

THE UNIVERSITY CONCOURSE

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Pluralism and orthodoxy

by Joanna K. Bratten

It is a fact of human nature that not everyone will always see eye to eye on all matters, from points of taste to questions of religious principle. Thanks to this fact, journals such as the *Concourse* are able to flourish, as a forum for discussion—for the throwing about of brains, if you like. But there comes a point, does there not, when the participants in a debate have to cede: “This is my position and that is yours and neither of us is absolutely in the right.”

Certainly in the business of academia this must be. In literary criticism, for example, it does the Marxist theorist no good to proclaim his or her reading of a given work the absolutely

correct reading, because the Marxist can look to the feminist readings, for example, and see that these readings are equally viable. Richard Levin, a critic from Chicago, leveled an attack some years ago on feminist critics who rejected out of hand every interpretation of Shakespeare but their own. Their obstinate refusal to accept other positions, Levin said, would eventually stifle the entire feminist critical movement, because they would be cut off from real dialogue with the larger body of critics. In academic matters it seems that one must maintain a balance: promote one’s own position, without denying the tenability of others’. Without that balance, we cripple and impoverish the whole academic enterprise.

But what have academic and intellectual pluralism to do with religious orthodoxy? Should we encourage pluralism in matters of faith and religion? And if so how much? Are there lines to be drawn?

I started thinking about this question some time ago, after reading Michael Healy’s article “How hobbits and company might really exist.” While whimsical and playful on one level, the piece addresses seriously the problem of religious pluralism. If we were to discover “non-human sentient life-forms” in the universe, Healy writes, “we must accept their existence as [God’s] will—and we must evangelize them.” My first thought on

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A most urgent work of mercy

by Jeff Ziegler

One of the facets of campus life most striking to alumni of other alma maters is the devotion of this university’s students to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Whether or not they take part in the formal program that bears the name, students here strive to put these works into practice: they visit the sick, instruct those ignorant of the Faith, and, most importantly, pray for the living and the dead. Through prayer and counseling, students take part in the great work of mercy of rescuing the unborn from the death of surgical abortion, a barbaric death from the crushing of skulls, the burning of salt,

or the dismemberment of limbs.

Sadly, surgical abortion is only the tip of the abortion iceberg. Chemical abortion, which has killed more human persons more rapidly than any other means in human history, also cries out for a response from Christians who strive to see their Lord in the least of their brethren.

Dr. Bogomir Kuhar, the Executive Director of Pharmacists for Life

International, estimates that Americans kill 9,115,000 unborn children each year by means of contraceptives that are often abortifacient (e.g., the Pill, Depo-Provera, and Norplant) and devices that are always abortifacient (i.e., IUDs).¹ It is well known that these chemicals and devices are truly contraceptive when they suppress ovulation or prevent the migration of male gametes into

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QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, AND CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS



Compliments from a reader

I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed the last issue of the *Concourse*.

I read it cover to cover as soon as I picked it up at the library. Every article was well written. I especially liked the editor's comments on various topics included in this issue. I agreed with every one of them. I was particularly interested in Joe Sobran's theory about Shakespeare. I know very little of the issue, but from the comments I have read in his columns over the past year I have found his arguments persuasive. That commentary as well as the discussion of J.R.R. Tolkien's work have made me realize how ignorant I am of

great literature, and have impelled me to begin reading these authors. Anyway, keep up the good work. The *Concourse* is a great asset to the University, and I have seen much improvement in it over the two years I've been in Steubenville.

Joe Griesemer
MA class of '98

Joe Griesemer entered the seminary this summer in St. Louis, Missouri

More compliments

Having just finished the latest *Concourse*, I am more than ever sold on its importance to Franciscan University. You have supplied a missing and much needed opportunity for intellectual conversation among students, faculty and friends like me. Fortunately you have set your goal high, demanding both literary quality and content importance. Although adherence to this standard will be difficult at times, the journal provides a much needed outlet of intellectual thought emanating from the University. Please keep it up.

While the *Concourse* may cause some friction at times, your own goal as publisher, which you enunciate quite clearly and well, should be reiterated from time to time so that your readers will be reminded that all things should

speak to the glory of our Lord Jesus, and so that the *Concourse* develops new and richer harmony as it grows older and hopefully more and more helpful.

Robert Thomas

Mr. Thomas is a trustee of Franciscan University. He lives in Florida.

New Prize Offer



The editors would like to see more action in the Questions, Comments and Continuing Conversations section of the *Concourse*.

To that end, in addition to our annual grand prize for the best article, we will be offering this year a prize for the best short comment, inquiry or reply to our articles submitted by our readers. The more people who send in their contributions, no matter how brief, the livelier the *Concourse* experience will be for all of us.

We would especially like to hear from more students and faculty. If you have something to say, don't be shy! Let us hear from you!

THE UNIVERSITY CONCOURSE

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Editorial Policy

The University Concourse is an independent journal of opinion, published by alumni and students of Franciscan University, but not formally affiliated with the University. It is designed to encourage fruitful discourse among members of the FUS community. The views expressed in this journal do not necessarily reflect those of the editors, nor those of the Franciscan T.O.R.s or other University officials.

We welcome submissions from faculty, students, administrators, staff, alumni, parents, trustees, benefactors and friends, on any topic of interest to a general university readership, provided they are courteously expressed and framed with a view to advancing the welfare of FUS and/or Catholic culture at large.

We recommend opinions be kept to fewer than 1,500 words.

Contributions should be submitted on a 3.5" disk, either to *The University Concourse*, Box 27, University Boulevard, Steubenville, OH 43952, or sent to e-mail address: "katieandjules@ibm.net"

Please include your full name, phone-number and e-mail address, if you have one.

We will consider printing submissions anonymously or under a pen-name; however, in general we wish to encourage open, "face to face" discussion. In either case, the editors require the full name and phone-number of the author of each opinion.

John Paul II to Franciscan University: Do not be afraid to listen to the surrounding culture

by John F. Crosby

THE APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION OF JOHN PAUL II ON CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES, *EX CORDE ECCLESIAE*, IS OFTEN QUOTED HERE

AT THE UNIVERSITY WITH A SENSE OF SATISFACTION. People point out, and are right to point out, that we seem to be in full conformity with all the provisions of the document concerning the loyalty to the magisterium that should be practiced by the teachers in a Catholic university, as well as with the provisions concerning the pastoral care of students. What is, however, not sufficiently noticed among us is that *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* also gives directives that represent a challenge for Franciscan University; we have no little growing to do before we are in full harmony with them.

I am thinking of passages in it like this one: “a Catholic University, aware that human culture is open to Revelation and transcendence, is also a primary and privileged place for a fruitful dialogue between the Gospel and culture.” Now some of us might at first react by asking what good can come from dialogue with the surrounding culture; we might say that the surrounding culture is nothing but the culture of death, and that our job as Christians is to avoid being contaminated by it and to witness against it, but certainly not to engage it in dialogue. We should of course study our own Catholic culture, but why bother with the culture of fallen human beings? Well, John Paul writing in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* thinks otherwise; he would have us listen to the surrounding culture, fallen as it is, and try to understand its aspirations and hear its questions and appreciate the elements of truth that it recognizes. He would tell us that the surrounding culture cannot be simply identified with the culture of death, since it is in some ways, as we just heard him put it, “open to Revelation and transcendence.”

I know of no better example of what it is for Christians to enter into dialogue with the surrounding culture than the Introduction to the Vatican Council’s great declaration, *Gaudium et Spes*. The Council fathers are far from identifying the modern world with the culture of death. Instead they try to understand “the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time,” to quote the famous opening sentence. Then they say: “Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in our hearts.”

John Paul gives us many examples of listening intently to the surrounding culture. I was particularly struck by the addresses he gave in the summer of 1995 on woman and her place in society. He spoke as one who has obviously been listening to all that is stirring in our culture on the subject of woman.

Now the idea of the Pope in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* is that this listening to the culture takes place in a particular way in a Catholic university, where Catholic intellectuals try to understand the thought and the imagination and the aesthetic sensibility of their contemporaries.

At first glance it might seem that this listening is simply a pastoral necessity—as if the Church cannot evan-

gelize until she knows something about those whom she would evangelize.

But there is more to it than that. The Church too receives something from the encounter with the culture. In *Gaudium et Spes* the Council fathers certainly were led to develop the Catholic understanding of the Church in relation to the world. For example, they recognized as never before the religious significance of what they call building up the earth, and with this they deepened the Church’s understanding of the lay vocation. My point is that it was just in listening seriously and sympathetically to the modern world and in trying to respond to it that the Church was enabled to bring forth something new from her treasures. This growth in the understanding of her own faith could have hardly taken place if the Church had refused to have anything to do with the modern world.

We see the same thing with John Paul de-

veloping the Christian understanding of woman, to which I just referred. He is saying some new and original things just because he first listened to what is being said about woman. For all the feminist errors abroad in the land, errors of which John Paul is entirely aware, there is an important sense in

This listening to the culture takes place in a particular way in a Catholic university, where Catholic intellectuals try to understand the thought and the imagination and the aesthetic sensibility of their contemporaries.

which he is developing the Church's teaching on woman in dialogue with the surrounding culture. It is not as if he has to be taught about woman by non-Christians, but he cannot fully unfold the revelation about woman entrusted to the Church if he does not try to respond to the aspirations and questions and challenges of the women of our time. John Paul expresses this in strong language in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* when he says that a faith that refuses the encounter with the culture is a "decapitated faith."

Cardinal Newman understood this, too, and expressed it in terms of a

certain "power of assimilation" that the Church has in relation to the surrounding culture. The Church can assimilate elements from the culture for her own upbuilding, and in fact without this work of assimilation she would be in some way deprived.

... wherever she [the Church] went...she was a living spirit..."sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions;" claiming to herself what they said rightly, correcting their errors, supplying their defects, completing their beginnings, expanding their surmises, and thus gradually by means of them

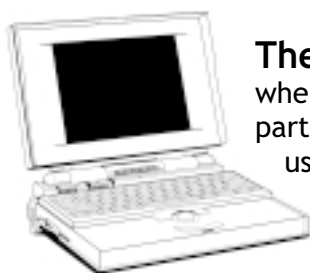
enlarging the range and refining the sense of her own teaching. ... we hold that one special way in which Providence has imparted divine knowledge to us has been by enabling her to draw and collect it together out of the world, and, in this sense, as in others, "to suck the milk of the Gentiles..." (Newman, 232) But we can suck the milk of the Gentiles only on the basis of the dialogue with the culture of John Paul speaks in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Newman seems to envision something like this dialogue when he speaks of the Church "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions."

Yes, I know, it is dangerous to undertake this work of assimilating elements from the culture; it can all too easily happen that instead of assimilating, *we get assimilated*, losing our Christian identity. In the post-Conciliar Church we have seen too many Christians losing themselves in the culture. But everything worth doing is dangerous. I would just remind you that it is also dangerous not to engage the culture, for then, as I was saying, the faith runs the danger of a certain atrophy.

I conclude with a word on the responsibility that we teachers have for our students. If we let them think of the surrounding culture as nothing but the culture of death, then they will approach it with a stance of total rejection. They will be unable to penetrate it with the spirit of Christ. They will tend to remain sheltered in ecclesial structures and not to know how to live the lay vocation, which is the vocation of most of them. When they take their first position of responsibility in the world, or even in the Church, they are liable to become embroiled too quickly in confrontation and to "crash" before they have made their contribution. In a word their ability to be convincing bearers of Christ in the world depends on our ability to make Franciscan University a place where the Church listens to and engages the culture. ■

Dr. Crosby is Chairman of Franciscan University's Philosophy Department.

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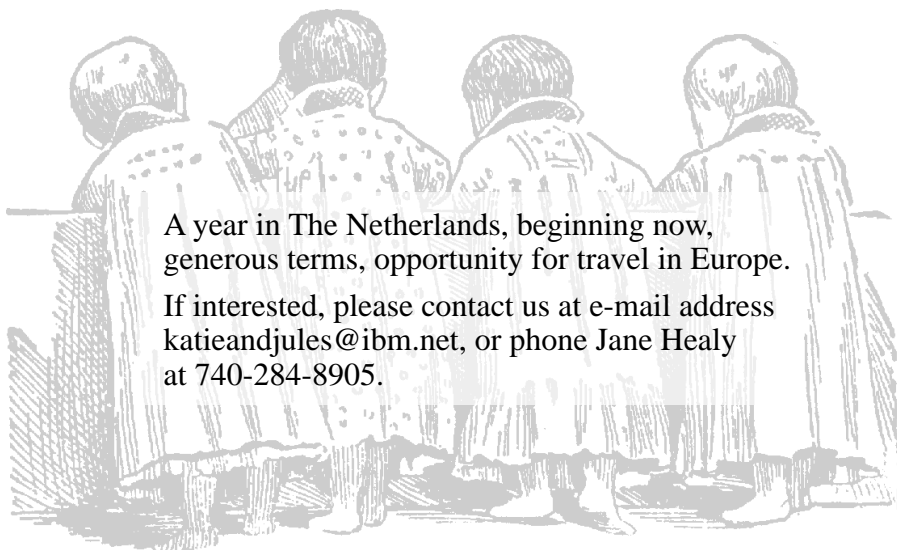
The Concourse is now on the web where you can now browse old issues, and participate in on-going discussions. Please visit us when you have a chance! The site is not yet totally perfected, and we welcome your feedback.



e-mail alert:

Because we were about to launch a website, we canceled our e-mail account over the summer, perhaps prematurely. If you have tried to reach us at the old address during the last couple of months, I'm afraid we've missed you. Please write again, either through our website or to katieandjules@ibm.net. Sorry for the inconvenience!

We are looking for a Mother's Helper



A year in The Netherlands, beginning now, generous terms, opportunity for travel in Europe. If interested, please contact us at e-mail address katieandjules@ibm.net, or phone Jane Healy at 740-284-8905.

Love Never Leaves

by Kathleen van Schaijik

ONCE I HEARD A HUSBAND SAY SOMETHING ABOUT DYING ONE DAY, AND HIS WIFE OF TWENTY-SOME YEARS, WHO HEARD THE REMARK, SAID RIGHT AWAY: "I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU, DEAR." He tried to pass the thing off lightly: "Oh, sure you could." But she was serious: "No. I couldn't."

I was only sixteen at the time, and I remember feeling shy, as if I had intruded on a too-intimate moment between spouses. At the same time I was conscious of being deeply moved by the revelation of their love for one another—by the unexpected vision of hearts and lives so thoroughly intertwined that the mere mention of loss was unbearable. The scene remains a personal icon of marriage for me—framed and displayed, as it were, in the section of my mental gallery dedicated to the essence of spousal love.

Then the other day I happened to hear on the radio the popular tune: "Tell me, how could I live without you? If you ever leave...how could I live?" The melody is appealing, and the words are very similar to the ones I heard at sixteen. And again I experienced in myself a kind of embarrassed inner recoiling from the too-personal nature of the sentiment being expressed. But this time, it was an embarrassment of a very different sort. Whereas the words in the first instance struck me as a revelation of something beautiful and exalted, these seemed rather an exposure of something degrading and pitiful. Why? What is the difference?

Someone will say, "That is the difference between a sixteen year old romantic and a thirty two year old cynic." But that's not it at all. I am still touched whenever I think of that little scene with that middle-aged couple. And, now having been married nine years, I have experienced myself the kind of love I glimpsed between them. I have participated in the mystery of two souls



living "as one flesh." I have felt the insupportable agony—that instantaneous horrible knotting of the insides—when my husband is late coming home and the thought flashes through my mind: "What if something's happened to him?" I know first hand that the dread of being bereft is an essential characteristic of a deep human love.

So why does the contemporary tune not strike a chord? Why does it make me feel sorry for the singer, and inclined to lament a culture that so ignorantly and self-defeatingly excludes itself from the greatest and most profound experience this side of the Jordan River? The key, I think, lies in the contrast between the lines "if you died" and "if you ever leave." The wife who said she wouldn't be able to live without her husband had no fear whatsoever of his leaving. She was totally secure—so secure, so "rooted and established" in her husband's love, that she could not imagine her life without him. In her dread of his death there was no hint of despair.

The pop lyrics, on the other hand, seem to have been written by a young

woman who has staked her entire life and happiness on a man whose commitment is uncertain. He might leave. The song is pervaded by a subtle but unmistakable angst. Its creator is not simply expressing the intensity of her devotion; she is pleading with her lover not to abandon her. This is why we pity her: both because she could very well be in for some serious heartache, and because she has held herself too cheaply. She has "spent her money on what is not bread." She has given too much in exchange for too little.

People will tell me to lighten up, it's just a song; you think too much. But in my opinion we think far too little about such things these days. We absorb uncritically. We wax sentimental over froth and sap and pay no attention to the assumptions beneath, and the logic of their influence on us and on our culture.

No doubt I would have loved the song were I still in high school. At sentimental-sixteen, I could be impressed by real love when I saw it, but I would not have been able to distinguish it clearly from its counterfeits. Now I can.

"How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord is laid for your faith by His excellent Word!" The religious reality captured in this line of the old hymn has its exact parallel in spousal love. The "excellent word" the indissoluble oath, the "I do swear until death" is the only foundation firm enough to sustain conjugal "faith." Anything less involves us in a ruinous self-squandering. Don't fall for it. ■

Kathleen (Healy) van Schaijik, who graduated from FUS in 1988, is editor-in-chief of the Concourse. She lives with her husband and four children in The Netherlands.

Chemical Abortion

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the uterus. It is far less well known that these chemicals and devices kill unborn children when (after the contraceptive effect fails) they alter the endometrial lining in the uterus and thus prevent newly conceived human persons from being implanted in their mothers' wombs. The Church teaches unambiguously that these tiny human persons—fertilized eggs the size of the period at the end of this sentence—have “identical ethical relevance”² to that of an embryo or a fetus. Truly these brothers and sisters of ours are the poorest of the poor, the least of the least of our brethren. They have no mouths with which to scream for help and no arms with which to defend themselves. If we do not speak and act on their behalf, no one will.

Drawing upon impeccable scientific data, much of it from manifestly pro-abortion sources, Dr. Kuhar calculates the number of chemical abortions based upon the standard conception rate per cycle, the number of American users of each of the abortifacients, and the percentage of instances in which each of the chemicals is abortifacient rather than contraceptive. For example, 1,500,000 Americans use Depo-Provera; thus it affects 18,000,000 monthly cycles each year. Assuming the standard 25% conception rate per cycle, Dr. Kuhar calculates that 4,500,000 conceptions occur (or would have occurred) each year among users of the drug. Depo-Provera has an abortifacient effect 40-60% of the time and a contraceptive effect 40-60% of the time. If the 40% abortifacient figure is true, Dr. Kuhar estimates that Americans kill 1,800,000 unborn children per year by means of Depo-Provera (the other 2,700,000 conceptions being prevented by the drug's contraceptive effect). If the 60% abortifacient figure is true, then Americans kill 2,700,000 children each year by means of Depo-Provera (the other 1,800,000 conceptions being prevented by the drug's contraceptive effect).

There are 3,915,000 births and 1,350,000 surgical abortions in the United States each year. If there are 9,115,000 chemical abortions each year in the United States—a figure that is sure to increase with the recent FDA approval of the sale and marketing of the PREVEN “morning-after” pill—then 63% of the 14,380,000 persons conceived each year are killed by chemical abortion. An additional 9% are killed by surgical abortion. Thus only 37% of Americans survive their first week of life, and only 28% survive their first nine months. Every day Americans kill 28,671 unborn children by chemical and surgical means—1,195 every hour, 20 every minute, one every three seconds, like water dripping from a faucet. In the past quarter century, Americans have killed over a quarter billion of their children.

The worldwide statistics are more horrifying.³ Estimates of the number of surgical abortions worldwide vary widely; 50,000,000 is a number often used. If the ratio of chemical to surgical abortions is the same worldwide as it is in the United States, then there are over 387,000,000 total abortions worldwide each year—1,061,898 every day, 44,246 every hour, 737 every minute, 12 every second.

We are members of what is in many ways the finest Catholic university in the United States. If much has been given to us, much is expected of us. If Franciscan University students, faculty, staff and alumni do not show mercy to these children by praying, speaking and acting on their behalf, who will? If we do not strive with the humility and gentleness of a St. Francis de Sales to tell others the truth that contraceptives can act as abortifacients that kill children, how many more children will die? Will not innocent blood be upon our hands?

The world is enveloped in the culture of death. Each day, as it were, we breathe the air of death, trod the ground of death, and gaze upon the landscape of death. In chemical and surgical abortion, we face the greatest corporal moral evil any generation has ever faced. But

the Holy Spirit gives us hope through the Sacred Scriptures: “[W]here sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” (Romans 5:20)

Let us beg for that grace which alone can overcome the culture of death. In prayer and especially in the sacraments, we can beg Our Lord for the grace of heroic chastity and heroic simplicity so that we can choose to accept our future sons and daughters (or use NFP if there are serious reasons) rather than kill them. If, one day, we have surplus financial resources, we can beg Him for the grace to assist friends and relatives in financial need so that they may welcome their children rather than kill them. We can also beg Him for the grace to inform others about chemical abortion so that innocent lives may be spared, a duty especially incumbent upon us if God should raise us to the clerical or religious state or place us in a position of public influence. Then we can beg Him for the grace to endure, and even welcome joyfully, the ridicule, ostracism, and persecution that are bound to follow.

Surgical abortion and chemical abortion may well kill 12 children every second. Nearly 3,000 more children may have been killed during the four minutes you have spent reading this article. What are you going to do about it? ■

Jeff Ziegler, a graduate of Princeton, has worked for FUS since 1994. He has written a lengthier article on abortifacients which appears in the October 1998 issue of the New Oxford Review.

¹ Bogomir M. Kuhar, *Infant Homicides Through Contraceptives* (Bardstown, KY: Eternal Life, third ed. June 1998) 62. This figure is the mean of Dr. Kuhar's high and low estimates.

² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation Donum Vitae* (February 22, 1987) Foreword.

³ Father Richard Welch, CSSR, the President of Human Life International, says that “the number of abortions [chemical and surgical] worldwide now surpasses the number of live births.” (“HLI Ready to Step Up Fight for Life,” *National Catholic Register*, July 26-August 1, 1998, 16.)

The reality of war and our proper response

by Tony Flood

HAVING SEEN STEVEN SPIELBERG'S HIT FILM *SAVING PRIVATE RYAN*, I AM STRUCK WITH A FEW THOUGHTS AND CONSIDERATIONS. FIRST, I WAS IMPRESSED BY THE MOVIE ITSELF. IT IS A DRAMATIC portrayal of the horrors of World War II and of war in general. In order to give due remembrance to the American soldiers who fought against the Nazi/Axis powers, Spielberg employs the effective and convincing tactic of stark realism. The reality of war—at least in the trenches where it is fought—is suffering, destruction and death. Insofar as cinematography has the capacity to capture and convey experience, Spielberg manages to give the viewers a shocking taste of that reality. In this way, the film serves as a notable memorial to the sacrifices of the soldiers—not a monument of marble or stone, but an unforgettable glimpse of what they actually went through.

From this consideration, we cannot help but ask what response ought to be given to the sacrifices made for us. The response, I propose, is twofold. First we should show reverence and gratitude—gratitude for our freedom, and reverence toward the men who underwent such unfathomable experiences to win it for us. The second level is more complicated.

Allow me to preface my explanation with the following point: I do not contend that the “more perfect union,” the establishment of “liberty and justice for all” envisioned by our forefathers has come to fruition in America today. In fact, my views on this matter are quite the contrary. However, it would be an injustice (not to mention fallacious reasoning) not to honor the memory of the many who died on the battle field, just because the country they fought for does not presently embody the ideals upon which it was founded and for which they fought.

With this in mind, what is this second type of response? This is the response of maximizing the gifts and opportunities we enjoy as a result of these sacrifices. Yes, we need to recognize the errors embodied by this country's way of life, but this in no way entails a state of indifference or apathy to the positive attributes it possesses, thanks in part to the soldiers of war. We should acknowledge and cherish these blessings, and manifest them in our very selves by flourishing as persons. This not only gives the greatest tribute possible to those who sacrificed everything for these opportunities, it is also our duty as sons and daughters of God

My final consideration issues again from the portrayal of WWII by *Saving Private Ryan*, a portrayal I am assuming is accurate. It is apparent that many of the commanders and soldiers were hardly striving for a life of perfection in Christ. This can be seen by their illicit sexuality and their profane use of the name of God and things sacred. This fact may cause some Christians to question whether we ought to show gratitude and reverence to men who fell so short of the ideals we cherish.

All of this points to the reality of the two spiritual cities that St. Augustine portrays in *The City of God*. There is the city of man, inhabited by those who love themselves to the contempt of God, and the city of God, inhabited by those who love God to the contempt of self. The tension between these two cities varies in degree at different times and in different places. Most Christians, according to Augustine, vacillate between them throughout their lives.

In studying American history, one may get the impression, and I think rightly so, that many who have lived in

this country, led this country, and formed this country, have thought highly of the city of God and even attempted to integrate and incorporate many of its values into American life and policy. This being the case, it may be taken for granted by us that the principles of this country ought to be those of the city of God. Although this would be the ideal situation, given the fallen nature of humanity, and the prideful struggle for domination, it is an unreasonable expectation. We remain, like all earthly governments, principally a city of men.

We should be thankful that America embodies many Christian ideals. At the same time, we should not be surprised at the imperfect and partial nature of this embodiment. It is not the city of God. For the same reason, it should not surprise us to find that many of the soldiers who made heroic sacrifices for our country were not models of virtue.

But since we ourselves aspire to be citizens in the Godly city, and therefore strive to live by the ideals and values appropriate to such a state, is it fitting for us to offer reverence to the soldiers who, though they fought and sacrificed their lives on the “altar of freedom,” frequently abused those ideals? I contend not only that we may, but that we *must* give this response.

Citizens of the city of God live in communion with all people, and are



commanded to love all of them, friend and foe alike. Moreover, the more defined the institution that binds us, the closer the communion ought to be, e.g. the world, nation, church, family, etc. In other words, we have a call to particular communion with our compatriots. And, in virtue of tradition, this call to communion extends not only to those who live but to those who have gone before us as well.

Further, we are well aware of the myriad difficulties obstructing our

journey to Christ. We have all strayed at one time or another, even after gaining knowledge of the Way, the Truth and the Life. In light of this experience, we ought to be sympathetic to the struggles of those who fall short of the vocation to holiness, and grateful for whatever portions of it they are able to realize.

Finally, the soldiers of World War II were consciously fighting for the establishment of liberty and peace. Though the secular notions of liberty and peace may not be identical to the

Christian ones, they are nevertheless values worthy of aspiration, and blessings for those who share in them. They are high values, and they were in part secured for the country and its posterity through the sacrifices of our soldiers. For these reasons, we are grateful and reverent toward these men, and should strive to make our lives worth the price they paid. ■

Tony Flood is a graduate student of philosophy at Franciscan University

Pluralism

Continued from page 1

reading this was “*Must we? Whatever for?*” If God in His wisdom had created an entirely different species of souls, would He not have revealed Himself to them, albeit in a different way from how He has been revealed to us? Are we so arrogant as to assume that we are the only ones on whom truth has been conferred?

What about other faiths—Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and the myriad of world religions? Should we accept their religious positions as being as viable as our own and refrain from trying to bring their adherents to the Christian, or Catholic, Faith? The problem with answering “yes” to the last question is that it implies a loss of real belief. If we lose our belief in our Faith as the true Faith we lose belief itself. Religious pluralism is much more serious a thing than trendy political correctness which asks us to simply respect the views of people different from ourselves. Religious pluralism leads eventually to the admission that everything is permissible, nothing true.

To illustrate the disastrous effects of pluralism in religion, I refer to a very sharp little novel (albeit slightly dubious in its theology) by David Lodge, a Catholic novelist writing in England. *How Far Can You Go?* deals with the lives of a number of English Catholics

prior to and in the wake of Vatican II. At the start of the novel, the young Catholics are fervent and committed to orthodoxy; by its end they are involved in the pro-contraception, sexual liberation, “free church” movement of the 1970’s. Liberation theology had turned the Catholic Church into a watered-down social awareness club—one that no longer believed in the absolute truth of its Faith, but sought to broaden its horizons by experimentation with anything and everything. By the end of the novel, Masses were being said by “expriests” and liturgical music was reduced to The Beatles. What is frightening about this novel is that such things did happen, as a direct result of trying to make the Church more open-minded and accepting of other positions and beliefs.

So how are Catholics meant to balance acceptance of others’ religion with a commitment to their own as absolutely true? Unfortunately I cannot even begin to answer this query. Living in a decidedly multi-cultural and multi-faith intellectual community, I am constantly faced with the balancing problem. I was at a dinner once with a young man who was a devout follower of Islam—very pious, very disciplined—indeed, moreso than I and the other Catholics present. I would not for a moment have thought of trying to convert him to Christianity. Wouldn’t it have been absurdly arrogant of me to suggest that his faith was

insufficient to him? I think often of the story in C.S. Lewis’ *The Last Battle*, when a young Calormen soldier, who had served the enemy state and enemy deity all his life, is joyfully and wholeheartedly welcomed into the communion of the saints in the “new Narnia.” Aslan tells him that he considers all his works done for the false god Tash as having been done for him, the true Lord—because the boy was pure of heart and devoted entirely to what he believed to be right and good. I have a hunch that if this devout Moslem and I were to die at the same moment God would say to him what Aslan said to the young man.

But the problem of religious pluralism is not solved by this anecdote. If we strive to be accepting of others’ faith(s) we are not guilty of arrogance and narrow-mindedness and are possibly better able to see God working through faiths we don’t understand; yet if we are *too* accepting of other faiths anything and everything becomes permissible. We are called, yes, to make believers of all the world; but are we somewhere, somehow, permitted to make exceptions? ■

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