Leadership University *Reprint*

Reprinted from First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life • December 1991• Number 18

The Public Square

(December 1991)

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The Feminist Revelation

That is the title of an important article in *Social Philosophy & Policy* (Vol. VIII, No. 1) by Christina Sommers, Professor of Philosophy at Clark University. The burgeoning academic industry of feminist/womanist studies is rife with declarations of a grand social revolution. Contemporary feminism, says Sommers, has more to do with revelation than with revolution.

She notes that Alison Jaggar identifies four dominant feminist "frameworks": liberal, Marxist, radical, and socialist. The last three frequently overlap, and all are determined that feminism requires the overthrow of prevailing social arrangements, especially the "nuclear family," and the wresting of power from men. As Andrea Dworkin puts it: "Men love death. In everything they make they hollow out a central place for death. . . . In male culture slow murder is the heart of eros, fast murder is the heart of action, and systemized murder is the heart of history."

Sommers simplifies the typology by suggesting that there are essentially two feminisms: liberal feminism and gender feminism. She identifies herself as a liberal feminist. Liberal feminists respect what women want, also if that includes such "gendered" choices as marriage and motherhood. The goal of liberal feminism is straightforward: women have a right to fair treatment and equal opportunity in trying to realize their aspirations. Gender feminism is very different, indeed radically different. Gender feminism views all of social reality in terms of the "sex–gender system." According to gender feminist Sandra Harding, this system is a "system of male–dominance made possible by men's control of women's productive and reproductive labor, where 'reproduction' is broadly construed to include sexuality, family life, and kinship formations, as well as the birthing which biologically reproduces the species. . . . The sex/gender system appears to be a fundamental variable organizing social life throughout most recorded history and in every culture today."

It is that system that must be replaced. And it can be done, for gender feminists agree with Richard Rorty's dictum that "socialization goes all the way down." Like Simone de Beauvoir, they deny that there is such a thing as a distinctive human nature. The mistake of such feminists, says Sommers, is that "they conflate mutability with corrigibility." Obviously, human nature is diverse and mutable in that it is affected by historical and social forces, but it is not politically corrigible, says Sommers. "For it does not follow that we have either the knowledge or the ability to effect the kinds of changes adumbrated by the gender feminists. To assume that we can effectively and responsibly intervene to change the mores that in fundamental ways define or determine us to be as we are–heterosexual, family–centered, genderized, and non–assimilationist–is to assume that we can take *full* charge of our social history. But nothing in history suggests that corrigibility goes all the way down."

Sommers notes the oddity that, just as our culture has become more sensitive to the dangers of reckless intervention in the processes of non–human nature, gender feminists are so wondrously insouciant about intervening to revolutionize the complex processes of human nature and behavior. "It is ironically true that so many who are sensitive and considerate when it comes to issues of ecology are so intemperate when it comes to embracing an activist and radical social philosophy whose goal is to eliminate such things as the 'gendered family.' Perhaps we need a group of moral ecologists who would protect our fragile but vital social institutions (some of which have taken millennia to evolve) in the way ecologists help us to protect systems in nature. Now I do not mean to say that we cannot look at utopian ideals for guidance in making needed changes; I simply mean that we cannot deploy any ideal in the wholesale utopian manner that the gender feminists do–as blueprints for the radical reform of preferences, values, aspirations, and prejudices. For those who do not like the word 'conservative' I offer the more accurate and, perhaps, less tendentious term 'conservationist.' The careful and socially responsible philosopher–the Aristotelian whig–is a liberal and a conservationist; she wants reform, but she treads carefully in her dealings with such fundamental institutions as the family or the rearing of children. By contrast, the feminist who believes in the pervasiveness of the sex/gender system of male oppression is led to look upon the women she wants to liberate as a duped constituency whose actual preferences need not be taken seriously."

Forced to Change

The fact that the overwhelming majority of women have no use for gender feminism does not deter its proponents one whit. Such women, in their view, have been "socialized" into accepting their oppression and need to have their "consciousness raised" to understand the need for revolutionary change. Sommers writes: "Here, the gender feminist–like other radical social philosophers–shows her illiberal colors. Where the liberal attends to the actual professed aspirations of those she wants to help, the radical is impatient with them. The goal of restructuring human beings and human society by changing what the average person professedly wants in favor of what he or she 'ought to want' is an essential feature of gender feminism. In this fundamental respect, gender feminism is crudely illiberal and undemocratic."

Christina Sommers thinks Simone de Beauvoir was at least refreshingly candid about what should be done about women who want to be wives, mothers, and attractive "sex objects" to men. Women who insist upon following the patterns of "craven femininity" should simply be forced to change their ways. De Beauvoir wrote: "No woman should be authorized to stay at home and raise her children. . . . One should not have the choice precisely because if there is such a choice, too many women will make that one." Thus does the gender feminist set herself up as a Philosopher Queen to make sure that people choose what is "good for them." Sommers observes: "Radical philosophers characteristically believe themselves to have a clear perception of the 'objective interests' of the people they want to help. Where liberal reformers are dependent on finding out about the ideals and preferences of those they help, radicals come to the task of social reform already equipped with a principled knowledge of what their constituents 'really' want and need. Deploying their understanding of the 'objective interests' of women, gender feminists tend to disregard the values of men and women who may like many aspects of *la difference*. The values of the uninitiated are 'subjective' and must be discounted when they conflict with the genderless ideal. (Radical philosophers are not good at seeing themselves in ironical perspective. The irony of an egalitarian elite would not have been lost on Hegel.)"

Scientific Pretensions

Academic feminists claim that they are not only involved in a revolution but that it is also a *scientific* revolution. Elizabeth Minnich declares: "What we [feminists] are doing is comparable to Copernicus shattering our geo–centricity, Darwin shattering our species–centricity. We are shattering andro–centricity, and the change is as fundamental, as dangerous, as exciting." Once one has recognized the androcentric scheme of "the gender system," everything else falls into place. Then you can see things *as they really are*, these feminists assert. Sommers contends, however, that this claim has much more to do with religion than with science: "The kind of revolutionary discovery that fundamentally changes our perspective on a wide range of phenomena, and that we associate with the likes of Pasteur, Copernicus, or Darwin, also had its analogue in prescientific days. One may think of Zoroaster preaching his doctrine of malicious evil forces doing battle with the forces of good, teaching his disciples to see their life struggle in a new light by viewing it as part of the battle between Ahura Mazda and the lying Druj. One imagines how Zoroaster changed the perspective of the farmer who henceforth saw himself fighting alongside Ahura Mazda and against the evil Spirit who threatened his crops. These insights of Zoroaster did radically change the lives of millions of people, shaping their reality by shaping their perspectives; henceforth, the world could never be the same for them. Indeed we may hear the disciples saying 'Now that the forces of the Druj have been exposed, we can see these forces at work everywhere.' "

What Zoroaster preached was no less revolutionary than the preachments of Darwin, Copernicus, or Pasteur, says Sommers, but it was not and is not science. Yet writers today are bringing "the feminist critique" to bear on everything from astronomy to physics. Liberal feminists want women to have parity in the sciences; gender feminists claim that the sciences today are "masculinist." Not only the sciences, but law, history, economics, and every other field must be revolutionized by the "feminist critique." It is not just bluster, Sommers notes, when feminists claim that they are out to "transform the academy." Their cause is not parity of enrollment or treatment in the several disciplines but redefining the disciplines following the demolition of their present structures of androcentric oppression.

The gender feminists are undoubtedly right in claiming that their perspective changes everything. Sommers writes: "If it is right to say that the discovery of the sex/gender system and its wholesale deployment to explain nature and society is basically religious, then that would help to explain why so few of us are vouchsafed the revelations that so exercise the feminist apostles. The inability to see what is revealed afflicts most people when a revelation is nonscientific and perspectival. Catherine MacKinnon looks on a married woman and sees her as a prostitute. To ask why MacKinnon sees what I do not see may be like asking why Ahura Mazda waited until the tenth century B.C. before revealing himself to Zoroaster, and why Zoroaster's revelation is still not accessible to most people."

Of course the Philosopher Queens indignantly protest the notion that their doctrines are more religious than scientific.

They can even give an "empirical" explanation of why other women do not share their insights. The reason is that other women have a stake in defending the "masculinist" system that has so twisted their values. But, as Sommers notes, this is a stock answer of many believers. "Ask the Zoroastrian believer why so few people see the world as she sees it, and she too may tell you that most people are in thrall to the forces of evil." It is all very depressing. The end result is that gender feminists demean women by saying that they should not and cannot be held to the same standards as men because those standards are, well, the standards of men. Gender feminists are free to "critique" everyone (and in a literally *ad hominem* manner) while being critiqued by no one. They produce books beyond numbering, all gushingly reviewed by one another. Sommers observes that there is "an appalling dearth" of dispassionate analysis of this literature.

The gender feminists are one more contingent in a long line of radical philosophers who would employ "consciousness raising" to destroy an allegedly oppressive system and establish their notion of a just social order. "More often than not," writes Sommers, "the radical philosopher is innocuously utopian and socially irrelevant. The gender feminist would be so as well were it not that, in America, her influence on education is growing apace."

To Appease and Humor

The influence grows apace, we might note, because many more serious intellectuals are condescendingly tolerant of sundry radicalisms. People like Andrea Dworkin do not take kindly to being patted on the head, but when they rage, for instance, that marriage is rape, their colleagues opine that it is an "interesting viewpoint" to have around, and thus do they, in effect, pat the Andrea Dworkins on their heads. Of course that makes the radical feminists very angry, so they then rage something calculated to be even more outrageous, which also is received as an interesting viewpoint, even if somewhat extreme. Universities pride themselves on being "open," which means that people will tolerate most anything that doesn't interfere with their doing what *they* want to do. As for other institutions, such as theological seminaries, in some cases they are effectively under the control of gender feminists. Serious scholars have either retreated to their private little academic corners, or have sought employment elsewhere.

In addition to the politics of condescension and intimidation, however, there is another reason why the influence of gender feminism is "growing apace." An increasingly large sector of academe has a steep vested interest in Rorty's maxim that "socialization goes all the way down." Black studies, Chicano studies, Marxist studies, gay and lesbian studies–all claim to possess a "cognitively privileged truth" that enables them to critique everyone while being critiqued by no one. Each lays claim to a revelation, and the revelation is the uniqueness of the self and the self–interpretation of the self. These various "disciplines" have different and even conflicting ideals of the just society, but those employed in them have a common stake in demanding immunity from criticism issuing from those who do not share their socialization–and their particular construal of that socialization. Christina Sommers is right; radical feminist and similar studies are better understood as religions rather than as academic disciplines. When the university gets rid of religion, it does not end up with nothing to believe in but with a multitude of belief systems–most of them wildly incoherent and very, very angry.

Orthodoxy and Orthodoxies

In the last twenty years a number of small Catholic colleges have been established to provide a "traditionalist" alternative to mainstream Catholic higher education. Gregory Wolfe taught in one of these schools for three years and is greatly disillusioned. Writing in *Crisis* ("Killing the Spirit?" September), Wolfe deplores the infighting among faculty and students who are out to demonstrate that they are more orthodox than thou. He continues: "Perhaps the most significant tension within the alternative college is over the nature of education itself. Though publicly these schools tend to laud [John Henry Cardinal] Newman's 'philosophical habit of mind,' in practice they are closer to Dickens' Gradgrind ('Just the facts, ma'am'). In other words, students get the impression that they are going to spend four years stocking up on the Truth, which consists of a body of doctrines and propositions (or even 'great books'). The emphasis is on acquiring correct opinions, not on learning how to think more clearly and imagine more deeply. A substantial percentage of these young men and women think of the alternative college as a munitions depot: when they emerge, they will be laden with 'smart bombs' that they can fire at the heretics and pagans. All too often, they start by shooting them at each other."

We cannot judge the accuracy of Wolfe's forceful critique. We have met students from, for instance, Christendom College in Virginia and Thomas Aquinas College in California who struck us as altogether healthy and personable in their considered commitment to Catholic orthodoxy. No doubt there are also the other kind described by Wolfe. But the article raises other questions about how to respond to impassioned sectaries of alleged orthodoxies. The questions are as pertinent to the Southern Baptists and Missouri Synod Lutherans, for example, as to the Catholic situation.

Wolfe calls upon the schools in question to cultivate a measure of moderation, dialogue, tolerance, pluralism, and so forth. But the problem is that truth is involved–and it is truth that, people believe, has eternal consequences. It is no virtue to be moderate in one's devotion to truth. People who recognize the patterns of apostasy in wide swaths of contemporary Christianity are understandably suspicious about words such as dialogue and pluralism. Where does tolerance of diversity end? they ask. The rhetoric of tolerance almost inevitably begins to sound like the disputes described in David Lodge's hilarious novel, *How Far Can You Go?* The rhetoric surrenders to the sectaries the claim to orthodoxy by suggesting that they are *too* orthodox.

The problem is that they are not orthodox enough. Smelly, sectarian, little orthodoxies can only be effectively combatted by a greater orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is a grand, capacious, multi–splendored thing, as G. K. Chesterton argued so grandly. When truth is turned into "smart bombs" it is no longer truth. It has become a weapon, an instrument of intimidation. It coercively violates the human freedom without which the truth cannot be apprehended. It is Christian truth itself that requires the rejection of narrow, stagnant, stifling pseudo–orthodoxies that produce nothing but toeing the line and browbeating those who deviate from the line. Christian schools rightly try to secure and cultivate a free adherence to an authoritative framework for teaching and learning. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, for instance, calls such a framework "the structure of faith."

This structure, like a house, is to be lived in. It is not a jail cell but a home. It is a place of light and delight for the exploring of truth and truths that will never be exhaustively comprehended. It happens that there are those who turn against the structure of faith; they leave little doubt but that they want to dismantle and destroy it, and at some point they must be invited to leave the home that they have already left in spirit. Equally, there are those who, in the name of orthodoxy, would turn the home into a military barracks. They are drill sergeants of the spirit who think it their mission to muster out those who do not measure up to their regimen. To be sure, one tests for orthodoxy by the measure of dogma and doctrine. Orthodoxy is tested also by love, by gentleness, and by honesty of mind. Orthodoxies that turn narrow, nasty, and vindictive fail the test.

As we said, we do not know enough about the colleges in question to evaluate the justice of Mr. Wolfe's charges. But, to the extent that he is right, we are sure of this: The difficulty is not that they are too orthodox. They are not orthodox enough. Orthodoxy is the solution, not the problem. We spoke some years ago at an event where the late Methodist ecumenist Albert Outler prayed, "Lord, protect us from the mindless love that deceives, and from the loveless truth that kills." The appeal for love can sometimes obscure the truth. But the absence of love always destroys the truth. Those who are capable of loving only the truth understand neither love nor truth. They are anything but orthodox.

Reformation to the South of Us

At least one writer is submitting a vigorous dissent from recent discussions of evangelical Protestant growth in Latin America. A number of scholars, including some regular contributors to this journal, have been urging that the evangelical explosion south of the border is bringing about massive cultural change that is conducive to the flourishing of democracy and market economies. The new Protestant communities–typically pentecostal in orientation–nurture habits of thrift, dependability, sobriety, and mutual support, it is said. Peter Berger expects "the new Protestant internationale . . . to produce results similar to those of the preceding one–to wit, the emergence of a solid bourgeoisie, with virtues conducive to the development of a democratic capitalism."

Timothy Goodman, writing in *The American Enterprise* ("Latin America's Reformation," July–August), however, is not at all sure about that. He contends, inter alia, that the statistics on Protestant growth are greatly inflated, that the charismatic churches and their leaderships are fractious and authoritarian, and that the Protestant challenge may be stimulating a renewal among Catholics along the lines of the Counter–Reformation's response to the sixteenth–century challenge. Above all, he argues, the prospects for democratic capitalism depend upon structural changes of a political and economic nature in countries that have long been captive to policies of pervasive statism. "Culture by itself," he writes, "is rarely able to explain economic and political change."

Few would assert that culture *by itself* transforms societies. But culture is never by itself. Culture–and religion as the heart of culture–is a powerful force interacting with other powerful forces, such as economics and politics. It is typically, we would suggest, the most powerful force. Of course economic disasters and politically generated wars can override the force of culture. But little that is constructive, including the structural changes urged by Goodman, can succeed unless it builds on the ideas, aspirations, mores, and patterns of behavior that make up what is called culture.

While we believe he is mistaken in pitting structural change against cultural change, Goodman's conclusion is a useful caution: "The jury is still out on whether the rise of evangelicalism in Latin America will hasten or hinder the onset of modernity there. It probably will not have much influence either way since modernization will depend more on structural than on cultural change. Although it is largely a matter of personal conviction whether or not the rise of evangelicalism should be applauded, the new faith incontestably gives its adherents–among the poorest inhabitants of a poor continent–much spiritual comfort and emotional help in bearing up under the stresses of life. That is no small mark in its favor."

The Closed Circle of Islam

Societies that close in upon themselves, that set themselves in a posture of unremitting hostility to outside influences, are doomed to wither and die. That proposition is set forth in two of John Paul's encyclicals this year, *Redemptoris Missio* and *Centesimus Annus*. In neither does he mention it by name, but there is no doubt that he is talking about Islam. Events of this past year, notably the crisis in the Gulf, have concentrated Western minds on Islam and the Arab world. Must reading in this connection is David Pryce–Jones' mordantly brilliant *The Closed Circle: An Interpretation of the Arabs* (HarperCollins). Pryce–Jones is a British journalist who has spent many years in the Middle East, and he allows that he has been forced to a point of near hopelessness about the Arab world and its near kin, such as Iran and Turkey.

Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia–all seem to be irretrievably mired in brutal power struggles controlled by tribal codes of honor, shame, corruption, and ruthless careerism. "At present," he writes, "an Arab democrat is not even an idealization, but a contradiction in terms." Following the six–week war in the Gulf, some in the Bush Administration talked about pressing Iraq toward democracy. According to Pryce–Jones, the only possible response is to weep or to laugh, or to do both at the same time. "The Arab World has no institutions evolved by common consent for common purposes, under guarantee of law, and consequently there is nothing that can be agreed as the general good." Like V. S. Naipaul, he writes that the Arabs are caught in the bind of wanting the goods that the West produces while rejecting the cultural, economic, and political institutions that produce them. Their unqualified anger is directed against a world history that continues to be the story of the rise of the West.

Contempt and Envy

The kings, emirs, and princelings of the oil countries squander their one–shot wealth in displays of vulgar opulence, publicly thanking Allah for their good fortune, but knowing that they have momentarily lucked into the technology and needs of the infidels for whom their disdain almost equals their envy. Algerian novelist Kateb Yacine writes, "We are in a train which is rolling but we have little or no idea where it came from or where it is going. A people fortified by its history is a strong people. But we have lost our way in our history." "Our culture?" says the Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani. "Nothing but bubbles in washtubs and chamberpots." Fouad Ajami, a Lebanese Shiite now teaching in the U.S., says Arabs are living in "the foreigner's universe" and are "losers in the world system."

It is a Western conceit that, if only Arabs are introduced to our way of life, they will learn the ways of liberal democracy and economic productivity. More often than not, it seems the opposite happens. These pages have noted the ways in which nearly ten million Muslims in Western Europe have reacted by declaring an "Islamic Mission" to what they claim is an exhausted, secularized, and decadent West. Pryce–Jones observes that the most virulently anti–Western literature in the Arab world has usually taken its lessons from writers in the West. "Modern Arab literature is characterized by a somber and depressing self–hatred, as well as a hatred of the West and all its manifestations. These two tones are sometimes so intermingled that they can hardly be separated."

"More insidiously," he continues, "Western literature itself over the last fifty years has lost touch with the human imagination and narrowed into social criticism. In a highly complex phenomenon involving guilt and aggression and fashionability, Western writing has tended to denigrate and attack the spiritual values, human as well as scientific, which have made Western society what it is. Those Arabs who have turned for inspiration and example to the West have encountered the full force of these negative factors, with nothing positive as makeweight. Taught by Westerners themselves to the Arabs, the hate–engendering 'radical' and 'anti–imperialist' tradition has seemed to offer a high road to advancement and honor and reputation, in London and Paris as much as at home." And, we might add, in New York.

Islamic Revival?

In the last two decades there has been much talk about an Islamic revival. Like most writers on the subject, Pryce–Jones is profoundly skeptical. Surveying the last two hundred years in particular, it seems to him that Islam has lost its capacity to be, in the sociological jargon, an independent variable. With all its internal divisions, Islamic religion has become little more than a rhetorical cover to legitimate, most unconvincingly, the factional bloodlettings and individual careerism of Arab politics.

"Islam, to which the Arabs have always turned for identity," he writes, "ceased in its earliest years to be unitary. Whether Sunni or Shia, ambitious men in all centuries abused the Holy Law they were supposed to be upholding, in sectarian wars and challenges to advance themselves. Religious belief cannot now be conjured in protection. It is not possible to return to ancient simplicities as though science had never questioned nature and the universe, as though the West and its values did not exist. . . .'Islamic revival' has nothing to do with worship and man's relationship with God or nature, but is a fictitious catch–phrase on which anyone with the will for it may mount a bid for power, either Sunni or Shia, but divisive in any case. Without political form, strictly emotional in thought and practice, the appeal of this alleged revival lies in its apology for weakness, and in the converse of its apparent defiance of Western vitality. Unaffected in any important interest by any such nostalgia or defiance, Westerners take note of it, if at all, as a strange human curiosity, momentarily wondering at the psychological frame of mind in others that calls for hatred and cursing. . . .What part Islam would finally have in any putative rational order is something a Muslim philosopher has yet to define with authority."

The Closed Circle is without doubt a sobering book. Some think it is altogether too sobering, and they offer a more attractive picture of the Arab past, present, and possible future. Unfortunately, that picture is too often painted in the hues of romanticism, frequently revolutionary romanticism, and betrays the very loathing of the West that is the opiate of Islam. We may, quite understandably, want to believe that the interpretation advanced by Pryce–Jones and others is one–sided. It is an interpretation that, if true, portends a perhaps endless standoff between the West and the Arab world. We can continue to toss the emirs their opulent toys until the oil runs out and then they, too, will recede from world history into the bloody tribalisms from which they never really emerged. That is a dismal prospect, to which we should not acquiesce without resistance. Regrettably, there is little convincing evidence to support such resistance.

While We're At It

- Joseph Amato's *Victims and Values: A History and a Theory of Suffering* (Praeger) is an ambitious work and well worth the effort of what is, at times, a difficult read (see John P. Sisk's review in the October issue). From Plato to Isaiah to Paul to Bentham, Amato tracks the ways in which peoples and cultures have understood the meaning, or meaninglessness, of suffering. He ends up with modern political exploitations of suffering and victimhood. The public claim is made that "we" (meaning the state) should do something to "make right" the sufferings of the past. Here is but a taste, to whet the appetite for a more complete reading of *Victims and Values*: "Claims of victims' suffering from the past cannot be allowed to shadow the present. These claims, if admitted fully into the political discourse, put the living in the service of the dead. The democratic legislator must be leery of claims that exceed his everyday understanding and practice. As European politics of the 1920s and 1930s demonstrated, to choose only one example, a politics of suffering can produce parties of blood, resentment, and violence. Politicians, no doubt, need to speak about suffering, sacrifice, and victims, for they are irreducible, often composing, elements in any discussion of fairness and justice. The legislative process and the courts should, and have no choice but to, remain open to claims of wrong. Yet they must be cautious, for there are always abundant victims and nothing guarantees that today's victims won't be tomorrow's victimizers. Citizens do not reason well about blood, sacrifice, and martyrs. Myths become prisons for political thought and action. Democracies can fail when they speak mystical languages."

- James Burtchaell, George Marsden, and others have written in this journal about the ways in which religiously associated higher education ineluctably became disassociated. Boards and administrators frequently did not realize where, step by step, they were being led. In that connection, a friend has dug up a letter from Woodrow Wilson, then president of Princeton, to a Mr. George B. Logan, who protested the use of historical–critical methodology at that school. Wilson wrote on February 4, 1909: "While we believe in the necessity of studying the Bible by critical methods, if it is to be a part of a university course, I can assure you that you are wrongly informed if you suppose that the methods or the effects of the instruction are destructive. The consistent aim of the instructor is to emphasize the positive conclusions to be reached. . . . You may rest assured, also, that the person of Christ as the cardinal and essential fact, the real Saviour of mankind, is dwelt upon with all the emphasis of profound conviction. [A university course] cannot be, in the ordinary sense of the word, a course of religious instruction. It inevitably becomes so, however, because of the extraordinary character of the books studied, their place in the whole history and development of the church and of civilization, and their inevitably divine character as a revelation of God to man." Eighty–two years later and it seems such sentiments would not be admitted in the religious studies department, never mind the president's office, of a respectable (read secular) university such as Princeton.

- Stout hearts are always in short supply. For instance, Bishop William Milsaps of the "American Episcopal Church," one of the "continuing" groups that has parted ways with the other Episcopal Church, gives his testimony in *Christian Challenge,* which describes itself as the "voice of traditional Anglicanism." Writes the bishop: "In the years ahead it appears we shall witness some further unraveling of the Anglican Communion. . . . Some people will submit to Rome and others will seek refuge in Orthodoxy. Some, however, will maintain the Anglican heritage. Just as 'There will always be an England,' there will always be Anglicans. And perhaps by some miracle, they will be able to be Anglicans in the Church of England." Just so.

- The question of when we're "letting die" and when we're taking a life will not go away. Gilbert Meilaender, a Lutheran at Oberlin College and frequent contributor to this journal, contends that withdrawing the feeding tube in a case such as Nancy Cruzan's is accurately characterized as being aimed at her death. Richard McCormick, a Jesuit at Notre Dame, disagrees. McCormick urges us to consider the following analogy: "Suppose hurricane winds bend and break a sapling tree. We prop it up, hoping to revive it, but see that it will never return to full budding form, even though it will stand and possibly produce a few anemic leaves. So we remove the prop and the tree dies. What killed the tree? Was it not the hurricane winds? Analogously, if we remove nutritional props from Nancy, was it not the original anoxic trauma that *caused* her death, that killed her?" Meilaender has considered the analogy and believes the answer to McCormick's rhetorical question is No. "Moreover," he writes, "as the language of assisted suicide comes increasingly to the fore, it will become apparent to all that the answer is No. McCormick's claim that we are simply 'letting die' those in Ms. Cruzan's circumstances when we stop nourishment will prove to have been a stopgap measure–language needed to tide us over while we worked up the gumption to face a more adequate description of the act. A human being who does not or cannot achieve 'full budding form,' who puts forth only 'a few anemic leaves,' but who can continue indefinitely to live this less–than–fully–flourishing life with some assistance (propping) from us, is not a dying human being. She may be ill or seriously disabled, but she is not dying. And therefore she cannot be 'allowed to die,' though she can be killed." Once again, that Meilaender strikes us as an uncomfortably clear thinker.

- Ah, capitalism. In the leftist *Nation* we note this advertisement for *Liberal Opinion Week*, in which one can get weekly all the columns of the portside biggies. In *National Review*, on the other hand, we are offered *Conservative Chronicle*, which does the same thing for the right. Both are published by some presumably politically neutral entrepreneurs in Iowa. We did note one difference, however. The main pitch with *Liberal Opinion Week* is for 24 weeks at $18, whereas the only offer with *Conservative Chronicle* is for a full year at $39. Maybe our entrepreneurs have more confidence about conservatism being around for another year.

- This from *Technology, Theology, and the Idea of Progress* by a David Hopper: "Only an intensification of social–political meaning can counterbalance the forthcoming restrictions on economic exploitation of the natural order. Faith's vision cannot be fixed on the next life, though that prospect is not denied." It never ceases to amaze that some folk seem to find it harder to believe in the promise of the next life than in the prospect of fixing up this one.

- We have earlier remarked on the unfortunate rantings of the National Council of Churches in connection with the 500th anniversary of the European discovery of the Americas. You may recall that the NCC in solemn assembly handed up the equivalent of a Nuremberg indictment, declaring that what happened after 1492 was "an invasion and colonization with legalized occupation, genocide, economic exploitation, and a deep level of institutional racism and moral decadence." Karl E. Meyer of the *New York Times* responds very nicely in a little essay that points out, inter alia, that the NCC tirade is in a long line of Protestant fulminations against the real and alleged crimes of Catholicism, especially Spanish Catholicism. But the argument of the essay, "Columbus was not Eichmann," is broader in scope. "What is left out is that Spain almost from the beginning acknowledged that Indians were also God's children, a ruling that gave moral leverage to clerical defenders of indigenous peoples. And Spanish culture, which included Cervantes no less than Torquemada, gave Latin America a common tongue and a common framework of law. . . . Those who sentimentalize native American cultures overlook a grievous failing: All power was vested in the community, to which obedience was obligatory. The idea of individual rights–human, civil, and political–was a redeeming gift of haughty Iberians and, yes, Anglo–Saxons. The colonizers had much to answer for. But to ignore their achievements travesties history. Europeans passed judgment on themselves, thus nurturing the very universal norms that enable people today to throw mudballs at their ancestors."

- Lord Zuckerman, the distinguished British scientist, reviews a slew of books proposing that animals, and apes in particular, are surprisingly like us. He thinks not. He quotes Noam Chomsky who claimed that the question of man's acquisition of a so–called language organ had no greater significance than the question of the origin of the heart. To which he says: "But perhaps there is a difference after all. All vertebrates have hearts that exercise the same functions as do our own, and anatomically we face no problem when we compare the structure of one heart with that of another. But there is nothing with which to compare language. However it came about, there is no form of animal vocalization with which it can be functionally compared. Language exists sui generis. That is why we are what we are. And that is a mystery no less profound than is the origin of life itself."

- Discussing a number of books on cosmology in *The New York Review of Books*, Daniel Kevles quotes Charles Misner, a specialist in general relativity theory: "I do see the design of the universe as essentially a religious question. That is, one should have some kind of respect and awe for the whole business. . . . It's very magnificent and shouldn't be taken for granted. In fact, I believe that is why Einstein had so little use for organized religion, although he strikes me as a basically very religious man. He must have looked at what the preachers said about God and felt that they were blaspheming. He had seen much more majesty than they had ever imagined, and they were just not talking about the real thing. My guess is that he simply felt the religions he'd run across did not have proper respect . . . for the Author of the universe." You might want to pass that on to your preacher. If you're the preacher, you might want to give some thought to repenting. As might we all.

- *catholic eye* is a spirited newsletter. Admittedly, some might think its style is best described by the expression "in your face." It does tend to let you know where it stands. Discussing abortion, a recent issue proposes that Cain should have adopted the maxim, "Every Abel should be a *wanted* Abel." In the same issue, and again on abortion, *eye* is not happy with the Catholic bishops. "It's hard to imagine a better example of what's wrong with the U.S. Bishops' 'approach' to the abortion battle. Instead of standing firm on the moral high ground, they're down in the political trenches, pushing compromises to win votes for half–a–loaf stuff. Isn't their job to teach what the Church teaches–you know, like the Pope did in Poland? They can always count on politicians to make the compromises (that's *their* job, and they love doing it). How can a Bishop 'teach' that rape–incest abortions are indeed justified? The unborn baby is totally innocent of its conception; if it is OK to kill even one of them, then there is a 'right' to abortion–exactly what the whole Abortion War is about. . . . There will never be a shortage of 'imperfect' bills spewing out of our woefully imperfect political system; only standing on principle (i.e., the truth) will make them less imperfect." There is, it seems to us, more than a little something to that. (If you wrote *catholic eye* at 150 East 35th St., New York, NY 10016, the folks there would likely send a sample copy.)

- Alfred T. Hennelly, S.J., of Fordham University, a most correct academic, is vehemently opposed to simplisms. Everything is so *very* complex. That is why he says he does not like Paul Sigmund's fine book, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads: Democracy or Revolution?* (Oxford). Reviewing the book in *Theological Studies*, Hennelly complains that Sigmund "tends to seek simplistic and immediate solutions to very complex problems and issues." He most particularly does not like the "simplistic approach" suggested by the subtitle of Sigmund's book. Fr. Hennelly concludes his rant with what he presumably thinks to be a truly nuanced complexification: "As Gutierrez continually reminds us, the real issue and the real task is not theology; it is the actual liberation of the continually growing masses of the poor throughout the hemisphere." In defense of Gustavo Gutierrez, the "godfather" of liberation theology, it should be noted that he has long since repudiated that most vulgar simplism.

- Martin E. Marty of the University of Chicago reflects on the days when he was impressed by theologians who posited authentic Christianity against "religion." But in what he now takes to be a largely post–religious culture, he's not sure that is such a good idea. He writes: "I think that Barth and Bonhoeffer wrote during the late stage of a Christian culture when they could assume that those who rejected faith knew what they were rejecting. Those who entertained it knew what faith, faiths, and faithfulness were about; those who held faith did so against a common background of recognition. Mid–century America may still have represented something of that culture. . . . It is difficult to teach discrimination among wines to a cola culture or to point to the excellences of Mozart and Rembrandt in the cultures of rock–and–roll or comic books. It is harder to offer the wines, art, or music where no taste, hearing, or sight of any sort appears. It is difficult to point to the values of an agonizing and profoundly eucharistic faith in a culture that has nothing analogous. So my mind evidently has changed: let things analogous to articulated faith appear, problematic though they be. Then let people of specific faith get specific, demanding, and promissory."

- The following headline from the *Washington Post*: "Christianity a Topic at Georgetown U." It seems the new president of the putatively Jesuit institution is moving toward a more balanced curriculum. "G.U. Choice," the official pro–abortion group on campus, may be upset, and we would not be surprised if the D.C. government takes legal action, charging that the new direction violates the separation of Church and Society (Society of Jesus, that is).

- We are pleased to note the appearance of George Weigel's *Freedom and Its Discontents: Catholicism Confronts Modernity* (Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1030 Fifteenth Street NW, Washington D.C. 20005, $19.95). Parts of the book appeared in this journal and its predecessor, *This World*. Richard D. Land, head of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, writes: "What a challenging and exciting book. My fellow Protestants will find the chapters on the revolutionary evolution of Roman Catholic thought on religious freedom since Vatican II particularly informative and encouraging. Weigel writes with eloquence, elegance, and passion." Richard D. Land is right.

- Dr. Michael Donahue of the Search Institute in Minneapolis takes exception to our February commentary on their study, "Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations." He notes that there *was* specific mention of Christ in the measure of faith maturity and that "conservative" churches, notably the Southern Baptists, came out looking good by the study's criteria. While we appreciate Dr. Donahue's corrections, neither point affects our conclusion that the study is evidence of "the credulity of church leaders who cannot distinguish between Christian faith and liberal sentimentalities."

- Readers concerned about the euthanasia campaign discussed in this issue's editorial are urged to write for a new and exceedingly useful newsletter, *(Life At Risk: A Chronicle of Euthanasia Trends in America,* available from the NCCB Secretariat for Pro–Life Activities, 3211 4th St. NE, Washington, D.C. 20017. The statements of Leon Kass, Yale Kamisar, and Daniel Callahan quoted in the editorial are from a *Commonweal* symposium in the issue of August 9, 1991.

- Some years ago, Monsignor Harry Byrne of Epiphany Church in Manhattan visited The Hermitage in St. Petersburg. Commenting on Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the Virgin and Child, the young guide mentioned some technical details and then said, "The subject of this painting is 'Maternity.' " So effectively had her Marxist training erased any awareness of Mary and Our Lord, or so aware was she of what it was not permitted to say in public. The incident came to mind when a priest in upstate New York asked Msgr. Byrne what to do about a village atheist who was suing to have a crebche removed from a public space. Byrne, who is no slouch on church–state relations, told the priest about the legal niceties and then offered a suggestion. "It's a long shot, but you might take away the halos, rearrange the angels, remove any words proclaiming divinity, and then caption the display, 'Maternity.' Everyone could then interpret the display as they wish." It worked under Communist oppression. Maybe we could get away with it under the oppression of currently cockamamie court rulings on religion in public.

Sources: Quotation from Amato's *Victims and Values*, p. 196. Bishop Milsaps in *Christian Challenge*, April 1991. Meilaender versus McCormick on "letting die," *Midwest Medical Ethics*, Vol. 6 No.4. Karl Meyer on the National Council of Churches in the *New York Times*, June 27, 1991. Lord Zuckerman on human vocalization in *The New York Review of Books*, May 30, 1991. Charles Misner quoted in *The New York Review of Books*, May 16, 1991. On Catholic bishops and abortion, *catholic eye*, June 26, 1991. Hennelly review of Sigmund book in *Theological Studies*, June 1991. Martin Marty on authentic Christianity, *Christian Century*, July 10–17, 1991. On pro–abortion group at Georgetown, the *Washington Post*, September 7, 1991. Monsignor Byrne on crebches and "maternity" in Epiphany Church parish bulletin, June 23, 1991.

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