a union between a man and a woman, the freedom not to officiate at same-sex marriages has been denied to certain magistrates. And now, removing restrictions against euthanasia and assisted suicide may very well violate the consciences of medical professionals as well as patients who do not want to die. Instances of forced euthanasia are well documented in the Netherlands and Belgium.



*Gravity takes dire liberties with our freedom to fall.*

Liberty, of course, has a positive function. The restrictions that enslave a person must be removed so that he can take his rightful place in society. Here, liberty exists for freedom. But the restrictions that require him to refrain from criminal activity must be upheld, and also for the good of society. When too many restrictions are withdrawn, society descends into chaos, what Thomas Hobbes referred to as “a war between all against all”. Legitimate restrictions are needed so that law can function. When restrictions that serve to protect are removed, law

no longer exists to protect people against themselves.

Archbishop Richard Smith of Edmonton is acutely aware of how too much liberty, that is, the removal of too many restrictions, is tantamount to an assault on the freedom of citizens and sets them up as victims of discrimination. “What is already clear,” he states, “is that this legislative step [in Canada] introduces into law the chilling message that some lives are less worth living than others.”

Liberty should not crush freedom; nor should it discriminate against people. Rather, it should prepare the way and provide the opportunity for freedom. “With liberty and justice for all,” means that the limits of liberty are set by the demands of freedom.



*An Angel frees Peter from prison*

# SIX

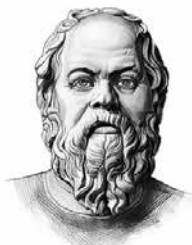
## THE CASE AGAINST THE PREPOSTEROUS



**I**t would seem unnecessary to build a case against the preposterous. Doing so would seem like arguing against procedures that are self-evidently foolish, silly, and backwards. Yet, there continues to be a certain proclivity alive in society for doing things that are preposterous, a phenomenon that warrants both careful attention and immediate correction.

This problem came to my attention many years ago when I was teaching a philosophy course to undergraduates. I knew that many of them were in love with what I call “incomplete ideas”. Such students championed freedom, but not responsibility, justice, but not truth, and sex without the complications of personal attachment and pregnancy. My challenge was to wean them of their affection for singularity, that is, the mistake of isolating a single idea from its proper matrix and according it supremacy.

I began the course by using three carefully chosen philosophers to exemplify thinkers who were skilled at putting several ideas together to form a unified whole. In other words, a trio of philosophers whose thinking was systematic.



First, representing antiquity, I chose Plato. Next, as a representative of the Middle Ages, I selected Saint Thomas Aquinas. My third philosopher, exemplifying systematic thought in the modern era was Mortimer Adler. All of these philosophers, though different in certain ways, understood two important aspects of philosophical thinking:

- 1) that no idea stands alone, independent of other ideas;
- 2) that ideas must be placed in the right order and not thrown together willy-nilly.

None of these philosophers were champions of the preposterous.



It was both disappointing as well as astonishing to me that several students could not count to two! As an old cigarette commercial stated, “I’d rather fight than switch”. These students held tenaciously to their preferred notions of philosophy, one in which a single, isolated idea (like “choice”) was self-justifying. At that point I realized that a case was needed to expose the utter foolishness and unacceptability of the single idea masquerading as a unified philosophy. And so, I needed to build an irresistible case against the preposterous.

The study of Latin is often very helpful toward the understanding of words. The word “preposterous” is derived from two Latin words: “*pre*,” meaning “before,” and “*posterius*,” meaning “after”. Bringing these two words together tells us that to put something “before” which really should come “after” is foolish and unrealistic. It is preposterous, therefore, to try to put one’s shoes on before putting on one’s socks, or trying to dive into the water before learning how to swim, or trying to erect a second floor without putting in a first floor underneath it. The examples are numberless.

It is true that the meaning of “preposterous” has been stretched to include the outrageous and the outlandish. But I wanted to show my



students how that word was helpful and appropriate as an argument against the unrealistic assumption that people are free either to choose their own order or to reject the notion of order entirely.

Ecology, which all my students want to protect, involves a great deal of balanced order. We disrupt this order at our peril. Morality is ecological in the sense that one thing follows another according to a predetermined plan. I did not need to convince any of my students of the nature and value of ecology. Morality, however, was an entirely different matter.

Consider the notion of “justice”. Everyone is in favor of “justice,” especially “social justice”. Nonetheless, justice does not stand alone. It is built on truth, just as the second floor is built on the first floor. It is simply preposterous to deny this order and proceed as if it were not binding. In order to render justice, a judge must discover the truth of what took place. Did the suspect or did he not commit the crime? Justice follows truth. That is the natural order of things. If we put justice ahead of truth, we find that in our preposterous way of thinking, we have completely lost sight of justice. Lynch mobs are not practitioners of justice. If we put man first and God second, we soon lose sight of God. Similarly, if we put ourselves first and the Church second, we find that we no longer have any need for the Church. In order to preserve things, we must know where they are, which is to say, how they follow

or precede other things. A melody can never be preposterous because it consists of the right notes in the right order. To sing a melody backwards is to destroy it.

The case against the preposterous is also the case for the proper place and order of things. The formula for JOY, as some clever individual has pointed out, is “Jesus” first, “others” second, and “yourself” third. Former football great Gayle Sayers had the same idea when he titled his autobiography, “I am third”.

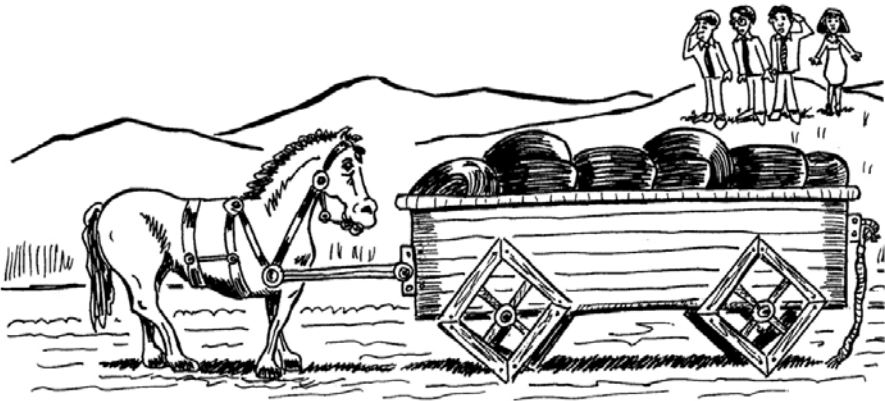
When sex is isolated from love, commitment, and marriage it becomes difficult to grasp the value of this triad. In the natural order of things, one thing prepares for the reception of what



follows. Love prepares the way for marriage, marriage prepares the way for children, and children prepare the way for grandchildren.

That which is preposterous is indeed outrageous and outlandish, but precisely because it inverts the order of reality. Plato, Aquinas, and Adler all agreed that one thing follows another naturally, and not arbitrarily. The natural law is the basis for morality. When people try to suspend morality in space, without any foundation for it, they discover that they have completely lost the very meaning of morality.

The case against the preposterous is needed largely because of its importance. Abortion should not follow conception, divorce should not come after marriage, and despair should not be the consequence of old age. I continue to maintain that, despite the normal frustrations of the educator, teaching should result in learning. The student who thinks he already knows what he has not learned offers us a prime example of the preposterous. Let the teacher teach so that it will follow that the student will learn.



# SEVEN IDEALS AND FANTASIES



**P**hilosophy cannot get off the ground without making distinctions. According to the scholastic maxim, *Philosophi est distinguere*. That something either is or it is not is a most fundamental distinction without which we are not able to think coherently. Quite often, however, in order to define things clearly, one distinction requires further distinctions.

And so it is with distinguishing an ideal from a fantasy. The Irish novelist and philosopher, Dame Jean Iris Murdoch expresses concisely how I would like to use the word ‘fantasy’ in this essay when she complains that “We live in a fantasy world, a world of illusion. The great task in life is to find reality.” The great physicist, Albert Einstein, captures how I employ the word ‘ideal’ when he states that “The ideals that have lighted my way, and time after time have given me new courage to face life cheerfully, have been Kindness, Beauty, and Truth.”

The term ‘ideal’ is sometimes used to indicate something that is wholly unattainable. We can distinguish, then, between an ideal that is unattainable and unrealistic for one that is both attainable (at least in part) as well as realistic. Therefore, we can speak of an ‘ideal’ as an aspect of reality which, when attained, is personally fulfilling. At the same time, the term ‘fantasy’ can refer to the fanciful expressions of reality provided by such eminent writers as J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. A fantasy can enlighten one to the truth of things or it can wander off into the realm of the illusory. Politics is too often nothing more than a fantasy.

G. K. Chesterton neatly contrasts the practicality of ideals with

the impracticality of politics in his book *Orthodoxy*. In so doing, he is turning the conventional world on its head: “They said that I should lose my ideals and begin to believe in the methods of practical politicians. Now, I have not lost my ideals in the least; my faith in fundamentals is exactly what it always was. What I have lost is my childlike faith in practical politics.”

Because it is so easy, as well as commonplace, to confuse the terms ‘ideal’ and ‘fantasy,’ people often find themselves pursuing a fantasy when they assume that they are pursuing a worthy ideal. This confusion, for people who may be well intentioned, provides a situation that calls for much tolerance and sympathy. Struggling to make things better is a noble endeavor. The critical point, however, is to make sure that the struggle is for an ideal that is fulfilling and not a fantasy that will prove disappointing. Here is a distinction that has the potential of transforming mere acquaintances into friends.

We have a natural inclination to strive to achieve an ideal that will make the world a better place. George W. Bush once remarked that “We are bound by things of the spirit — by shared commitments to common ideals.” He envisioned this human condition as illuminating the way for all Americans to achieve unity. His reference to the notion that we are “bound by things of the spirit” is consistent with the Vatican II injunction “that all men should be at once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth (*Gaudium et Spes*).” A true ideal has its counterpart in the nature of the human being. Ideals are worth striving for because they are enriching. On the other hand, there is nothing within us that inclines us in the direction of pure fantasies. Lucy Maud Montgomery, author of *Anne of Green Gables*, gives the notion of the ideal a homespun quality when she states the matter as follows: “We must have ideals and try to live up to them, even if we never quite succeed. Life would be a sorry business without them. With them it’s grand and great.”

Abortion, euthanasia, and the LGBTQ agenda attract people’s enthusiasms. But they are not ideals to which anyone should commit himself. It is fantastical to think that their implementation will bring about a better world. Abortion claims roughly 40 million lives each year throughout the world. Euthanasia is expanding its frontier so that it is now claiming the lives of children. Approximately 35 million people throughout the globe have died of AIDS related illnesses and 34 million people currently have the HIV virus. Even a spokesperson for LGBTQ

lamented that “Our lifestyle had become an elaborate suicide ritual.” True ideals should be rooted in our common human nature. They are for everyone. Our fantasies, on the other hand, are rooted in private dreams that are at odds with reality.

Exchanging a fantasy for an ideal would constitute a major revolution in a person’s life. Energy and dedication are simply not enough. What we hold sacred is critical. Ultimately, the ideals of peace, goodness, beauty, justice, and truth are personified in God. God is also the God of Life. Therefore, in directing our efforts to any of the divine attributes, we are also directing our energies to both God and to the Life that He represents.

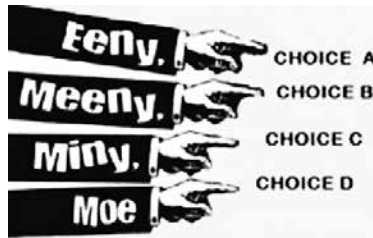
We should aspire to things that are at the same time both above us and within us. This is implied in the adage, “Hitch your wagon to a star”. Ideals must unite heaven and earth. We are all possessors of a religious impulse. But which God should we serve? Should it be the God of Life or the god of convenience? This is an old Biblical question. And herein lies the critical difference between a true and realistic ideal and a misleading and fraudulent fantasy.





# EIGHT

## CHOICE AND CHOICES



**O**ur mental vocabulary exceeds our verbal vocabulary. And since we have more thoughts than words at our disposal, some words have to do double duty to express certain thoughts. The word “love” offers a good example. The word is singular, whereas its meanings are prolix. If the mind did not possess this superiority over words, poetry, metaphor, analogy, as well as philosophy, would not be possible. Moreover, if these two vocabularies were equally extensive, language would become a prison house from which we could not take flight. A STOP sign does not simply mean “stop,” but stop until it is safe to proceed and then proceed. To take the word in its one-dimensional verbal singularity would make us victims of verbal determination. A dogwood tree is not determined by its bark. If freedom meant nothing more than freedom of choice, morality would be inconceivable. We would stop at freedom of choice and not advance to a higher freedom. Not all choices are fulfilling.

Freedom operates on two distinctive levels. The popular mistake is to think of freedom only in terms of the ground floor, so to speak, and not conceive of it as a power by which we can reach the penthouse. Ground floor freedom is “freedom of choice,” a capacity that we have as our birthright. No one is against this capacity any more than anyone is against the power of sight or the power of hearing. God is, in this sense, pro-choice, since he created us with this power. God, however, wills that we use the power wisely.

Freedom of choice is not, in itself, a terminal value. It exists for something beyond itself. Likewise, first grade is not an end in itself, but exists for second grade and even a series of higher grades. The higher freedom, like education, is graduated and advances by degrees. Various names have been given to this second form of freedom. Some have

referred to it as “freedom of autonomy”. We will refer to it as “freedom of fulfillment”.

The two freedoms work hand in hand. Freedom of choice exists for freedom of fulfillment. Freedom of choice is given to us by nature. Freedom of fulfillment is something we have to work for in order to attain it. If a person is to master the violin, for example, he must direct his choices in a consistent and meaningful way so that this end is achieved. This would entail securing a competent teacher, possessing a playable violin, obtaining good violin music, practicing, and so forth. The path from freedom of choice to freedom of fulfillment is fairly direct, though there may be some slight detours along the way. It is the kind of path that is often compared with a journey, leading from the starting point to the arrival at a pre-selected destination. Freedom of fulfillment crowns freedom of choice. At best, freedom of choice is a halfway house.

In order for this movement toward fulfillment to be accomplished, there must be a guide, a kind of map that suggests the choices that should be made so that the end is reached. This “guide” is nothing more than reason. Reason and will form a co-operative tandem, the former seeing what should be done, and the will executing it. They are both necessary. Neither is absolute in its own sphere. Freedom of choice is expressed again and again in a myriad of choices that should lead to personal fulfillment.



On the Dick Cavett Show, some years back, the eponymous host asked his special guest, violin great, Isaac Stern a most disturbing question. “If you had one of your arms smashed by an elevator door, which one would you prefer it be?” The distinguished virtuoso winced, paused a moment to regain his equilibrium, and insisted that he needed both arms. So, too, reason and freedom need each other. Reason without freedom is inert; freedom without reason is blind. We need reason for

light, freedom for action.

When we separate reason from freedom, we make an invalid of freedom. On the other hand, freedom thrives on reason, the way flowers thrive in the presence of the sun. As St. Thomas Aquinas explains, in *De Veritate* 24, 2, reason is at the very root of freedom: “*Totius libertatis radix est in ratione constituta* (The entire root of freedom is found in



reason). Being in favor of choice alone, then, without the guidance of reason, is to render choice irrational. In this mode, freedom of choice is no longer a human ally.

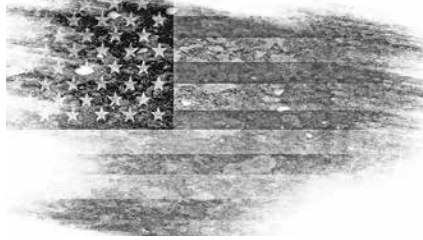
In his encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor*, Saint John Paul II writes: “Acting is morally good when the choices of freedom are in conformity with man’s true good and thus express the voluntary ordering of the person towards his ultimate end . . . .” Freedom needs reason, and both need to be subordinated to that which is truly a good for the human being. To be a whole person, consequently, means to favor freedom of choice, reason, moral goods, and freedom of fulfillment.

The epithet, “anti-choice,” is egregiously misdirected at pro-life people who are, in fact, pro-freedom of choice, but also conjoin this freedom with reason, morality, and freedom of fulfillment. Opposition to abortion is not based on a negation of freedom of choice, but on an affirmation of that and much more. There can be no dialogue without an understanding of what is involved. The pro-life position emerges from a unified picture of the human person. The anti-choice accusers argue out of desperation since they are unaware of the broad ramifications of the abortion issue as well as the equally broad platform of their right-to-life opponents.



# NINE

## GRAY MATTER



**S**t. Thomas Aquinas stated in the second chapter of his *Summa Contra Gentiles* that if he were writing for the Jews, he would use the authority of the Old Testament, and if he were writing for Christians, he would use the authority of the New Testament. But since he was writing for the Mohammedans who do not accept the authority of either, he must “have recourse to the natural reason, to which all men are forced to give their assent.”

Reason is the common denominator of all human beings. It represents the possibility of turning discord into concord. The rejection of reason is the rejection of something that is essentially human and therefore leads to violence. Turning our attention to the civil strife involving the conflict between black and white that continues to plague America, reason represents the primacy of “gray matter” since that is the color of the brain and is a natural way of reconciling black and white.

Black lives matter, and so, too, white lives matter. All lives matter. But so does gray matter matter. The coolness of reason offers hope for understanding and reconciliation. Reason is in accord with truth and justice. When reason is rejected, so are these indispensable values. The



universal value of reason should not be contested. Let us all be reasonable. The alternative, ultimately, is violence

Certain recent events in the United States involving a disrespect for the flag have led to intense controversy. It is said that an athlete has a right not to honor the flag when the National Anthem is being played at the beginning of a sporting event. There are many rights a person

has which are imprudent and counterproductive. The range of rights far exceeds that of the range of good ideas. A person has the right to paint his house bright orange, or wear a five foot hat to work, but these are not good ideas. It seems that many Americans have forgotten the significance of their own flag and why it should not be disrespected.



Francis Scott Key provided an important piece of Americana when he wrote the lyrics to his country's National Anthem, *The Star Spangled Banner*. The circumstances that inspired his immortal words constitute a significant and dramatic moment in American history. It was the War of 1812. The British had been bombarding Fort McHenry for 25 hours. Key, a lawyer,

was aboard a British ship negotiating a prisoner exchange. He was not allowed to return to shore and had to watch the bombardment from a distance of 8 miles. The British finally gave up trying to destroy the fort. In time, the smoke cleared. The lawyer, who was also a poet, strained to see if the flag had become visible.



“By the dawn's early light,” he could detect those “broad stripes and bright stars”. Each of his

four stanzas ends with reference to the “star-spangled banner” waving triumphantly, gloriously symbolizing “the land of the free and the home of the brave”.

The song gained immense popularity and was played during public events, such as July 4 celebrations. On July 27, 1889, Benjamin Tracy, Secretary of the Navy, signed a general order making *The Star Spangled Banner* the official song to be played at the raising of the flag. It was played during the seventh inning stretch at each of the 1918 World Series games and became a staple preceding innumerable sporting events after that. President Herbert Hoover signed a bill in 1931 officially adopting *The Star Spangled Banner* as the national anthem of the United States of America.

The flag represents an ideal. By disrespecting the flag, one is, at the

same time, disrespecting that ideal. One may protest the evil he sees in many ways. As former US Representative Ron Paul has remarked, “Real patriotism is a willingness to challenge the government when it’s wrong”. But to denigrate the ideal that the flag represents is to attack the very reality that one hopes will remain intact. It is a contradictory strategy. It is like slapping your dad in the face and then asking for a raise in your allowance. It is rejecting the ideals and then demanding their implementation. The ideal is unassailable; it is the deviation from the ideal that should be corrected. But the correction cannot be made unless the ideal remains intact.

Congressman Joe Barton calls to our attention the fact that “Our flag honors those who have fought to protect it, and is a reminder of the sacrifice of our nation’s founders and heroes. As the ultimate icon of America’s storied history, the Stars and Stripes represents the very best of this nation.” And Ronald Reagan warned that “If we ever forget that we are One Nation Under God, then we will be a nation gone under.”

Reason tells us not to bite the hand that feeds us or to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. In 1861, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. added a fifth stanza to the *Star-Spangled Banner* that includes the following words which are a severe indictment against anyone who fails to respect the flag:

If a foe from within strike a blow at her glory,  
Down, down with the traitor that dares to defile  
The flag of her stars and the page of her story!

To protest the flag is to make a protest that is so broad that nothing remains to serve as the matrix for improvement. In the absence of the pincushion, the pins have no home. Gray matter indicates that if we want improvements to be made, we ought not to rail against that which stands to receive the improvements. Reason tells us to avoid strategies that are self-destructive and adopt those that preserve the fount while correcting the flow.



METHUSELAH

# TEN

## THE SECRET OF LONGEVITY



**T**he sequoia tree (*sequoiadendron giganteum*) is the largest living thing on the planet. The oldest living sequoia is estimated to be 2,200 years although there is scientific evidence, through carbon dating, that this extraordinary plant can remain alive as long as 3,200 years. “General Sherman”, the name given to the largest living example of the species, is located in northern California’s Sequoia National Park. It is more than 275 feet high, has a base diameter of 102 feet, and contains approximately 52,508 cubic feet of wood.



Given their massive surface area, one would expect that high winds could easily cause them to topple over. Such is not the case, however. Sequoias typically live in groves, within a community, so to speak, of other Sequoias. Although their roots penetrate only between 6 to 20 feet below the ground, something rather fortuitous takes place that allows them to remain standing even during severe windstorms. The secret to their longevity lies in the fact that their roots spread across a wide area and intertwine

with the roots of other Sequoias. As mighty as this tree appears above the ground, it owes its longevity to a sub-visible community of roots that bind themselves together. They are, quite literally “well-grounded”. “United they stand; divided they would fall.” “President Lincoln” might have been a more suitable name for the largest of the living Sequoias.

An analogy between the Sequoia tree and the human person is irresistible. We find an analogy between tree and man in Deuteronomy 20:19-20: “When you besiege a city a long time, to make war against it in order to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by swinging an axe against them; for you may feast from them, and you shall not cut them down. For is the tree of the field a man, that it should be besieged by you?” The special value of trees is underscored in Isaiah 60:13: “The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the juniper, the box tree and the cypress together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I shall make the place of My feet glorious.” Did Daniel have a vision of a Sequoia tree when he said, “Thus [were] the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof [was] great” (Daniel 4:10-12).

We find numerable references to trees throughout Scripture: the tree in the Garden of Eden, the tree of Jesse, the fig tree, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, poplar, almond, olive, and plane trees, and David’s musical instrument made of fir wood.

The mighty Sequoia can be used to symbolize the person. Whereas the Sequoia owes its longevity to its sub-visible roots; man owes his longevity to roots that are invisible. God sustains us. But, in addition, we survive, prosper, and thrive thanks to the invisible cords that bind us in our friendships with others. As mere individuals, no matter how tall we stand, we are vulnerable. As the poet Lord Byron put it, “Happiness was born a twin”. It is an old story. Isolation from others breeds misery. As the sixteenth century philosopher, Lao Tze sadly remarked, “Though neighboring communities overlook one another and the crowing of cocks and barking of dogs can be heard, yet the people there may grow old and die without ever visiting each other.”

The Sequoia tree reminds us that we are persons, which is to say, that we are both visible individuals and, at the same time, bound to each other by invisible ties. This stupendous example of plant life refutes the individualism that has so haunted the modern world since René Descartes (I think, therefore I am, but I am not so sure about you) and



the ideology of Karl Marx which contends that man is merely a part of the collective.

Jacques Maritain is severe in his denunciation of both radical individualism and atheistic communism. His critique of the former, however, may resonate better with the individualism of North American society. In his *Three Reformers*, he states that “the modern city sacrifices the person to the individual [giving] equal rights, liberty of opinion, to the individual, and delivers the person, isolated, naked, with no social framework to support and protect it, to all the devouring powers that threaten the soul’s life.” It is as if society is saying to the vulnerable individual: “You are a free individual. Defend yourself, save yourself, all by yourself.” And this is why Maritain sees fit to describe the naked individualism of the modern world as constituting a “homicidal civilization”. In *Without Roots* (2006), co-authored by Joseph Ratzinger and the atheist philosopher, Marcello Pera, the latter makes the comment that “The only thing worse than living without roots is struggling to get by without a future”. If we are not well-grounded, can we survive?

Saint Paul VI used the image of the tree to describe the way in which the Church has developed. “This is how the Lord wanted his church to be,” he wrote, “universal, a great tree whose branches shelter the birds of the air . . . In the mind of the Lord the Church is universal by vocation and mission, but when she puts her roots in a variety of social and human terrains, she takes on different external expressions and appearances in each part of the world” (*Exarchat Apostoloque*, 1992).

Our roots must be placed in the invisible, but providential protection of God, without forgetting our rootedness in love, friendship, and civility with our neighbors. Here, like that of the Church, is the secret to our longevity.





III  
POLITICALLY  
CORRECT  
ROLE MODELS



# ONE

## JEAN-PAUL SARTRE



**T**he contention which has been put forth by several writers that there is no such thing as human nature will seem rather startling to most people. After all, such claims are made by those who write from their own human nature and direct their thoughts to readers who are also assumed to have a human nature. Nonetheless, although most people would agree that there are human beings who are endowed with a human nature, the consequences of this strange philosophy are very much with us today and will be difficult to expel without a clear understanding of their roots. The flowers and the trees are eminently visible; it is their roots that remain in hiding.

Jean-Paul Sartre argued, insistently and consistently, that there are no human beings (*“Il n’y a pas de nature humaine”*, as he stated in his major work, *Being and Nothingness*). This total negation of human nature, for Sartre, derives from his radical atheism. If there is no God, he maintained, then there is no one to conceptualize human nature. Therefore, when we are born, we only exist. It is through our life’s choices that we obtain an essence, though it has no name and belongs uniquely and exclusively to the individual. Consequently, existence precedes essence. Sartre sedulously avoids referring to human beings. In their place, he uses the expression “being-for-itself” (*être-pour-soi*).

Sartre accords absolute value to choice, since it is through choice that we obtain an essence. As a result, we cannot be held responsible for our choices. We do what we do through our freedom in determining who we become, for our bare existence to gain an essence. On this premise, Sartre can write sentences that should shock most people: “The most atrocious situations in war, the worst tortures do not create an inhuman state of affairs; an inhuman situation does not exist.” If there is no human nature, there cannot be anything which is inhuman. Absolute freedom prevails.

Sartre is by no means alone in this kind of thinking. Walter Kaufman, a German-American philosopher who taught at Princeton University for more than 30 years (1947-1980), firmly agrees with the fundamental principle of existentialism, laid down by Sartre, that “existence precedes essence.” Accordingly, he writes the following: “Thus, there is no human nature, because there is no God to have a conception of it. . . . Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the fundamental principle of existentialism. . . . We define man only in relation to his commitments; it is absurd to reproach us for irresponsibility in our choice.”

This type of freewheeling moral philosophy that entitles a person to choose anything he wills without reproach or recrimination, is cheerfully accepted by those who advocate abortion on demand, the unqualified right to euthanasia, sex without regulation, and marriage without structure. But its range of enthusiasts is ever-widening. If there is no human nature, how can there be sexual natures? The eradication of human nature leads logically to the eradication of all natures within the individual. Consequently, even one’s sex is something to be chosen. Humanity, sexuality, and marriage are all assumed to be nature-less. But a world without natures is a world without a foundation. As a result, there can be no direction or guidance.

Existentialism, it should be noted, is not restricted to atheistic thinkers. Søren Kierkegaard, a Christian existentialist, affirms that “whoever has not God has no Self, and who has no Self, is in despair.” F. H. Heinemann, in his work, *Existentialism and the Modern Predicament*, claims that “A society adopting this attitude [that of Sartre and Kaufman] would be ripe for the rubbish-heap.” Dostoevsky stated that “If God did not exist, everything would be permitted.” And that “everything” would include war, famine, and pestilence. And let us not forget G. K. Chesterton’s *bon mot* that “if there were no God, there would be no atheists.”

We read in Jeremiah 1:5 that “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I set you apart.” And in Psalm 139:16: “Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.” In his encyclical, *Humani Generis*, Pope Pius XII condemned atheistic existentialism because of its irrationalism, subjectivism, pessimism, and because of its degradation of human reason.

God is telling us through Scripture that that our essence, that is,

our human nature, is something that He has endowed us with. In other words, it is God, not the individual, who accounts for essence. Existence does not precede essence, it is coterminous with it. Our duty in life, therefore, is not to choose anything we like, since there are no essences and consequently no moral guidelines, but to choose in a way that is consistent with the human nature that God has given us. This makes it possible for people to live together in peace and harmony.

According to William James, a new theory goes through three stages. In the first stage it is attacked as absurd. Next, it is regarded as true, but obvious and insignificant. Finally, it is heralded as so important that even its adversaries claimed that they themselves discovered it. It is hoped that the idea that neither God nor human nature exist will be returned to the first stage and recognized for the absurdity that it is. Meanwhile, many people are searching for a basis of morality that all can share and a way to accept their natures not as some arbitrary thing to be chosen, but as God-given treasures to be honored and cultivated.







## TWO

# VICTORIA WOODHULL



**O**ne hundred and forty four years separate the first woman and the most recent woman who campaigned for the presidency of the United States. Despite this extended period of time, during which America has changed dramatically, it is interesting to note that the lives and views of Hillary Clinton and Victoria Woodhull are similar in ways that are striking. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* (The more things change, the more they stay the same.).

Who is Victoria Woodhull? A journalist writing for the *Atlanta Journal & Constitution* deftly captured her eccentric personality when he said, “If you spliced together Hillary Clinton, Madonna, Heidi Fleiss and Margaret Thatcher, you might have someone like Victoria Woodhull.” The comparison with Hillary Clinton is justified. Both were ardent feminists who had liberal views on sex, love, marriage, contraception, and divorce. Both were married to men who took a dim view of marital fidelity. And both were haunted by the law.

Victoria Woodhull was nominated for president of the United States on May 10, 1872 by the newly form Equality Party. She ran on the platform of prostitution, vegetarianism, spiritualism, birth control, and free love. By the latter, she meant the freedom to marry, divorce, and bear children without government interference. “Yes, I am a Free Lover,” she stated. “I have an inalienable, constitutional and natural right to love whom I may, to love as long or as short a period as I can; to change that love every day if I please, and with that right neither you nor any law you can frame any right to interfere.” She was a forerunner to Margaret Sanger who founded Planned Parenthood. Frederick Douglas, a former slave, declined being Woodhull’s vice-presidential running mate for fear that his acceptance of that post would have adversely affected his future.

Her arrest on an obscenity charge a few days before the election

added to her already scandalous image. She spent the eve of the election in jail. Because, at that time, women were not allowed to vote, she could not vote for herself. She received no electoral votes. Biographer M. M. Marberry claimed that she received exactly no votes. However, an unrelated man in Texas admitted voting for her as a protest against Ulysses Grant.

Woodhull's life and views were sufficiently disreputable that her twelve-year-old daughter had to assume an alias in order to attend school without being harassed. Because of her sullied reputation, she could not find housing in Manhattan. Exhausted and burned out, the "Queen of the Quill", as she was called, fled to England where she remained until she passed away at the age of 88, twenty years before the birth of Hillary Rodham Clinton. The mood of America was not on her side during her brief and turbulent political life. It would be an understatement of considerable magnitude to say that she was not a person for the times in which she lived.

But how the public attitude toward her has changed! How the political climate of America has undergone a metamorphosis! In 2003, the Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance, an American human rights and sexual freedom advocacy group, was named in honor of Victoria Woodhull. On September 26, 2008, St. John's University Law School in Queens New York, a Catholic institution, posthumously awarded her the "Ronald H. Brown Trailblazer Award". Victoria Bond composed the opera "Mrs. President" about Victoria Woodhull which premiered in Anchorage, Alaska in 2012. The 1980 Broadway Musical, *Onward Victoria* was inspired by Woodhull's life. Several female writers have penned her biography. The accolades are numerous. Will comparable honors be heaped upon Hillary Clinton in the future? The dominant memory of her no doubt, one she shares with Victoria Woodhull, is that she ran for the presidency and lost.

The once scandalous eccentric of 1872, is now, at least in certain circles, an honored figure. One may ask the question, "Is Victoria Woodhull looking more like Hillary Clinton today, or is Hillary Clinton looking more like Victoria Woodhull?" Victoria Woodhull's image is a barometer that indicates how drastically attitudes toward morality have changed.

There is one significant difference between Victoria and Hillary, though it is a tenuous one. Woodhull opposed abortion. "The rights of children as individuals," she wrote, "begin while they yet remain the

foetus.” But her stance was unrealistic and one that would logically and inevitably lead to the acceptance of abortion. “Every woman knows,” she claimed, “that if she were free, she would never bear an unwished-for child, nor think of murdering one before its birth.” In this regard, Woodhull was anticipating the mantra of “reproductive freedom” and “control of my body”. Such radical freedom and control, of course, do not exist. Unwanted pregnancies persist despite contraception and human beings remain as mortal and prone to the vicissitudes of life as ever before.

Hillary and Victoria are dreamers. They see politics as a way of bringing about an ideal world. They both believe in a freedom that is impossible. At the same time, both reject a moral order, especially in the sexual sphere, which, if followed, could bring about a more realistic kind of freedom, namely, the freedom of personal authenticity. Freedom apart from the moral order is an illusion.

When we examine “now” and “then,” Hillary and Victoria, we realize that our moral obligations remain the same. Sex within marriage, fidelity between spouses, and the parental care of children continue to be fundamental moral obligations. And these obligations are not restrictions but ways in which we can better realize who we are as responsible human beings.





# THIRTE

## JACQUES THEROUX



**M**any pro-life advocates believed that the answer to the abortion problem lay in education. Science supports the claim that human life begins at conception. Psychology reports that induced abortion has adverse effects on a high percentage of women. Sociology informs us that abortion has a negative impact on marriage and the family. Scripture commands us not to kill, and so on. Unfortunately, education in moral matters has gone underground. Political correctness has not only invaded the groves of academe, but has captured it.

At the same time, political correctness has maintained a veneer of respectability. It is designed to avoid offending anyone while creating the impression that by offering information on both sides of the abortion issue, to take one important example, fairness will prevail. Thus, it is typical of schools of higher education to offer text books that represent both sides of any issue and leave the resolution of the topic to the student. In this way, no one is offended and the student's freedom of choice is fully respected. What is lost in this arrangement, however, is education.

A typical example of this phenomenon is found in a college text prepared by Jacques Theroux (*Ethics: Theory and Practice*). In offering a justification for abortion, the author states that "women, like men, should have absolute rights over their own bodies." It is simply assumed that men have long enjoyed such rights. Tacitly swept under the rug are a myriad of incontestable realities beginning with mortality and defectibility, and passing through impotence, incontinence, insomnia, and indigestion. Blessed with the power of Kryptonite, not even the fictional Superman has absolute control of his body. It is as if the author began by using some being mightier than Superman as a standard by which he would argue for abortion. This is hardly education.

Blissfully ignoring the fact that he has started on the wrong foot, the author argues that women, in the interest of equality, should also have such rights. He is, of course, pandering to a brace of politically correct notions involving feminism and equality. But his notion of both women and equality are Procrustean. He also adds the myth of progress for good measure. He writes: “In the past, women, because of an ‘accident of nature’— the fact that they are the ones who get pregnant — have not shared in these equal rights, but now that birth control is possible, they can.” At this point, a logically minded reader would protest: “Maybe it is an ‘accident of nature’ that men do not have the possibility of procreating.” Another might say, “Maybe it is an accident of nature that we have legs.” At any rate, it dishonors women to assume that their distinctive — some would say ‘God-given’— power to procreate is downgraded to an ‘accident’.

What Theroux does in his “argument” for abortion is to whittle down the nature of the woman so that she looks equal to a man while assuming that men have an absolute right over their body which, of course, they do not have. And this becomes, what he calls, “the central argument” for justifying abortion! He is counting on the word ‘equality’ to blind his readers to the obvious fact that he is comparing two fictions to each other.

Theroux erroneously identifies contraception with ‘birth control’. He then adds to this mistake by identifying birth control with abortion, thus displaying his ignorance of the meaning of all three terms (“abortion [is] just another method of birth control”). The truth is, nonetheless, that contraception aims at preventing a pregnancy; abortion ends a pregnancy that has already begun. “Birth control” is a misnomer that has little to do with either birth or control. As G.K. Chesterton once quipped, “They insist on talking about Birth Control when they mean less birth and no control.”

Not finished with his parade of errors, the author then boldly asserts that “any conceptus is a part of a woman’s body until it is born.” Here, he is exposing his ignorance of science. Giulio Cesare Aranzi (Arantius; 1530-1589) showed that the blood systems of the fetus and the mother are neither continuous nor contiguous with each other. Theroux is five centuries behind the times. Moreover, the fetus has its own DNA, has received half of its genes from a male and has its own sex type, which may also be male.

The author, in being eager not to offend the naïve reader, manages to infuriate those who are intelligent. He wants to be neutral by presenting both sides as if they had equal merit (if he is really pledged to equality, he should look at the gross inequality in credibility he has established between the two sides he represents). Political correctness attempts to conceal deeper truths in order to maintain a superficial ideology.

A colleague of mine, teaching at a state university, tried as hard as he could, to present both sides of the abortion controversy as fairly as possible. Nonetheless, he was criticized by some of his students for making the pro-life side appear to be more attractive. Such students, sworn to the myth of neutrality as they were, could not believe that the pro-life side was inherently more attractive. Neutrality is not a virtue, nor is it an end in itself. A baseball umpire should be neutral about which team wins, but he cannot be neutral about the location of balls and strikes, and whether a player is safe or out.

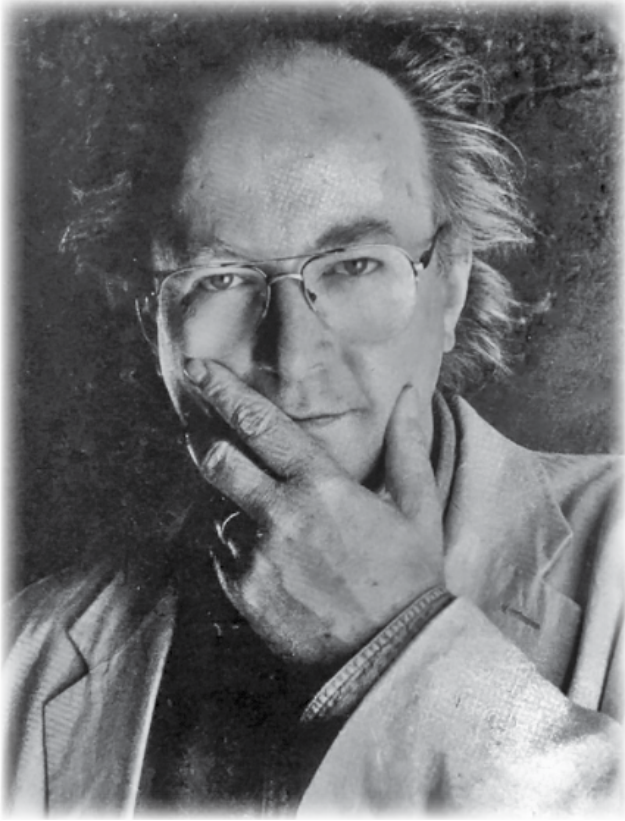
Moral neutrality can be dispelled through knowledge. In a world of pure neutrality, no one would ever have a conviction strong enough to act on. “I used to be indecisive, but now I’m not so sure”, does not illustrate progress. The whole point of education is to move from neutrality, indecision, ignorance, apathy, or indifference to knowledge, conviction, wisdom and action. The text book approach, by trying to make both sides seem equal is designed to prevent education from taking place. It stops the process of enlightenment at the starting gate. It fails to teach while seducing students into believing that they are being educated.

IVLII CAES. ARANTII  
PHILOSOPHI, AC MEDICI  
BONONIENSIS  
Medicinæ, ac Anatomæ  
*publici professoris*  
DE HVMANO FOETV  
LIBELLVS.

SACRIS MEDICORVM, AC PHIL  
lotophorum, Collegiis Bonon.



BONONIAE,  
Ex officina Ioannis Rubrii ad infigne  
Mercurii. MDCXIII.





# FOUR

## PHILIP PULLMAN



**S**aint John Paul II made a claim in his international best-selling book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, that may be startling to many, namely, that Original Sin, is, above all, an attempt “to abolish fatherhood, destroying its rays which permeate the created world, placing in doubt the truth about God who is Love and leaving man only with a sense of the master-slave relationship.” Upon reflection, this statement makes a great deal of sense. After all, Adam and Eve chose to reject God and side with the serpent. This initial act of disobedience, or Original Sin, has cast a shadow that has covered all of human history. For the former Holy Father, the notion that God is not a loving Father, but as a tyrant or oppressor, has led to a rebellion against Him as a slave would rebel against the master who kept him enslaved. Whether God is a loving Father or an oppressor is perhaps the most fundamental of all theological questions.

This rejection of the Fatherhood of God has an immediate impact on society in that it also represents the rejection of all forms of fatherhood. Writing for the *American Psychologist*, authors Louise B. Silverstein, and Carl F. Auerbach assert that “the argument that fathers are essential is an attempt to re-instate male dominance by restoring the dominance of the traditional nuclear family with its contrasting masculine and feminine gender roles” (*Deconstructing the Essential Father*, June 1999). A concerted attempt has been underway in the last few decades to “deculture” paternity. Fatherhood is something bad.

The attempt to abolish Fatherhood is by no means restricted to academia. For example, on the cover flap of Philip Pullman best-seller’s, *The Golden Compass* (which was made into a popular movie), the author offers us a brief description of his theology: “My sympathies definitely

lie with the tempter. The idea that sin, the Fall, was a good thing. If it had never happened we would still be puppets in the hands of the Creator.” Moreover, as he continues to inform us, “I am all for the death of God.” “My books are about killing God.” “I am of the Devil’s Party and I know it.” For Pullman, the principal evil in *The Golden Compass* is called “the Authority”.

As a direct consequence of the derogation and dismissal of fatherhood, additional weight has been placed on “brotherhood”. The “rainbow coalition” and all groups that profess to be “inclusive” exemplify this transition. Yet, there cannot be any true brotherhood without fatherhood, just as there cannot be offspring without parents.

David Blankenhorn has provided compelling evidence in his critical study, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem*, that fatherlessness is the most harmful trend of the current generation: the leading cause of the declining well-being of children; the engine driving our most critical social problems, from crime to adolescent pregnancy to child sexual abuse to domestic violence against women. Such warnings, however, go largely unheeded and are casually dismissed as tradition-bound, or arch-conservative.

As fatherhood diminishes, mother-nature becomes more central. Consequently, there is an intense, sometimes extreme, interest in ecology, the environment, and planet earth. The disappearance of the vertical dimension has led to an exaltation of the horizontal. The relationship with God the Father has been replaced by relationships between kindred groups bearing various, often elongated acronyms. Godfried Cardinal Danneels’ questions are worth pondering: “This feverish search for all sorts of communities, large and small—could it have anything to do with the obliteration of the Father? Is universal brotherhood possible in the absence of a common Father?” (*Handing on the Faith in an Age of Disbelief*). The key word here, is “feverish”. For the Belgian Cardinal, it implies a kind of desperation.

The type of community group to which Archbishop Danneels is referring, tends to be self-justifying. Its members are usually protective of each other and abhor any criticism from the outside. They do not have lofty aspirations but merely ask for acceptance. Such an arrangement is the antithesis of Christian community that does not dissolve its relationship with God the Father. The Gospel tells us, “Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48), and “when you have done all that is commanded of you, say, ‘We are unworthy servants’” (Lk 17:10).

The Father can command, because He is the loving authority who has given us our life. But He can also forgive us our trespasses and restore us to spiritual health. Without the Father, therefore, three important factors are absent, the gift of life, the command to use it well, and the readiness to forgive. A community lacking in these three factors, even if it calls itself a brotherhood or a community or a coalition or an alliance, is, by comparison, impoverished.

John the Evangelist, in his First Letter (Jn 2:1-2), speaks to us with great solicitude and warmth: “My little children, I am writing to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus the righteous; and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the world”. All forgiveness is from the Father, whose concern extends to everyone, everywhere.

Brotherhood needs Fatherhood just as children need parents. The rejection of God the Father will continue to have calamitous results. Brotherhood is of the present. Fatherhood not only unites us with the past and with the future, but with eternity.





## FIVE

# WHOOPI GOLDBERG



**I**t happens infrequently, perhaps not as infrequently as the arrival of Halley's Comet, but infrequently enough to arouse attention: a celebrated media personality proclaiming his allegiance with the lives of the unborn. Kelsey Grammer, famous for his roles on the TV hits, *Cheers* and *Frasier*, posted a view of himself wearing a pro-life shirt that read: "Would it bother us more if we used guns?" His t-shirt was designed by the pro-life advocacy group Abort73. Grammer, the father of six children, elaborated on the meaning of his message: "It's simply a response to the fact that when children are the victims of gun violence, the world is outraged. When children are the victims of abortion violence, the world barely notices."

Grammer's shirt provoked outrage from the panelists on ABC's *The View*. The program's title raises the question, "When is a view a view?" Apparently, the answer is only when it is politically correct. That is to say, there is only one view. The pro-life view is not a "view". So much for diversity, pluralism, liberalism, tolerance, and rainbows.

Katie Yoder carried the story, "Whoopi slams Kelsey Grammer's pro-life t-shirt: men can't talk about abortion," for *Newsbusters* (October 12, 2015). Whoopi Goldberg introduced a segment of *The View* by expressing her outrage over the view that Grammer's t-shirt conveyed. She held firmly to the pro-abortion view of choice, not mindful of the fact that her narrow conception of this value did not extend to a choice for life. Nor was she willing to allow Grammer the right to smile, a gesture that she emphatically denounced. Rather, she held to the contradictory view that gun violence and violence via the abortionist's knife, though they both end the lives of their victims, should not be equated. It is the instrumentality that she opposes, not the end result. Not only does the end justify the means, in her view, but the means justifies the end. Concerning "choice" one should never view the end; concerning abortion

one should never view the means, as long as a gun is not involved.

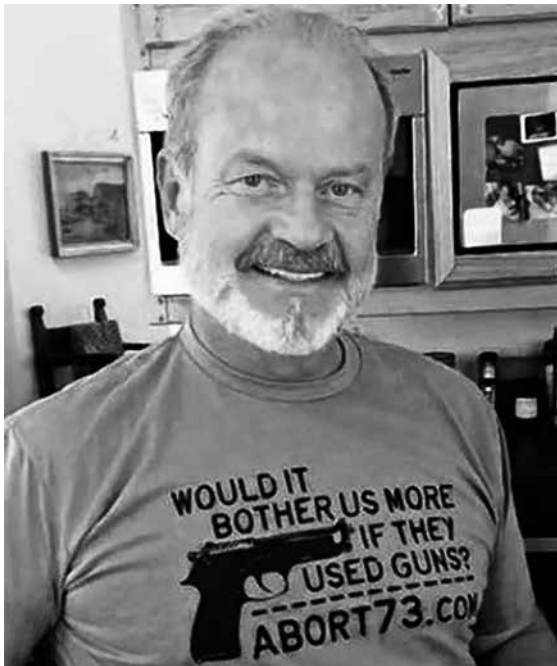
For Ms. Goldberg, Grammer disqualifies himself from saying anything about abortion since he is a male. On the face of things, that remark might be called “sexist” since men are the initiators of pregnancy and fatherhood is in the balance. Furthermore, most abortions are performed by males. Statistically, males are more likely to be pro-abortion than females. Men are allowed to express their views on abortion, according to Goldberg, as long as they support it. Apparently, at least on the issue of abortion, only men are eligible for being branded as sexist. The male view is valid only when it agrees with the female view. This is to say, however, that the male view in itself is never valid. So much for viewpoints.

The issue of sexism aside, Whoopi then ventured into the area of religion in order to buttress her position. This appears to be disingenuous because pro-abortionists have fought hard to keep religion out of the abortion discussion. Nonetheless, Ms. Goldberg established a woman’s right to abort on a religions premise. “But if you’re a woman who has found that she needs to get an abortion,” she argued, “isn’t that her choice between her and her God?” A man, therefore, has no right to interpose himself between a woman and her God. Such an interposition would, for Whoopi, be sacrilegious. But why would God, the Creator of Life, become God the de-creator of the life he has created? It seems more to the point to say that the person who is doing the interposing is the woman who places herself between God and the life He has created.

It is not without significance that Goldberg’s theology identifies the Divinity as “her” God rather than “God”. But what kind of God has she invented for herself? The God who speaks through Genesis is a Creator who is concerned about the people He has created. “Where is your brother?” he asks Cain. Had Cain conferred with God about whether or not he should kill his brother, it seems clear enough that God would have said, “No,” in accordance with His command, “Thou shall not kill.” If God is the Creator, does man have the right to be the de-creator? Can man veto God’s work and then abolish it? Does God’s creation flow from his wisdom or from his tentativeness? It is not good theology to believe that God creates a human being and then approves its rejection. God commands us, He does not submit to us. Whoopi’s theology is inverted. She presumes to be the one in charge, not God. Her “God” is really a puppet on a string. It is this kind of poorly thought out religion that should be kept out of the abortion discussion. No one

will ever encounter Whoopi's God, not even Whoopi herself.

By contrast, Kelsey Grammer is on firm ground when he calls attention to the end (the millions of unborn babies who are aborted), exhibits the courage to present a politically incorrect view (though one that is eminently humane), and challenges the establishment to examine its own hypocrisy (the belief that, in spite of its approval of wholesale killing, it claims to have attained the higher ground). He is trying to get the establishment to say, "Whoops, we made a mistake." May his tribe increase.







## SIX

# HARRY BLACKMUN



**C**entral to the story line of Ray Bradbury's celebrated 1953 novel, *Fahrenheit 451*, is a curious reversal that fascinated the author. In the story, firemen, who are traditionally trained to put out fires, start fires. In Bradbury's futuristic world, books are illegal, since they cause some people to feel superior to others. Therefore, they must be destroyed. The idea that books, that should be read, must be destroyed so that they cannot be read, is another example of this strange reversal of things. In the novel, firemen go from house to house, ferreting out literary contraband and setting it on fire. Interestingly enough, the author had experienced a similar reversal when he was accosted by a police officer one night when he was merely walking with a friend and minding his own business. Police, of course, should be helping, not harassing citizens. With mock sincerity, Bradbury promised the policeman never to walk again. But the germ of this odd practice of doing the opposite of what you are supposed to do had been planted in his fertile brain.

What kind of future world did Bradbury envision where firemen start fires and policemen accost innocent citizens? Was this noted author on to something? He has been credited with predicting a number of innovations such as flat screen televisions, automated bank machines, electronic surveillance, thimble radios, and self-driving cars. Did the revered writer of science-fiction (who insisted that he never wrote "science fiction") anticipate that one day reversing one's sworn duties would become pandemic? We may not be able to answer this question satisfactorily. Nonetheless, we witness reversals of responsibilities that now constitute not only a major problem in our brave new world, but also a threat to civilization.

The most glaring reversal took place in 1973 when seven Supreme Court judges found in the *United States Constitution* a justification for killing unborn human beings. It took special eyesight to find this provision since the very Preamble to the Constitution states that it exists

in order to “establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, . . . promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity . . .” They found it, nonetheless. It had been hiding for nearly 200 years, “implied in the penumbra,” as Justice Harry Blackmun stated. Judges, sworn to uphold the Constitution were actually opposing it. They were now seeing things that were not there, painting by penumbras, as it were.

Robert H. Bork was defeated in his bid to become a Supreme Court justice essentially because he respected the Constitution and called *Roe v. Wade* unconstitutional. His defeat was led by “Roman Catholic” senators Ted Kennedy, Joe Biden, and Pat Leahy. Judges opposing the Constitution were complemented by Catholics opposing life. Reversals were being reinforced by more reversals. As President Reagan, who had nominated Bork, later remarked, “I believe, as he does, [Robert Bork] that judges are to interpret rather than rewrite the Constitution the Founding Fathers crafted with such care and precision.”



Judge Bork went on to write *The Tempting of America* (1990) in which he stated rather matter-of-factly, “the right to abort, whatever one thinks of it, is not to be found in the Constitution.” In dissent, Justice White had been similarly emphatic: “I find nothing in the language or history of the Constitution to support the Court’s judgment.” The reversal of

integrity, most unfortunately, is tantamount to tyranny.

We know of priests who promote euthanasia and abortion. Health agencies are now prescribing RU-486, a dangerous drug that has claimed the lives of several adults in recent years. We have school teachers who are required to promote lies and distortions, publishing houses that refuse to publish books that bear witness to Christian values, and politicians who have become enemies of the family. These reversals have caused a widespread distrust of people in authority. What makes the situation even worse is the fact that people with integrity are being persecuted for opposing this wave of tyranny. “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil,” warned Isaiah, “who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness” (5:20).

Reversing these reversals and restoring integrity among professionals is a daunting task. It will require a new kind of solidarity among grassroots people, family members, plus anyone else who is realistic enough to understand the current threats to the family and to civilization. Something of this nature is going on presently in Ontario. Parents opposed to the Liberal government’s radical sex education program organized a multi-city Awareness Car Rally that was held in the Greater Toronto Area on August 1, 2015. Cars were decked out with red flags that read: “No to irresponsible sex education,” or “My child my choice”. The battle lines have been established. The Liberal government has launched a \$1.8 million summer ad campaign promoting the sex-ed curriculum. How does one win a war against a government that has unlimited assets at its disposal. “I don’t have \$1.8 million dollars to work with,” voiced a spokesperson for the Parents Alliance of Ontario, “but I do have 1.8 million parents to support us.”

We now live under the rule of a professional oligarchy. It is the great task of the people, especially family members, to regain a democratic form of government. The use of the Internet, the distribution of circulars, town meetings, and other ways of informing people that bypass a meretricious Media, will continue to be necessary. It is also urgent that churches play a more vital role in the restoration of democracy and restoring respect for its citizens.



# SEVEN

## HILLARY CLINTON



**R**eligious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed.” This proclamation, delivered in various forms, has been given many times throughout history. But, coming from Hillary Clinton, it is the first time it has been iterated by an American who was running for the presidency of the United States.

King Henry VIII declared the Act of Supremacy in 1534 which made him “the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England”. He broke with the Church of Rome because Pope Clement VII refused to grant him a divorce. Mrs. Clinton has taken issue with the Catholic Church and everyone in the country who is opposed to unrestricted abortion and has decided that America needs a new religion. Her view is unusual in that it regards religion as favoring abortion, not opposing it.

Hillary’s pretensions, however, are far wider than those of Henry VIII. Henry merely wanted the Church to permit him to divorce so that he could remarry and have, he hoped, a male heir. Hillary wants America to separate itself not only from traditional religions, but also from science, reason, and a knowledge of history. It is science and reason that tells us that abortion is the killing of a human being. The Catholic Church affirms, but does not invent this position. Hillary, therefore, makes herself an enemy of science and reason. Moreover, history tells us of the great contributions of Christianity, something that does not seem to concern the former presidential candidate.

Her ambitions are indeed grandiose, though many voters prefer to see her merely as a champion of women’s rights. But in order to achieve her grandiose plans, she must silence a broader range of citizens than people of faith; she must also silence a segment of atheists who have also recognized the positive contributions that Christianity has brought to the world.

In *Sign of Contradiction*, which is based on a private retreat that the then Bishop Karol Wojtyla gave to Pope Paul VI, we find an interesting reference to an article that appeared in a 1965 issue of a journal published by the Polish association of atheists and freethinkers. Bishop Wojtyla fully recognized that atheists can be reasonable, at least on certain important points. The author of the article is Leszek Kolakowski, a Marxist atheist. Its title is “Jesus Christ, prophet and reformer”.

According to Kolakowski, there are a number of fundamental values and cultural meanings that are derived solely from Christianity. Among these values for which the world is deeply indebted are the following: 1) the supplanting of law in favor of love; 2) the ideal of an end to arrogance in human relationships; 3) the truth that man does not live by bread alone; 4) the abolition of the idea of the chosen people in favor of a truly ‘catholic’ or universal notion of human society; 5) that the world suffers from an organic imperfection. Kolakowski’s atheism by no means obscures his recognition of the historical significance of Christianity.

How much worse the world would be today had these five values never come into being? Would it not be utterly foolish to disparage the source from which these values sprang? Would it not be severely counterproductive to seek to remove them? Kolakowski is a Pole, not an American. Nonetheless, the important point here, is that he exercised reason, not religious faith, in order to appreciate Christianity’s great and unique contributions. We find a similar conviction from another atheist, Merello Pera who, in collaboration with Pope Benedict XVI produced *Without Roots* in which they both expressed their great respect for the Christian heritage. Pera agrees with all the great scholars of history who confirm “that Christianity has been the greatest force in Western history.” In a letter to Pope Benedict XVI, Pera decried present day Europe’s denial of its own Christian legacy, regarding it as a “pathology” that can be found blatantly evident “in the prison-house of insincerity and hypocrisy known as political correctness.”

After the Act of Supremacy, Henry VIII had parliament enact The Treasons Act which punished those who would “disavow the Act of Supremacy”. As a result, many Catholics, including Saint Thomas More, were put to death. If Hillary Clinton gains the White House, what kind of punishment does she envision for those, religious or otherwise, who continue to believe in the sanctity of unborn life? How does she envision a new Church of America?

A religion cannot be built from the premise of the right to divorce; nor can a civilized society be erected on the grounds of an unrestricted right to abortion. Hillary wants to invert society, making killing the unborn an absolute right, while relegating life, liberty, and the right to conscientious objection distant options. She does not appear to mind that religion and reason stand in her way. We are well served in recalling the words of the French poet, Jean de La Fontaine: “Anyone entrusted with power will abuse it if not also animated with the love of truth and virtue, no matter whether he be a prince, or one of the people.”

Christianity begins with a positive command, “Love God and your neighbor as yourself”. Here we have something to build on. One positive leads to another. Love is a prelude to rights, justice, virtue, and creativity. A negative cannot be a building block. Divorce and abortion are terminations, not starting points. Because religion binds a person to God, it gains access to an abundance of blessings. The religions that begin with divorce and abortion are truly anti-religions.







# EIGHT

## TIM Kaine



**F**ormer Democratic vice-presidential candidate Tim Kaine is a man who is ahead of his time. At a dinner for one of America's largest and wealthiest homosexual lobby groups, he stated his belief that the Catholic Church will change its teaching on same-sex marriage just as he did. "My full, complete, unconditional support for marriage equality is at odds with the current doctrine of the Church that I still attend," he declared. "But I think that's going to change, too."

How did the Catholic Church, given its meticulous explanation of the nature of marriage as described in Scripture miss the importance of "marriage equality" for more than 2,000 years? How could it have slipped past the attention of her 266 popes, her learned theologians and philosophers, and educated laymen? How could the Church have so egregiously misinterpreted Genesis where it is written that "in the image of God he created them . . . Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh?" Senator Kaine interprets Genesis differently: "My church also teaches me about a Creator in the first chapter of Genesis who surveys the entire world, including mankind, and said, 'It is very good. It is very good.' Who am I to challenge God for the beautiful diversity of the human family? I think we're supposed to celebrate, not challenge it." But Genesis is diverse about creation, not marriage which is restricted to a man and a woman indissolubly bound together for life.

Kaine's allusion to his reluctance to challenge Scripture is hardly convincing, when he does not hesitate to challenge the Church's clear and consistent teaching on the nature of marriage. What he is truly reluctant to challenge is his own reckless and gratuitous misinterpretation of Scripture. Nor does he let the lessons of Sodom and Gomorrah stand in his way. It is not for us, one might say, to judge a man who is ahead of his times by the present times. We must wait and see what unfolds. In the

meantime, we must withhold judgment. Presumably, we must all just sit there and wait for Godot.

Being ahead of one's times is an ambiguous notion. Charlie Finley, the former owner of the Oakland A's, was said to be someone who was ahead of his time. He promoted changing the color of baseballs to orange and suggested that a walk should be reduced to three balls, while a strikeout be set at two strikes. Charlie O, as he was affectionately called, passed away in 1996. But he is still ahead of his times. Perhaps so far ahead of his time that time will never catch up with him.

Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes was also a man who was considered well ahead of his times. In an 8-1 Supreme Court ruling (*Buck vs. Bell*, 1927), he and his cohorts agreed to the forced sterilization of the "unfit". "Three generations of imbeciles is enough," he wrote. Adam Cohen, in his recent book, *Imbeciles: The Supreme Court, American Eugenics, and the Sterilization of Carrie Buck*, describes these six words as constituting "one of the most brutal aphorisms in American jurisprudence." Holmes was echoing the sentiments of several other prominent thinkers who also were considered to be ahead of their times. One in particular was Frank Taussig, a Harvard economist who reasoned that "The human race could be immensely improved in quality if those of poor physical and mental endowment were prevented from multiplying." His challenge of Genesis here is only too evident.

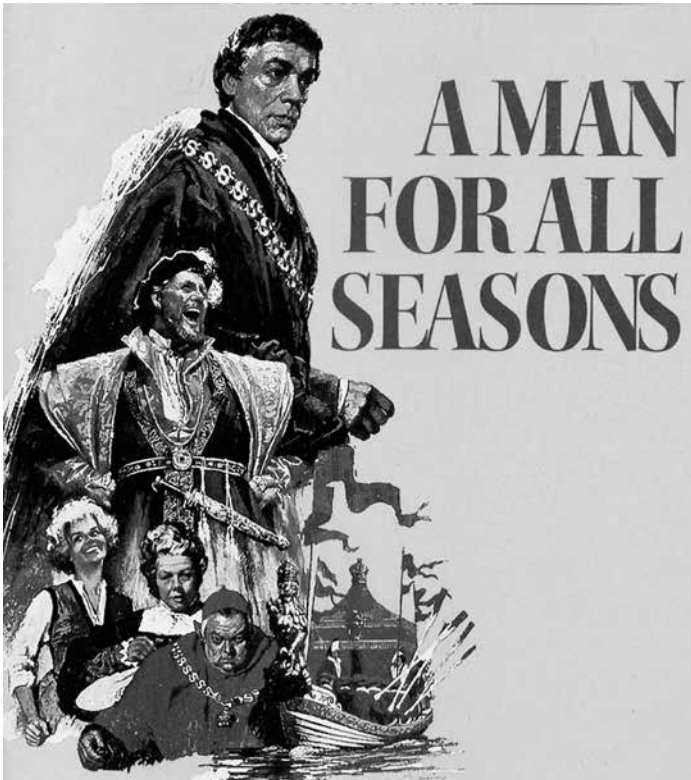
Was Carrie Buck, whose name has been immortalized in the history of American jurisprudence, truly "unfit"? She married twice, sang in her church choir, and cared for elderly people. Having been forcibly sterilized at age 21, she always mourned her inability to have children. Carrie, most unfortunately, was a victim of men who were ahead of their times.

There was a single dissenter in the *Buck vs. Bell* case, a certain Pierce Butler, who was also the lone Catholic on the bench. In his aforementioned book, Cohen credits American Catholics at that time with being the "single most outspoken group in opposition to eugenic sterilization laws." There was an additional reason, other than defending the sanctity of life, which motivated Catholics. As Cohen reports, "Protestant eugenicists thought Catholics were the kind of people who should not be reproducing."

Butler was not "ahead of his time" or a "progressive". He was, in the esteemed tradition of Saint Thomas More, a "man for all seasons". Robert

Bolt chose this fitting appellation to title his famous play on the life and death of this great saint. The “man for all seasons” is relevant today, tomorrow, and always. He is, what the Church has always been, eternally valid. She was founded and nourished not by men who were ahead of their times, or who adapted to their times, but by those who maintained their integrity and fidelity during extremely difficult times. Of the first 31 popes, all but Zephyrinus were martyred (though Zephyrinus, who fought heresies valiantly and was known as a great defender of the divinity of Christ, suffered enough to gain the title of “spiritual martyr”).

The man for all seasons does not bend with the times. He is prepared to deliver a relevant message no matter what passing fancies or popular trends cloud the cultural atmosphere. Tim Kaine is not a man for all seasons, he is a man who is so far ahead of his times, that his time will never arrive. The Church is eternal. If Kaine thinks that he is ahead of the Church, he must think that he is ahead of eternity. Thus, he is eternally irrelevant.





# NINE

## BARACK OBAMA



**T**he classic excuse among “liberal” Catholics for not opposing abortion is that they would not think of imposing their views on others. One may recall Vice-President Biden emphasizing this point during the 2012 vice-presidential debate with Congressman Paul Ryan. Though he affirmed that he has been a practicing Catholic all his life, he did not want to impose his Catholic views on anyone else. “I refuse to impose it on equally devout Christians and Muslims and Jews,” he told the world, “and I just refuse to impose that on others, unlike my friend here, the — the congressman. I — I do not believe that we have a right to tell other people that — women they can’t control their body.”

Superficially, this declaration is appealing to many since it makes Biden appear highly respectful of others and admirably self-restrained. It is nonetheless bogus since opposition to abortion is not peculiarly Catholic, but essentially humanitarian. Human beings, precisely as human beings, should oppose the slaughter of other human beings. To be a Catholic does not mean that one’s views are irrelevant to the welfare of others. One would not say, “My Church opposes domestic violence, but I refuse to impose that view on others”.

When former President Obama proclaims: “I believe in choice,” he also appears to repudiate imposing his values on others. But again, the appeal is superficial. Choices can have dire consequences. To believe in choice but ignore the consequences of choices is the very definition of irresponsibility. Obama would have been more honest, though less appealing, if he stated the corollary: “I believe in being irresponsible”.

Superficial rhetoric can be appealing to people who do not think. Thinking does not coincide with hearing. It begins where hearing leaves off. When one hears words such as “impose” or “choice,” one wants to

think about what they mean in a living context that goes far beyond being the mere enunciation of certain buzz words. One also wants to test the integrity of those who employ such words by comparing their words with their actions. Does Barack Obama really believe in unfettered “choice,” and does he really, in practice, avoid “imposing” his values on others?

Before Obama made his July, 2015 visit to Kenya, 700 Kenyan evangelical pastors wrote an open letter to the acting American president urging him not to come to their country to promote the homosexual agenda. Mark Kariuki, the main drafter of the letter, represents 38,000 churches and 10 million Kenyan Christians. “We do not want him to come and talk on homosexuality in Kenya or push us to accept that which is against our faith and culture,” he wrote. Obama had little regard for the choice of the Kenyan people and told them that outlawing homosexual acts is “wrong,” while comparing Kenya’s policy toward homosexuals with the treatment of blacks in the United States prior to the civil rights movement. This invidious comparison angered American blacks. “President Obama is a disgrace to the black community,” said Rev. William Owens of the Coalition of African American Pastors. “He is rewriting history,” he told Breitbart News. “We didn’t suffer and die for gay marriage”.

Obama’s rejection of Kenya’s choices and his attempt to impose a homosexual agenda on her people was met with scorn by a number of African Archbishops. Yet, Obama appears to have escalated imposing to the level of using force. Bishop Emmanuel Badejo of Oyo, Nigeria has stated that Africa’s position of homosexuality had proved to be an obstacle in gaining American assistance in fighting Boko Haram. He avowed that the US has made it clear to him that it would not help Nigeria fight Haram unless his country modified her law concerning homosexuality.

If one engages in the act of thinking and is not mesmerized by the rhetorical words he hears, he will soon realize that neither President Obama nor Vice-President Biden believe in either “choice” or refraining from “imposing” values. Strangely enough, thinking seems to be disappearing from society. The Media is, more than anything else, in the business of entertaining its viewers. To a certain extent, entertainment helps to release us from the tensions of everyday life. We can turn on the TV after a hard day, relax, and let ourselves be entertained without

having to think through things. Entertainment, nonetheless, should not exclude thinking.

Thinking can expose hypocrisy. Christ denounced this sin when He made reference to wolves in sheep's clothing: "Beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15). Matthew Henry, author of the six-volume *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (1708-10), may have stated the point more trenchantly when he wrote: "Hypocrites do the devil's drudgery in Christ's livery."

Hypocrisy is generally condemned, but only when it is noticed. The problem is to be able to notice it when it appears. In order for this to take place, thinking must be exercised. We should not want to form our opinions by infection, like catching a cold, or being spellbound by superficial rhetoric. Thinking is essential in strengthening our intellectual immune system and protecting us against alien and malicious notions, especially the virus of political correctness. But thinking is not merely a self-defence tactic; it is essential in helping us to discern and follow the line of truth. Through thinking, we can detect hypocrisy in others, but perhaps more importantly, it helps us to detect hypocrisy in ourselves.







# TEN

## ANTHONY KENNEDY



**D**uring the oral arguments preceding the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision which granted same-sex couples a constitutional right to marry, some of the judges who ultimately sided with the majority, reflected on an expansive notion of democracy that recognized the vote of people who are no longer among the living. Justice Kennedy commented that heterosexual marriage “has been with us for millennia. And it’s very difficult for the court to say, ‘oh, well, we know better.’” At the same time, Justice Breyer expressed the matter even more emphatically, stating that marriage restricted to members of the opposite sex “has been the law everywhere for thousands of years . . . and suddenly you want nine people outside the ballot box to require states that don’t want it to change what marriage is to include gay people. Why cannot those states at least wait and see whether in fact doing so in the other States is or is not harmful to marriage?”

These comments represent a concept of democracy far wider than the single swing vote of Justice Anthony Kennedy (or the votes of the other four justices who sided with him) and echo the insightful thoughts of Edmund Burke and G. K. Chesterton. In his monumental work, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke wrote about “a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living and those who are dead, and those who are to be born.” In his *Orthodoxy*, Chesterton viewed this expansive notion of democracy in the context of the received tradition: “Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about. All democrats object to men being disqualified by the accident of birth; tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of death.”

Nonetheless, Kennedy and the Majority rejected both tradition and concern for future generations and voted as an “arrogant oligarchy” of five. Why did they do this? Kennedy claimed that the Constitution asserts that “the right to marry is a fundamental right inherent in the liberty of the person. . . couples of the same-sex may not be deprived of that right and that liberty.” And thus, the autonomy of the individual takes precedence over the wisdom of the ages.

Burke dismissed autonomy (the “sovereign individual,” as he called it) as a “foolish abstraction”. He saw the individual human being as limited, imperfect, finite, and highly dependent on others: “We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason, because we suspect that this stock is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and the ages.” If two heads are better than one, would the innumerable millions of individuals over millennia not be better that a quintet of unelected lawyers? Nonetheless, private autonomy, as in the *Roe v. Wade* decision, held sway.

This notion of autonomy, however, which is not to be found anywhere in the Constitution, is part of the new mythology. The autonomous person does not exist, except in the minds of romantics (but even Superman was susceptible to kryptonite, and Achilles had a weak heel). If such a creature actually existed, he would surely be of sturdier mettle than what he is in the minds of prosecuting lawyers. Shortly after the *Obergefell* decision, two same-sex couples began legal action, with the support of the American Civil Liberties Union, against a Kentucky clerk for failing to marry them. The ACLU claims that “Plaintiff and Plaintiff Class have suffered and continue to suffer irreparable harms, including harms to their dignity and autonomy, family security, and access to the full spectrum of benefits conferred by the state upon others.” One would think that autonomy would be made of “sterner stuff”. Did Kennedy himself really believe in the autonomy of the individual? He stated that unless same-sex couples were allowed to marry, they would “be condemned to live in loneliness, excluded from one of civilizations oldest institutions”. So much for the alleged “gay community”. One would not suspect that “gay pride” participants had been condemned to loneliness. On the other hand, why couldn’t the aggrieved couples simply go to a more willing clerk to get married?

As frail as this notion of autonomy is, in reality, it nonetheless generates a second myth, that of the infallible chooser. Indeed, if a

person is autonomous, he should be able to choose whatever he wants. In fact, as Justice Roberts wrote in dissent, “The truth is that today’s ruling rests on nothing more than the majority’s own conviction that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry because they want to, and that it would disparage their choices and diminish their personhood to deny them this right.”

The third myth, following on the heels of the previous two, is that we can construct an ideal world where no one suffers disappointment, frustration, or ever having his personhood diminished (whatever that means). Those who defend traditional marriage, it should be noted, are not permitted to enter this brave new world. Recalcitrant clerks everywhere can be sued. The current utopian dream, however, based as it is on the illusion of autonomy and irresponsible choices, could hardly provide the fabric for a perfect society. As democracy reels into mythology, the need for a more realistic view of the human being, his moral obligations, and the real world he can inhabit becomes increasingly urgent. Mythology, a deification of political correctness, is no replacement for democracy. That government of the people, by the people and for the people is now being transformed into that government of the complainants, by the elite and for the minority.





IV  
POLITICALLY  
INCORRECT  
ROLE MODELS



# ONE

## SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS



**T**homas Aquinas was born in the year 1224 in Rocca Sicca, the hereditary castle of the counts of Aquino in the Neapolitan province. While he was residing in the womb, a holy man brought a prophecy to the unborn child's mother, Theodora, Countess of Aquino: "Rejoice, O lady, for thou art about to have a son whom thou shalt call Thomas. . . Such will be his learning and holiness that his equal will not be found throughout the world."

The prophecy was fulfilled. At the hearing for the canonization of Saint Thomas Aquinas in 1319, a statement from the Archbishop of Naples was introduced. According to the testimony of the good bishop, Friar Giacomo di Viterbo, "Our savior had sent, as doctor of truth to illuminate the world and the universal Church, first the apostle Paul, then Augustine, and finally in these latest days Friar Thomas, whom . . . no one would succeed till the end of the world."

This testimony properly recognizes Saint Thomas Aquinas' rightful place as a pre-eminent Doctor of the Church. This most distinguished honor was ratified by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical, *Aeterni Patris*: "Let carefully selected teachers endeavor to implant the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas in the minds of students, and set forth clearly his solidity and excellence over others. Let the universities already founded or to be founded by you [venerable brethren] illustrate and defend this doctrine, and use it for the refutation of prevailing errors."

Other Popes have lavished similar praise upon the Angelic Doctor. In his encyclical, *Humanae Generis*, Pope Pius XII declared that "since, as we well know from the experience of centuries, the method of Aquinas is singularly preeminent both for teaching students and for bringing truth to light; his doctrine is in harmony with divine revelation, and is most effective both for safeguarding the foundation of faith, and for reaping,

safely and useful, the fruits of sound progress.”

It is important to note that Aquinas is not great because the Church states that he is great; rather the Church recognizes the greatness that is demonstrated in Aquinas’ writings. Jacques Maritain, the 20th century’s foremost Thomistic philosopher avers that Aquinas’s philosophy is founded on evidence alone and continues to live by reason alone.

What is it that sets Aquinas apart from all the others? Peter Kreeft, in his summary of the *Summa Theologica*, states that Thomas Aquinas is the greatest of all philosophers because he is a beacon of “truth, common sense, practicality, clarity, profundity, orthodoxy, and modernity.” A single sentence from his voluminous writings integrates all of these seven points: “The greatest kindness one can render to any man consists in leading him to truth.” For Aquinas, truth can be known, communicated, and serve as a benefit for people. In clear and straightforward language, Aquinas states that “The truth of the human intellect receives its direction and measurement from the essences of things. For the truth or falsity of an opinion depends on whether a thing is or is not.” In other words, the intellect makes contact with the external world and comes to know the truth of things as they are and not as one might have a subjective opinion of them. This is indeed practical because it is not at all practical for a person to reside in a dream world of private thoughts. Here, common sense, orthodoxy, and modernity come together. We emphasize “modernity” because such a sensible position holds true for all ages. Aquinas is modern, therefore, because his thought, not being restricted by what is fashionable, never goes out of style.

The distinguished Thomistic scholar, Etienne Gilson has made the observation that Aquinas had two virtues to a very high degree that are seldom found as such in the same person. The virtues he specified are intellectual modesty and intellectual audacity. Aquinas was open to all thinkers and was astonishingly well read. Cardinal Cajetan said of him that because “he most venerated the ancient doctors of the Church, in a certain way seems to have inherited the intellect of all.” Because of this intellectual modesty, Aquinas could understand what he read clearly and objectively without the intrusion of any personal bias. Because of his intellectual audacity, he had the strength of mind to hold on to what he understood without making any concessions to popular trends or to critics who had political power.

Therefore, Pope Leo XIII could say that “Thomas collected together and cemented, distributed [the doctrines of his predecessors] in



wonderful order, and so increased with important additions [the claim] that he is rightly and deservedly esteemed the special bulwark and glory of the Catholic faith.” Aquinas saw clearly, held firmly, and ordered properly, both the truths of philosophy and those of revelation.

There are many philosophers who possessed intellectual modesty but lacked the audacity to hold on to what they knew and capitulated to political correctness. Among these thinkers can be found pragmatists who call themselves “liberal” and temper their convictions to suit the times. There are perhaps as many philosophers who saw things skewed by their own personal preferences, but presented them to the world with unswerving force and dedication. These are the ideologues such as Marx, Nietzsche, Comte, and Mao Tse-tung.

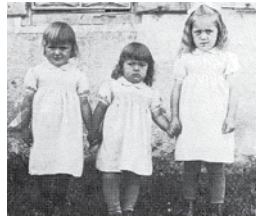
Aquinas was true to his vocation as a great thinker as well as a holy person. Aquinas is well remembered for his five proofs for the existence of God. Perhaps he should be better remembered for providing us with such an excellent example of a human being in which God and man so perfectly interact.





## TWO

# BL. FRANZ JÄGERSTÄTTER



**I** was informed by a bishop recently that, according to reliable sources in the Vatican, approximately 100,000 Christians are martyred for their faith each year throughout the world. This is a most heart-rending statistic. At the same time, the blood of even one martyr can bring about much good.

Martyrdom means bearing witness to the faith even unto death. It is the supreme witness that a person can give for the truth of his faith. The very etymology of the word (*martyros* in Greek) means witness. The martyr accepts this death with courage as a witness to the faith and to the presence of the Kingdom of God

The furthest thing from martyrdom is social respectability. The well-known writer, Norman Cousins, once denounced "any man in the pulpit who by his words and acts encourages his congregation to believe that the main purpose of the church or the synagogue is to provide social respectability for its members." A true Christian's faith is centered on Jesus, not polite society.

Martyrdom is the most definitive contradiction of "religion as hypocrisy". The fact of martyrdom is the ultimate and unequivocal witness, not of the world or of the self, but of God. It is the price that must be paid to silence the detractors and make the presence of God known to a world of skeptics and non-believers.

Franz Jägerstätter is a martyr for our modern world. His witness should be more widely known. Initially, a martyr, such as Jägerstätter, may be a "solitary witness". But there is no limit to the number of people who can be witnesses to his witness. Jägerstätter's witness might have remained "solitary" except for the witness of another — Catholic sociologist Gordon Zahn. It was Zahn, a University of Massachusetts professor, who discovered Jägerstätter's inspiring story of courage and

unyielding commitment to God, and brought it to light in his book, *In Solitary Witness* (1964). The book has now been translated into several languages, including German, French, Italian, and Greek.

Franz Jägerstätter was born in 1909 in St. Radegund, a small village in Upper Austria about thirty kilometers from Braunau-am-Inn, the birthplace of Adolph Hitler. In 1936 he married a woman from a nearby village, and the two went to Rome for their honeymoon. A Catholic by birth, Franz experienced a spiritual re-awakening of his faith around the time of his marriage and served his parish church in the capacity of a sexton.

On March 11, 1938, Hitler's forces crossed into Austria and two days later incorporated it into Grossdeutschland. In due time, the invaders presented Jägerstätter and all the other able-bodied men of St. Radegund, their orders to swear allegiance to Hitler and serve in the Nazi army. Jägerstätter alone, refused to comply. He was a Catholic, and in conscience could neither honor nor serve the evil purposes of an intrinsically immoral political regime. He refused, knowing that his refusal would cost him his life. The drama, in the words of Professor Zahn, was "nothing less than a repetition of an old story, the ever-recurring confrontation between Christ and Caesar".

Jägerstätter was married and a father to his wife's three little girls. He was also urged by many of his neighbors to be "prudent" and not risk his life by offending the Nazis. But Jägerstätter was resolved. While in prison and awaiting execution, he wrote: "Again and again people stress the obligations of conscience as they concern my wife and children. Yet I cannot believe that, just because one has a wife and children, he is free to offend God by lying (not to mention all the other things he would be called upon to do). Did not Christ Himself say, 'He who loves father, mother, or children more than Me is not deserving of My love?'" Just a few hours before his death, he stated in a letter to his family, "I will surely beg the dear God, if I am permitted to enter heaven soon, that he may also set aside a little place in heaven for all of you."

On August 9, 1943, in a Berlin prison, Franz Jägerstätter, like Saint Thomas More, was beheaded.

The night before the execution, a Fr. Jochmann visited Jägerstätter in his cell. The priest found the prisoner, who had already received the last sacraments earlier that day, completely calm and prepared. The opportunity to avoid death was still available. On the table before him

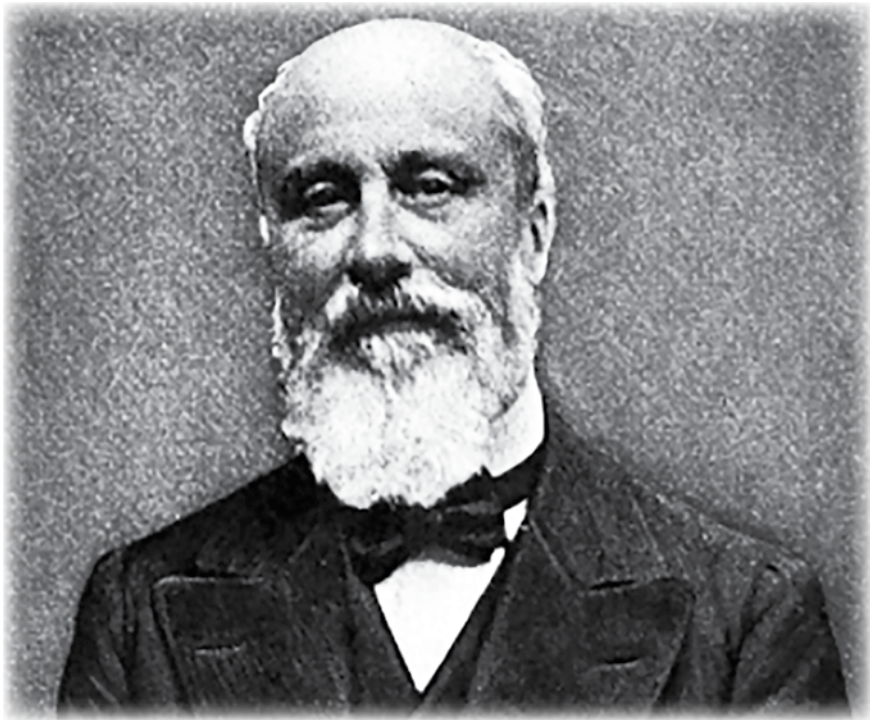
lay a document that Jägerstätter had only to sign in order to have his life spared. When the priest called his attention to it, Jägerstätter provided a simple explanation: "I cannot and may not take an oath in favor of a government that is fighting an unjust war."

Jägerstätter remained calm and composed when he walked to the scaffold. On that very same evening, Fr. Jochmann said, in the company of a group of Austrian nuns: "I can only congratulate you on this countryman of yours who lived as a saint and has now died a hero. I say with certainty that this simple man is the only saint that I have ever met in my lifetime."

Jägerstätter died convinced that his manner of death would pass unnoticed by the world and would completely fade from human memory with the passing of the handful of people who had known him personally. He was a martyr, not a prophet. In December 1984, responding to a nationwide petition, the President of Austria formally issued a special posthumous Award of Honor to Franz Jägerstätter. At the Second Vatican Council, an English Archbishop called upon his fellow bishops "to consider this man [Franz Jägerstätter] and his sacrifice in a spirit of gratitude" and let his example "inspire our deliberations". The document that issued from these deliberations would be eventually known as *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*.

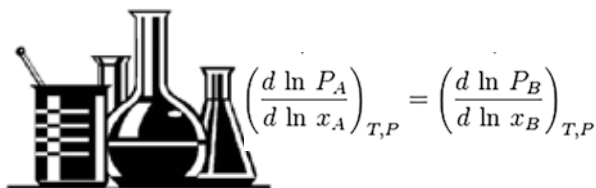
Jägerstätter's example, one hopes, might inspire politicians to make acts of undying martyrdom by finding the courage to oppose the political pressure that obliges them to approve euthanasia and other moral evils. To whom shall I be a witness is the most important decision a human being can ever make.





# THREE

## PIERRE DUHEM



**P**ierre Maurice Marie Duhem (1861-1916) is that rare, if not to say unique, scientist whose contributions to the philosophy of science, the historiography of science, and science itself – in thermodynamics, hydrodynamics, elasticity, and physical chemistry – were all of profound importance on a fully professional level. His contributions are legendary and fully justify the honor he is currently being given throughout the world this year on the 100th anniversary of his death. Duhem Centenaries are planned or have already taken place in the United States, Paris, Brazil, Tunisia, and Austria.

Turning the clock back by five decades, we read the following encomium from a fellow scientist, Donald G. Miller on the pages of *Physics Today* (December 1966): “This year marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Pierre Duhem, one of France’s greatest intellects. . . In his 32 years of scientific activity, he published without collaborators more than 350 papers and 21 books for which a nearly complete bibliography exists. . . Duhem was absolutely honest and had firmly held opinions. He prided himself on his independence, as evidenced by the publication of his refused thesis. He always protested vigorously things he believed unjust. He never feared a polemic, was a savage critic, and chose his adversaries without regard to rank or reputation.”

Duhem was a staunch Catholic, was interested in the Catholic students’ association, and was active in a widow’s’ and orphans’ aid society. He was a likeable man, possessing courtesy and charm. He had many close friends and his students had the highest regard for him. Naturally, as a Catholic, he deplored the anticlerical nature of the Third Republic. He produced massive groundbreaking work in medieval science and ably defended the continuity between medieval and early modern science. He offers a fascinating example of a brilliant scientist

who fearlessly adhered to his views, while entangled in historical and personal circumstances that prevented his career from being all that it could have been and partially suppressing his contribution to science and history.

As with any great man, Duhem was not without his detractors. His enemies, which is to say, those who envied his talents, called him “stubborn”. Here we come to an important and most interesting distinction, one between stubbornness and tenacity. Stubbornness is a firm act of the will animated by the desire to be right. As such, it is a vice. Tenacity, on the other hand, is a firm act of the will that is guided by objective truths. In this regard, tenacity is a virtue. An examination of Duhem’s life, his faith, and his work strongly suggests that he was a man of tenacity in the esteemed tradition of St. Paul, Louis Pasteur, and St. Thomas Aquinas.

St. Paul, in Thessalonians 2:15, advises us to “stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.” In so saying, he is not inviting his “brothers and sisters” to be stubborn, but to be faithful in holding on to what is true and right. He is advocating tenacity. “Let me tell you the secret that has led me to my goal,” wrote Louis Pasteur. “My strength lies solely in my tenacity.” By contrast, Sophocles tells us in *Antigone* that “stubbornness and stupidity are twins.”

Etienne Gilson, as we mentioned above, in his book, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages*, credits St. Thomas Aquinas with possessing two virtues to a high degree that are seldom found in the same person: “a perfect intellectual modesty and an almost reckless audacity.” Duhem learned much from the Angelic Doctor and may very well have absorbed these two virtues from him. As Gilson elaborates, “Intellectual modesty” means accepting things just as they are, conforming one’s mind to external reality. Duhem, it must be admitted, possessed this virtue.

“Intellectual audacity,” as Gilson explains, is the insistence on accepting a thing as it is without compromise, and doing it fearlessly. What the distinguished philosopher of history is saying about audacity appears to be synonymous with “tenacity,” or holding firm, despite temptations to the contrary, to what one knows is right. “He is no wise man,” remarked Samuel Johnson, “who will quit a certainty for an uncertainty.”

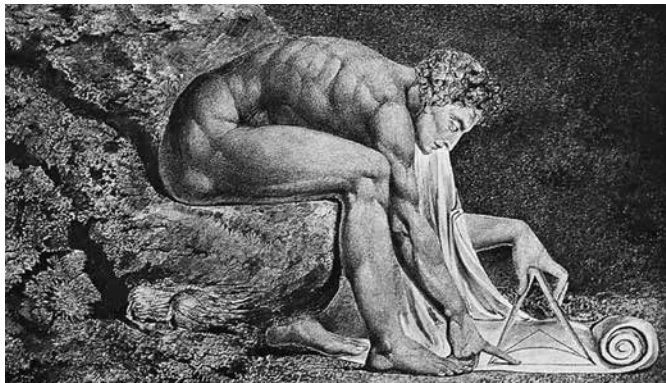
Duhem could not have accomplished as much as he did, if he



had cow-towed to the political correctness of his time. Despite the unfavorable, anticlerical environment in which he worked, he made original discoveries that clearly established a continuity, now fully acknowledged, between Medieval scientists and the science of the Modern World. “In other words,” as Hebert Butterfield writes in *The Origins of Modern Science*, “the modern world is in a certain sense a continuation of the medieval one — it is not to be regarded as merely a reaction against it.”

Commenting further on Duhem’s establishment of this continuity, Templeton prize-winner Stanley Jaki, who holds doctorates in both physics as well as in theology, states that “What Duhem unearthed among other things from long-buried manuscripts was that supernatural revelation played a crucial liberating role in putting scientific speculation on the right track . . . It is in this terrifying prospect for secular humanism, for which science is [presumed] the redeemer of mankind, that lies the explanation of that grim and secretive censorship which has worked against Duhem.”

Duhem’s mother feared that the study of science would lure her son away from the Catholic faith. Ironically, throughout his life, Duhem was persistently accused of separating science from faith. The 100th anniversary of Duhem’s passing allows us to rejoice in the more realistic, harmonious, and balanced view that science and faith are perfectly compatible with each other. It also allows us to honor the tenacity of Pierre Maurice Marie Duhem, for without that extraordinary virtue, no such celebrations would be taking place. Honoring a person one hundred years after his death is itself an expression of tenacity. We honor those whose memory we hold firm, as we honor the Word of God. “By this gospel you are saved,” St. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 15:2, “if you hold to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.”





## FOUR

# JAMES CONNOLLY



**T**he times are never so bad,” said Saint Thomas More, “that a good man can’t live in them.” These are encouraging words that can be applied to our present times. In addition to encouraging words, however, we, especially Catholics, need heroes, people who beat the odds and offer hope for the many who feel they have little chance of succeeding.

One such hero, though his name may not be exactly a household word, is James Brendan Connolly (Irish: Séamas Breandán Ó Conghaile), one of 12 children born to poor Irish immigrants in South Boston. He developed his prowess as an athlete in the streets and vacant lots, where he joined other young men in running, jumping, and playing ball. He did not attend high school, but was sufficiently self-educated that he was able to pass Harvard’s entrance examination. As a result, he was unconditionally accepted to study the classics.

It was 1896, the year the Olympic Games were being revised. The motto, *citius, altius, fortius* — meaning “swifter,” “higher,” “stronger,”— coined by Father Henri Didon, urged athletes to be at their best. This Dominican priest had envisioned the games as a means of using a physical competition to achieve spiritual greatness. “You who wish to surpass yourself, fashion your body and spirit to discover the best of yourself,” he is reputed to have said.

James Brendan Connolly was a freshman at Harvard that year and possessed a strong desire to compete in the first of the modern Olympiads. He approached the dean of the college requesting permission to leave school in order to go to Athens, but was refused. Connolly was one of the few Catholics attending Harvard at that time. He eschewed the safe and convenient choice of remaining at Harvard, getting his degree, and then making his mark in the world. Little did he know what immediate

difficulties awaited him.

He had saved \$250, but the German freighter which would take him and the nine other American athletes to Greece, suddenly raised the fare an additional \$75. Through the intercession of Father O'Callaghan, himself a sports fan, parishioners raised the required money. The team planned to spend 12 days in training prior to the opening of the games. What was not known at the time was that Greece operated on the Julian calendar, which gave the ten athletes but one day to prepare. There were more problems. Arriving in Naples, Connolly's wallet was stolen. In addition, he almost lost his ticket, retrieving it after a pursuit of the robber.

On April 6, 1896, at 2 pm, the Modern Olympics got under way. Crown Prince Constantine of Greece made a speech, and King George I officially opened the Games. James Brendan Connolly entered the first event, the triple jump, or more accurately, at that time, the "hop, hop and jump". He was the last of the competitors to compete in this event, and he out-distanced all his predecessors. With a jump of 13.71 meters — or 44 feet 11.75 inches — a remarkable three feet and three inches ahead of his nearest rival — he won the first championship of the modern Olympics and the first for his country. He became the first such champion since an Armenian prince by the name of Barasdates triumphed in boxing in the fourth century. Connolly was the first Olympic winner in 1,500 years — but received only a silver medal. The tradition of awarding gold to the winner was not inaugurated until 1908 at the London Olympiad.

Connolly also finished second in the high jump and third in the long jump. Some 40,000 spectators watched the events, including sailors from the USS San Francisco. In all, 285 men participated in the 42 events, representing 13 nations. Connolly watched with pride as the American flag was ceremoniously hoisted and a 200-piece band played the *Star Spangled Banner*. When Jim Connolly returned home, he was virtually penniless. He was by no means, at that time, a national hero. But the hero's welcome he did receive from the Irish community of South Boston made him feel like a king. He participated in the Paris Olympiad in 1900 and won a silver medal in the triple jump. He attended the 1904 Olympics as a journalist. "Connollystrasse", in Munich is named in his honor and was a key location in the events surrounding the Munich Massacre at the 1972 Summer Olympics.

Recognizing the merits of its former student and in an attempt to offset an infelicitous and hastily made decision, the Dean of Harvard

offered Connolly an honorary doctorate. Connolly, ever the man of integrity, refused it. He went on to become a noted journalist and war correspondent. He covered the Spanish American War, World War I, and the Irish War of Independence. He authored 25 novels, including *The Olympic Victory* (1908), and 200 short stories. Joseph Conrad, himself an accomplished teller of nautical adventures, once described Connolly as “America’s best writer of sea stories”. He continued his distinguished and varied career until his death on Jan. 20, 1957, at 87. A collection of items related to Connolly, including his triple jump silver medal, is housed in the library of Colby College in Maine. A statue in his honor stands in South Boston.

James Connolly beat the odds on so many levels. He was the son of a poor family of twelve, growing up in a poor area, and penniless at the age of 27. Yet, he became the first champion of the Modern Olympic Games, a successful journalist, and an accomplished novelist. He is an inspiration and role model for all of us.





FIVE  
MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE  
& G. K. CHESTERTON



**T**he late Malcolm Muggeridge, who, in his twilight years, had some sensible things to say about human sexuality, lamented that people “have sex on the brain, and that’s an unhealthy place for it to be.” What he meant by this remark was based on his observation that sex, which is a natural inclination toward another, is commonly short circuited by being lodged in the brain, or, if you will, stymied at the starting gate.

The prime example of this phenomenon is the young man who prefers the company of images of voluptuous women rather than taking the pains to cultivate a truly personal relationship with a real woman. The female images, “a harem of imaginary brides,” to borrow a phrase from C. S. Lewis, are accessible, undemanding, and unchallenging. They do not require the male dreamer to become sufficiently mature so that that any intelligent woman would be interested in him. It is a sad case of arrested development. His imaginary brides remain subservient to him, but they are of absolutely no help to him.

Since we are all imperfect, we are all subject to criticism. Intelligent, observant people notice flaws and often have something to say about them. While people, for the most part, love to be praised, even, at times, to the point of being flattered, they tend to resist criticism. Creatures of the imagination, however, do not have the power either to observe or to criticize. This is why they can be regarded as desirable. The imaginary bride lives under the rule of pleasure. She is perfectly mindless.

But we need criticism for growth. Our real friends, male or female, will, when the circumstances are auspicious, help us to overcome our faults and develop as responsible human beings. They help us, as the saying goes, to “get our act together”. The road to maturity is not traveled alone, but in the company of mutual friends. Mere flatterers are not true friends.

The inimitable G. K. Chesterton put the matter in a realistic framework when he explained that “Sex is an instinct that produces an institution.” That institution, of course, is marriage and the family, and continues on to who knows how many succeeding generations. But if sex remains merely on the level of an instinct, it remains sterile and unproductive. “The house is very much larger than the gate,” the author of *Orthodoxy* goes on to say, and “There are indeed a certain number of people who like to hang about at the gate and never get any further.”

Hanging around the gate and never entering the house is the sad epitaph belonging to those for whom sex remains “on the brain”. It is like holding on to the ticket but not entering the stadium to witness the game, or reading the menu but never ordering a meal. The harem of imaginary brides leads to nowhere, an empty place where no one resides to offer anyone companionship. It is a seduction that grounds the self at the zero point. It offers no antidote for loneliness, no compensation for unproductiveness, and no solace for personal failure.

The most fundamental duty we all have as human beings is to develop our personalities. Friendship is at its best when two developed personalities can bring out the best of each other. Love, put simply, is the will to promote and protect the good of the other. Being self-absorbed does not provide any good for anyone. The person who cannot get out of his imagination is of little good either to himself or to others.

The mythical figure, Narcissus, was self-absorbed and died of malnutrition while worshipping his self-image. One draws no nourishment from worshipping one’s self. Echo, who was interested in Narcissus and not her own extended image, wept for him. Her tears proved that she was real. They proved that she lived on a far more expansive horizon than did the man for whom she shed those tears. She was the realistic, though tragic woman who was spurned by a man who preferred the company of an illusion. The myth retains its relevance in our day. We may also understand malnutrition as an extreme undernourishment of love. The harem of imaginary brides, voluptuous as they may appear to be, are neither lovable nor loving. In addition,



the word “*Narcissus*” is etymologically elated to “*narke*” (in Greek) from which is derived “narcotic,” referring to numbness. Narcissus was numb to himself.

Love is realistic and expansive. It protects sex from remaining a mere instinct. It awakens the person to a richer reality than his mere imagination could possibly concoct. Because it is a tendency toward the real, it endows sex with a realistic direction. One woman, because she is real, surpasses any number of imaginary substitutes. She may be demanding, and critical, but her divine assignment is to help lead the young boy into becoming a responsible man. We would be remiss, however, if we denied that women do not experience, in some way, the same temptations toward isolation that the man experiences. The friendship, especially marital friendship between two mature persons, can overcome many imperfections. If spouses are critical of each other it is only because they are called to improve each other. To quote C. S. Lewis once more, “this carnival of sexuality leads us out beyond our sexes.” For, “in the image of God, He created them.”





SIX

# WILBER WILBERFORCE & BRANCH RICKEY



**T**he cynic will deny the existence of Providence. That is because he wants to be the sole master of both his dowry and his destiny. What he does not realize is that God has, so to speak, beaten him to the punch. It was God, not he, who granted him existence, placed inclinations in his being, and provided him with the means to fulfill those inclinations. We do not invent our destiny, no more than we choose our parents and our place of birth. We pursue it. Without God, we can do nothing.

During Black History Month, each February, it is most fitting to recall how Wilber Wilberforce (1759-1833) saw his role as fulfilling the providential duties that God had given him. Far from being self-centered, Wilberforce believed that the great choice he had to make in life was between self-interest and something much larger in working for God. As he stated in his diary, "My walk is a public one. My business is in the world, and I must mix in the assemblies of men or quit the post which Providence seems to have assigned me."

Wilberforce was an Evangelical Christian and one of the leading Abolitionists in England who fought unremittingly against slavery. "So enormous, so dreadful, so irremediable did the trade's wickedness appear," he wrote, "that my own mind was completely made up for abolition. Let the consequences be what they would: I from this time determined that I would never rest until I had effected its abolition." The work of the Abolitionists proved successful and led to the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 which abolished slavery in most of the British Empire. Wilberforce died just three days after hearing that the passage of the Act through Parliament was assured.

The attitudes of Wilberforce and Abraham Lincoln toward slavery were strikingly similar. The former held that everyone should live “by the golden rule of doing to others as in similar circumstances we would have them do to us.” The latter affirmed that “As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master.” In this regard, they both upheld democratic values.

God has left the final carrying out of his Providential Plan to us. Some cooperate; others do not. We are given our life, our appetites, and the means of directing them to their proper ends. When we accede to these gifts, Providence becomes evident to us. As Blaise Pascal once wrote, “He that takes truth for his guide, and duty for his end, may safely trust to God's providence to lead him aright”.

In America, Jackie Robinson is honored as the first black baseball player to cross the color barrier. This particular crossing, however, would not have taken place without the vision, determination and courage of Brooklyn Dodger executive, Branch Rickey (1881-1965), who, like Wilberforce before him, was a man of deep Christian faith. Rickey, who played professional football as well as baseball, detested racism and was determined to do what he could to overcome it. “I may not be able to do something about racism in every field,” he once stated, “but I sure can do something about it in baseball.”

In 1947 Jackie Roosevelt Robinson, thanks to the assistance of Branch Rickey, made his baseball debut for the Brooklyn Dodgers. He was named baseball's first “Rookie of the Year” and led his team to the World Series. Though he was jeered by opposing players, managers, and fans, he was extremely popular with the American public. For Mr. Rickey, his role in opening the door for blacks to play in the Major Leagues was the crowning achievement of his illustrious career and a key factor in his election to baseball's Hall of Fame.

Branch Rickey was a thinker as well as a doer. He knew that if Providence was to be fulfilled, people had to apply themselves to the God-given laws of reality. “Things worthwhile generally don't just happen by chance,” he once stated. “Good luck is what is left over after intelligence and effort have combined at their best. The law of cause and effect and causality both work the same with inexorable exactitudes. Luck is the residue of design.” No doubt, Rickey would have applauded these words of Martin Luther King, Jr.: “I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the

bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.”

From a philosophical perspective, “fortune” may be a better word than “luck”. We are fortunate to have a providential God. One may cite one illustrious example from history. Giovanni Fidenza (born 1221), was stricken with a grave illness when he was an infant. His mother prayed to St. Francis of Assisi who, according to the account, not only cured the child but foretold his future greatness. “*O Buona Fortuna!* (O Good Fortune), cried the mother, in sheer gratitude. Thus, the child was renamed Bonaventure. He became known as the “Seraphic Doctor” and ultimately, St. Bonaventure. “Man proposes, God disposes.” This oft-repeated phrase first appeared in Thomas á Kempis’ book, *The Imitation of Christ (Homo proponit, sed Deus disponit)*. “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7).

We are blessed by Providence when we put ourselves in a situation to receive it. In order to hear the music that streams from our receiving set, we must first turn on the radio. Providential assistance is always available. It is up to us to cooperate with its benefits. Finally, in order to find answers to some of the vexing problems associated with divine Providence, one may read Rev. Garrigou-Lagrange, OP’s excellent work, *Providence: God’s loving care for man and the need for confidence in Almighty God*.





SEVEN

**VIOLA DESMOND  
& ROSA PARKS**



**B**etter late than never” offers consolation for those who are patient, and a poor excuse for those who are delinquent. When it comes to apologies, however, “the sooner the better” is much preferred. Sixty-four years is more than a little tardy. But that is how long it took for the province of Nova Scotia to pardon Viola Desmond and apologize to her, posthumously, for her crime of tax evasion, of defrauding the province of Nova Scotia of the sum of exactly one cent. Outrageous as this appears, it is nonetheless true, well documented in Graham Reynolds’ *Viola Desmond’s Canada: A History of Blacks and Racial Segregation in the Promised Land*, in Wanda Robson’s *Sister to Courage*, and in a documentary produced by Canada’s National Film Board entitled *Long Road to Justice: The Viola Desmond Story*.

Viola Desmond, one of 15 siblings, was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in the year 1914. Her parents were active in the black community. Viola became a beautician and a successful business woman. She ran the Desmond School of Beauty Culture. In November 1946 she set out to sell some of her beauty products. En route, her car broke down in New Glasgow, giving her some time to kill while waiting for repairs. She entered a movie theater not knowing that it was racially segregated. Because of her poor eyesight, she sat in the downstairs section rather than in the balcony that was reserved for blacks. When she was told to leave, she refused. She was subsequently forcibly removed from the theater and kept in jail overnight. Offered the choice between 30 days in jail or a \$20 fine (equivalent to \$270 in 2016), she chose the latter. An additional fee of \$6 was imposed on her for court costs. The one cent charge for tax evasion (the amusement tax) was based on the slightly higher price of the downstairs ticket. She was not informed of her right to legal advice, counsel, or bail.

Desmond sought justice in the courts, but to no avail. After her marriage failed she moved to Montreal and then to New York City where she passed away alone at age 50. The town of New Glasgow now has a theater in her name. On December 8, 2016, she was chosen as the first woman to appear on a Canadian \$10 bill. The note will be issued in 2018.

Viola Desmond was Canada's Rosa Parks, though her refusal to leave her seat in the theater occurred 9 years before Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat in the white-section of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Both Desmond and Parks are commemorated on postage stamps and are revered for their courageous actions that brought about civil rights reforms. On July 7, 2016 a Halifax ferry bearing the name Viola Desmond was launched.

Why is the "road to justice" so often so long? It is because citizens of a particular moment in time find it difficult to judge their own time. They tend to see things through a rear view mirror and not notice certain iniquities until they have left the moment and can look back at them with 20/20 vision. No prophet is judged in his own time. Christ was not a man for his time, but a man for all seasons.

How long will the road be that leads to honoring courageous pro-life figures who are presently dismissed as cranks? When will the time come when such prolife stalwarts as Jerome Lejeune, Paul Marx, OSB, Judie Brown, Louise Summerhill, William Kurelek, Jim McFadden, and Dr. Jack Willke are accorded their rightful places and receive their appropriate honor? How is it possible to see what is really happening in the present moment without relying on the rear view mirror, when our correct view of things comes too late? The Catholic Church sees things from the broad perspective of eternity. Love, truth, and justice should never be excluded from any brief time period. Poets, philosophers, and theologians, it is said, are trained to evaluate correctly what is transpiring in the now. All too often, however, we prefer to allow what is "new" to guide our lives. If the wages of sin are death, it behooves us to be able to recognize sin when it is taking place. We need to set aside the political correctness that distracts us from the iniquities that are occurring before our eyes. Then will we discern that being fired for defending traditional marriage, being jailed for standing up for the rights of the unborn, being accused of a hate crime for holding that there are only two sexes, are outrages that are of the same type that were experienced by Viola Desmond, Rosa Parks, and all those unsung heroes who transcended



their moment in time and offered the world a broader vision.

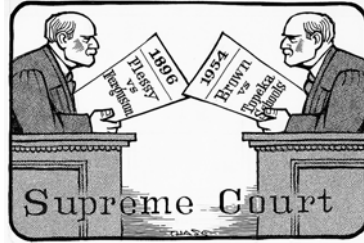
It has been said that “All human progress is a result of standing on the shoulders of our predecessors.” The challenge is to know whose shoulders we should stand on. It is not as important to know who is popular, as to know who is right. And the person who is right might well be the kind of being that emerges from some obscure place, like Nazareth, and spends a good deal of his brief mission in life urging a message of love and peace that the world violently rejects.





## EIGHT

# JOHN MARSHALL HARLAN & ROBERT E. LEE



**T**he history of US Supreme Court decisions looks like a roller coaster, moving from lows to highs or even from highs to lows as wisdom and short-sightedness take turns in replacing each other. What is only too clear is that there is no steady progress from injustices to justice. Even a cursory knowledge of US Supreme Court decisions is enough to prove the point. *Plessy vs. Ferguson* serves as a good example to illustrate how the US Supreme court can be, on some occasions, egregiously lacking both in justice as well as in vision.

In 1890 the State of Louisiana adopted a law providing for “equal but separate accommodations for the white and colored races” on its railroads. Homer Plessy tested the legitimacy of the law by sitting in the “white” section of a train and refusing to leave when told to do so. Plessy was fined \$25 and his case was heard by Judge John H. Ferguson of the Criminal Court of New Orleans who saw fit to uphold the law. The Louisiana law was ultimately challenged in the US Supreme Court in 1896 on the grounds that it violated the 13th and 14th amendments of the Constitution. By a 7-1 decision, however, the Court upheld the Louisiana law. Thus, it affirmed and maintained the notion that blacks were “separate but equal”.

*Plessy* was highly influential in establishing racial segregation laws in the South and provided the impetus for further segregation laws in the North. The “separate but equal” doctrine prevailed, even though “equal” did not really mean equal. For example, States consistently underfunded black schools and provided them with substandard buildings, textbooks and supplies. Inequality prevailed in restaurants, washrooms, hotels, and in other public facilities. Segregation and equality were on a collision course with each other.

The single dissenter, Judge John Marshall Harlan made an impassioned and thoroughly reasonable argument that blacks should be accorded their full civil rights. "The white race deems itself to be dominant," he wrote, but the Constitution recognizes "no superior, dominant ruling class of citizens." He went on to state that "Our Constitution is color-blind . . . In respect of civil rights all citizens are equal before the law." In stressing the equality of the races, independent of social status, he



made the following remark that expressed the equality that the Constitution affords to everyone concisely and eloquently: "The humblest is the peer of the most powerful."

His dissent is worth reading in its entirety. One passage, in particular, stands out: "The destinies of the two races, in this country, are indissolubly linked together, and the interests of both require that the common government of all shall not permit the seeds of race hate to be planted under the sanction of law. What can more certainly arouse race hate, what can more certainly create and perpetuate a feeling of distrust between these races, than state enactments which, in fact, proceed on the ground that colored citizens are so inferior and degraded that they cannot be allowed to sit in public coaches occupied by white citizens? That, as all will admit, is the real meaning of such legislation as was enacted in Louisiana."

Judge Harlan, is known as the Great Dissenter. But he was also a prophet. Concerning the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision, he had this to say: "In my opinion the judgment this day rendered will, in time prove to be quite as pernicious as the decision made by this tribunal in the Dred Scott Case." Fifty-eight years later, in *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) the US Supreme Court ruled that segregation in public education was unconstitutional. Ten years after that, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited all legal segregation.

History teaches us hope. Forty years has passed since seven judges

removed legal protection from the unborn in *Roe v. Wade*. In dissent, Justice Byron White called the decision nothing more than “an exercise in raw judicial power”. It took 68 years before racial segregation affirmed by *Plessy vs. Ferguson* was effectively overturned. Will it take as long as that for the unborn to reclaim their rights?

In 2009, Keith Plessy and Phoebe Ferguson, descendants of both sides of the 1896 *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision announced the establishment of the Plessy and Ferguson foundation for education and reconciliation. The aim of the Foundation is to teach the history of civil rights in order to create an understanding of the 1896 case and its effects on the American people. On February 12, 2009 an historical marker was unveiled near the location where Homer Plessy had boarded his train. As Keith Plessy stated in a radio interview, “It is no longer *Plessy v Ferguson*. It is *Plessy and Ferguson*”.

Education and Reconciliation are lofty goals. Would that the day will come in which education succeeds in teaching the humanity of the unborn and that they would be reconciled to their mothers. It is the broad perspective that brings hope for the unborn. “The march of Providence is so slow,” wrote Robert E. Lee, “and our own desires so impatient; the work of progress is so immense and our means of aiding it so feeble; the life of humanity is so long, that of the individual so brief, that we often see only the ebb of the advancing wave and are thus discouraged. It is history that teaches us to hope.”

General Lee, himself, was deeply involved in both Education and Reconciliation. He served as a most innovative president of Washington University from 1865 until his death five years later, prompting the school to change its name to Washington and Lee University. The name change symbolizes a reconciliation between the North and the South. When the school was known as Liberty Hall, John Chavis, a free black, enrolled in the year 1795. He is believed to be the first black student to enroll in higher education in the United States. Chavis went on to found a school in North Carolina for white and poor black students. History teaches us both hope and reasons for measured optimism.



*Alexander Goode*



*George Fox*



*Clark Poling*



*John Washington*

# NINE

## THE IMMORTAL CHAPLAINS



**A**n Englishman and a Jewish gentleman were engaged in an argument about their respective histories. The latter accused the former of taking things from his people for thousands of years, the Ten Commandments, for instance. “But”, the Englishman retorted, “though we took them from you, you can’t say that we’ve kept them”.

The joke contains one error and one truth. The Ten Commandments belong to all people and are universal in their application. The truth is that they are hard to keep. And especially difficult to keep is the Christian maxim that “There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friend” (John 15:13). And yet, when this expression of love is put into practice, the world takes notice and proudly commemorates it. We are wise to do the same. What is most difficult to do may be most lavishly honored.

On January 23, 1943, the S. S. Dorchester, carrying 904 passengers, mostly military men, left for Greenland. During the early morning hours of February 3, 1943, the ship was torpedoed by the German submarine U-223 off the coast of Newfoundland. The blast knocked out the electrical system, leaving the ship in the dark. Panic ensued. Four chaplains sought to calm the men and organize an orderly evacuation. They also assisted in the attempt to guide the wounded men to safety. Life jackets were passed out until the limited supply ran out. The chaplains then removed their own life jackets and gave them to others. They helped as many men as they could into lifeboats. When they could no longer be of help, they linked arms, saying prayers and singing hymns. They went down with the ship. Two ships that accompanied the Dorchester, disobeying orders to continue the search for the German U-Boat, stopped and rescued 230

men from the frigid waters. Nearly 700 perished, making it the third largest loss at sea of its kind for the United States during World War II.

The four chaplains were of different faiths, but shared the conviction that there is no greater love than to lay down your life for a friend. One survivor provided a moving testimony: "The last thing I saw, the Four Chaplains were up there praying for the safety of the men. They had done everything they could. I did not see them again. They themselves did not have a chance without their life jackets." According to the testimony of another survivor: "I could hear men crying, pleading, praying. I could also hear the chaplains preaching courage. Their voices were the only thing that kept me going." According to the Army War College account, another survivor of the *Dorchester*, John Ladd, said of the four chaplains' selfless act: "It was the finest thing I have seen or hope to see this side of heaven."

Who were these courageous and self-sacrificing men? They were truly an extraordinary quartet. George L. Fox was a Methodist preacher who had been decorated for bravery and was awarded the Silver Star, Purple Heart, and the French Croix de Guerre. Alexander D. Goode, the son of a Rabbi, followed in his father's footsteps. He received his PhD from Johns Hopkins University. He was both an athlete as well as an intellectual. Clark V. Poling was ordained in the Reformed Church of America. He studied at Yale University's Divinity School and graduated with a BDiv degree in 1936. John P. Washington was a Catholic priest. He was Chief of the Chaplains Reserve Pool in Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana. In 1942, he reported to Camp Myles Standish in Taunton, Massachusetts where he met Chaplains Fox, Goode and Poling at Chaplains School at Harvard.

On December 19, 1944, all four chaplains were awarded the Purple Heart and the Distinguished Service Cross, posthumously. In 1988, February 3 was established by a unanimous act of Congress as an annual "Four Chaplains Day". The United States Post Office Department issued a commemorative stamp in 1948 honoring the chaplains. The issue was unusual in that U.S. stamps were not normally minted to honor someone other than the President of the United States until at least ten years after his or her death. Their names were replaced by the words: "These immortal chaplains . . . Interfaith in Action". The Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation is located at the former South Philadelphia Navy Yard. Its official mission statement is "to further the cause of 'unity without uniformity' by encouraging goodwill and cooperation among



all people”. The various ways in which these self-sacrificing men of God are honored, in music, literature, iconography, and other modes of expression, is quite extensive. For a more complete account of the four chaplains, one can read *No Greater Glory: The Four Immortal Chaplains and the Sinking of the Dorchester in World War II* (2005) by Dan Kurzman.

We often admire what we are reluctant to imitate. Nonetheless, our willingness to honor genuine heroes at least keeps our sights on the right ideal. Perhaps this is the first step in gaining the willingness to do something heroic. In the meantime, there are the unheroic acts of self-sacrifice that are always within our grasp. One way of honoring the “Immortal Chaplains” and their like is by making small acts of generosity. That may very well have been the apprenticeship of chaplains Fox, Goode, Poling, and Washington long before they boarded the ill-fated S. S. Dorchester.





# TEN

## THE HOLY FAMILY



**I**n Christian parlance, Christmas is rightly celebrated as the Nativity. It is not Father’s Day or Mother’s Day, but the day when the child Jesus was born. This may seem to be an unnecessary or even trivial observation, but it actually represents an important insight into why the Holy Family is so named.

The ancient notion of *pater familias* (the Latin expression for “father of the family,” or “owner of the family estate”) placed the father first, the mother a distant second, and the child a far distant third. With regard to the Holy Family, the order is reversed so that the child comes first, the mother second, and the father third. Thus, Christmas, first and foremost, is about the child Jesus. Mary is never absent from the child, but she does not dominate the spotlight. In all the icons of the Mother of God, Mary’s eyes are always drawn to her child. St. Joseph is present, but clearly in third place. Joseph protects, Mary nourishes, but Jesus is the fulfillment.

The Pope is also known as the Holy Father. Pope (*papa* in Italian) means “father”. When Pope Gregory the Great gave himself the title of *Servus servorum Dei* (servant of the servants of God), he did not abandon his role as pope and spiritual leader of the Church, but he made it clear that not he, but others come first. The paradox here is that the leader subordinates himself in love for others so that he can be a better leader. The proud man thinks primarily of himself; the humble man thinks first of others. In stark contrast with King Herod, Catholic popes have consistently adopted the role the Pope Gregory bequeathed to them.

The modern family in the secular world prefers a different order than that which characterizes the Holy Family. It gives a place of supremacy to the mother while demoting the child third place, a reduction in value that opens the door to abortion, child neglect, and the increasing

popularity of marriages that are childless by choice. The father is often regarded as an unnecessary or bothersome appendage. Contraception, abortion, and divorce are common. This is the “profile” of the modern “unholy family,” which is not, in accord with its “pro-life” anagrammatic companion.

If we seek the reasons to explain the holiness of the Holy Family, we find one in the unchecked transmission of love that begins with God, flows through Joseph and Mary, and culminates in the child. Love has a forward motion. It overcomes obstacles. *Amor omnia vincit* (love conquers all) as the Romans said. Happiness characterizes those who live by love. And “happiness expresses itself as the desire to reproduce the beautiful,” as Plato stated. This applies very well to the Holy Family and any other family that aspires to holiness. In addition to the uninterrupted flow of love, there are the other supernatural virtues, faith and hope, that mark the holiness of the Holy Family. Mary needed faith to believe that she, despite her virginity, would bear the Christ child. She needed hope to be assured that she would be an effective instrument in the unfolding of God’s plan.

The decision to abort may be the consequence of a lack of love. Moreover, it may be influenced by a lack of faith that the pregnancy will go well. Or, it could be a lack of hope that the child will be healthy and lead a meaningful life. A family that is deficient in love, faith, or hope, places the child at risk and is not modelling itself after the Holy Family.

In 1643, Louise and Barbe d’Ailleboust came to Canada with the



purpose of devoting their lives to the welfare of the natives. After the death of her husband, Barbe, she founded, with the help of the Jesuit Father Chaumonot, the Confraternity of the Holy Family, which spread throughout the country. Her work drew the attention of Monsignor François Laval who established the feast of the Holy Family. The feast was added on October 26, 1921, under Pope Benedict XV, to the General Calendar of the Western Rite with

the purpose of counteracting the breakdown of the family. Bishop Laval was canonized on April 3, 2014 by Pope Francis. Today, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Holy Family on the Sunday that falls between Christmas and New Year’s Day (or on December 30 when there is no Sunday between those dates).

The Holy Family is the model family for all other families inasmuch as it perfectly integrates the supernatural virtues of love, faith, and hope. It is a most appropriate model in today's world when the family is suffering acutely, not only from forces from without but also from forces from within.

At the close of his Apostolic Exhortation, *The Role of the Family in the Modern World*, Saint John Paul II prays to St. Joseph that he may “always guard and protect and enlighten families,” and to Mary that she may “be an example of humble and generous acceptance of the will of God” and “comfort the sufferings and dry the tears of those in distress because of the difficulties of their families.” He invokes the help of the Holy Family to help ailing families, mindful of the fact that the future of humanity passes through the family. In his sermon on the Feast of the Holy Family (Sunday, December 20, 1978) he reiterated, in accordance with Vatican II, that “The deepest human problems are connected with the family. It constitutes the primary, fundamental and irreplaceable community for man.”





V  
BEYOND  
POLITICAL  
CORRECTNESS





# ONE

## PROVIDENCE



**T**he motto of Colorado is *Nil Nisi Numine*, which is usually translated as “Nothing without Providence”. One might think that such a motto is more suitable for Rhode Island, for, without its State Capital, it is, in terms of land mass, virtually nothing. Nonetheless, the city of Providence, Rhode Island is not without a connection with Divine Providence. Roger Williams, a religious exile from the Massachusetts Bay Colony named the area in honor of “God’s merciful Providence”. He believed God had led him to discover such a fine haven for him and his followers to settle. Today, the city of Providence is home to eight hospitals and seven institutions of higher learning. Roger Williams may have been on the right track.

In the secular world, however, the word “providence” is more often associated with insurance companies and health plans than with God. One is being provident, it is said, by preparing for the future. In a well-known Aesop fable, the author illustrates that “It is best to prepare for the days of necessity” by comparing the grasshopper, who lives for the moment, and the provident ant, who prepares for tomorrow. In this regard, being provident is a virtue. Similarly, philosophers of antiquity viewed providence as simply an act of prudence. The question naturally arises, “Do we need God to prepare for the future”? After all, are we not in good hands with Allstate?



Saint Thomas Aquinas’ discussion of Providence is especially helpful and instructive. He understands God’s Providence in a twofold

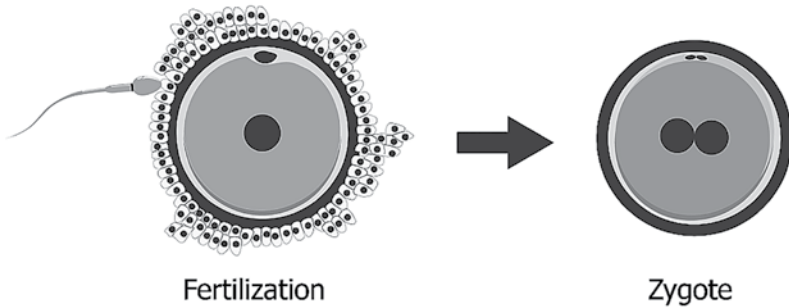
manner. First, God manifests his Providence in creation. In this way, God's demonstrates his Providence with regards to the "substance" of things (*Summa Theologica* I, 22, 1). But God would have abandoned his creatures if He left them to their mere existence. Therefore, He shows his Providential Care for his human creatures by endowing them with an inclination toward their end. Their end is also twofold including the particular end which is their natural good, and their supernatural end which is to be with God.

The word "providence" means to see things before they happen (*Pro + videre*). Therefore, Aquinas states, "It is necessary that the type of the order of things towards their end should pre-exist in the divine mind: and the type of things ordered towards an end is, properly speaking, providence." As a providential God, He gives us both our life and our direction. He knows the things that are good for us long before they come into being when we can see them ourselves. His Providence does not preclude our freedom, for it is up to us to choose freely what is good for us. It must also be stated that, for Aquinas, God's Providence can be found in the particulars of a person's life. "For instance," as he writes, "the meeting of two servants, although to them it appears a chance circumstance, has been fully foreseen by their master, who has purposely sent to meet at the one place, in such a way that the one knows not about the other" (S. T. I, 22, 2). In other words, we can sense the actions of divine Providence in the particular events and incidents of our daily lives. We are travelers. God gives us our life, our destination, and the provisions we need to reach our destination.

The debate between providence and chance is one that is as old as philosophy. The more we know, however, especially what science teaches us, the more the notion that we are guided by a Divine Agent becomes irrefutable. Consider the development of human life from the initial zygote stage.

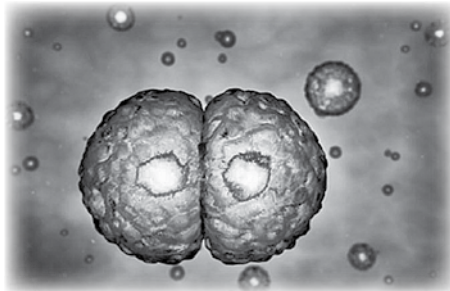
Although it is no larger than a grain of sugar, the single-cell zygote contains a complete genetic code, all the DNA and all the genes that a complete human being will ever need. This tiny zygote initiates a development that progresses to form the 30-trillion cell adult. At the same time, it exerts biochemical and hormonal influences on the mother as it begins to control and direct the process of pregnancy, a power amplification, considering its miniscule size in relation to that of the mother that is utterly astonishing. Moreover, it impresses itself, through its DNA, on all the generations of its descendants just as all the

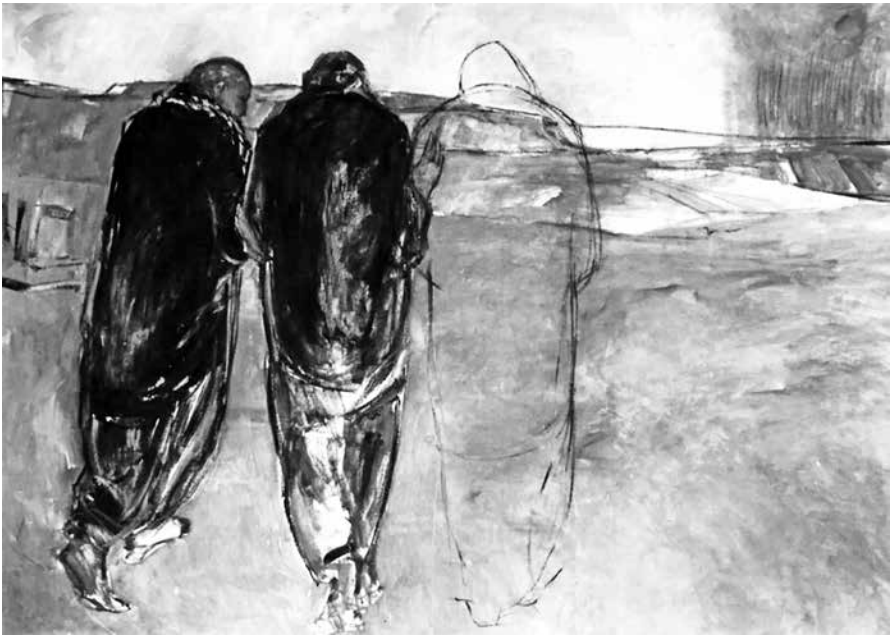
generations of its ancestors have impressed their own genotype on it. Accordingly, world-class geneticist Jérôme Lejeune states in his book, *The Concentration Can*, “As no other information will enter later into the zygote, the fertilized egg, one is forced to admit that all the necessary and sufficient information to define that particular creature is found together at fertilization.” This is Providence in a nutshell.



How could it be possible for a single cell to develop into a perfectly integrated human organism of 30 trillion cells by chance? All indications are that it develops on its own. Moreover, the infant human produces 200 neurons in his brain per minute. This prodigious rate actually slows down a bit in the adult brain and settles in to form a brain of roughly 100 billion neurons. A large hotel, given all its wiring, plumbing, heating ducts, and everything else that goes into it, is not nearly as complex as the cellular complexity of but one of its guests. Furthermore, a similarly organized complexity exists for all plants and animals.

Aquinas is fully in agreement with the *Book of Wisdom* and cites the following passage with approval: “She reaches from end to end mightily, and orders all things sweetly” (Wisdom 8:1). Providence creates, equips, inclines, provides, sustains, and directs.





## TWO

# WHAT IS THE BEST PROOF FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE?



**O**n the day before Christmas (2016) I received an email from a person I do not know. His message consisted of a single sentence: “What do you believe is the greatest proof for God from philosophy?”

I was tempted to answer with a single word: “Providence”. Philosophically, this conforms to Aquinas’ fifth proof for God’s existence, the Argument from Design. However, since I was asked what I thought is the best proof, I decided to answer him by combining Aquinas’ argument from design with my own personal experiences of God’s Providence. The following examples strongly support the contention that God is providential and cooperates with us in our daily lives. And since God is with us, He surely must exist.

1) My flight from Bradley Airport in Hartford, CT to Toronto was delayed by a storm just long enough so that I missed my connecting flight from Toronto to Calgary. While I sat in the departure lounge awaiting my new flight, I met a friend who lives in Vancouver. He was astonished to meet me not only because we almost never meet but because on the previous day, while in Miami, he had an inspiration that I should write a book on moral virtues and illustrate them with memorable stories from life and literature. I was equally astonished since on that very day I had received a letter from a woman in upstate New York urging me to write the same book. I had brought her letter along with me for good luck. We boarded a plane that was two hours late getting in from Paris. Our seating assignments, as it so happened, were next to each other. During the five-hour flight, we discussed what virtues should go into the book and how they should be exemplified. After completing my round of talks, the priest who drove me to the Vancouver airport was none other than the godfather of one of my friend’s children. I proceeded to write

the book with complete confidence that God was with me and that it would be published, a conviction I had never had before. *The Heart of Virtue* became a best-seller for Ignatius Press and was translated into Korean. One of my students in Ontario contacted a young woman in Illinois through a dating service and asked her what book was her favorite. My book was the favorite of both of them. Discovering that they had much in common contributed to their falling in love. My wife and I were invited to their wedding and enjoyed hearing the groom relate from the dais how *The Heart of Virtue* played an important role in their relationship. There were many other remarkable events tied to the publication of this book. Nonetheless, the myriad of coincidences that occurred before and after the book's publication cannot be explained by mere chance.

2) During the era of Stalin's "Planned Starvation" in the Ukraine, a stout-hearted grandfather would tell members of his family to get up and "rouse the lion in your soul". I was touched by this gesture of hope and heroism and incorporated it in a poem. One of the grandchildren from this Ukrainian family is Michael Medved, a well-known movie critic and staunch promoter of family values. I was subsequently invited to give a presentation at an international conference on the family where Mr. Medved was the principal speaker. I brought along my poem in the hope of giving it to him. He was not easy to find, however, and after the first day's activities concluded, I decided to retire to my room. My journey to slumber land, however, was interrupted by the sound of three friends calling out to me. They were excited and told me about the ringing words that were part of Mrs. Medved's presentation: "Rouse the lion in your soul". One of my friends bid me to look over my shoulder. I obliged and found myself looking directly into the eyes of none other than Michael Medved himself. "I think I am experiencing a miraculous event," I said to him. "I have no problem with miracles," he said. I gave him a copy of my poem. On the following day, another chance meeting gave me the opportunity to have him sign a copy of his book, *The Golden Turkey Awards*. He graciously obliged — "For Dr. DeMarco—Fine Scholar — Fine Poet — and kindred spirit." Sometime later, one of the three friends who called out to me interviewed Medved, the occasion being Medved's new book on, of all things — Providence.

3) I was about to give a presentation in Portsmouth, NH. The lady I was conversing with was struck by the fact that I lived in Canada. "I know only one person in all of Canada," she said. It turned out that this

one person lived in the town adjacent to mine and had been assigned to introduce me for my talk two weeks later.

4) At a conference just outside of Pittsburgh, a married couple identified themselves to me as residents of Salina, Kansas. “I know just one person from your city,” I said. Not only did they know this person, but had recently attended her wedding. I picked up a book of mine that was nearby, *Chambers of the Heart*, which contained a poem I had written for her. It was a poem that, as she had informed me by letter, helped dissuade her from taking her life.

5) My wife and I were in a gift shop in Cape Cod. I was looking for a suitable gift for our soon to be hostess in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I picked out a porcelain music box adorned with an elegant blue jay. Our friend loved the color blue and was fond of Toronto’s Blue Jays. I turned the key and listened to the mechanical unwinding of “True Love,” the song that Bing Crosby crooned to Grace Kelly in *High Society*. I was concerned that the song conveyed too personal a message and asked God for a sign that this was, indeed, the right gift. The sign was answered forthwith in the form of the store radio playing that very same tune. Not only that, but the saleslady walked past me while cheerfully humming it. I purchased the gift and it turned out to be the perfect present.

Coincidences may be God’s way of remaining anonymous. But it is also God’s way of expressing his providential care.







# THREE

## AUTONOMY AND INTERCONNECTEDNESS



**T**he family is more interconnected biologically than most people realize. An article published in *Scientific American* (Dec. 4, 2012), carries a most startling title: “Scientists Discover Children’s Cells Living in Mother’s Brains: The connection between mother and child is deeper than thought”. In this report, author Robert Martone discusses “microchimerism,” a fascinating phenomenon that is a burgeoning new field of scientific inquiry and also “a reminder of our interconnectedness”.

The term “microchimerism” is derived from the fire-breathing Chimera of Greek mythology that was part serpent, part lion, and part goat. We find the earliest surviving description of the chimera in Homer’s *Iliad*: “a thing of immortal make, not human, lion-fronted and snake behind, a goat in the middle, and snorting out the breath of the terrible flame of bright fire.” A chimera has come to be known as any creature that is a mixture of more than one being. Microchimerism refers to a condition in which this phenomenon occurs in human beings, though on an exceedingly small scale and not at all horrifying.

Microchimerism in humans was first noticed when cells containing the male “Y” chromosome were detected circulating in the blood and also in the brains of women after pregnancy. Since these cells are genetically male, they could not have been produced by the pregnant mother. This finding offers additional evidence that the child a woman carries in her womb is not simply part of her body. It may be that these fetal cells that migrate to the mother’s brain have a salutary effect on the mother’s well-being. Scientific research reports that there are fewer fetal-derived cells in women who have Alzheimer’s disease, more in those who do not have the disease.

Microchimerism occurs most commonly when fetal cells pass through the placenta and enter the mother's body. But this transfer is not a one-way street. There is evidence that cells may be transferred from the mother to the infant through breast feeding. A similar exchange of cells may occur between twins in utero. In addition, the cells from an older sibling residing in her mother may find their way back to a younger sibling during the latter's pregnancy. Also, a mother may retain microchimeric cells from her own mother. Indeed, the family, from a biochemical point of view, is far more interconnected than was formerly believed.

While the impact that microchimera cells have on the body is not entirely clear, studies indicate that microchimeric cells may stimulate the immune system to stem the growth of tumors. Martone reports that "Many more microchimeric cells are found in the blood of healthy women compared to those with breast cancer, for example, suggesting that microchimeric cells can somehow prevent tumor formation." There is also evidence that, like stem cells, microchimeric cells can repair damaged organs. On the other hand, the presence of such cells may have certain negative consequence. Much more research needs to be done.

In an article entitled, "Microchimerism – "The More, The Merrier" (*Harvard Science Review* (Dec. 3, 2015), Una Choi reports that "mothers themselves often benefit from increased immune surveillance. Indeed, fetal microchimeric T cells can eradicate malignant host T-cells." She also points out that microchimeric cells can provide protection against various forms of cancer. As one mother has stated, "It is nice to know that while my children are messing up the house, their microchimeric cells are working to clean up my body." One must look beyond what one can see with the limited vision of eyesight.

It seems reasonable that the two-in-one flesh intimacy of husband and wife, which includes a profoundly biochemical dimension, would serve as a prototype for cellular intimacies between all the members of the family, including ancestors and descendants. The word "flesh," as scientists are discerning, is richer in implication than Genesis could have explained to a non-scientific community. It involves microbiology, microchimerism, and the immune system. This interconnectedness does not apply to same-sex relations. Marriage between man and woman, which extends something of its character to all its family members, is founded on, and springs from, a two-in-one flesh intimacy that is distinctive of a heterosexual union.

“We are accustomed to thinking of ourselves as singular autonomous individuals,” writes Robert Martone, “and these foreign cells [microchimeric cells] seem to belie that notion” since most people carry remnants of other individuals. We remain individuals, however, although we are not autonomous individuals. We remain unique and interdependent.

Science continues to be a good friend for those who oppose abortion. In order to maintain a pro-abortion rationale, it is necessary to suppress a continuing flood of information that science uncovers. The relatively new field of microchimerism provides additional proof that the fetus is not merely a part of the mother’s body, that human beings (especially family members) are profoundly interconnected, and that we are not autonomous beings, islands cut off from the mainland. Abortion cannot be the isolated choice of an autonomous individual. Rather, abortion is a form of disconnection. Moreover, it fractures family ties that are beneficial and life-serving in certain ways that we are just beginning to understand.





# FOUR

## RE-SACRALIZING THE SACRED



**A** student, who was enjoying a course I was teaching, asked me if I would like to speak to the members of his Bible study group. I considered it an honor and happily accepted his cordial invitation. The study group, comprised exclusively of young adults, met in the home of one of the students, an atmosphere most conducive to friendly discussions. I began my informal presentation by commending everyone for taking the time and making the effort to study Sacred Scripture. The Bible, of course, I reminded them, has the great merit of being sacred. My eyes then fell upon a copy of a Sears' catalogue, which, so I thought, would serve well in contrasting the sacred with the profane. My illustration, however, was immediately rebuffed. "That catalogue is sacred to my dad," piped one of the students. The group seemed to agree with my dissenter. How do I proceed, I thought to myself, if my audience was composed of relativists? If nothing is sacred in itself, what is the point of studying Sacred Scripture? No doubt the catalogue was important to the father, but being important is a long way from being sacred. There was small consolation for me that the refreshments and light banter after my talk were mildly enjoyable.

The Bible is the Word of God. It is sacred because God is sacred. Pope Leo XIII expressed it well when he stated that "all the books which the Church receives as sacred and canonical are written wholly and entirely, with all their parts, at the dictation of the Holy Ghost." God is the absolute and should not be relativized by the individual. If we are left with nothing more than the profane, how do we learn about the essential things of life: what we should believe, how we should live, and the reason for our coming into this world? The novelist John Updike spoke of his generation as existing "between the death and rebirth of the gods, when there is nothing to steer by but sex and stoicism and the

stars.” Yet, the profane of itself can never attain the sacred. And that is why the word of God was given to us from above.

It was once the policy of the United States Army that every military plane flying over water must carry a collapsible boat containing food rations and a copy of the Bible in a waterproof package. The justification for including the Good Book was that “spiritual equipment can be as important as food and drink is to save lives.” There was no thought of including a consumer catalogue or a copy of the New York Times. Perhaps an army pilot could have made a more convincing presentation to my Bible students.

The noted psychiatrist Karl Gustav Jung has informed us that among the many hundreds of patients he has treated, “Among those over 35, there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook in life.” And what is a better anchor for religion than sacred Scripture? I wondered what life would be like for my Bible students once they achieved the age of 35. The Word of God, unlike newspapers and magazines, has no dateline. Its relevance is permanent, through history and throughout the course of one’s lifetime.

Catalogues and newspapers offer us very little assistance when it comes to the important questions. Queen Victoria, upon losing her beloved husband confided that the Bible was her greatest source of comfort. And so it has been, for millions of people throughout history and throughout the world. What other document is so completely resistant to political correctness?

There is a movement afoot to remove Gideon Bibles from hotel rooms. While this is occurring, salacious material is made increasingly available through pay TV in those same hotels. Monuments displaying the Ten Commandments have been removed by law. It is ironic that some people who study the Bible fail to discern its sacredness, while others who do recognize its sacred character want to remove any signs of it from public display in the interest of separating Church and State. When the sacred is desacralized, it does not take its place alongside the profane; it becomes disreputable. The need is only too apparent to re-sacralize the sacred. On second thought, it is better to state that we need to sharpen our spiritual wits so that we can better recognize the sacred character of that which is essentially sacred.

We are created in God’s image. Therefore, there is a spark within us that resonates with the sacred just as a tuning fork vibrates in accord

with the piano key that is set to the same frequency. It is easy to adapt to the profane and ignore the sacred. Nonetheless, that which is best in us remains present in us. What St. Augustine said in his *Confessions* about our affinity for Truth can also be applied to our innate affinity for the sacred: “O Truth, Truth, how inwardly did the very marrow of my soul pant for you” (“*O veritas, veritas, quam intime etiam tum medullae animi mei suspirabant tibi*”).



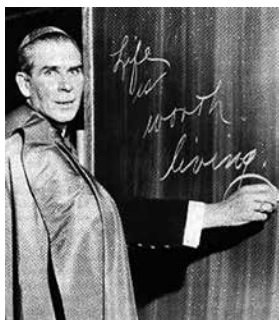
Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.





# FIVE

## THE IMPORTANCE OF HOLIDAYS



**B**ishop Fulton J. Sheen fully appreciated the value of humor. He would invariably open his TV show, *Life is Worth Living*, which was watched back in the 1950's by an audience estimated to be thirty million viewers, with a joke or a funny story. He knew that humor was double-edged. It could make a point as well as make people laugh, appealing both to the mind and to the funny bone. One of my favorite of his one-liners is his reference to the man who was an atheist for a year, but had to give it up because there were no holidays.

Sheen's witticism actually complements atheists for it implies that they have a sense of the holy and long for it when it is missing from their lives. Dana Gioia, California's reigning poet laureate agrees with Sheen in principle, and credits the Church for being a kind of specialist when it comes to cultivating a sense of the holy. "What Catholicism does is inform my work," he states. "Whether the poem is about an angel or an alley way, my way of seeing the world (and sensing what lies beyond the visible world) is always Catholic." He cites Psalm 96 which instructs us to "Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness." He adds, "A nonbeliever should be able to feel the truth and majesty of the Church."

No doubt, because Sheen was a philosopher, he believed that the "point" of his humor was more important than the laugh it might evoke. And the "point" was usually a way of making his moral message irresistible. His artful humor brings to mind the words of the esteemed 18th century essayist Joseph Addison: "I shall endeavor to enliven morality with wit and temper wit with morality." The humorist must steer a middle course between presenting morality as lifeless and muddying it

up so that it appears disreputable.

A holiday, as the word implies, is a “holy day”. Holiness is not derived from the earth. Its origin is from on high. Christmas is our most popular holiday because it offers something that the world cannot provide: peace, brotherhood, and enduring love. A life without holidays is a life immersed in a world that cannot fulfill our deepest desires. Such a life renders a person a cosmic orphan, reducing him to just another meaningless atom within an infinite ocean of other meaningless atoms.

Although holiness originates from on high, its reality is readily accessible. The world is diaphanous. It allows us to see through it so that we have glimpses, hints, or intimations of the holy. Life would be unbearably barren without any sense whatsoever of the holy. Christmas celebrates the arrival of the Most Holy, the One who penetrates our hearts and sanctifies our souls. It gives us a booster shot of what we are able to sense, perhaps more dimly, on a daily basis. As C. S. Lewis states in *Miracles*, “The Supernatural is not remote and abstruse: it is a matter of daily and hourly experience, as intimate as breathing.”

For Saint Thomas Aquinas, the Natural Law participates in the Eternal Law. It is a doorway, so to speak, into a realm that is richer and purer than the one in which we live. Thus, for the Angelic Doctor, everything has a “certain hidden secret) or a “certain hidden secret” [(*sacrum secretum*) *Summa Theologica* III, 60, 1]. All things contain God’s secret signature.

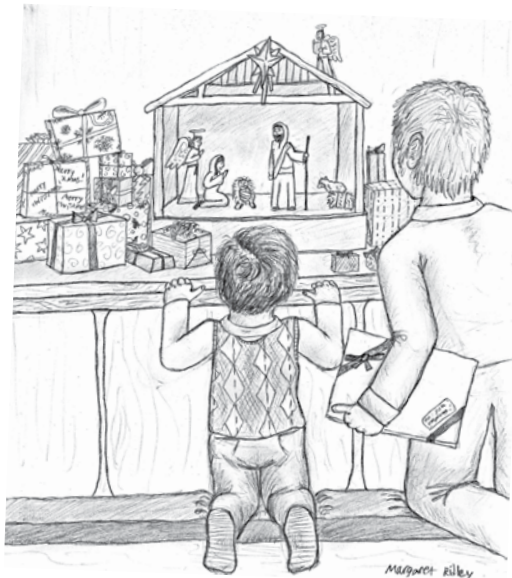
Shakespeare added a touch of poetry to this insight in *As You Like It* where, walking through the Forest of Arden, one “Finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything.” Yet, for the perspicacious, this enchanted forest encompasses the entire globe. Accordingly, for C. S. Lewis, we discover “patches of God-light in the woods of our experience”. This “light” assures us that there is more to reality than meets the eye. We are not bound by the lower order of things. The eternal flashes before our mind. The epitaph that Cardinal Newman chose for himself was “Coming out from the shadows into Reality” (*ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*).

Alfred Lord Tennyson’s little poem, “Flower in the Crannied Wall,” is large in implication, bringing the finite and the infinite into contact with each other. Holding the flower in his hands the poet states that “if I could understand what you are, root and all, and all in all, I should know what God and man is.” The word “if” offers the possibility of sensing the

divine in the ephemeral. Our lives are an unceasing attempt to translate the “if” into a realization, a possibility into an epiphany.



It is easy for us to imagine Sheen’s atheist as being smitten by metaphysical claustrophobia. Being so constricted, boredom becomes inevitable. The attempt to escape from boredom is a national pastime. But immersing oneself even more in things that are not holy, drugging ourselves with shopping, eating, and drinking, fails to solve the problem. The key that unlocks our prison house is the sense of the holy that surrounds us. And the passages to escape are virtually everywhere. The Christmas season offers us a splendid opportunity to revel in the glory of a holiday so that our vision is enlarged, having been liberated from a closed and calculating world. Christmas is God’s personal response to the temptation to atheism.





## SIX

# COMFORT FOR THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED



**C**atholics have always been persecuted, and so has the Church. In today's world, for people who call themselves "liberal," claim to deplore prejudice, and hold firmly to the notion of "inclusiveness," a direct attack against Catholics for being Catholic goes against their professed preferences. Therefore, they do not oppose Catholics because they are Catholic, but because of the various doctrines that are part of the Catholic faith. In this way, "liberals" can persecute Catholics while maintaining the illusion that they are educating them in a spirit of broadmindedness. They are not prejudiced, therefore, but simply trying to get Catholics into the 21st century.

The daily news delivers a seemingly endless series of instances in which a Catholic is punished in one way or another because the Catholic teaching he affirms is at variance with the ethic of the world. A recent example, at a Catholic University, speaks for and symbolizes many of these instances. A woman, fifteen years in the employ of her school was suspended because she dared to express, in an informal conversation outside of the classroom, that there are two sexes: male and female. She was charged with hatred against that powerful alliance known by the acronym LGBTQ.

Holding to the opinion that there are many sexes is considered broadminded. The opinion that there are only two sexes, one that flies amidst a flurry of dubious other opinions, should be considered, one would think, at least tolerable. As a matter of fact, it should also be considered innocuous, since it does not stand to hurt anyone. Yet it hardly qualifies as an expression of hatred. But why is this so? And how did this bizarre state of affairs come about?

Pope Benedict XVI, in the first volume *Jesus of Nazareth*, states that

“man constantly strives for emancipation from God’s will in order to follow himself alone.” It is much easier for a person to follow his ego than to live by the Cross and follow Jesus along the “narrow path” that He has set for him. Therefore, Christian doctrine will always be a sign of contradiction to the world. For this reason, the former pontiff goes on to say, “there will be persecution for the sake of righteousness in every period of history.” It is not an easy thing to be persecuted. Some “Catholics” avoid this by watering down their doctrine to the point that their view of life is indistinguishable from that of the world. But the true Catholic is a person of faith, and is unwilling to barter away his faith for worldly gain.

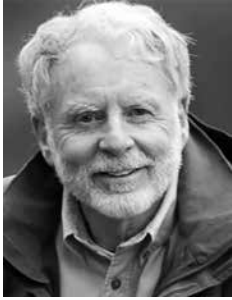
The Sermon on the Mount offers great comfort for all who are persecuted: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:10).

The word “blessed” cannot be stressed enough. Friedrich Nietzsche reviled Christianity because he thought it was a religion of losers. He denounced Christian morality as a “capital crime against life.” The typical Christian, for the founder of atheistic existentialism, was a failure, a person who was unequal to the challenges of life, one who resented those who were stronger, more successful, and more alive. “We want the kingdom of earth,” he cried.

The persecuted are blessed for three reasons. They stand as blessed in contrast with those who unjustly persecute them. As Socrates said, long ago, it is better to suffer an injustice than to commit one. They are saved from the illusion of self-sufficiency. Secondly, they are comforted by Christ who suffered persecution unto death. His words are most reassuring. He understands, better than anyone else, the pain of persecution. Finally, the persecuted are blessed because the suffering they experience will be completely washed away when they enter the Kingdom of Heaven. They are given both comfort as well as hope. They are not losers, but winners who have a kingdom to gain.

At the same time, comforting as Christ’s words are, comfort is not brought to its completion until one enters God’s Kingdom. At that time, past sufferings will seem trivial. St. Paul declared that “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the

glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). Likewise, Saint Teresa of Avila said that from the point of view of heaven, all the suffering we experienced on earth will seem as no more than a single night stay at an inconvenient hotel.



Roy Lessin’s personal story illustrates how the Will of God, seemingly expressed in a set of contradictions, can lead to a richer life and bring the Good News of the Gospel to many. He was forty years old when he entered a hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada and read, for the first time in English, a Bible, courtesy of the Gideon Society. He began reading Genesis, the locus of that now troubling passage in which God proclaims that “He created them male and female”. The experience led to his conversion to Christianity and the many successful pastoral and educational apostolates he conducted. He is well known for his daily Christian devotions. In one of his devotional statements, called *Your Life is a Blessing*, he eloquently captures the liberating paradoxes that lie at the heart of Christ’s message: “The mind of God is different that the thoughts of man. As we follow Him, we discover that we lose to gain . . . surrender to win . . . die to live . . . give to receive . . . serve to reign . . . scatter to reap. In weakness we are made strong . . . in humility we are lifted up . . . in emptiness we are made full.”

The persecuted are indeed blessed. May their faith remain strong and unwavering.







## SEVEN

# CONTROLLING MY DESTINY



**“Destiny”** is a word that has both profound and mysterious significance. And like kindred words such as love, beauty, goodness, wisdom, and truth, it is often trivialized to fit some mundane purpose. A football team, for example, is said to “be in control of its own destiny” simply because its trip to the playoffs is not dependent on a rival team losing. Yet, that same team is not in control of winning. Nor does it make any sense to say that at the start of the season every team is in control of its destiny. Equally fallacious is the notion that contraception and abortion afford a woman “control over her destiny”. We have no control of how words are cheapened or used in a contradictory fashion, but we can do something about restoring important words to their more proper and exalted meaning.

The truth is that “destiny,” in its proper sense, is something that no one can ever be in control of. The central paradox of destiny is that it comes to me from the outside, although, in some way, it is present within myself. Destiny, therefore, must be from God. “There is a divinity that shapes our ends,” says Hamlet, “Rough-hew them how we will”. “That is most certain,” replies Horatio (Act V. Sc. 2).

For Chaucer, “The destiny, minister general, that executeth in the world over-all, the purveyance, that God hath seen before . . . All is thus ruled by the sight above” (*The Knightes Tale*). Destiny involves a mysterious interaction between our freedom and God’s superintendence. It is a matter of coordination, not control. It cannot be determined simply by a “Destiny Number,” which is calculated by adding the numbers associated with each letter of a person’s name.

Destiny involves the God who created us and did not abandon us to chance. It is interesting to note that the word “density” is an anagram

for “destiny”. This is most fitting since, there is an anthropological basis in us for our destiny. Our destiny is rooted, in part, in our particular makeup. Caruso’s destiny was to sing, Rubinstein’s to play the piano, Michelangelo’s to be a sculptor, Bernadette Soubirous to see the Immaculate Conception, Karol Wojtyla to become Pope John Paul II. A horse cannot sing like a nightingale, nor can a nightingale whinny like a horse. Destiny is neither a matter of chance nor of fate. It is the fulfillment of our faithful relationship with God’s Will.

The fact that we have a destiny is a source of great hope and jubilation. It means that we are not abandoned to “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune”. It means four things in particular that add challenge and excitement to our lives:

1) My destiny is unique. Because of the particular way in which I was made, given whatever talents and abilities God has given me, my destiny is unlike that of anyone else’s destiny. Therefore, I can pursue something which is mine in a most specific way.

2) My destiny awaits me. Because God has shaped my destiny, it is something that has pre-existed in God’s mind. Thus, my destiny is something real.

3) My destiny is achievable. By living in accordance with God’s Will, it is possible to achieve my destiny. Therefore, I can live with hope and have faith that my destiny can be realized.

4) My destiny is worthwhile. Because God has a hand in my destiny, it must be something that is good and worth whatever sacrifices I must make, and hardship I must endure along the way. I will not succumb to the grim notion that “The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

Our destiny, though it draws us like iron filings to a magnetic pole, remains elusive. We understand full well what “destination” means. I



drive to the airport and complete one destination. This is followed by a series of additional destinations: my flight to New York, my ride to the hotel, taking the elevator to my room, and so on. As I complete one destination another destination immediately takes its place. But, as I go through this process of completing one destination after another, am I any closer to my destiny? Destinations do not deliver one's destiny. Destiny transcends destination. When I am asked "Where are you going?" it is always in terms of reaching my next destination. I do not know how to speak of my destiny, though I know, deep in my heart, that I have one.

In his book, *The Destiny of Man*, the Russian existentialist, Nikolai



Berdyaev discusses destiny as the process of advancing from mere individuality to spiritual personhood. "Individuality is a naturalistic and biological category," he writes, "while personality is a religious and spiritual one." An individual is part of the species, is born and dies. But personality is created by God. "It is God's idea, God's conception, which springs up in eternity." Thus, man's destiny is to achieve spiritual personality: "personality," for Berdyaev, "is a task to be achieved".

A communist government may have a "Plan" for its people. But this plan is not unique to each person and has nothing to do with the dignity of the human person. Destiny, though shrouded in mystery, belongs to each of us as a reality conceived by God that draws us out from the finitude and pre-occupation with the self to a richer realization in spiritual personhood. And as this transformation takes place, we begin to understand both the reality and the rewards of our specific destiny.



# EIGHT

## THE STARS ALSO PERISH



**D** **Death, we are told** by a most reliable source, can come like a thief in the night. We are all mortal and even stars perish. The year dies at the close of December 31. We wonder how the New Year's child aged so much in just twelve months. As the present year comes to an end, we think hopefully of the following year. Yet, we cannot forget the rapid passing of 2016. Death is all-embracing, even to those glamorous beings who are identified as “stars”.

So many lives, vibrant on the screen, energetic on the playing field, refreshing as comedians, edifying as authors, inspirational as religious figures, and influential in the world of politics, have made their exits from the land of the living in the seventeenth year of the new millennium. Even stars flicker, falter, and fall. Nonetheless, we always experience a certain shock, along with a respectful sadness when we learn of their demise. Did not Gene Wilder, George Kennedy, Robert Vaughan, Hugh O'Brien, and Patty Duke appear to be immortal in celluloid? Arnold Palmer, Joe Garagiola, Mohamed Ali, and Gordie Howe, whose names were linked with “winning,” are now numbered among the numberless who have passed into the next world. Garry Shandling and Alan Young, who spread laughter, are now voiceless. Politics has said goodbye to Nancy Reagan, while Antonin Scalia will never write another brilliant legal tract. We also said farewell to Frank Sinatra, Jr., and Zsa Zsa Gabor. We envied all those celebrities who seemed larger than life. And now we realize that they were as mortal as anyone else. Our envy has turned to sympathy, a more properly human emotion. In death we are united with them. Death ends a life, though it does not close a relationship. We will miss their vitality. The strange and unexpected feeling comes over us that, at least for the present, we, the “non-celebrities,” have outlived the “stars”.

Death is the great leveler. Media immortality, if there can be such a thing, is not personal immortality. The various “stars” who performed so admirably on the world’s stage entertained and beguiled us. But they were not beings who belonged to the stratosphere. They were basically just like us, as it turns out – imperfect, fragile, and destined to pass from the earth. Their deaths bring to mind two thoughts: that the distinction between celebrity and non-celebrity is trivial; that we must renew our commitment to finding meaning in our own lives and not in the accomplishments of others. David Bowie, Leonard Cohen, Gloria DeHaven, and Prince, will no longer entertain us live and in person. Super-celebrities Mother Angelica, Elie Wiesel, and John Glenn will be honored posthumously. We bid good-bye to Alan Thicke, Florence Henderson, Alan Rickman, and Abe Vigoda, and return to our own day-to-day obligations with stronger dedication. Life belongs to the living. There are no stars, only we earthlings. We would do well to heed the words of G. K. Chesterton: “If the seeds of the black earth can turn into such beautiful roses, what might not the heart of man become in its long journey toward the stars.”

Nikolai Berdyaev, one of the modern world’s more passionate philosophers, has stated that “Death is the most profound and significant fact of life, raising the least of mortals above the mean commonplaces of life.” If there were no death, he goes on to say, life would be meaningless and without hope. It is only through death that we can escape to a better world. “If life in our world continued forever, there would be no meaning in it.” “The meaning of death,” for Berdyaev, “is that there can be no eternity in time and that an endless temporal series would be meaningless.” People who merely reach for the stars are not reaching high enough.

Celebrities are called “Stars” because they populate a haven of popularity. Because of the electronic Media they can be seen from virtually any place and by nearly everyone. Like stars, they appear to be constantly shining. They are both above and beyond us. They seem to be, as the Ancients believed stars to be, “imperishable”. Their deaths, however, prove this image to be an illusion. In the final analysis, what we all yearn for is not stardom, but God’s Kingdom. Fame is a soap bubble. Christianity teaches us about the Resurrection, which is the victory of life over death. In addition, we are less likely to mistreat our neighbors when we see them as dying, even though that point of death belongs to an indeterminate moment in the future. Recognizing each

person's mortality elicits in us a certain sympathy that casts aside any possible rancor or envy that we might harbor. When we visit a person who is bedridden in a hospital, our thoughts and actions are loving and supportive. We fight each other in moments when we fail to see each other as we really are, namely, mortal beings who are destined to die.

The "bell tolls for Thee," as John Donne has reminded us. We owe each other a profound sympathy inasmuch as we are all made of the same clay and are traveling toward that presently unknown moment when time and eternity intersect. Our attitude toward others would be more Christian if we saw them as dying, however slowly, and establish our relationship with them in accordance with both this fact and the reality of our own mortality.

We say adieu to our panoply of celebrities with the hope that their personal lives have earned them an eternity of everlasting joy with the God whose Life does not cease upon the midnight hour. These former stars, like everyone else, are placed in the merciful hands of God.







# NINE

## THE REALISM OF CHRISTIANITY



**T**he prevailing assumption in the secular world is that science is a reliable pathway to reality, whereas religion, although a source of hope for many, is fundamentally unrealistic. A strong case, however, can be made that science is largely theoretical and cannot provide a basis for authentic living, while religion, particularly Christianity, is not only eminently practical, but far more realistic than science. The following ten points serve to make the case for the realism of Christianity.

### 1) The Realism of Man:

What is a human being? What is man that God is mindful of him? He is not simply an individual, according to the Cartesian tradition, nor is he merely a member of the collective, according to the ideology of the Marxists. The concept of the human being in the secular world oscillates between man as a mere individual who has rights but few duties, and man as a member of society who has many duties but few rights. Christian philosophers, including Jacques Maritain, Nikolai Berdyaev, and St. John Paul II, have been at pains to explain that a human being is, in reality, a person, that is, a dynamic integration of unique individuality and communal responsibility. He is called to love, and in love finds his truest self.

### 2) The Realism of Sex:

God created them male and female. A person's sex is the first thing we notice in another and the last thing we are likely to forget. Its identity is marked in each of the thirty trillion cells that constitute the body of the human being. It is not fluid, changing from one to the other. Nor is it merely a convention. In reality, male and female are complementary.

Neither sex is self-sufficient. As complementary opposites, male and female assist each other in becoming whole, psychologically, morally, and personally.

3) The Realism of Marriage:

The realism of marriage follows the nature of the human being as a sexual person who has the capacity to become a two-in-one-flesh partner with another. The unity of man and woman in marriage also includes the natural capacity for procreation. Marriage is a most exceptional form of friendship because of its profound unity and the pledge of fidelity that honors its particular value. Statistically, married people live longer and are more strongly motivated than their unmarried counterparts — a strong indication of the realism of marriage.

4) The Realism of the Family:

The family is the basic unit of society and bears upon the health of society's future. "The future of mankind passes through the family," as St. John Paul II was fond of saying. The family is the fruitful achievement of a man and a woman living together in a bond of love that produces offspring who are themselves loved, cared for, and educated. Children bless marriage. Grandchildren are their grandparents' "crown" as Scripture claims.

5) The Realism of Altruism:

At the heart of Christianity is the mandate to love one's neighbor. If this mandate were to be carried out, peace would reign and war would be relegated to the vault of history. The neighbor is "another self." The relationship between one person and another, then, takes on the form of "I-Thou". Expressing love toward one's neighbor is the only realistic solution in working toward ending poverty and overcoming the loneliness that afflicts untold millions of human beings.

6) The Realism of Society:

The fact that the realism of the family is the basic unit of society logically leads to Christianity's understanding of the realism of society. One realism prepares the way for another. According to the tenets of Christianity, the factors that make for a good society are not wealth, status, and power, but virtue, neighborliness, and love. One of the essential responsibilities of parents is to educate and prepare their children for their productive role in society.

7) The Realism of Religion: It is not the function of religion to

wallow in superstition, but to locate basic truths that science cannot provide. Christianity reveals truths about man, God, and the afterlife that have their foundation in a realistic philosophy, and add to it. Given the finite abilities of the human being, it is reasonable to conclude that he needs help from above. Moreover, this help for Christians is also provided in the form of sacraments. Man needs God. Without God, as history has shown, man sets himself against man.

#### 8) The Realism of Life:

Life is a gift. It is all we have. Without this gift we would never have existed. Therefore, life must be received with gratitude and regarded as our most cherished possession. The Christian, therefore, finds it easy to believe that working for a Culture of Life is far more reasonable and realistic than allowing a Culture of Death to prevail. He values human life in all its forms and at all its stages.

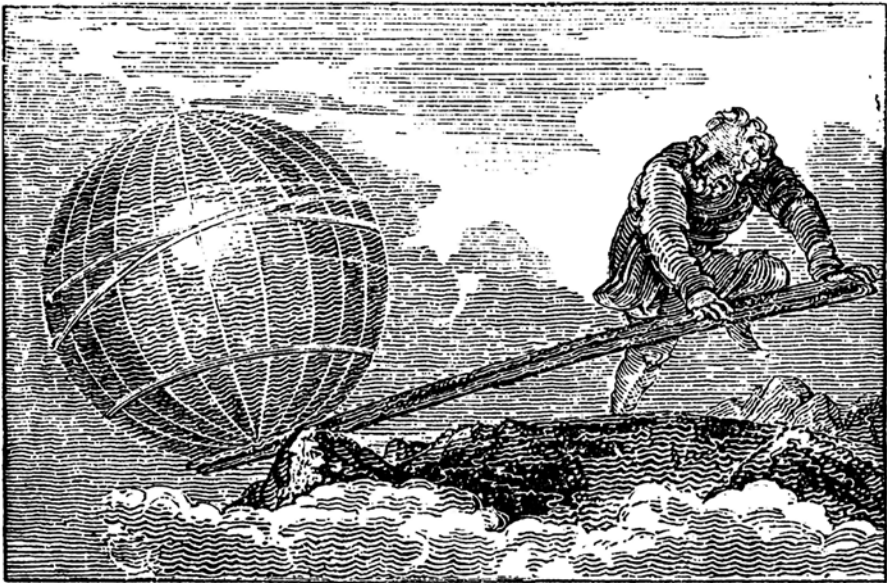
#### 9) The Realism of Death:

The denial of death is a common feature in a secular world that does not believe in an afterlife. Nothing is more unrealistic, however, than to deny that which is inevitable. The Christian, with St. Paul, agrees that death has neither “sting” nor “victory”. Death is a passage to another world. An endless life under earthly conditions, ever growing older and ever becoming increasingly enfeebled, would mean that life ultimately has no meaning. It is death that gives life meaning.

#### 10) The Realism of God:

God is the ultimate reality. He is the source of everything that is. We know that nothing we observe has the intrinsic power to generate itself. Everything we know comes from something prior to it. God is the great Beginning. He creates and governs the universe and everything the universe contains. He is the light that illuminates what little we know. He holds the answers to all the mysteries that now perplex our minds. He is the final piece of the puzzle that completes all things and gives them their ultimate meaning.

Christianity is hardly a fiction. It is intensely realistic. In fact, its realism is the primary reason that it has outlasted all other institutions over the past two millennia. Christianity is realistic. But its realism is not overpowering. Although it appeals to the intellect, its membership requires an act of the will. A person must choose to be a Christian. But that choice is eminently realistic.



TEN

# TURNING THE WORLD AROUND



**G**ive me a lever long enough and a place to stand and I shall move the world.” Archimedes’ bold request was never granted because no one could find either a lever long enough or a place for him to stand. He could never put his theory into practice. And just as well, for dislodging planet Earth from its fixed orbit would have proved catastrophic. But times have changed!

The idea of moving the world fascinated me when I was very young and enjoyed listening to football games on the radio. The broadcaster, in an attempt to bring the listener closer to the game visually, would say, “Notre Dame will be moving the football from right to left on your radio dial.” This did not enhance my identification with the game, however, but ushered in the fantastical thought of how I could move the world by simply moving my radio. If I turned my radio 180 degrees in either direction I would then cause Notre Dame, as well as the rest of the world, to be moving from left to right. It was a dizzying idea. My radio became my lever and my place to stand was on the floor next to my magical receiving set. The amazing thing for me is that even today, broadcasters are still indulging in this amusing and innocent fantasy.

I do know that, by turning my radio around, the only thing I affect is the radio and certainly not the world. But there is something that does turn the world, but not in the way old Archimedes had envisioned. The “world” in this instance is not the physical but the moral world. And that “something” is abortion.

Back in 1973, at the time of *Roe v. Wade*, many believed, though

naïvely, that abortion was an event that was limited to the horizon of the woman and her private decision. The Blackmun Court agreed. Abortion, according to an unusual reading of United States Constitution, was presumed to be a private matter. It was allegedly “implied in the penumbra”, an implication that had gone unnoticed for nearly 200 years. In the following years, however, it became abundantly clear that abortion was not restricted to the sphere of a woman’s private choice. The question, nonetheless, remained concerning whether the father of the unborn child had a right to veto his wife’s decision to abort. Three years later, *Planned Parenthood v. Danforth* answered the question in the negative. The father has no such right. According to the Court, the State has “no constitutional authority to give the spouse unilaterally the ability to prohibit the wife from terminating her pregnancy when the State itself lacks that right.” The abortion circle widened to include the father.



Attorney John C. Danforth thought he could save marriage from the sweep of abortion. He argued, courageously, but not successfully, in that same decision that bears his name that “marriage is an institution, the nature of which places limitations on the absolute individualism of its members.” The Court ruled, however, that despite the fact that “joint consent” was required for a husband to get a vasectomy or a wife to procure a tubal ligation or even for the married couple to dispose of property they co-owned, there would be no “joint consent” required for abortion, nor respect for fatherhood, nor marriage. The abortion tide was moving swiftly and claiming much along its path of destruction.

Abortion separated the mother from her unborn child. But this separation was merely a prelude to a series of additional separations that would shatter the family into a collection of isolated fragments. The father was separated from his child and thereby separated from his wife. Marital unity was compromised. If there were siblings, they, too would be separated from their brothers or sisters. Grandparents would be separated from their unborn grandchildren. The extended family would lose its honor and its integrity. Abortion cut through the family and weakened the contribution the family would make to society.

Beyond marriage and the family, abortion would make significant inroads into the spheres of medicine, law, education, and politics. The institutionalization of abortion required compliance and cooperation from these institutions as well as religion where the reluctance to

“impose” against abortion became a trend even among those who were God-fearing. Abortion became entrenched in the establishment. Defenders of abortion came to be regarded by some as “racketeers” and by others as “terrorists”. They were silenced in universities, ridiculed by the Media, and excluded from certain political parties. Abortion, hardly a “private matter”, became the Archimedean lever on a moral level that moved the world.

Another ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle, had a different slant on how to move the world. He contended that love moves the world. He reasoned that everything aspires to its own perfection because everything aspires to the condition of God. Aristotle’s God is the great magnet that draws everything to itself as the Prime Mover. All things that move do so because they love what is supremely lovable. And because they love what is supremely lovable, they aspire to their own highest end. Therefore, love makes the world go around. This notion of “aspiration” truly captures the spirit of the ancient Greek philosophers, especially that of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. This trio of gifted thinkers would have abhorred the political correctness that has now replaced the pursuit of wisdom, for PC is the great leveler, making every moral choice appear to be of equal value. By the same token, political correctness makes any moral determination seem to be unjustifiable. As G. K. Chesterton caustically remarked, “Let us not decide what is good, but let it be considered good not to decide it.” The hierarchy of values is replaced by a flat moral universe. Allan Bloom, author of *The Closing of the American Mind*, has lamented that fact that “Fathers and mothers have lost the idea that the highest aspiration they might have for their children is for them to be wise . . . specialized competence and success are all that they can imagine.” According to deconstructionists, wisdom in the modern world gives way to “undecidability”.

Aristotle’s notion of love moving the world is half way toward the Biblical notion of love. The Stagirite’s God moved everyone not because he loved them but because they loved him (if we may assign gender to Aristotle’s God). The God of Scripture created the world out of love. Christian writers sing of this love. Dante speaks, in his *Divine Comedy*, of “The Love that moves the sun and the other stars” (*l’amor che move il sole e l’altre stelle*). The great Christian novelist, Fedor Dostoevsky identifies “humble charity” as the most powerful force in the universe. He was not impressed by money, sex, or political power. And if we need a secular voice to add to this notion, we can turn to what a popular American

novelist, Stephen King, has said: “Love is what moves the world, I’ve always thought...it is the only thing which allows men and women to stand in a world where gravity always seems to want to pull them down...bring them low...and make them crawl...”

We live out our lives between two opposing forces: gravity and grace. If we do nothing, we surrender to the force of gravity and are pulled downward. Yet no one who feels the weight of the world, who feels down and depressed, finds this to be a pleasant condition. In order to follow the path of grace, we must aspire to something higher. We speak of higher education and high moral values. Cultural historians write about the high points of past civilizations. We believe that good art can inspire us to a higher level of awareness. Thus, novelist Joseph Conrad could state: “Give me the right word and the right accent and I will move the world.” But the present culture seems to have rejected the line of grace and its concomitant aspiration to something higher.

The Italian philosopher, Marcello Pera contends that the West is suffering acutely from a moral paralysis. He strongly criticizes those people who “see no evil and speak no evil to avoid becoming involved; who see no evil and speak no evil to avoid appearing rude; who proclaim half-truths and imply the rest, to avoid assuming responsibility.” Such are the paralyzing consequences of political correctness,” the fear of aspiring to something better because of a cowardly preference to deny that anything can be better than anything else. It is the death of aspiration. As a result, birth is not deemed better than abortion, life is not better than death, hope is not better than fear, and good is not better than evil. Moral paralysis is the condition that ensues when people submit to a form of political correctness that is, in truth, their concession to gravity.

Abortion and love contend to move the world in opposite directions: the former in the direction of dissolution, the latter, in the direction of actualizing life in its highest potential. Abortion is an act that negates all the potential aspiration that is bound up in the unborn child. It defiantly rejects the path of grace. On the other hand, as long as there is love, there is hope, for love disdains moral inertia and constantly aspires to something better. As long as that hope is alive, love will ultimately secure the victory of grace over gravity, light over darkness, life over death. Yet the battle will be long and the effort demands nothing less than sustained dedication. It falls to each of us, then, to do what we can, by choosing life, to turn the world in the right direction. Our Archimedean task is to move the world through the lever of love.





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