For That I Came
For That I Came

Virtues and Ideals of Jesuit Education

Edited by William J. O'Brien

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Contents

Introduction vii

*Leo J. O'Donovan, S.J.*
Jesuit Education and Georgetown University 1

*Brian E. Daley, S.J.*
The Pursuit of Excellence and the “Ordinary Manner”:
Humility and the Jesuit University 9

*Howard J. Gray, S.J.*
How Do You Get a Jesuit to Say “Yes”?
Obedience as a Virtue 39

*Fred Kammer, S.J.*
Faith That Does Justice 51

*George Aschenbrenner, S.J.*
Discernment in the Ignatian Tradition:
Educating for the Spontaneity of the Holy Spirit 83

*James Keenan, S.J.*
Casuistry 93

*G. Ronald Murphy, S.J.*
Yggdrasil, the Cross, and the Christmas Tree 117

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Introduction

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same;
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves—goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
Crying What I do is me; for that I came.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

The main entrance to Georgetown University’s office of admissions happens also to be the doorway to Georgetown College. Directly above that entrance, several stories higher and carved in stone is the Jesuit motto, “Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam” (for God’s greater glory). Above the motto is an equilateral triangle, in the center of which lies the Georgetown seal. That trinitarian reminder provides the support for a cross, the central Christian symbol of the central Christian mystery.

The architecture suggests that at Georgetown University learning is pursued under the sign of the cross, not simply for learning’s sake, but for God’s greater glory. The poet’s words, “for that I came,” echo biblical words that link the life signed by the cross to God’s greater glory. In 1540, Ignatius Loyola founded an order of priests whose determination to be a society of Jesus led them from the beginning into halls of learning to bring with them those virtues and ideals that first of all drew them. Those who have followed in Ignatius’s footsteps to teach at this university and walk through the doors beneath the motto at the foot of the cross might easily say “what I do is me; for that I came.”

Today in America, prestigious halls of learning once conjoined to religious denominations retain only vestiges of those affiliations. One by one the best of them have become secular institutions in which the arts and sciences are pursued in radical independence of faith traditions. Georgetown, like other Roman Catholic universities, is now governed by a lay board of trustees, receives federal grants, and in many respects resembles other independent universities that have become progressively detached from their religious traditions. Georgetown could become another Princeton, Harvard, or Yale.
For That I Came

But unlike its secular counterparts, Georgetown's architecture and its Jesuits, in stone and in spirit, stand rooted in a tradition with ideals and virtues that augur a future in which the life of learning will continue to be animated by faith, signed by the cross, embodied by men and women whose pursuits are carried on "for God's greater glory."

The series of essays which comprise the present volume were first presented as lectures at Georgetown University. Each speaker was invited to focus attention on a virtue or an ideal central to Jesuit spirituality, which continues to animate the pursuit of learning at Jesuit institutions in general and at Georgetown University in particular. Georgetown University president Leo J. O'Donovan's opening essay, adapted from remarks he delivered at a ceremony honoring outstanding Georgetown students, addresses the general question of Jesuit education at Georgetown University. "In the end," he writes, "tens of thousands of words defining Jesuit education cannot have the impact of one single life, lived well, lived in true wisdom."

The other essays in the volume are in many ways amplifications of the meaning of that phrase, "true wisdom." Brian Daley quotes twelfth-century Hugh of St. Victor:

Many are deceived by the desire to appear wise before their time. They therefore break out in a certain swollen importance and begin to simulate what they are not and to be ashamed of what they are; and they slip farther from wisdom in proportion as they think, not of being wise, but of being thought so.

With Hugh he concludes that humility is an absolute requirement for growth in wisdom. Further, "the goal of humility in the classroom is part of a wider vision of Christian service and pastoral ministry, part of the Jesuits' earnest new ideal of glorifying God as the 'least companions' of Jesus, who revealed God's glory to us by humbling himself even to death for our sakes."

"What I do is me; for that I came." It is the cross that orients learning at Georgetown. Father Daley's essay roots the virtue of humility in the tradition that springs from the gospel, traces its unfolding in that tradition with particular attention to its place in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius,
and contends that “humility in the Christian and Ignatian sense is a quality essential to Georgetown’s corporate identity.”

The virtue of obedience is the focus for Howard Gray’s reflections. To counter a contemporary tendency to eschew obedience, Father Gray points to the Latin etymology of the word (ob-audire, to hear) in order to tap Hebrew and Christian reservoirs of meaning. Obedience in the Hebrew context is to a radical call to love and to life. He sees the Christian tradition developing its understanding of obedience within this Hebrew context. He cites the Last Supper narrative in John’s gospel:

Though he was in the form of God
Jesus did not deem equality with God
Something to be grasped at . . .

And it was thus that he emptied himself,
Obediently accepting even death,
Death on a cross.

“What I do is me; for that I came.”

Father Gray suggests that “out of his personal call and response, Jesus explored the power of obedience to free a person to more life and deeper love.” The implications for education here are clear. If the aim is to produce graduates who embody true wisdom, then Georgetown will cultivate that virtue which can free one for more life and deeper love. How? Among other things, by articulating a set of shared values—including obedience in the sense suggested here—which give the Georgetown community an identity, and by inviting its members to strive to make those declared values, that declared identity, their own. The call to obedience ultimately is a call to do the hard work of justice, of peace, and of love.

That hard work is the focus of Fred Kammer’s essay, reprinted in part from a chapter in his book Doing Faithjustice. As with the virtue of obedience, the Christian understanding of justice is rooted in the Hebrew scriptures. An understanding of this tradition, Father Kammer concludes, leads one to realize that “the poor . . . stand at the center of the divine revelation: of who God is, what creation is for, how the human community is to live with one another, and what our own truth is.”
To respond to the call to do the hard work of justice, to be where one is called to be, requires not only an adequate grasp of the virtue of justice but also the skill of discernment that Ignatius bequeathed his followers in his Spiritual Exercises. Discernment of spirits is a Jesuit legacy unique to an institution like Georgetown, and it is the focus of George Aschenbrenner’s essay. Father Aschenbrenner distinguishes four steps in a process that he sees as central to Jesuit spirituality and as a hallmark of any Jesuit university: a growing realization of God’s love; an acknowledgement of one’s spontaneous stirrings; an interpretation in faith of those stirrings; and the application of decisive tactics enlightened by that faith interpretation. He concludes his reflections with five suggestions about discernment and education at a Jesuit university.

Similar to discernment is the virtue of prudence, a kind of practical wisdom that is central to the moral life. James Keenan lets his study of Jesuit casuistry (the art of divining principles of moral conduct in cases) inform his understanding of this virtue. He goes on to describe its operation in a university setting in relation to moral dilemmas presented by cases in which men and women are faced with decisions about cooperating with others who are prepared to act immorally.

No discussion of the ideals and virtues of Jesuit education would be complete without attention to the activity of imagining. It is particularly appropriate that this collection of essays exploring Jesuit education, learning oriented by the sign of the cross, should conclude with an imaginative account of the incorporation of the tree of Germanic myth into the cross of Christian revelation. Imagination is central to the spirituality of Ignatius and integral to Jesuit education. It is the engine of realization. Not until learning is realized is the act of education complete. Then is the word made flesh, and learning redeemed.
Leo J. O'Donovan, S.J.

Jesuit Education and Georgetown University

Leo J. O'Donovan, S.J. is President of Georgetown University.
Asking a Jesuit university president to talk about Jesuit education is a little bit like asking a theologian to talk about God. The scope is so complex, the significance so varied, the subject both so well-known and yet so often discussed, that no easy explanation would be persuasive. But, if nothing else, Jesuits usually are not at a loss for words. So I shall try today to give you some overview of that elusive term "Jesuit education" and its implications for Georgetown.

In one sense, "Jesuit education" ought to be easy to define. After all, it has been around for more than four hundred years, and the experiences of the early Jesuit schools offer numerous and rich examples. Founded in the mid-sixteenth century, those schools included characteristics still common in Jesuit education today: they stressed the humanities, good communication skills, religious study and development, and they were open to students of all social levels. One even succinctly described itself in a sign it hung outside its door. It was, the sign proclaimed, a “school of grammar, humanities, and Christian doctrine—free.”

In a letter to his colleagues in 1551, a leading Jesuit educator, Juan Alfonso de Polanco, made a similar point: “First of all, we accept for classes and literary studies everybody, poor and rich, free of charge and for charity’s sake, without accepting any remuneration.”

Those early schools were also not denominationally exclusive, enrolling Protestant as well as Catholics in cities where both dwelled. And the non-Catholic students were not forced into Catholic practices.

While the early schools were sometimes small, the scope of Jesuit education was not. Internationalism soon took Jesuits to India and China. Before long they were known as skilled teachers of humanities as well as mathematicians and astronomers. In fact, no fewer than thirty craters on the moon were named for Jesuit scientists—a sure sign that either we have our eyes on the heavens, or that our ideas, like craters, may be a bit flat and empty!
Early on, too, the Jesuits linked their form of education with service to the community and nation. They opened one school with the professed goal of having it operate “ad civitatis utilitatem” — for the utility of the city. They prodded a bishop to back them in establishing one college because, they said, it would serve the “republic” by educating good clerics, good civic officials, and good citizens of every status.

After about fifty years of running schools, the Jesuits systematized their idea of education in what they called their “ratio studiorum,” the rationale or plan of study. In its ten basic points, you will find much that sounds familiar. According to the Ratio Studiorum:

- Jesuit schools charged no tuition. (This, of course, has changed at today’s Jesuit colleges and universities. But the underlying principle of providing education to deserving students without regard for their ability to pay still holds true.)
- They admitted students from every social class and religion. (And this at a time rife with religious intolerance and class distinctions.)
- They emphasized the humanities and “humane letters.”
- They linked these “humane letters” to other studies as well, including Aristotelian philosophy and science and Thomistic theology.
- They followed an order of learning, with students progressing from class to class and one level of curriculum to another.
- They cultivated both rigorous thinking, or ideas, and skills.
- They included a religious dimension that went beyond rote to foster values, ethics, and a spiritual life—as well as assistance to others.
- They provided more specialized religious outlets, for example, through the Marian Congregations of the day. (Today, we might emphasize campus ministry programs and projects in various forms.)
- They had an international magnitude, with schools linked throughout Europe, sharing learning but attentive to the demands of local culture and circumstances.
- Finally, they tried to influence students by example—not just by word—and stressed the importance of knowing and caring about each and every student.

But even with all this, the early Jesuits sometimes got bogged down in
defining what they meant by education. Letters to one another went flying back and forth across Europe.

On that score, too, things have not changed a whole lot. As a fellow Jesuit and friend, Joseph J. Feeney, English professor at St. Joseph's University, wrote in recent years, modern Jesuits sometimes don't easily agree on exact definitions of "Jesuit education" either. He suggested, though, that the definition still entails a few basics: a certain way of organization; the care of each student (what we often call, in Latin, cura personalis); seeing everything as a means to God; blending divine purpose with practical details; an emphasis on rigorous thinking and appreciation for such subjects as philosophy, theology, and Renaissance humanism.

And, as Feeney also reminded us, Ignatius of Loyola considered this question some time ago, and put the answer quite plainly. A Jesuit university was to represent an "improvement in learning and living." Of course, for Ignatius and his brothers, this was to be an "improvement in learning and living" not just for the benefit of the student, but for the benefit of all, and for God. We still believe that.

So, too, did John Carroll, establishing this university more than two centuries after Ignatius, and likewise more than two centuries before our own time. Bishop Carroll wanted his graduates not only to have outstanding academic and intellectual skills, but also to serve God through efforts in their communities, nation, and religions. He wanted them capable of interacting in both church and state, in mind and spirit, in the world and at home —utraque unum, as our University motto has it, "and both as one." His vision embraced spirituality, service, educational excellence, and attention to each individual—all aspects of the ratio studiorum.

Heirs to his Hilltop, we have not veered from his fundamental mission, although ways of fulfilling it surely are a bit different in 1997.

Something else was important to John Carroll, too, just as it had been to his Jesuit predecessors, just as it is to us. He wanted his "academy" open to students of all faiths, from diverse classes and nations. And so it was. An act of social progressiveness and religious tolerance? Indeed. But it was more than that. It was also an ardent affirmation of the value of the human spirit, and of the spiritual depth in human life. For Carroll, as in the Jesuit tradition, spiritual depth and the realization of hu-
man potential were inherently linked to the intellect, and its thirst for knowledge.

Fellow theologian Ron Modras (who is not a Jesuit) wrote insightfully in *America* magazine about the "spiritual humanism" of the Jesuits.

From the start, Modras said, "Jesuits have been about spirituality, which is to say, about experience and awareness." (And a quest for "experience and awareness" is a rather apt definition of education.) In the Jesuit way of thinking, he added, "holiness and humanism require each other." Put another way, "insight without action was barren, and action without insight was barbaric."

John Carroll understood that, too. He made it a hallmark of his academy and its style of education. And from such education, he, like Ignatius, believed good would come. So do we. We are proud of our accomplishments, even as we strive to do more.

By any measure—membership in highly regarded peer associations, the selectivity of the student body, the numerous rankings in the news media, the superb accomplishments of our students and faculty—Georgetown is a leader among the top scholastic institutions in our nation, and among the best in the world.

We are among the top few most selective nationally in undergraduate admissions. We have consistently been among the top national universities as rated by *U.S. News & World Report* (a magazine all presidents discount as a business rather than an educational journal, but likewise always cite when their institution is mentioned with admiration). We are among the fewer than one hundred institutions considered level-one research universities by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Our students win top scholarships and fellowships. We have had seventeen Rhodes Scholars and nine Marshall Scholars between 1984 and fall 1996, and twelve Truman Scholars in less than twenty years—just to name a few. Our graduation rates for student-athletes are among the highest in the nation.

But, in keeping with the vision of Ignatius and John Carroll, that is not all that we do. Through our "fourth-credit option," students can turn a three-credit course into a four-credit course by designing and implementing a community service project related to the course's intent. Collectively, we donate roughly seven thousand hours of community service in this way each year.
Just this month, I had the pleasure to award our first faculty development grants to support the creation of new service learning courses. As a result of these grants, four new courses and one restructured course will become part of the service learning curriculum in the fall. These were the first of the $150,000 in grants we will award for this purpose over the next three years.

Students also regularly join in weekend and after-hours volunteerism—everything from providing Thanksgiving dinners for the poor; to neighborhood cleanups; to fund-raising, toy drives, and other organizing projects; to tutoring urban youngsters; to spring vacations spent repairing houses and assisting the disadvantaged in Appalachia.

In 1995-96 this University invested more than $6 million in community service. That total included myriad projects on the Main Campus, efforts by our Law Center in pro bono and related work, and our Medical Center’s outreach through our pediatric mobile clinic, free cancer screenings, and various other healthcare projects. As Ignatius of Loyola said, the Jesuits should make priorities of universities, “which are generally attended by numerous persons who, by being aided themselves, can become laborers for the help of others.”

Georgetown students, faculty, and administrators have tried to make real those Jesuit maxims we emphasize so much: living “for the greater glory of God, and the well-being of humankind,” being “men and women for others.” It is not always easy, striving to live “ad majorem Dei gloriam, inque hominum salutem,” as any Jesuit will admit. But it is no solitary struggle. Through the community we have created on our Hilltop, we encourage and sustain each other.

And the force of our commitment to each other—and to these values—will hold us strong even when we are dispersed from campus, our journeys take us down divergent roads, and we don’t see each other so often. We will still be with each other, utraque unum, and with God—always with God. For to be “men and women for others,” to serve the greater glory, to seek truth through knowledge, is to praise God.

In the end, tens of thousands of words defining Jesuit education cannot have the impact of one single life, lived well, lived in true wisdom. Women and men of Georgetown strive to embody that wisdom.
The Pursuit of Excellence and the "Ordinary Manner": Humility and the Jesuit University

Brian E. Daley, S.J.

Brian E. Daley, S.J. is Catherine Huisking Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame.
In the middle of the 1120s, a canon regular who lectured on theology in Paris, Hugh of St. Victor, wrote an influential book on the art of reading that summed up, with remarkable comprehensiveness and concision, the way Western civilization had by then come to understand the process of education. Hugh's Didascalicon, as the work was called, was really meant to give its public a method for absorbing most profitably the branches of knowledge then available for enriching and advancing human life: the theoretical sciences that sharpened the mind for the pursuit of wisdom, the technical and mechanical arts that enabled their practitioner to deal most efficiently and elegantly with the environment of living, and the "sacred sciences" rooted in Holy Scripture, which opened up to the human spirit a pattern of knowing and loving that promised a share of everlasting life, and so enabled a person to reach the final goal of his or her being. Inspired, no doubt, by Augustine's classical exposition of the techniques and resources needed to become an effective preacher, the De doctrina Christiana, as well as by Cassiodorus's sixth-century syllabus designed to prepare the ideal interpreter of the bible, the Institutiones divinarum et saecularium lectionum, Hugh's work stands at the end of a long Christian intellectual tradition: it represents an approach to knowledge centered on the relationship of all human culture to the life and worship of the community of faith, and expressed most perfectly in the monastic practice of learned, meditative scriptural study known as lectio divina.

"The things by which everyone advances in knowledge," Hugh states in the preface of the work, "are principally two—namely reading (lectio) and meditation (meditatio)." Hugh chooses to focus his work simply on reading—on what one should read and how one should read it, in order to find life-giving wisdom in the bible; he leaves meditation, the internalization of the message, for a later treatment. But even fruitful reading, in Hugh's view, is by no means a mechanical process; it requires not only natural intelligence (ingeni m) and acquired skill (exercitium), but also a real asceticism (disciplina), a freely-chosen shape imposed on one's life that frees one from the distractions of passion and self-seeking. And "the beginning of
FOR THAT I CAME

discipline,” Hugh confidently asserts, “is humility,” which reveals itself in a reader in three principal ways: “first, that [the reader] hold no knowledge, no written work in contempt; second, that he not be ashamed to learn from anyone; and third, that when he has attained learning himself, he not look down upon others.”

This stipulation of humility as the first personal discipline needed for profitable reading may surprise us, but Hugh goes on to explain why it seemed to him so necessary:

Many are deceived by the desire to appear wise before their time. They therefore break out in a certain swollen importance and begin to simulate what they are not and to be ashamed of what they are; and they slip all the farther from wisdom in proportion as they think, not of being wise, but of being thought so.

In some cases, Hugh observes, this desire to appear wiser or more learned than one knows oneself to be takes the form of academic name-dropping—aping learning by associating oneself with an eminent Doktorvater:

I have known many of this sort, who although they still lacked the very rudiments of learning, yet deigned to mingle only with the highest sort of people, and they supposed that they themselves were well on the road to greatness simply because they had read the writings or heard the words of great and wise men and women. “We,” they say, “have seen them. We have studied under them. They often used to talk to us. Those great ones, those famous people, they know us.” Oh, if only no one knew me, and I knew all things!

Humility, by contrast, is the disposition to learn from anyone who knows something that we do not, the recognition that all books are worth our respect simply because they can all teach us something, and the fundamental conviction that “all learning is good.” Humility also is the best way to prevent the arrogance which Hugh seems to regard as the main moral pitfall of the learned:

For the vice of an inflated ego attacks some people because they pay too much fond attention to their own knowledge, and when they
seem to themselves to have become something, they think that others whom they do not even know can neither be nor become as great.\textsuperscript{9}

Such pomposity can only be, in the long run, a bar to further learning and to genuine understanding. So Hugh concludes that humility, both with respect to the text one is reading and with respect to one’s fellow readers, is an absolute requirement for growth in wisdom:

For the good reader should be humble and docile, free alike from vain cares and from sensual indulgences, diligent and zealous to learn willingly from all; he should never presume on his own knowledge, should shun the authors of perverse doctrine as if they were poison, should consider a matter thoroughly and at length before forming a judgment, should seek to be learned rather than merely to seem so, should love such words of the wise as he has grasped and always hold them before his gaze as the very mirror of his countenance. And if some things, perhaps rather obscure, have not allowed him to understand them, let him not break out in angry condemnation and think that nothing is good but what he himself can understand. This is the humility that belongs to the discipline of those who read.\textsuperscript{10}

As Ivan Illich has recently argued in his own fascinating reflections on the Didascalicon,\textsuperscript{11} the decades immediately following Hugh’s death in 1142 witnessed a change in the way books were produced and organized that revealed a deeper change in the way writing itself was being used in Western culture: a new emphasis on organized design, indexing, outlining, and didactic illustration that suggested books were coming to be regarded more as tools for communicating ideas to other minds than as records of past spoken discourse, inviting later hearers to listen. This change in the use and design of books reflected, in its turn, a new approach to knowledge that characterized the second half of the twelfth century in Europe: a move from the quest for a wisdom that transformed the knower to a quest for information and dialectical skills that enabled the knower to transform his society and his world. This deeper change was paralleled by the movement of the principal theater of learning from the liturgical community of the monastery to the new, more public and more secular setting of the university.

Hugh, in the Didascalicon, was in fact the final spokesman for an older, essentially auditory and contemplative approach to both reading
and learning; so, as Illich points out, "Reading, for Hugh, is a moral rather than a technical activity. It is at the service of personal fulfillment." Just as all human beings are called to seek the wisdom that is a participation in the inner life of God as "the form of the perfect Good," all are called to study the truth about themselves and their role in the world, as the way leading to wisdom. The duty of the teacher—especially of a teacher like Hugh, who addresses, as a member of the learned Victorine community, a wider audience than simply his own monastic confrères—is to offer not simply the information and intellectual techniques needed to read well, but the edification and moral example that will help his audience in their quest for wisdom.

Four hundred years later, the newly-founded Society of Jesus inherited and began to transform the European university system that emerged from Hugh's twelfth-century Parisian schools. The story of Jesuit involvement in higher education—at first more or less by chance, but then almost immediately by enthusiastic commitment and careful design—has been told well elsewhere and need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that although the original concern of the Jesuits, as a religious community, was pastoral ministry on a wide variety of fronts and in a wide assortment of forms—pastoral ministry by well-educated and spiritually mature priests, to those chiefly who lay beyond the reach of ordinary parishes and dioceses, and whose needs could only be met by a new, more flexibly organized and more highly trained body of ministers—still, when the opportunity arose to become involved in education, Ignatius Loyola and his early companions quickly recognized an extraordinary chance to communicate the Christian gospel fruitfully, and to shape a Christian culture.

Anyone who reads carefully through the abundant documents that chronicle early Jesuit education—letters from St. Ignatius and his successors as superior general, constitutions for new colleges, rules and admonitions from superiors for the Jesuits who taught in them or studied in them alongside young lay peers—can hardly help but be struck by what may seem to be an odd paradox: a tension between an emphasis on pursuing serious academic quality, on the one hand, and on cultivating and communicating modesty and humility, on the other. In agreeing to staff and run not only schools (collegia) that trained younger teenagers in the essentially literary skills which, in the sixteenth century still formed the basis of education—Latin and Greek, grammar and history and rhetoric—but also
universities that provided instruction in the "higher" disciplines of logic and metaphysics, mathematics, natural science and theology, the Jesuits of the 1550s chose to imitate the highly organized curriculum and the demanding program of drills, debates, repetitions and examinations, largely unknown in Italy and Spain until then, that was mainly identified with the University of Paris. Jesuit educational institutions quickly became known for the good results of their pedagogy; prize orations, academic demonstrations, even theatrical performances of striking sophistication became identified with the Jesuit schools almost from their inception, and were to play an important role in the development of European literature, as well as opera, theater, and ballet, in the two centuries that followed. Jesuit professors, particularly at the "flagship" Collegio Romano, came to be known for their groundbreaking research in astronomy, mathematics, and even archaeology, and names like Kircher and Clavius, who taught there, represented the forefront of sixteenth-century science.

Yet along with this astonishing stress on academic seriousness and humanistic engagement, the documents of early Jesuit education also put a curious and continuously high value on the cultivation of a modest, self-effacing, even egalitarian style among professors and students that was considered central to these institutions' central purpose: the promotion of "the glory of God and the good of souls." While the Jesuit Constitutions, for instance, leave it up to future superiors general to decide whether the officers and faculty of the Jesuit universities should be allowed to wear academic robes and insignia at official ceremonies, they take a generally dim view of such signs of status. So, even though academic degrees are to be taken seriously and are only to be awarded after rigorous examination, students in the Jesuit universities are not to accept rankings or special places corresponding to those degrees, "to avoid every appearance of ambition or inordinate desires"; rather, they should 'anticipate one another with honor' [Rom. 12.10], without observing any distinction which arises from places. The rector of a Jesuit college—at that time both its chief administrator and its religious superior—was to be chosen both for professional competence and personal modesty and piety:

Care should be taken that the rector be a man of great example, edification and mortification of all his evil inclinations, and one especially approved in regard to his obedience and humility. He ought like-
wise to be discreet, fit for governing, experienced both in matters of business and of the spiritual life . . . 21

Young Jesuits studying in the Society’s academic institutions, wrote Jerónimo Nadal to the Spanish colleges in 1553, should “make the firm resolution to be real students,” since their intellectual growth is so central to their religious purpose of “helping souls”; nevertheless, academic excellence was not to be their sole goal: “they should take steps to distinguish themselves equally in learning and in modesty.”22 The second general of the Society, Diego Laínez, during the same decade, put this same point more emphatically in his list of rules for the Jesuit students at the Collegio Romano:

Both in hearing lectures attentively and in diligently engaging in other classroom exercises, and in their modesty and humility, all should expend every effort to edify those who are not of the Society, as is required for the glory of God and the good of souls; and they should beg God’s help particularly for this in their prayers each day.23

In the sixteenth century as much as in the twelfth, it seems, those who saw formal teaching and learning as a part of Christian ministry were aware of the inherent tendency of academic institutions to promote pretension and self-congratulation rather than real human and community values among their members. “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up,” St. Paul had reminded the Corinthians (I Cor. 8.1), and his words continued to sound in the ears of Christian scholars both as a warning against spiritual “inflation” and a call to a more constructive, more “edifying” style of academic exercise. Yet even though the emphasis in these early Jesuit documents on the integral role of edification and good religious example in the educational process echoes a major concern of Hugh and his early medieval colleagues, the reason for stressing modesty and humility now seems to have been significantly different. It is not simply a question of humility of mind as a prerequisite for real learning—humility before the text and before other readers of the text, as a condition of possibility for hearing the text’s full meaning. Now the goal of humility in the classroom is part of a wider vision of Christian service and pastoral ministry, part of the Jesuits’ earnest new ideal of glorifying God as the “least companions” of Jesus, who revealed God’s glory to us by humbling himself even to death for our sakes.
To understand the importance of humility in the spirit and corporate ideal of the first Jesuits, we must take a very brief look at the development of the Christian understanding of humility as a religious and moral virtue. In ancient Mediterranean culture, humility or lowliness, in itself, was not generally seen as part of human perfection. For the Greeks, a reasonable and realistic awareness of one’s own abilities and goodness was considered to be the key to self-sufficiency and happiness. The *hybris* that led to the downfall of Agamemnon or Achilles was not so much their abundant self-esteem, as an excessive and exclusive preoccupation with their own ideas and projects that blinded them to the larger cosmic order and led them to overstep their own moral and physical limits. Important as moderation and self-restraint were to the Greeks, however, their real admiration was reserved for those who knew their own worth, and acted accordingly. Aristotle’s celebrated portrait of the person characterized by “magnanimity” or greatness of soul (*μεγαλοψυχία*), in Book IV of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, presents us with a kind of natural aristocrat, who crowns all his other positive qualities by a strong and accurate awareness of his own gifts, and a willingness to accept the honor and the responsibilities those gifts bring. Like all virtues, of course, Aristotle’s magnanimity was conceived as a balance between extremes: in this case, the extremes of either claiming more honor than is one’s due (the vice of vanity or boastfulness: *χαυνότης*) or, more contemptible still, claiming less (the vice of small-heartedness, *μικροσυνιστολή*). But while Aristotle and the later Greek ethical writers could speak scornfully of all forms of pretension, they did not normally use the word “humble” or “lowly” (*πατεινός*) in a positive sense at all. A “lowly” person, for Aristotle, was simply someone who, as we might say, lacked “class”—someone with low ideals and low ethical principles rooted in a low estimate of his own worth.

It was only in the biblical tradition that the ready recognition of one’s own littleness or neediness came to be seen as a positive human quality. As a righteous ruler and judge, the God of Israel was understood by most of the prophets to take special care of the materially poor and oppressed (Amos 2.6-16; 8.4-8; Isa 3.10-15; 10.1-4). By a kind of moral reciprocity, it was often these same “little ones”—the *‘anawim* or lowly people—who were seen to be free of the arrogance that leads human beings
to disregard God’s law; for the seventh-century prophet Zephaniah, for instance, it is the “humble of the land” (‘anwei ha-aretz) who “do his commands” (2.3), who “do no wrong and utter no lies” (3.13). In many of the psalms it is precisely the poor and oppressed who can look forward confidently to God’s vindication, because of their righteousness and fidelity, while the arrogant who now prosper at the expense of little people will ultimately come to nothing (e.g., Ps. 9.18; 10; 34.6-9, 17ff; 37.11-19). So some later Jewish writers equated a humble attitude before God, and a deliberate decision not to concern the mind with “matters beyond us,” with the righteousness that “finds favor in the sight of the Lord” and allows human beings to know him (Sir. 3.17-24; cf. 10.26-31; Ps. 131); it was Moses, “the humblest man on earth,” after all, who had been chosen by God to reveal his decrees to Israel (Num. 12.3; Sir. 45.2-5).

In the New Testament, Jesus is presented precisely as one of these “little ones,” one who in fact chooses freely to walk the road of humiliation in fulfillment of his divine mission. His prophetic message is called, in the words of Isaiah, “good news for the poor” (Lk 4.18, citing Isa 61.1); it is the news that God, in fulfilling his promises, “puts down the mighty from their thrones and raises the lowly” (Lk 1.52). Jesus speaks of himself, in a key synoptic passage of self-identification, as one who is “gentle and humble of heart,” and who is therefore both able to reveal God’s wisdom to other “little ones” and to give them “rest” (Mt 11.25-29). In Mark’s gospel (10.32-45), Jesus interprets his coming humiliation—the failure of his mission, his passion and death—as a freely-accepted way of “serving” both his disciples and “the many” (cf. John 13.1-16); here and in many other New Testament passages, such humility and service, “even unto death,” is held out as the model for a disciple’s relationship with God (Acts 20.19) and the rest of the community of believers (cf. Rom 12.3-8, 16; Phil 2.1-8; Col 3.12; Eph 4.2; I Pet. 5.5).

Against this background, it is understandable that the Christian ethical and spiritual tradition should soon begin to identify humility, lowliness, as an indispensable part of human goodness. For some early Greek theologians, thoroughly steeped in pre-Christian Greek ethics, this took some explaining: Origen, for instance, who seems to have been the first to identify humility alongside wisdom, justice, fortitude and temperance as “one
HUMILITY AND THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY

of the virtues,” in his commentary on Mary’s Magnificat, equates it there rather lamely with freedom from pomposity (ἀτυφία) and moderation (μετριότης)—qualities the Hellenistic philosophers might also have accepted as humanly ennobling. Both Origen and his older contemporary Clement of Alexandria tend to interpret the poverty and marginalization associated in the beatitudes with the kingdom of God as a kind of freely-chosen hardship required for the service of others, or as the costly background for heroic achievement. By the late fourth century, however, many Christian writers had come to see a harsher, more dramatic humility—the genuine embracing of human weakness and obscurity, even of human ignorance, for the sake of Christ—as a central element in the Christian “way.” Augustine, in the central books of the Confessions, makes the point that the final stage of his own journey to full Christian discipleship was not the pursuit of high ideals or the solution of intellectual problems, but the concrete decision to leave behind the academic speculations that only nurtured his pride in order to follow Christ, the “humble God,” on his way to humility. Pope Leo the Great, in an Epiphany sermon of 452, presents this humility, centered on the Incarnation of the Word, as the core of Christian wisdom:

The Savior’s entire victory over the devil and the world began in humility and was brought to its completion in humility . . . . Therefore, dear friends, the whole method of attaining Christian wisdom consists not in abundance of speech, not in sharpness of argument, not in a hunger for praise and glory, but in true and voluntary humility, which the Lord Jesus Christ chose and taught, with all imaginable courage, from the womb of his mother to the pains of the cross.

Against this background, it is understandable that as the forms of Christian monastic and ascetic life developed in the fourth and fifth centuries, humility was considered necessary and integral to this new “Christian philosophy.” For Abba Poimen, one of the great early monastic leaders of the Egyptian desert, “humility and the fear of God are like the breath that comes out of the nose.” For John Cassian, the Latin writer who propagated the Egyptian monastic ideal in Gaul in the early fifth century, growth in humility comprised the middle stage of a person’s spiritual trajectory, in which one’s fear of God, which probably played a role in one’s first conversion and
brought one to embrace the monastic life, was gradually transformed into the “love, which casts out fear” (I John 4.18). A century or more later, the anonymous Rule of the Master and the better-known Rule of St. Benedict took over Cassian’s list of ten “signs” by which this process of growing monastic humility could be recognized, and built them into the ten central “steps” of a twelve-step “ladder” by which one paradoxically climbs to a peak of lowness that brings us to “exaltation in heaven.” For these early spiritual writers and for the medieval tradition that drew on them, humility had become a way of life, the formal principle of organized Christian discipleship.

For the university theologians of the late thirteenth century, however, this traditional stress on the centrality of humility among the Christian virtues was suddenly complicated by the rediscovery of Aristotle’s portrayal of the virtues—notably his powerful picture of magnanimity—in the Nicomachean Ethics, now available in Robert Grosseteste’s new and accurate Latin translation. So some of the major scholastics again began to try and conceive of humility in the terms of classical Greek virtue theory, as Origen and Clement of Alexandria had done a thousand years earlier. St. Bonaventure, in his lectures on the biblical account of creation delivered in 1273, identifies Aristotelian magnanimity itself as a function of humility: the ability to recognize both what is truly great (God) and what is truly small (the world and its honors), so that one might confidently focus one’s efforts on serving God. In the second part of the Summa Theologica, St. Thomas Aquinas treats both magnanimity and humility as distinct and authentic virtues: the former as a subspecies of the cardinal virtue of fortitude, the latter as a subspecies of temperance. Yet he is quick to point out that they are not at all opposed to one another:

Magnanimity makes a person deem himself worthy of great things in consideration of the gifts he holds from God. On the other hand, humility makes a person think little of himself in consideration of his own deficiency [and] makes us honor others and esteem them better than ourselves, insofar as we see some of God’s gifts in them.

Since humility and magnanimity, like all the virtues, steer their possessor on a course of moderation between two extremes, Thomas later suggests that the two ideally work together to help us find a mean with regard to
our human hopes: humility keeping the practitioner away from the extreme of arrogant presumption, magnanimity keeping him or her from its opposite, crippling despair. 

Artificial as both schoolmen's accounts of these virtues might seem, they show a renewed concern that the humility of the Christian disciple not be taken as opposed to an authentic awareness of his or her true value. For Thomas, especially, humility shows itself in the submission of the human creature to God as the source of all that is good in oneself, and to other creatures insofar as they also have received gifts from God; it is the virtue that allows a person both to recognize the genuine greatness of all human endowments, and still to see them as gratuitous blessings of the Creator.

As Ignatius and the early Jesuits, then, developed their new approach to Christian preaching and ministry two and a half centuries later, both humility and great-heartedness or magnanimity were understood, if in a variety of ways, to rank high among the virtues to be cultivated by the members of their new Company. The first Jesuits were steeped in the classical tradition of Augustinian and monastic spirituality, which saw the humiliation of the self as one of the central ways in which the human mind and heart were to be formed in the image of Christ. Yet they were also shaped by the humanism of the age of Erasmus and trained in the scholastic philosophy of the University of Paris; they knew that true virtue is all of a piece, and can never lead to the degradation of God's creation. It is not surprising, then—though it may be paradoxical—that the spiritual and religious ideal of the early Jesuits included a stress both on striving for distinction, for real human excellence, in doing the work of God, and on deliberately choosing not to stand out from the crowd. In the young Society's first attempt to define its purpose, the Formula of the Institute of 1540, we read: "This Institute requires men who are conspicuous in the integrity of Christian life and learning." The General Examen, a description of the new Society's life and work written for prospective candidates about 1546, says more paradoxically still: "For sound reasons and with attention always paid to the greater service of God, in regard to what is exterior the manner of our living is ordinary." Outstanding saints and scholars whose first characteristics are to be humility and prudence; men who choose to seek God's "greater service," God's more evident glory, by deliberately avoiding the
extreme forms of asceticism, garb and behavior which traditionally had marked out religious life as a discipleship more intense than that of “ordinary” Christians: this early sketch of the Jesuit ideal was rooted in the paradox of Christian humility itself, as a central formative principle of the Christian life.

The importance of humility in the Ignatian understanding of active discipleship is nowhere clearer than in the *Spiritual Exercises*, that program for an experience of prayerfully deepening and focusing one’s commitment to following Christ that has served as the common, organizing center of Jesuit life and work throughout the Society’s four hundred fifty years. Here, after a first “week” of prayer and self-examination meant to lead the one making the Exercises to see himself or herself more vividly as a loved and deeply graced sinner, the second “week” or major division of the Exercises begins with a grand meditation on the project of Christ to save and transform the world, put in the somewhat romantic terms of a great king’s campaign to conquer his enemies. The exercitant is told to compare his or her desire to join in the saving work of Christ with the generous readiness any idealistic person might feel to join the honorable political program of a human king or leader. Ignatius’s point, it seems, is to touch the chords in each of us of what Aristotle might call our natural magnanimity: to apply to Christian discipleship our human desire for heroism, even at great cost to ourselves. But the real—and paradoxical—point of the exercise comes at the end, when Ignatius asks the exercitant to consider that “those who desire to show greater devotion and to distinguish themselves in total service to their eternal King and universal Lord” will not stop simply at joining in the “labor” of winning the world for Christ’s kingdom, but “will work against their human sensitivities and against their carnal and worldly love” by striving to make their own the very inner shape of Jesus’ life—what Paul called the “self-emptying” of him who “was in the form of God,” but took on “a servant’s form” for our sake. So the exercitant is urged to make a complete offering of himself or herself to Christ by saying:

"I wish and desire, and it is my deliberate decision, provided only that it is for your greater service and praise, to imitate you in bearing all injuries and affronts, and any poverty, actual as well as spiritual, if your Most Holy Majesty desires to elect and receive me into such a life and state."
A full involvement in the way of Christ, Ignatius seems to assume, will involve not only heroic labor for his glorious cause, but participation in his personal humiliations; "distinguished" discipleship is a matter of deliberately choosing to join him among *anawim*, deliberately walking the way of the cross with him.

As the Second Week of the *Exercises* unfolds, this focus on following Jesus precisely in his humility remains central. During this "week" of the process, the exercitant is asked to contemplate the course of Jesus’ life, as the context for coming to an "election" or express choice of a concrete form for his or her own future living. The emphasis of this contemplation is on the breathtaking humility, the generous self-emptying, the fully-willed obedience of the Word made flesh. At the same time, Ignatius proposes several additional meditations to help the exercitant prepare to answer the fundamental question, "In which life or state does his Divine Majesty wish us to serve him?"
The first of these, the famous meditation on the Two Standards or Banners, presents Satan and Christ as commanders of opposed forces waging the central battle of history over human hearts. Satan’s strategy is to try and lead human beings to covet riches, which lead them in turn to crave honor from their fellow men and women, and finally to pride, the source of all the other vices. Jesus’ plan is exactly the opposite: to invite all people to embrace "the highest degree of spiritual poverty and also, if his Divine Majesty would be served and pleased to choose them for it, to no less a degree of actual poverty," then to attract them "to a desire of reproaches and contempt," and so to humility, from which people can grow into all the other virtues. Humility, built upon freedom from the encumbrances of possessions and reputation, is for Ignatius the key to human perfection and the presupposition for freely forming one’s life to conform to the will of God.

This challenging suggestion is both repeated and clarified a few pages further on in the *Exercises*, in yet another consideration given to prepare the exercitant for making the right choice or choices to shape his or her life: the consideration on "three kinds of humility." The first kind of humility, Ignatius argues,

is necessary for eternal salvation, and consists in this: I so lower and humble myself, as far as is in my power, that in all things I may be obedient to the law of God our Lord. Consequently, even though others
would make me lord of all the creatures in the world, or even to save my
temporal life, I would not enter into deliberation about violating a com-
mandment either human or divine which binds me under mortal sin.\textsuperscript{50}

This is really nothing else than the humility involved in honestly recognizing
that I am a creature, and not God—that I am \textit{not} “lord of all creation” and
am \textit{not} ultimately able to “save my own life,” but that I must acknowledge
the sovereignty both of the creator and of the moral principles he has estab-
lished for his world.

The second kind of humility, Ignatius then suggests, is both more per-
fect and more demanding than the first: it is a complete readiness to follow
the will of God, even when there is no question of serious sin, a focus on
serving God that makes a person genuinely indifferent to other important
human concerns.

\begin{quote}
It is when I find myself in this disposition: When the options
seem equally effective for the service of God and the salvation of my
soul, I do not desire or feel myself strongly attached to have wealth rather
than poverty, or honor rather than dishonor, or a long life rather than a
short one.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

Here, again, what Ignatius labels “humility” is really what one might
call a brand of “creaturely realism”: a recognition and an acceptance of the
fact that just as our being depends on God, so our ultimate welfare lies only
in our service of him, our conformity to his will in the most concrete details
of our life. It is humility in Thomas Aquinas’s sense of a complete and
voluntary subjection to God, rooted in reverence for him as a creator.\textsuperscript{52}

In what Ignatius then describes as the third, and most perfect, kind of
humility, however, the retreatant is invited to move beyond the simple impli-
cations of creaturehood into a deeper and more challenging pattern of Chris-
tian discipleship:

\begin{quote}
It consists in this. When I possess the first and second ways [when,
in other words, I am fully aware of my creaturely relation to God and
fully ready to accept it in my concrete choices] and when the options
equally further the praise and glory of God, in order to imitate Christ our
Lord better and to be more like him here and now, I desire and choose
\end{quote}
poverty with Christ poor rather than wealth; contempt with Christ laden with it rather than honors. Even further, I desire to be regarded as a useless fool for Christ, who before me was regarded as such, rather than as a wise and prudent person in this world.\textsuperscript{53}

Here the ground has clearly changed. Humility is no longer presented as a matter of submission to the will of God, but as a habit of mind, a bias in my personal preferences, to choose a pattern of life that will make me more like Christ, precisely in his choice “not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10.45). It is to enter the paschal mystery, to strive to recapture for oneself what Paul called “the mind that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave . . .” (Phil 2.5ff.). Ignatius clearly regards this as an attitude, a habitual preference or underlying desire, rather than as a recipe for decision-making. On most of the occasions in our lives when we must make important choices, in fact, moral imperatives and the desire to further God’s glory by our action in the world undoubtedly do draw us more towards one alternative than towards the other. What Ignatius is holding out as an ideal here, however, is simply that as the exercitant sets about making the concrete decisions that will shape his or her future life as a disciple of Jesus, he or she should put a priority on habitually sharing the mysterious form of Jesus’ mind and heart, on conforming herself or himself to the pattern of self-giving which Christian faith recognizes within God’s own life.

Humility, in fact, seems to be for Ignatius ultimately the distinguishing characteristic of the love that “shows itself in deeds” and that always seeks, in one way or another, to give itself away.\textsuperscript{54} So in one place in his highly abbreviated spiritual journal, the entry for Passion Sunday, March 30, 1544, Ignatius notes the many tears he experienced as he prepared for and celebrated Mass, and then remarks:

\begin{quote}
During this period of time I kept on thinking that humility, reverence and affectionate awe [before God] ought to be not fearful but loving. This thought took root in my mind so deeply that I begged over and over again, “Give me loving humility, and with it reverence and affectionate awe.” After these words I received new visitations. Moreover, I repulsed tears in order to attend to this loving humility, and so forth.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}
So, too, a tract on the Ignatian approach to making an election or life-choice, written in the early 1540s by the Spanish theologian and diplomat Dr. Pedro Ortiz (who had made the Exercises under Ignatius's direction) and by his brother Francisco, a well-known Franciscan preacher, refers to the three kinds of humility in the Exercises rather as "three kinds or degrees of the love of God, and of the desire to imitate and serve his divine majesty." The humility of the active Christian disciple, for Ignatius and his friends, is clearly not just an ascetical practice, nor even a subspecies of the virtue of temperance, but a share in the outward, self-emptying movement of God's transcendent love.

What sense can we make today of this mysterious and challenging virtue that has played such a central and varied role in the Christian spiritual tradition? For many people in our culture, humility is at best an ambivalent, if not an unhealthy quality. We tend to identify it with a dangerous lack of self-esteem, with the habit of deliberately putting oneself down, even as we stress the social and psychological importance of equality, inclusiveness and truthful self-affirmation. We often wonder about the sincerity of conventional expressions of modesty, or wonder if another person's apparent willingness to sacrifice notice or advantage is not really a covert strategy of inducing guilt in others, as a way to ultimate control. For many women in our society, humility and the ideal of self-effacing service seem to be simply part of a larger pattern of passivity and subordination that a male-dominated culture has urged primarily on them, and that has led all too often to a repression of their legitimate desires and to the loss of a legitimate sense of identity and value. Yet even the brief look at the Christian tradition of humility that we have taken here suggests that the virtue, in its historical sense—and in its authentically Christian sense—has little to do with slavish-self-abasement, and even less with a negative sense of one's own worth. Christian humility can only be rightly understood in the context of the discipleship founded in love; it expresses itself—as Clement and Origen knew, as well as Ignatius—in courageous and confident acts of service rather than in cringing retirement. Christian humility can really only be appreciated for what it is, in fact, if it is paired with Christian magnanimity, as Thomas Aquinas suggests. Only the person who has come to realize what gifts are his or hers, in the dignity of being created by a loving and generous...
God, can imitate that creative love and generosity by serving others, "submitting" to them, according to the pattern of Christ. Only the person who realizes, in faith, how good he or she is can freely make that goodness into a gift without strings.

More to the point for us here, however, is the question of what this Christian virtue of humility might mean for a modern American university like Georgetown. Even if understood in its most positive sense, is it not too private an affair, too deeply personal and religious a quality, to have concrete and practical implications for the life of a large and illustrious educational institution? Why do we dare to include a reflection on humility in a series of lectures on the virtues of a Jesuit university?

The answer, I contend, is that humility in the Christian and Ignatian sense is a quality essential to Georgetown's corporate identity. No human social body is without its collective ideals of excellence, its vision of what constitutes success and failure, of what kinds of behavior are laudable and what reprehensible; no educational institution can function without an at least implicit sense of what kind of person it hopes will emerge from participating in the complex, formalized series of intellectual and cultural exercises that go on within its walls. For a Catholic university to be what it historically has been and to make the contribution to American society that only a Catholic university can make—for Georgetown to become a still better version of what it has been and is, rather than be transformed into a permanently second-rate imitator of the Ivy League—it is, I would argue, essential that the corporate ideals that form its educational vision be identifiably rooted in the tradition of Catholic faith and Jesuit ministry. For a university like Georgetown to justify the preferential treatment it gives to members of the Jesuit order in seeking them out for academic and administrative positions, it must be able to expect from them not only professional competence and personal charisma, but a distinctive contribution that is rooted in their own religious commitment and formation, a contribution that the whole university community judges essential to the maintenance of its character. Obviously this shared conviction cannot and should not mean today that all a Jesuit university's faculty or all its students be Jesuit or Catholic or Christian, or that everyone involved in the University's life be equally committed to living out those corporate ideals as individuals. But it
For That I Came

does mean that the fundamental view of reality and of human fulfillment that lies behind the university's institutional policies and educational choices be rooted in the Christian and Catholic and Jesuit vision of things, and that this collective vision be acknowledged and welcomed by all, even by those who cannot accept it as directly normative for their own lives.

Within this corporate set of Christian and Catholic and Jesuit ideals for life and education, as I have tried to show, humility has played and needs still to play a central role. This may surprise us—those who have had dealings with Jesuits may even find the notion of "Jesuit humility" something of an oxymoron; but the fact is that even in the Society's earliest efforts at secondary and university education, the cultivation of a humble, egalitarian style was urged on Jesuit educators as something of equal importance with the pursuit of genuine academic excellence—the "ordinary manner" of "this least Society" was proposed as a necessary counterweight to the ambition and magnanimity it expected of its members in promoting God's reign.

One principal reason for this stress on humility in a ministry of education, surely, is that pretentiousness has always ranked among the worst vices of the academy. "Knowledge puffs up," St. Paul cautioned; Hugh of St. Victor recognized this in the crippling arrogance of some of his colleagues in twelfth-century Paris, and we need not look too far to recognize it in American higher education today. With only modest hopes of monetary reward but ample opportunities for other compensation in academic rank, solemn ceremony, and the subtler vanities based on where one has studied and who has published one's latest book—with the more tempting possibilities of adulation and ego-building available in a professor's daily dealings with a classroom full of eager young people who depend on his or her approval for advancement—those who want to teach as a service need some safeguard to sufiuse their scholarship and educational energy with the "love that builds." That safeguard is, in Ignatian terms, the virtue of humility.

Secondly, as Hugh of St. Victor reminds us, some degree of humility, in an intellectual sense, is a necessary requirement for learning itself. In order to be in a position to increase one's knowledge, one must be ready to acknowledge its limitations. Humility before a text, before laboratory data, before the wonderful flexibility and subtlety of the minds of one's peers or
one’s predecessors or one’s pupils—humility translated into the readiness always to look again, to be corrected, to have one’s research made obsolete—all form a kind of religious reverence for the veiled yet accessible truth that academic activity, if it is more than simply a game, eternally pursues. When university life becomes a power struggle or an ego trip, it is always the quest for truth that suffers most.

But the humility that animates the early Jesuit ideal of academic life is not simply the intellectual humility and integrity Hugh proposes to us, indispensable though that is; it is the humility sought in the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises: the humility of service, the spirit that edifies by seeking quality and promoting community while renouncing honor, the “love that builds.” Translated into the terms of a university like Georgetown today, this characteristically Jesuit humility should mean a corporate culture that sits easily towards rank and title, academic pomp and circumstance, but that places supreme value on the moral and human formation of its members. It should mean a vision of education centered on service, in which the university devotes a generous part of its energy and resources (as Georgetown has historically done) to involving its students and graduates in work among their less privileged brothers and sisters. It should mean a healthy skepticism, on the part of faculty and administrators, towards developing activities and involvements that simply enhance the university’s public prestige: corporate membership in exclusive academic organizations, big-name scholarships and awards for its graduates, big-time athletic programs whose main purpose is to enhance alumni bragging rights and promote national recognition.

Clearly the central business of any university is the growth of minds; but the Jesuit university, in virtue of its tradition and its identity, should be committed to promote that growth as well as it knows how to do, without an undue concern for how the wider public compares it to its prestigious secular counterparts, or even for what the wider public deems success. Despite the tightness of the market and the intense competition for enrollment in which every university is necessarily involved today, a Jesuit university must have the confidence and integrity— the collective magnanimity, in Aristotle’s sense of a just awareness of its own worth—simply to be true to itself, to stand unflinchingly for its moral and educational ideals, even if that means
risking some loss of opportunity for financial growth, or some diminishment of prestige among its peers in the contemporary academic galaxy—a lower ranking in the annual scales of *US News* or the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. The humility of service, as Ignatius reminds us, involves a readiness to share in both poverty and contempt for the sake of the kingdom of God.

In the year 1606, a Jesuit teaching in one of the Society’s colleges in Bavaria wrote a memorandum to the superior general in Rome, Claudio Acquaviva, outlining some principles of educational practice that he felt were not always being followed by his younger confrères. The name of the author, unfortunately, is now lost, but the portrait of an effective and conscientious Jesuit teacher he gives in his brief memo still retains much of its apostolic passion and its common-sense appeal. A Jesuit engaged in the teaching ministry, he begins, should always pray for the school and his pupils, and should rely on God’s constant blessing even more than on his own learning and skills. He should frequently examine the quality of his own motivation, his “zeal and love for the honor of God and the good of souls,” to make sure that in his classroom work he is living up to the expectations of his students’ parents and of the Society itself. In teaching, he must “take care not to work more for himself than for his students” by holding forth on what he finds important rather than what they need to learn; he must be careful not to be too easy and informal with them, but also not to burst out against them in anger. He should be consistent, straightforward and calm in dealing with problem students (dyscolos), careful not to be taken in but also free from the appearance of habitual suspicion or hostility. “He should treat all his pupils in such a way that each of them should feel that he, his studies and his salvation are of particular concern, and that no one can think he is neglected or not loved.”

In a nutshell,

He should try to be considered by his pupils to be the kind of person that the nature of his office and his religious profession demands: namely, a religious who loves his institute and strenuously follows its ideal, but not someone who is vain, superficial, worldly, lacking in self-mastery, a lover of his own honor and reputation, or excessively jealous. Such a person will truly be offering himself to God as a most suitable instrument for the divine goodness, through which God will most easily draw the tender souls of young people to every kind of idealism and virtue,
and to recognize Him, love Him and serve Him. And that is what the Society is looking for, in this whole business of education...  

Here the relevance of humility to the ministry of teaching—to teaching as a way of “helping souls”—suddenly stands out with new clarity. The humility this German schoolmaster expected of himself and his colleagues was not the humility of someone with low objectives or a weak self-image, but a sterner, stronger, more discerning humility cultivated as a means of preaching, by personal integrity as much as by words, the gospel of the humble Son of God. “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up”; and humility in the academy—the humility not of self-abasement but of service—seeks simply to build both knowledge and goodness in its pupils as a work of gratuitous love. That is why it is still an indispensable part of the Jesuit educational tradition.

Notes


2 For earlier analogues to the Didascalicon, see Taylor, 28-36.

3 Didascalicon, praef. (ed. Buttmer 2.9f; PL 176.741A); tr. Taylor 44 (altered).

4 Didascalicon 6.13; Hugh discusses meditatio briefly among the essential techniques of reading in 3.10, where he characterizes it as “sustained thought along planned lines (cogitatio frequens cum consilio)” laid
out within the text itself (ed. Buttmer 59.13; PL 176.772B; Taylor 92). The promised later treatment may be his little treatise *De meditatione* (PL 176.993-998). Taylor (225) suggests that the closest Hugh ever came to a full discussion of meditation is his still somewhat sketchy work, *De contemplatione et ejus speciebus*.

5 *Didascalicon* 3.13 (ed. Buttmer 61.22-62.1; PL 176.773C; Taylor 94f [alt.]). Hugh begins his treatment of the *disciplina* required for good reading by quoting a Latin epigram listing six conditions—none of them strictly academic—that make for the good student:

- *mens humilis*, *studium quaerendi*, *vita quieta*,
- *scrutinium tacitum*, *paupertas*, *terra aliena*:
- *haec reserare solent nonnulla obscura legenti*.

(A humble mind, eagerness in inquiry, a calm life, silent research, poverty, [living in] a foreign land: these can open up for a reader many an obscure passage.)

Hugh's own discussion of *disciplina* simply takes each of these conditions in order and reflects on their importance. Hugh attributes the epigram simply to "some wise person," but John of Salisbury (*Policraticus* VII, 13) attributes it to Hugh's contemporary, Bernard of Chartres. It seems to have become something of a standard thumbnail portrait of the ideal university scholar, and was later quoted by such medieval academic lions as Peter Comestor, Vincent of Beauvais and Guibert of Tournai; see Taylor 214, n. 61, for references.


7 "*non nisi summis interesse dignantur*": here Taylor's translation, "deigned to concern themselves only with the highest problems" (95), seems to do less justice both to grammar and to context.

8 *Didascalicon* 3.13 (ed. Buttmer 62.5-11; PL 176.773.D; tr. Taylor, 95 [alt.]).

9 Ibid. (ed. Buttmer 63.23-26; PL 176.774D; Taylor, 96 [alt.]).

In this passage, especially in the description Hugh goes on to give of contemporary "peddlers of trifles" who "wrinkle their noses" at those who profess a simpler, more classically biblical theology, some have seen a veiled attack on his fractious contemporary Peter Abelard; see Taylor, 215, n. 68, for further references.

10 Ibid. (ed. Buttmer 64.7-16; PL 176.774D-775A; Taylor, 97 [alt.]).
11 In the Vineyard of the Text (see above, n.1), esp. 81-83, 93-124.
12 Ibid., 75.
14 See, e.g., Didascalic praef. and 3.12-19; cf. Illich, 78-81.
15 The most comprehensive recent account of the origin and character
of early Jesuit schools and universities, in the context of the original corpo-
rate ministry of the Society of Jesus, is John W. O’Malley, The First Jesuits
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 200-242. For further
bibliography, see esp. 418f, n.2.
16 See O’Malley, 208-215.
17 For a discussion of the modus Parisiensis, which seems to have had
its origin in the Low Countries in the late fifteenth century, and for further
bibliography, see O’Malley, 216f.
18 Constitutiones Societatis Jesu IV, 6.1. In the section dealing with
the foundation and running of educational institutions, in Part IV of the Constr.
Constitutions, the language of promoting the “greater glory of God” and
engaging in God’s “service” by serving one’s neighbor recurs like a refrain,
justifying whatever prudential adaptations and innovations may be required:
e.g., IV, 5.1.4, 6.1-3, 15 (service); 7.1 (service), 3; 9.2-3; 10.4, 5, 7, 10;
11.1; 12.1, 3; 13.4; 14.3; 15, n. E; 16.5; 17.8.
19 Const. IV, 6.17; cf. 15.4
20 Ibid. IV, 15.4.
21 Ibid. IV, 10.4.
22 Regulae de Scholis in Hispania IV, 1, 4, 13: in L. Lukács (ed.),
Monumenta Paedagogica Societatis Jesu [henceforth MPSI] 1 (Rome 1965),
206f.
23 MPSI 2 (Rome 1974) 43.
24 For a fuller—if still highly abbreviated—treatment of this same de-
velopment of the Christian and Jesuit ideal of humility, see my article, “To
Be More Like Christ: The Background and Implications of ‘Three Kinds of
25 Nicomachean Ethics IV, 3 (1123a34-1125a36); see also Eudemian
Ethics 3.5 (1233a1-25) and Posterior Analytics 213 (97b15-25). For a full
discussion of the ideal of magnanimity in Greek philosophy and the later
Christian tradition, see R.-A. Gauthier, O.P., Magnanimité: L’idéal de la
grandeur dans la philosophie païenne et dans la théologie chrétienne (Paris:
Vrin, 1951).
FOR THAT I CAME

26 Nic. Eth. IV, 3 (1123b2-13).
27 See, for instance, Nic. Eth. 4.3 (1125a1); Rhetoric 2.6.10 (1384a4).
29 See, e.g., Clement, Paed. 3.6; Strom. 2.22.132.1f; 4.5.19; 4.6; Origen, Contra celsum 1.29; 2.24; 6.15; 7.55.
30 See, e.g., Conf. 7.20.26; also Tractatus 25 in Johannis Evangelium 16 ("That the cause of all our illness—our pride—might be healed, the Son of God came down and was made humble . . ."); De catechizandis rudibus 8 ("A proud humanity is a great misery, but an even greater mercy is a humble God").
31 Sermon 37.2f.
32 For the term φιλοσοφία as a generic name for the religious life after the mid-fourth century, see, e.g., Basil of Caesarea, Ascet. 2.1 (PG 31.881B); John Chrysostom, Hom. 6 in I Cor. 3 (PG 6151); Ps.-Dionysius, De eccl.hier. 6.3.2 (PG 3.533D).
34 Institutiones 4.39.3.
35 Ibid. 4.39.2.
36 Rule of the Master 10.5; Rule of St. Benedict 7.5.
37 Collationes in Hexaemeron 5.10 (Quaracchi ed. 5 [1891] 355): “Sexta est magnanimitas, ut appretietur magna et despicietur vilia. Haec est humilitas, quae despiciat apparentia magna et appretiat ea quae videntur esse parva, sunt tamen magna vere.” Bonaventure goes on to say that Aristotle’s description of magnanimity is simply wrong, unless the honor a person is seeking is that of “eternal things.” Cf. Bonaventure’s earlier tract on humility, among his four Quaestiones de perfectione evangelica (probably delivered at Anagni in 1255/56), in which he characterizes humility as part of true wisdom (Quaracchi ed. 5 [1891] 120B-122B); see also the anonymous Franciscan tract, Compendium de virtute humiliatis, attributed to St. Bonaventure: Quaracchi ed. 8 (1898) 658-663; cf. proleg. 3.5 (ibid. cii).
38 Summa theologiae IIa IIae, q. 129; q. 161.
39 Ibid., Q. 129, a. 3, ad 4.
40 Summa theologiae IIa IIae, q. 161, a. 2, ad 3.
41 See Summa Theologiae IIa IIae, q. 161, a. 1, ad 5; a. 2 ad 3; a. 3,
obj. 1 and corpus; a. 4, obj. 1; q. 162, a.5; q.170, a.d 2, obj.2; cf. Gauthier, Magnanimité 318-371, 444-465.


43 Examen generale 6: Ganss, ibid., 80.


45 Ibid. 98 (tr. Ganss, 147).

46 See, for example, the contemplation on the Incarnation, nn. 102, 108; the contemplation on the Nativity, nn. 114, 116; the contemplation on Jesus’ obedience to his parents, n. 134.

47 Spir. Ex. 135 (tr. Ganss, 154).

48 Spir. Ex. 142 (tr. Ganss, 155).

49 Spir. Ex. 146 (tr. Ganss, 155).

50 Spir. Ex. 165 (tr. Ganss, 160).

51 Spir. Ex. 166 (tr. Ganss, 166).

52 See Summa Theologiae Ila Ilae, q. 161, a. 2-3.


58 Ibid., 5 (649).

59 Ibid., 6ff. (649).

60 Ibid., 9-14 (650).

61 Ibid., 15 (650).

62 Ibid., 20 (651).
Howard J. Gray, S.J.

How Do You Get a Jesuit to Say "Yes"? Obedience as a Virtue

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Despite the breezy title, "How Do You Get a Jesuit to Say 'Yes'?," obedience does not shine through as an illustrious modern virtue. A recent treatment on obedience begins on this note: "The common sense understanding of obedience simply as compliance with the bidding of another (generally of superior status) is inadequate for understanding this much-maligned virtue in the spiritual life." ¹

As this quotation suggests, there are two obstacles to a contemporary appreciation of obedience. One obstacle emerges out of a variety of human experiences from animal training to traffic ordinances, from totalitarian regimes to liturgical laws, from following a map to getting through customs inspectors. What these experiences have in common is the connotation of imposition and a hint of punishment. The second obstacle emerges out of the way in which obedience has been taught, analyzed, and appealed to. Consequently, we suspect appeals to obedience because these will eventuate in restrictions, limitations over our freedom, and the exercise of power over us. Furthermore, if we consider the history of obedience, we also think about militaristic order and the kinds of inhumane execution of anonymous commands which have devastated cities and founded concentration camps. In short, obedience as a virtue needs to be rescued from obedience as an aberration of authority and an enslavement of the human spirit. Moreover, as we talk about obedience in this context of Ignatian tradition, we also have to move beyond simply liberating obedience from poor models of obedience to focus on obedience as the expression of something which is fully human and socially graceful. All this suggests the structure of this essay:

1. The Liberation of Obedience
2. The Formational Styles of Obedience
3. Ignatian Insights into the Virtue of Obedience
The Liberation of Obedience

As a Christian virtue, obedience takes its inspiration from revelation—the Hebrew and Christian scripture—and from tradition. While cultural contexts influence revelation, sacred texts, and the transmission of a spiritual heritage, the first "liberation" of obedience involves freeing the reality from exclusively or dominantly secular models of obedience. Allow me to take a synoptic view of the religious tradition.

Obedience comes from the Latin word audire, to hear. The etymology helps because it signals the radical meaning of obedience in both the Hebrew and Christian traditions: to hear the voice of God and to respond faithfully to that word.²

As a "listening heart," obedience is not so much a virtue within a complex of virtues, but rather an essential disposition for a religious person. Heart is the sacred place of decision, where thought, feeling, passion and choice meet.³

In scripture the heart gathers together whatever a woman or man is as human: history, present life, destiny. When David is called a man after God's own heart, David has been paid the supreme compliment. The final wound of Jesus, the piercing of his side, has long been interpreted as the symbolic opening of the Spirit, as the gift of Christ to his disciples, the ongoing revelation of his heart. In this context of call and response, then, obedience as a Christian disposition is the active and attentive heart which searches for and finally surrenders to the call of God.

In the Hebrew tradition two events seem to me to define this active, attentive heart: covenant and creation, the calls to love and to life.⁴ The sustained call to be God's people, sustained through defections and doubts, desertions and desecrations is not something that happens to the Hebrews. Rather it establishes their identity and their mission: to be God's chosen people. Obedience for the Hebrew is, then, a surrender to love freely extended and faithfully sustained.

Allied to this covenant-obedience is the creative-obedience of God. The love of God is also life-bestowing. The two creation accounts of Genesis explore the making of the human as gift and as obedience, i.e., as freely given but as expecting faithful response to the gift. What is important is the context, the narrative environment of this creative-obedience. In his collec-
tion of tales taken from the Hebrew scripture, Marc Gellman recasts the creation story as one of partnership. God and men and women are forever partners—"that's the deal." What Gellman catches is the mutuality of creation, a context of reciprocal donations, of freedom in harmony. Obedience for the Hebrew was this radical call to love and to life.

The Christian tradition develops its understanding of obedience within this Hebrew context and through the experience and teaching of Jesus. Two texts help to focus the Christian emphases: the Last Supper narrative in John's Gospel and the Hymn in Philippians 2:1-11: "I no longer call you servants but friend." And

Though he was in the form of God
Jesus did not deem equality with God
Something to be grasped at.
Rather he emptied himself
And took the form of a slave
Being born in human likeness.

He was known to be of human estate
And it was thus that he emptied himself,
Obediently accepting even death,
Death on a cross.

Because of this
God highly exalted him
And bestowed on him the name
Above every other name,

So that at Jesus' name
Every knee must bend
In the heavens, on the earth
And under the earth,

And every tongue proclaim
To the glory of God the Father:
JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!
Out of his personal call and response, Jesus explored the power of obedience to free a person for more life and deeper love. When the time came for him to characterize that movement to more life and to deeper love, he told his disciples that the only way he could characterize what it all meant was to call them his friends. Thus the first liberation of obedience is to see it as a call to a discipleship of love and life, to richer life and to deeper love, to partnership with God after the likeness of Jesus.

The second liberation of obedience is more contemporary, the labor of Vatican II. For younger Catholics that Council seems remote in time and distant from their experience. Nonetheless, Vatican II remains a methodological shift which we Catholics still struggle to assimilate. It is this “shift” which I want to underscore. It is a shift from legalism to pastoral adaptation. And this shift has important ramifications for how we see obedience. Permit me to make some bold generalizations.

First, that shift was a move from the regulation of worship, conduct and ideas to the adaptation of these to the needs of people, to different cultures, to ecumenical reconciliation. Thus the finality of worship was not rubrical good order but community prayer. Conduct looked less at individual acts and more at the overall disposition of the person. Ecumenical relations moved from apologetics to dialogue.

It is not my intent nor is it my mind-set to defend aberrations. It is my intention to point to a shift which, along with tradition, liberates obedience from a simplistic imposition from a higher authority to a partnership in a shared good: to pray truthfully, to act with integrity, and to be open to the fullest appreciation of God’s revelation. The liberation of obedience is a religious act that founds the virtue on God’s persistent call and the enduring human freedom to answer that call, seeing in call and response a way to live and to love.

The Formation Styles of Obedience

My concern here is simply to sketch how people can enter into obedience, the ways to make obedience a virtue, i.e., a facility for love and for life. Unfortunately, how depends on what, i.e., the method of moving towards a virtue depends on what you want to accomplish. A few years ago,
in preparation for the Synod of 1994 on Consecrated Life, I was asked to review the way religious life had moved since the time of Vatican II. At that time I suggested that there were three models of virtue-formation. I believe this analysis is still helpful.  

**Control Model**

The first formation model, the control model, depends on behavior modification to inculcate virtue. Through a system of reward and punishment, praise and blame, acceptance or rejection, you teach people to act in ways acceptable to the power group (the parents, the school, the business, the religious congregation). Obedience is pervasive throughout this system of training, but it is an obedience of compliance.

The advantages of this way of learning virtue are that it is ordered and clear. When it works well the child, the student, the employee, the novice can move from externally acceptable behavior to internal conviction. The disadvantages of this way of learning are that it can remain only external acquiescence and not invite participation in the deeper values of the group, the family, the institution; that it can degenerate into a formalism that is merely social and not ethical (i.e., people do the right thing only in the group, the family unit, the institution and act otherwise when authority is not present); that it can so repress people that eventually they rebel and reject not only the control model but also the values they should have integrated.

**The Permissive Model**

The second model claims that a person attains virtue when she/he is totally trusted, when the innate goodness of people is celebrated, where there is an environment of acceptance, support and freedom. In this model children, students, novices explore all options and the authority figures—parents teachers, novice directors—"walk with them." The role of the mentor in the permissive model is to give example, to exercise patience, to extend forgiveness but never to impose or to intervene. Obviously, no one espouses total permissiveness, but here I am talking about emphases, priorities, founding educational values.

The advantage of the permissive model is that it does indeed exhibit trust and acceptance; and therefore, that it can be a wonderful remedy for people who have been hurt by an excessive control model of formation. The
major disadvantages of the permissive model are that it can end up being all method with no values to identify the group, the family, or the institution. This model can confuse formative minds and hearts by approving conflictual values and behavior. This model can promote anarchy and cause permanent psychic injury—all under the name of freedom.

**Identity Model**

In this third model of virtue formation there is a careful melding of realities: e.g., freedom and accountability, initiative and responsibility, spontaneity and discipline, individual care *and* social obligations. What the identity model says is that the group, the family, the institution represents a set of shared values which give it meaning (identity). This model articulates these values as values and invites its members—family, students, faculty, parish, employees—to grow into making those declared values, that declared identity, their own. The identity model allows for development; it knows the need for trial and error, for time, for accepting ordinary human frailty. But this model is unafraid to separate itself from whatever would destroy the group. It is this third model of virtue formation I espouse. Regarding Jesuit obedience, this information model clearly enunciates what it means to belong to this religious community; it accepts the need for cooperation, mutuality, and understanding; it realizes people need time to interiorize values. But this model looks towards seeing movement towards discipleship with Christ as the way to discover life and love in God.

**Ignatian Insights into the Virtue of Obedience**

Ignatian obedience builds on a scriptural foundation and an educational model. Ignatian obedience presumes a man's personal religious experience of hearing God's call and of a desire to be faithful to that call. Ignatian obedience presumes that this call can adapt to the call of other people who also feel an attraction to Jesuit life, i.e., that there is an obedience to the ways people live in harmony and share their life. Finally, Ignatian obedience is an evolving virtue so that as men mature in their life together, the virtue develops and becomes, gracefully, part of the way they want to live.

There are two key experiences in Jesuit obedience—in getting Jesuits to say "yes." First there is the experience of the Ignatian Spiritual Exer-
OBEDIENCE AS A VIRTUE

cises, a thirty-day period of solitude and direction whereby a man explores the meaning of Christ for his life and the way in which he will live in conscious discipleship with Christ. The Exercises are not a moral uplift geared towards simply changing your life. Neither are they an intensive self-scrutiny which will give a person a kind of mastery over vice. They are primarily a revelation of how God in Christ calls one to adult discipleship to labor for the kingdom Jesus preached and taught.

I would express the rhythm of this school of discipleship in four movements: the hospitality of creation, reconciliation, and renewed call (Week I); friendship as a personal invitation to hear Christ’s plan to unite people for the work of the kingdom (Week II); the deeper understanding of suffering as part of human existence which Christ did not remove but taught us to transform by love (Week III); and the deeper understanding of the Resurrection as Christ’s reversal of sin and death whereby we continue in his Spirit to live with confidence and trust the values of the kingdom (Week IV). The Exercises are a prayerful deepening of obedience as the willingness to be human in surrendering to God’s desires for our life and to God’s directions for our love. The Exercises orient a Jesuit to obedience as a fundamental disposition of heart, endlessly capable of being led by God-in-Christ to let the ways of God come to human reality in his personality, through his talents, within his history.

Second, the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus are the expression of shared Jesuit values in formation, in choosing ministries, in living in a union of minds and heart, and in formal coordination of all this through a balance of government, initiative, and subsidiarity. There are ten parts to the Jesuit Constitution which represent a kind of pilgrimage from entrance into the order through spiritual and intellectual formation to mature final commitment to the apostolic work and community life of the members.

In this limited space I am going to restrict myself to a discussion about what grounds obedience throughout the Constitutions. First, it is an obedience that presumes mutual trust, affection, and reverence between superiors and fellow Jesuits. In one sense, Jesuits believe that all have come to obey because from the superior general in Rome to the most recent novice all are trying to hear what God has to say.

Because of his vantage point as overseer of the entire Society and
because of the expected grace of God working through him, the superior general is the chief animator of Jesuit obedience. But his leadership is a partnership, an authority exercised in brotherhood to help each Jesuit achieve his sense of corporate response to God’s call. Jesuits follow Ignatius Loyola, their founder, in seeing God’s impulse for good as both descending and ascending. God’s inspiration and wisdom come out of designated leadership but God’s prophetic and creative power also comes out of on-the-site experiences and discoveries.

The second feature of Jesuit obedience is that it adapts to pastoral needs, to developmental progress in understanding how God works in a specific situation, to a variety of cultures. Through the General Congregations, held either to elect a general or to treat important, worldwide matters, Jesuits throughout the world have a forum for reviewing and then reorienting their response to God’s call. God calls in prayer, in scripture, in worship—but God also calls in the signs of our times, in the needs of people, in the challenges to faith, to justice, to a humane society. The Jesuit Constitutions genuinely celebrate the flexibility of obedience, as a dynamic and imaginative response to God’s new ways of summoning them.

Thus Jesuit obedience—getting a Jesuit to say “yes”—is a rich incorporation of tradition and innovation, of a willingness to be directed but a freedom to represent new data and urgent pastoral demands. Because this virtue touches every aspect of his life, a Jesuit sees obedience as the socialization today of God’s loving covenant and God’s ardent call to live. A Jesuit sees obedience as the way to God for him as the member of a religious community called to help people.

Conclusion

What does this mean for Georgetown today? Let me suggest three possibilities. First, Christian obedience looks toward context. And the authentic context for every obedience is one’s own sense of God’s presence. Radically, obedience is religious, transcendent. How is God working in this reality?

Second, obedience has to emerge out of human reality. What are the ways God has called in history, tradition, cultures? God calls through hu-
Obedience as a Virtue

man voices and human needs. This demands a reverence for God's action in our environment, our cities, our poor, our young generations as well as in our sophisticated communications systems, our powerful centers, our wealthy and forceful populations.

Third, obedience is a call to do, especially to do the hard work of the kingdom—a work of justice, of peace, of love. Every mission statement is a command and a call. Georgetown's mission, as a place where God can still be heard, is to foster the kind of ethico-religious context where all the voices of God are reverenced so that all God's work placed now in our hands can be done.

Notes


4 Michael D. Guinan, O.F.M., To Be Human Before God: Insights from Biblical Spirituality (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994). I do not want to saddle Guinan with my reading; I merely want to suggest that he has many of these themes in his graceful overview.


6 I am deeply indebted to the essays found in the collection by John W. O'Malley, S.J., Tradition and Transition: Historical Perspectives on Vatican II (Wilmington: Glazier, 1989). I have treated some of this in "Shift in Theology," The Way Supplement 65 (Summer, 1989), 54-65.

Fred Kammer, S.J.

Faith That Does Justice

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The monarch was expected to defend the widowed, the orphaned, and the poor from all exploitation and injustice. According to documents unearthed at Ugarit, failure to protect the poor could cost a king his throne.

Howard LaFay
National Geographic

The bus grew strangely quiet as we passed through a small Mississippi town. In a conspirational hush, a voice behind me whispered to his companion, “This is where the lynching was.” I was a young teenager riding back across the deep south to New Orleans. . . The relative quiet of the fifties was giving way to the turbulent beginnings of the sixties when civil rights sit-ins, marches, and violence would turn our well-ordered world and my young self-awareness upside down.

Growing up Catholic in New Orleans was not exactly Southern in the traditional sense. True, I had painted large confederate flags on the walls of my bedroom. I fancied myself a Civil War buff. . . My contemporaries and I had no black friends or peers, although we often roller-skated on the same streets as black youth and walked past one another on the way to our separate schools. A series of black maids had cared for my brothers, sisters and me since our youngest years, prepared our family meals, and also were second mothers to us. My parents invested them with full authority in their absence; and in our own way, we had deep affection for them.

Being Catholic, however, put a different slant on things. Our family had Irish, French, Italian, Scotch-Irish, and German lines. We knew about the Klan: that we, along with the Jews, were part of their three K’s of hatred. Though our Catholic schools had been as segregated as the public system in the forties and fifties, articulate voices of reason and compassion in the Catholic community were threatening the social status quo which we young Southerners had imbibed with the air and water.
My awakening conscience was confronted first by a string of young Jesuit teachers in high school who questioned the assumptions that underlay a separate-but-equal mythology. They challenged us to reach beyond the prejudice of our families and society to a civil and gospel equality. . . .

One particular night in high school stands out for me in terms of the growing crisis. I had come downstairs to the living room to kiss my father goodnight before going to bed. He asked me about school, and I made the "mistake" of telling him about an article we had been discussing in class entitled "The Immorality of Segregation." For several hours that night my father tried to educate his second son in the realities of the South as he had grown up in it, and to teach me the rational underpinnings of segregation as it had been passed on to him. It was a mixture of fact, myth, reason, tradition, prejudice, Bible, experience, ignorance and feeling. The scene must have been repeated in tens of thousands of homes across the nation each year.

It was a failed lesson, however, because of the typical doubts young teenagers have about their parents' views, the strong counter-education we were receiving in school, and the innate fallacies and injustices of segregation itself. Perhaps, too, my father's position had been undermined years before by his own and my mother's moderation of their inherited social views, their wider sense of love and justice in which we were nurtured. . . .

On Easter night, 1963, I told my parents that I wanted to join the Jesuits after high school graduation that summer and study for the priesthood. . . . In December, 1973, I left Atlanta after my first years of legal services practice to study theology in Chicago. As a going-away present, a friend gave me a book by Ivan Allen, Jr., entitled Mayor: Notes on the Sixties. As mayor, Allen had presided over the progressive transformation of Atlanta during the turbulent sixties. Atlanta's changes stood in contrast for me with the tradition-bound conservatism of New Orleans, which had preferred to be a queen of the Old South rather than a molder of the New.

Then in my late twenties, I had taught catechism to rural, poor black youth as a Jesuit novice, written an unpublished book on the racial and economic politics of the War on Poverty in South Louisiana while in college, moderated a black Catholic youth group and done volunteer work in a
black public high school during philosophy studies in Mobile, and repre-
sented hundreds of black clients in Atlanta. When I took up Allen’s book,
then, I read with a sense of vividness and poignancy about his experience
with crossing the color line in Atlanta in 1947 to promote the Community
Chest Drive. Allen had sought the advice of his father about an invitation to
speak at the kickoff of the drive in the Negro community, to which the elder
Allen responded,

“Ivan, let me have a very honest discussion with you,” he said in his
office the day I went to see him. “My generation has completely failed
in every way to enlighten or solve the major issue which our section of
the country has: the racial issue. We haven’t confronted ourselves
with it. There is great prejudice, great trial and tribulation over the
whole thing. We’ve kept the nigger not in a second-class but in a third
or fourth-class position, and as a result we’ve impoverished him and
we’ve impoverished this section of the country. And the Southeast
will never amount to anything until it brings its level of citizenship up.
The very idea: here we are advocating human decency and freedom all
over the world, and we find ourselves with dirty skirts at home. It’s
time for some major changes. Your generation is going to be con-
fronted with it, and it will be the greatest agony that any genera-
tion ever went through.”

By the time I read these lines, many American cities had been burned
in the wake of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination, the Kerner Com-
mission Report had described two Americas, one white and prospering, the
other black and languishing, and the Vietnam War and the impeached Nixon
presidency seemed to have blinded us to the tragic realities of race and pov-
erty at home.

That made the advice from Ivan Allen, Sr., thirty years earlier, all the
more prophetic and painful. What he said confirmed the truth of what I had
seen and felt as events had swirled around me since grammar school. It also
promised that our future pain would be all the more searing the longer we
defered the question of racial injustice in America.

In the four coldest winters of my life, studying theology in Chi-
cago in the mid-seventies, one lesson came over dinner from a guest in my
Jesuit community. A member of our Old Testament faculty, she told us of
the discovery of the ancient city-state of Ebla in Syria. Ebla, in turn, became a symbol for me of the depth and breadth of the ancient responsibility of the human community and its leaders for the poor. This same responsibility was woven throughout the Hebrew scriptures and enfleshed in the prophets whom we studied in class.

In late September, 1975, a group of Italian archaeologists working on the Tell Mardikh dig in northwestern Syria discovered the largest and perhaps most significant third-millennium library to date. The library confirmed and helped to explain their 1968 discovery of a previously unknown city-state named Ebla. The city-state of Ebla spanned a period from 3000 B.C. until its final destruction by invading Hittites in 1600 B.C. At its height in the mid-third millennium (c. 2300 B.C.), the city proper had about thirty thousand inhabitants and it dominated an area populated by two hundred fifty to three hundred thousand persons.

Archaeologists who unearthed the library school or archive in 1975 discovered there more than sixteen thousand preserved clay tablets which had baked hard when the city-state was sacked and burned by Akkadians in 2250 B.C. Included were tablets translating Ugaritic and other languages into Eblaite, so the discoverers had a relatively easy route into the language of Ebla. There they found that some scripture references thought to be apocryphal, poetic, or merely imaginary were in fact realities in the ancient Mediterranean world. In time the Ebla find may contribute most significantly to our understanding of the Hebrew scriptures.

The most significant revelation for my purposes from the initial Ebla discoveries was summarized in an article in the December, 1978, *National Geographic* entitled, "Splendor of an Unknown Empire":

All roads lead to Ebla throughout much of the Middle East, long before Rome held sway. Once there, those roads went directly to the steps of the royal palace. Ebla erected no walls around its palace, only around the city itself. Eblaites believed their leaders should be accessible and accountable. A king ascended the throne not strictly through lineage but by election, and was responsible for the welfare of widows, the orphaned, and the poor. If derelict, a king could be ousted by a group of elders.
The author comments:

Wandering through the royal quarters, I reflected on one singularly attractive obligation of kingship in the Middle East. The monarch was expected to defend the widowed, the orphaned, and the poor from all exploitation and injustice. According to documents unearthed at Ugarit, failure to protect the poor could cost a king his throne.3

This observation provides a glimpse of one aspect of the culture of the region in which the Hebrews lived and in which their scriptures would develop. More than simply a regional note, however, it suggests a more universal understanding of public obligations having deep roots in the self-understanding of at least some ancient peoples. As either regional or universal, however, it can also serve to enhance our understanding of the Israelites' own attitude toward property, power, and the poor in the midst of their communities.

Triple Revelations from Genesis

When we turn to the first pages of the Hebrew scriptures, we discover the two creation stories which open the book of Genesis, each flowing from a different oral tradition among the Hebrews. The first and historically later version, beginning with verse 1:1, is the familiar seven-day creation story, fashioning order from primordial chaos. On the first day God said, "Let there be light," and so forth, until on the seventh day "God rested."

What is important in these creation narratives is not the science—or mythology—that was the currency of the day, but the underlying theology or faith assertions which the authors intend to convey, namely, . . . that what God saw was good. The very substance of creation—the earth, stars, plants, animals, and, ultimately, humankind—are essentially, by their nature, good. . . .

The second and older Genesis story begins in the very next verse (Gen 2:4) after the seven-day version. In this story, instead of the progression from light and darkness to water and land, then to fish, birds, animals, and so forth, the storytellers open with Adam's placement in the garden. "The Lord God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to
cultivate and care for it” (Gen 2:15). God then creates the animals for Adam, and Adam names the animals. In the scriptures the naming event was a sign of power or dominion over the one named. This same theme appears in the first creation story as well, when the man and woman are instructed to subdue and “have dominion” (Gen 1:28) over the earth.

This reveals the second critical faith affirmation of the Genesis narratives: the dominion which humankind is to have over this creation. Not only is creation good, but we as humans are gifted by the creator with responsibility for and dominion over the earth around us, over all creation. It is important at this point to distinguish dominion from domination or exploitation. Theologian John Pawlikowski explains:

There is absolutely no basis in the Genesis notion for unbridled economic exploitation of natural resources which has often occurred under modern industrial and agricultural capitalism. A careful reading of the Genesis accounts of human creation clearly gives great encouragement to those ecologists who emphasize that the earth has been left in humanity’s hands as a sacred trust. Human dominion over the rest of creation is not to be one of exploitation or simple dominance. Rather, it is to be a caring rule over creation modeled on God’s ultimate dominion.6

To have dominion is to be like the Lord (Dominus in Latin) who first poured out life into creation, to be procreative and co-creative. We then recognize and act from an awareness that we are intimately related to the earth in a mutually nurturing and life-giving communion.

This sense of dominion of creation extends far beyond what we normally associate with the natural environment, e.g., earth, air, and water. Pope John Paul II understands the biblical mandate and responsibility to have a double object: it is applicable to what we can call the “creation given” of the natural world; and it includes the “creation enhanced” that refers to all that we’ve done with creation since we as working people, homo faber, began cultivation of the land.7 Buildings, science, technology, societies, institutions, schools, laws, games, rules, customs, music, languages, and books—all these components of reality have come to be from the givenness and goodness of God through the instrumentality of human hands, labor, and co-creativity. They now come under the scope of human responsibility for dominion.
Ultimately the Genesis texts are saying we have been given all that is good, and we have care and responsibility for it. Goodness and dominion are the first two critical faith assertions in the creation stories. But with them comes a kind of caveat: we are not owners! We are tenants and caretakers of the earth in a sense deeply rooted in the scriptural understanding that this is God's earth, created good by God. That insight profoundly affects our use of the earth and our respectful and even reverent care for the earth and for creation's giftedness.

Creation is a gift; women and men are to be faithful stewards, in caring for the earth. They can justly consider that by their labor they are unfolding the Creator's work.⁸

So compelling is this sense of responsibility and so destructive are the attitudes of domination and ownership in the world today, even toward nature, that religious commentators have reclaimed the concept of stewardship. While "dominion" is essentially accurate, using the word "stewardship" provides the appropriate nuance to the biblical faith insight.

A third and related insight of the early scriptures is captured in the single phrase, "I will be your God and you will be my people" (Lev 26:12), an almost shorthand summary of the intimate bondedness between Yahweh and the Hebrew people which is expressed through the covenant of Sinai. There, in the dramatic climax of the Exodus event and journey, the divine liberator, who had acted as the "next of kin" in freeing the enslaved Israelites from Egypt, freely bonded them to one another and to Yahweh as one family.

Rather, in divine providence it was the momentous achievement of Moses to perceive Yahweh as desiring to form one family with His people, as intervening in history to maintain their freedom for His service and thus revealing the bonds of fraternal justice and fidelity to the oppressed as primal expressions of His Will for all time. The God of Moses was Yahweh, a God of radical justice, not caprice, a generous and loyal kinsman to those who truly love Him (Ex 20:6) and an ever present redeemer in times of oppression.¹⁰

Thus the inspiration of Moses to intrinsically connect the nature of the Lord Yahweh and the demands of social justice was "radical" in the sense of
the Latin *radix* (root, foundational). The Israelites, then, were constituted a covenant community in which the Lord Yahweh really dwelled: first in the tent of a nomad, and then in the fortress-sanctuaries and towns of the people as they settled the promised land.

This religious insight of the Hebrew scriptures is a far cry from the "Jesus and me" spirituality that some Christians have adopted as their individualized version of the Judaeo-Christian heritage. On the contrary, the scriptures maintain strongly that our spiritual heritage is innately communal from the very first days that a nomad God made common cause with a chosen people. In radical contrast to the dominant ethic of American individualism the scriptures portray human existence as communal in nature and "that an adequate definition of an individual requires some reference also to community."

Three key concepts, then, are at play here, each fleshing out the meaning of our creation in the "image and likeness" of God. At the heart of each is a revelation of God, a sharing of some aspect of God's own truth and life, which in turn reveals to us a corresponding aspect of our own truth. First, in the dynamic of creating, the creator shares the very fact of divine existence and goodness—God's own goodness. In so doing, we are created "very good" in our own being and becoming. Second, God shares divine dominion over the creation and, in that very instant, endows us as co-creators, stewards of the earth with a dominion of responsible and reverent care for the world. Third, God reveals divine kinship with us by freely choosing to dwell with the human community. We are thus constituted as a community of sisters and brothers to one another, one interdependent family with the Lord Yahweh.

Jubilee

Goodness, stewardship, and community also interplay to form a critical consensus around the sharing of the Earth's goods by all the members of the community. The not-familiar-enough Hebrew catchwords for this are the year of the Lord, the sabbatical year, and the jubilee year.

The jubilee year, or grand sabbatical, took its name from the trumpet which sounded to inaugurate the celebration. In the tradition it was to be every forty-ninth or fiftieth year. In that year the people were to be restored
to their full sense of community and right order: a community of faith and fidelity, sharing the goods of the earth, with God dwelling in their midst. This took place by restoring all community members, no matter what their standing or position, to a full share of the community’s goods. Property was to be returned to its original owners; slaves were to be freed; and all members restored to full membership, no matter what past misfortune or failure had occurred. With the restoration of freedom and property came a restored sense of dignity and participation in the community of faith. It also affirmed the integrity of the community itself.

 Beneath this custom, of course, lay the faith insight that the land was really Yahweh’s, a gift to the community for its use. All the community members, too, were kin to the Lord, not to be enslaved or rejected from active participation in the Lord’s family. This initial understanding of the land and its use did not extend to all those outside the Israelite community, with some notable exceptions. Some later Jewish teachers and the early Christian community, however, would find in the jubilee year a model for every community’s obligation of distributive justice. Underlying the practice of an equitable distribution of resources was the assumption that genuine need was due either to a breakdown in the equitable distribution of community resources or to the possession of a social identity, such as that of widow or orphan, over which an individual had no control.

While the jubilee tradition might be considered idyllic or primitive, it was rooted in deeply religious concepts and presented a social ideal for the people. This same sense of communality with the Lord and the earth, of distributing resources to meet basic human needs, and of resistance to exclusion from community participation persists today. It can be found in both particular cultural or ethnic groups and even in our own Anglo-American legal institutions. The Native Americans among us retain a sensitivity to common ownership which runs against the dominant private property ethic of American capitalism and much of our culture. Belief in tribal ownership and resistance to fencing the land, for example, seems close to the caution from Leviticus that, “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity . . . “ (25:23).
Native American customs also may suggest at a deeper level the close bondedness with Mother Earth which is transparent in the Genesis stories and the nurturing of the earth found in the jubilee custom of letting the fields be regenerated in each seventh year.

This compelling sense of the communal destination intended for the Earth’s goods is not just the province of ancient or primitive peoples. A similar biblical sense of ourselves and the subordinate role of property rights seems built in to the fabric of contemporary laws as well. “Starting all over”; “restoring a person to right order”; “no one should be so down that they cannot get up again”; “beginning again”—these are shorthand, for example, for our bankruptcy or insolvency laws. A basic premise is woven through the American legal tradition of bankruptcy and sanctioned by the Constitution that property rights ultimately are subordinate to human needs and human dignity. In bankruptcy proceedings, we say in effect to these insolvents who are so down-and-out that they cannot get up again, “We cancel your debts; you can begin again.” It is a fresh doctrine reminiscent of the jubilee year.

Part of our bankruptcy system involves the related concept of homestead exemptions. Homestead exceptions are not just the familiar protection of certain income or assets from taxes, although even that function suggests that people need to preserve some basic minimum for survival, even again the otherwise legitimate needs of the body politic. The exceptions also insure that, in the event of bankruptcy, the bankrupt person or family is allowed to keep certain minimal goods as a kind of “grubstake” to begin again. They are not to be left standing naked in a barrel.

Even in our modern laws, then, there seems to survive a kind of jubilee year and its underpinning rationale—that the goods of the earth are meant for everybody, and that we are one human community. If people are brought so low that they cannot get up, the community helps them on their feet again and lets them start life over.

The Role of the Poor

The poor, then, play a critical part in this biblical view of the world and its understanding of persons, property, and community. The great prophet Isaiah puts it this way:
Is this the manner of fasting I wish,  
of keeping a day of penance:  
That a man bow his head like a reed,  
and lie in sackcloth and ashes?  
Do you call this a fast,  
a day acceptable to the Lord?  
This, rather, is the fasting that I wish:  
releasing those bound unjustly,  
untying the thongs of the yoke;  
Setting free the oppressed,  
breaking every yoke;  
Sharing your bread with the hungry,  
sheltering the oppressed and the homeless;  
Clothing the naked when you see them,  
and not turning your back on your own.  

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your wound shall quickly be healed;  
Your vindication shall go before you  
and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.  
Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer,  
you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!

(Isaiah 58:5-9)

Isaiah was underscoring the central place of the poor in the religious experience of the people, in their lived understanding of creation’s goodness and their responsibility for it as a community of fidelity.

From the time of the Deuteronomic laws, the covenant, and the earliest prophets, there was a special mention of the poor and a special place for them existed in the community. The Hebrew word for the poor is the anawim, the little ones, originally those “overwhelmed by want.” In the Old Testament, paralleling those to be protected by the king in Ebla, this group is primarily widows, orphans, and strangers (refugees, sojourners, migrants, immigrants). They are the poor and powerless in their society. Their very
existence and the harsh conditions of their lives reflected Israel’s violation of the social virtues rooted in its ancient ideals. Their poverty was often the result of unjust oppression. As such, they comprised:

Yahweh’s poor (ananim)—i.e., of the socially oppressed whose redress could only come from Yahweh, and who, therefore, became virtually synonymous with the just, the faithful remnant with the right to call upon the Lord.\(^{19}\)

In this special status before Yahweh, the ananim embodied Israel’s own history of enslavement in Egypt, when only the Lord could free them. Like the Hebrews in Egypt, these poor had special protection from, and special access to, the Lord:

You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt. You shall not wrong any widow or orphan. If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry (Ex 22:20-22).

Their special status reflected a combination of powerlessness, poverty, and systemic exclusion from full membership in the community and the protection it afforded. Yahweh, then, was their protector.

Today, commentators on the scriptures continue to use ananim in a developed sense that now explicitly includes four groups: widows, orphans, strangers, and the poor. This broad group of “the poor” more often than not described the actual economic condition of the first three and is sometimes used to include them. The poor also covered others whose primary status was solely economic poverty. All four are linked in the interconnection of poverty, powerlessness, and exclusion from the community and in the oppression they suffer at the hands of others. Believers are charged to see to it that the ananim are not without the means to meet their basic needs, nor are they to be excluded from the community or its decision-making by their lack of means.

As the scriptures and their faith understanding develop, care for the ananim actually became the test of Israel’s faithfulness. Rather than the objects of optional charity or pious generosity, the poor became the measure
of Israel's fidelity to the Lord Yahweh; and their right treatment lay at the heart of the concept of biblical justice and righteousness. Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutierrez puts the matter boldly:

To know Yahweh, which in Biblical language is equivalent to saying to love Yahweh, is to establish just relationships among men, it is to recognize the rights of the poor. The God of Biblical revelation is known through interhuman justice. When justice does not exist, God is not known; he is absent.  

Scripture scholar John Donahue, a key resource person for the U.S. Catholic bishops on their 1986 pastoral letter on economic justice, reiterates the point that we are not dealing with just examples or expressions of faith, but its center:

The core of Israel's faith is equated with the doing of justice. . . . The doing of justice is not the application of religious faith, but its substance. Without it, God remains unknown.

To restate this rather startling connection, without the doing of justice, God remains unknown! . . . Why is not caring for the poor—the failure to do justice—actually infidelity to God, a form of atheism? Why is justice at the core of faith for the nation of Isaiah and for contemporary faith communities?

Failing to do justice is partly infidelity because those who forget the poor cease to be dependent on Yahweh for creation and salvation. They erect other gods for themselves. From Genesis came the multiple revelations that this creation is good, a gift from a continually generous God who never forgets us and who will not leave us orphans. Not caring for the poor is a sign of losing this sense of Yahweh's graciousness and compassion and, instead, hoarding the things of the earth over-against other members of the community.

Repeatedly the Israelites invest their sense of value and security in things: their wealth, success, status, power, and treaties. These become gods for them. A favorite scriptural image for this is chariots and horses; in the societies in which these scriptures developed, chariots and horses were an overwhelming war machine. They were the privilege of rulers and the
wealthy, who relied for security on these prized instruments of war power rather than the Lord. Yahweh, however, is one at whose rebuke "chariots and steeds lay stilled" (Ps 76:7). Of Yahweh, the psalmist says "In the strength of the steed he delights not" (Ps 147:10).

Not caring for the poor is infidelity to God, moreover, because people who forget the poor no longer really believe in the divine being who Yahweh reveals or in their own truth as reflected in the face of the Lord. The "I am who am" is self-revealed in the scriptures as a God of the people, the community, who dwells in their midst and is passionately concerned for their well-being. Not caring for the poor is a sign that they do not know who God is: they do not understand what John Donahue calls the "web of relationships"\(^\) which have at their heart the covenanting God. That is why without the doing of justice God remains unknown.

If the poor around us are uncared for in contemporary societies, we too cannot know the one who says, "I will be your God, and you will be my people." This God-of-the-community gave creation to us as goodness to be shared by stewards of the earth, not owners. If we forget the poor, we have forgotten God and the truth of our own radical interconnectedness: to God as life-giver and to one another as sisters and brothers.

**The Cycle of Baal**

One prism for understanding this better is found in a process I call the cycle of Baal. As a hermeneutic device, the cycle exposes more clearly the connection between the truth of who God is revealed to be in the Hebrew scriptures and our truth reflected in that revelation. The cycle says something about faith communities and civic communities and also addresses the personal religious experience of Christians.

**Original Blessing**

This pattern of understanding revelation begins with a moment contemplating the profound mystery of creation as what Matthew Fox calls original blessing,\(^\) the original vision of Yahweh melding nature, humankind, and the divine presence. The Genesis faith-understanding comes into play: the goodness and right order existing among the people, a sense of
being stewards of creation, and their awareness of themselves as community. They care for the *anawim* in their midst: the widows, the orphans, and the strangers in an agricultural and herding society who basically have nothing. No land, no flocks, no wealth. The scriptures mandate, for example that farmers not harvest all of the grain out of the field so that the poor widow and orphan can come behind and glean the fields for enough to eat, to keep themselves alive. This example expresses the basic sense of community, of right order, of shared goods. Yahweh is in the midst of this kinship community, and all is well, even prospering.
Become Owners

What evolves in the people, because of the good things they have and their own hard work to develop them (creation and creation enhanced), is a sense that they are really owners. Their self-identity is transformed in a radical fashion that says, "This is mine. I have produced this. I am owner." Their importance is invested in what they have, not in their own goodness and divine image which is gift from God. Their pride is localized in their prosperity and accomplishments: the size of their flocks, the number and beauty of their children, the building of the temple, the success of their armies, and even their observance of religious customs.

This is a subtle, but powerfully pervasive, evolution reflecting an inner dynamic of wealth that is so frequently the target of warnings and cautions from religious leaders of many different traditions. Jesus himself tells a parable about just such a person who possesses so much that his greatest concern is holding onto and storing up his wealth:

There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest. He asked himself, "What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest?" And he said, "This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods and I shall say to myself, 'Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!'" But God said to him, "You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?" Thus will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God" (Lk 12:16-21).

The innate danger of wealth is that it becomes dominant, it turns the order of creation on its head and our possessions have dominion over us, and not vice versa.

Forget the Poor

The dominant passion in the life of the person in Jesus' parable—who is already rich—is the amassing of more wealth, not the needs of the community. The wealthy farmer's self-centeredness is unmistakable in the "I" and "my" and "myself" that dominate his thoughts. This sense of "ownership" breeds an organic development: forgetting the anawim. The farmer
forgets the poor. Instead of leaving the surplus harvest to be gleaned from the fields by those in need in the community, the farmer’s dominant concern is building larger barns to contain it.

 Forget Yahweh

The forgetting of the anawim was the critical sign of a more profound memory loss: forgetting Yahweh. It betrayed the more fundamental atheism of not knowing who God is and not really caring. We forget who and how Yahweh has been revealed, as a passionate lover of a people in the midst of whom stands God’s own tent. And we forget the truth of ourselves.

This was not an unexpected turn of events. Yahweh had repeatedly warned the Israelites about the seduction of prosperity and the tendency to forgetfulness that would result:

For the Lord, your God, is bringing you into a good country, a land with streams of water, with springs and fountains welling up in the hills and valleys, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, of live trees and of honey, a land where you can eat bread without stint and where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones contain iron and in whose hills you can mine copper. But when you have eaten your fill, you must bless the Lord your God, for the good country he has given you. Be careful not to forget the Lord, your God, by neglecting his commandments and decrees and statutes which I enjoin on you today: lest, when you have eaten your fill, and have built fine houses and lived in them, and have increased your herds and flocks, your silver and gold, and all your property, you then become haughty of heart and unmindful of the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery: who guided you through the vast and terrible desert with its saraph serpents and scorpions, its parched and waterless ground: who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock and fed you in the desert with manna, a food unknown to your fathers, that he might afflict you and test you, but also make you prosperous in the end. Otherwise, you might say to yourselves, ‘It is my own power and the strength of my own hand that has obtained for me this wealth.’ Remember then, it is the Lord, your God, who gives you the power to acquire wealth, by fulfilling, as he has now done, the covenant which he swore to your fathers. But if you forget the Lord, your God, and follow other gods, serving and worshiping them, I forewarn you this day that
you will perish utterly. Like the nations which the Lord destroys before you, so shall you too perish for not heeding the voice of the Lord, your God. (Dt 8:7-20)

This text from Deuteronomy closes predicting, in the wake of the forgetting of Yahweh, the next turns of the cycle of Baal: the resort to false gods and the resulting destruction of the community of Israel.

Create Other Gods

Humans never seem to really renounce God, but only make their gods more convenient, more like themselves. Complete and formal atheism often is quite unfashionable. The Hebrews—like most societies—had a religious identity, religious leaders, and religious practices and traditions, all the makings of a religious culture. Culturally, then, it was far more natural to reshape God than to be atheists, to create gods who were compatible with their own evolving sense of themselves as owners and property-holders, gods whose worship and allegiance would not disturb those status-rights.

The gods to which they so often turned were the fertility gods of Canaan the foremost of which is “Hadad, the Canaanite fertility god par excellence.” Local versions of Hadad, called the Baals, were the lords of each territory. Often their worship occurred in the mountains, the high places. These were gods more to human liking, gods who could be controlled or at least with whom deals could be made. They were not the jealous God Yahweh who stubbornly insisted on an intimate relationship with a chosen people, who wanted hearts, not sacrifices.

No, the Baals were gods satisfied with a few critically timed sacrifices and with cultic prostitution “thought to have the inevitable effect of constraining the divinity in a magical way to give what was desired, i.e. fertility.” Once appeased in this way, these gods not only were to assure fertility, but they certainly were not to interfere with ownership. The Israelites could exercise status-rights without sanction, forget the web of relationships that originally defined their community, and ignore the poor among them.

Self-Destruction

What followed was self-destruction. Scripture tells the story in terms of punishment, of Yahweh letting the Israelites succumb to their enemies, of
God raising up some neighboring and greater nation which invades the promised land, destroys Jerusalem, demolishes the temple, kills many of the people, sells their children into slavery, takes the rest into exile, and so forth. The story is repeated throughout the scriptures.26

A geopolitical analysis might suggest that the Hebrews had the poorest location on the main thoroughfare between the great powers that rose and fell throughout their history—namely, Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, and Rome. Each time major conflict ensued, they seemed to have made poor alliances. Like a chronic gambler at the track, they picked one loser after another with whom to align themselves, and suffered the expected consequences. A theological analysis, as is offered in the prophets, was that they relied on the wisdom of their own schemes and clever treaties, and not on the Lord Yahweh who was their one sure protector. Thus followed destruction.

Prophets: The Poor

Then the prophets came, raised up by the Lord Yahweh. Whether the people were in exile, in slavery, or merely in political and moral disarray, the message of the prophets was the same strong medicine.

Their primary theme was not “you have forgotten the rituals of the temple,” or “you have forsaken the scriptures.” Their central message was not to accuse the people of worshiping false gods. Seeing into and speaking the truth—which is the business of prophets—their message was, you have forgotten the poor. As Isaiah proclaimed, our God does not want sackcloth and ashes, holy days and sacrifices. Our God wants captives freed, bonds broken, the hungry fed, the naked clothed, and the poor restored to their rightful place in the midst of the community. That was the prophets’ message over and over, as we hear from Jeremiah:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Reform your ways and your deeds, so that I may remain with you in this place. Put not your trust in the deceitful words: “This is the temple of the Lord! The temple of the Lord! The temple of the Lord!” Only if you thoroughly reform your ways and your deeds; if each of you deals justly with his neighbor; if you no longer oppress the resident alien, the orphan, and the widow; if you no longer shed innocent blood in this place, or follow strange gods to your own harm, will I remain with you in this place, in the land which I gave your fathers long ago and forever (Jer 7:3-7).
The prophets came into the midst of the Hebrew people and protested that, because the hungry were unfed, the poor homeless, and the orphans uncared for, they had forgotten who their God was. And by forgetting the revealed God, they had lost their identity which was rooted in the truth of God and of this living community, ministering to the needs of the poor.

Kill the Prophets

The message of the prophets was not a popular message. The prophets were people of passion, embodying the pathos and passion of Yahweh the Lord. They were especially critical of the kings and of the monarchy itself as a corruption of the covenant closeness of Yahweh and the Lord’s kinship community. None of us likes being reprimanded, least of all kings, especially if it means letting go of our treasures of one kind or another. So most prophets received, not respect and reverence for one called by God, nor the thanks of a truly contrite people, but the usual fate of prophets: banishment or death.

The Lord seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of prophets who continued to rise up from the most unlikely places—reluctant truth-tellers at the bidding of Yahweh. Again and again their message was repeated in the hearing of the people and their rulers: You have forgotten the poor.

Cry Out For Deliverance

Eventually, from the midst of their own suffering and captivity, the Hebrews repented. They cried out for mercy and forgiveness, begging the Lord to again be their liberator and to restore them to their promised land and all that it symbolized to them about their caissons. The Psalms were filled with their laments to the Lord:

Why, O God, have you cast us off forever?
Why does your anger smolder against the sheep of your pasture?
Remember your flock which you built up of old,
the tribe you redeemed as your inheritance,
Mount Zion, where you took up your abode.
Turn your steps toward the utter ruins;
toward all the damage the enemy has done in the sanctuary.

(Ps 74:1-3)
The people cried out to be freed from slavery and exile, brought back to the promised land, and restored to right order and the sense of a community of fidelity to Yahweh and to one another.

Restoration

Invariably, Yahweh heard the cries of the people, and restored them to the land and to their intimate community with God and with one another. In reestablishing the covenant community, the temple is rebuilt; the law of the covenant is rediscovered; the songs of their religion are sung again; and Yahweh is celebrated in the midst of the chosen people. The restoration is always painted in brush strokes of beauty and grandeur, joy overflowing:

For thus says the Lord:
Shout with joy for Jacob,
    exult at the head of the nations;
    proclaim your praise and say:
The Lord has delivered his people,
    the remnant of Israel.
Behold, I will bring them back
    from the land of the north;
I will gather them from the ends of the world,
    with the blind and the lame in their midst,
The mothers and those with child;
    they shall return as an immense throng.
They departed in tears,
    but I will console them and guide them;
I will lead them to brooks of water,
    on a level road, so that none shall stumble.
For I am a father to Israel,
    Ephraim is my first-born.
Hear the word of the Lord, O nations,
    proclaim it on the distant coasts, and say:
He who scattered Israel, now gathers them together,
    he guards them as a shepherd his flock.
The Lord shall ransom Jacob,
    he shall redeem him from the land of his conqueror.
Shouting, they shall mount the heights of Zion,
they shall come streaming to the Lord’s blessings:
The grain, the wine, and the oil,
the sheep and the oxen;
They themselves shall be like watered gardens,
ever again shall they languish.
Then the virgins shall make merry and dance,
and young men and old as well.
I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will console and gladden them after their sorrows.
I will lavish choice portions upon the priests,
and my people shall be filled with my blessings,
says the Lord. (Jer 31:7-14)

The Cycle of Baal has come full turn, as the community is restored to
the land promised to them by Yahweh. Each time it was a new creation, a
new exodus, a new liberation in which Yahweh redeemed the kinship com-
munity and reestablished the original blessing.

In liberating and creating anew, Yahweh does justice for the commun-
ity, all of whom have experienced the status of the anawim in their
exile and suffering. In the process, the three fundamental insights of
their early scriptures were reinforced: the goodness of creation, their stewardship over these gifts, and their identity as community in which God dwelled and all, especially the poor, were cared for. Yahweh’s redemptive activity was itself a model of reaching out in love to those in need, a schooling for the restored community in its attitudes of justice toward the anawim.

Then, despite their painful exile experience and the bitterness of their
own tears, despite the lesson of justice at the gracious hands of Yahweh,
they repeat the cycle of Baal all over again. After too short a time, they take
what they have for granted, become owners again, forget the poor, and em-
bark on the same journey to faithlessness and destruction. Over and over
again. Yet, as Psalm 106 proclaims,

Many times did he rescue them,
but they embittered him with their counsels
and were brought low by their guilt.
Yet he had regard for their affliction
when he heard their cry;
And for their sake he was mindful of his covenant
and relented, in his abundant kindness,
And he won for them compassion
from all who held them captive (Ps 106:43-46).

The cycle of Baal is repeated all through the Hebrew scriptures. As such, it forms a framework for understanding more clearly the poignant history of the chosen people and the truths taught them by Yahweh through the preaching of the prophets and their concrete history of forgetfulness, faithlessness, and self-destruction.

This also can be the fate of nations that forget their own giftedness, that turn their eyes from their inner cities and rural poverty or the destitution of much of the third world, and that close their ears to the prophets who call them back to their traditions of faithfulness and community. That is the message of Pope John Paul II in his retelling to the United States of Jesus’ parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, models for him of the first world sitting in wealth and splendor while the third world lies in agony like a beggar at our door.

This cycle of Baal can enlighten our own individual spiritual journeys as well. When we are doing well, popular and admired, successful at career or family or community leadership or even ministry, we begin being self-congratulatory. We forget about other peoples’ needs, ignoring the web of relationships that binds us to the earth and its people. We forget who Yahweh really is and that all we have is a gift from God, to be shared with God’s people. We don’t want a God whose presence in community and in the poor makes demands on our privacy or our property. We create other gods or we find a god we can handle with a weekly trip to church or other religious practices. Then, to our constant surprise, we bring destruction upon ourselves!

In the midst of our own amazement and chagrin that this could happen to me, someone plays prophet for us. They tell us, "You brought this on yourself." It is the Hollywood and televangelist syndrome; it happens to people who are the daily bread of television and the tabloids and who are
widely admired and imitated. Why are we so shocked when they are committed to an institution for alcohol or drug addiction, make shambles of multiple marriages, or commit suicide? “They had it all,” we say. “What happened?”

The same thing happens to us all. When we realize the truth of what we have done to ourselves, if we do, we cry out to the Lord. We get back our sense of right order. We are renewed in compassion for those who are less fortunate. We are restored to the community, a community in which God resides and the poor are cared for in dignity. . . . Then we forget again. The cycle of Baal.

The story is similar for the Israelites as a collective people, for modern groups and nations, and for ourselves as individuals. When we forget the poor we are forgetting the truth of ourselves as revealed in the light of the truth of God. Whenever we do so, we bring darkness and blindness upon ourselves and, ultimately, destruction.

This radical consideration of the cycle of Baal sets us at the heart of religious faith, because in choosing who our God is we are making ourselves like our God. If we flee to the mountains (or the seashore or the suburbs) and there construct the gods with whom we can make deals, we are invariably making ourselves over in their likeness. Psalm 135 puts it this way:

The idols of the nations are silver and gold,
the handiwork of men.
They have mouths but speak not;
they have eyes but see not;
They have ears but hear not;
nor is there breath in their mouths.
Their makes shall be like them,
everyone that trusts in them. (Ps 135:15-18)

The shocking truth of the scriptures is that our everyday decisions determine the basic direction of our entire lives. We can choose to be like the Lord Yahweh, loving first, sharing the good of ourselves in the goods of creation, and standing in the midst of a faith community as passionate lovers and protectors of the poor. Or, we can be like the gods of the mountainsides, neither hearing nor seeing the poor in our midst, and having stone-cold hearts.
The American bishops summarized this reading of the Hebrew scriptures in Economic Justice for All:

Central to the Biblical presentation of justice is that the justice of a community is measured by its treatment of the powerless of society, most often described as the widow, the orphan, the poor and the stranger (non-Israelite) in the land. The law, the prophets and the wisdom literature of the Old Testament all show deep concern for the proper treatment of such people. What these groups have in common is their vulnerability and lack of power. They are often alone and have no protector or advocate. Therefore, it is God who hears their cries (Pss 109:21; 113:7) and the king who is God’s anointed is commanded to have special concern for them.28

As we have seen, the duty shared by Ebla’s kings and Israel’s rulers was also the duty of the entire community of Yahweh.

Scholars tell us, in fact, that there was an evolution in what the Hebrew scriptures prescribe about caring for the anawim. Originally, the duty to care for the poor was the responsibility of the entire community. With the rise of the monarchy, this responsibility became a royal task. However, “when the monarchy fails ethically and historically, Yahweh becomes the defender.”29 The Lord God, liberator of the Hebrews from Egypt, will raise up the poor, the scriptures say, because of the failure of the people and their rulers.

Ironically, God will accomplish this by reversing the process we have just noted. First, God will choose a royal defender of the poor; then, through the action of that liberator, God will again commission a new people of a new covenant to take upon themselves the responsibility for justice and the anawim. Understanding the revelation of the Hebrew scriptures about the truths of creation and of ourselves as a covenant community, however, is a prerequisite to entering into the further revelation in the Christian scriptures of God’s action as savior and molder of a new faith community. Again, as the bishops note:

These perspectives provide the foundation for a biblical vision of economic justice. Every human person is created in the image of God and the denial of dignity to a person is a blot on this image. Creation is
a gift to all men and women, not to be appropriated for the benefit of a few; its beauty is an object of joy and reverence. The same God who came to the aid of an oppressed people and formed them into a covenant community continues to hear the cry of the oppressed and to create communities which are responsive to God's word. God's love and life are present when people can live in a community of faith and hope. These cardinal points of the faith of Israel also furnish the religious context for understanding the saving action of God in the life and the teaching of Jesus.  

The poor, then, are understood from the Hebrew scriptures to stand at the center of the divine revelation: of who God is, what creation is for, how the human community is to live with one another, and what our own truth is. It is here that any understanding of Faithjustice must begin. Here is the soil in which it is planted, and from here it will grow and mature in the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

Notes


3 One interesting example of this is that the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah, long thought to be merely symbols of the destructiveness of sin, were in fact trading partners of the people of Ebla. Ebla site explorers also have found the name David—considered unique to the Hebrew Bible—in a list of rulers and officials of the city-state. Names similar to other biblical figures and places have also been found at Ebla.


5 Ibid., 741.


8 U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social

9 See Richard J. Sklba, “The Redeemer of Israel,” in Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 34, No. 1 (January 1972), 1-18 at 13: “The unknown God was understood and described in terms of the known man and his world. One such institution of special import is the figure of the go’el, the “redeemer” or “recovery” who is so called because as next of kin he bears the solemn obligation to step in and recover any enslaved relative (or property) and to restore him to his proper position within the family.”

10 Ibid., 16.


13 See Arthur Waskow, quoted by Frida Kerner Furman, “The Prophetic Tradition and Social Transformation,” in Prophetic Visions and Economic Realities, Charles R. Strain, editor (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 103-14 at 111: “The Torah’s definition of economic justice is that once every generation, every face-to-face community . . . in a society must attain equal ownership and control of the crucial means of production. If that doesn’t happen once a generation, you don’t have economic justice. The tradition doesn’t require continuous equality from moment to moment, month to month, year to year. What it does require is that we be willing to transform the society, to start over.”


15 See Roland J. Faley, cited above, 78: “The question arises how these jubilee directives (land return, resolution of debts, liberation of slaves) could have been practically carried out in any advanced state of social development. In truth, the Old Testament records no historical observance of the jubilee. . . . Although we cannot exclude the possibility of its being observed in the early years of the land’s occupation, its presence here is best explained as a social blueprint, founded on the deeply religious concepts of
justice and equality, which strove to apply the simple sabbatical principle to a society that had become more economically complex."

16 Article 1, Section 8, Clause 4 of the United States Constitution grants to Congress the authority "to establish . . . uniform laws on the subject of bankruptcies, throughout the United States."

17 The federal bankruptcy law allows a bankrupt debtor to keep such property as $7,500 of interest in real or personal property, $1,200 interest in a motor vehicle, $200 of household or personal items, $500 of jewelry, $750 of implements, professional books, or tools of the trade, any unmatured life insurance, and rights to social security, veterans, disability, or unemployment benefits. 11 U.S.C. Section 522 (d).


19 Bruce Vawter, "Introduction to Prophetic Literature," ibid., 186-200 at 196.


22 Ibid., 69.


25 Ibid.

26 See John L. McKenzie, S.J., "The Gospel According to Matthew" in Ibid., 62-114 at 104: "One must understand that in much biblical thinking, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, history and eschatology are merged in a way that is alien to modern thought. Particular historical events that are seen as judgments of God are described in eschatological terms; the examples are too numerous for citation here, but one may mention the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC, the fall of the Assyrian and the Babylonian kingdoms, and even minor historical events such as the fall of Edom and the fall of Tyre."

27 See "Introduction to Prophetic Literature," cited above, 193: "The monarchy served partly as a stimulus to prophecy, for with it, there entered
into Israelite life a new conception of the relation of Israel to Yahweh, one that had to be under constant review by prophecy. That the popular call for a king was, in a sense, a repudiation of the covenant relationship (cf. 1 Sam 8:4ff) was doubtless the preferred prophetic view in retrospect . . .”

28 Economic Justice for All, No. 38.


30 Economic Justice for All, No. 40.

This essay, excerpts from Fred Kammer’s Doing Faithjustice: an Introduction to Catholic Social Thought (New York: 1991), is here reprinted with the permission of Paulist Press.
George Aschenbrenner, S.J.

Discernment in the Ignatian Tradition: Educating for the Spontaneity of the Holy Spirit

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This brief essay about discernment of spirits aims at shedding some light on a central concern for St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus: to be exactly where God desired him to be. As a Jesuit university, Georgetown also holds it as a concern of the educational experience it provides. As God’s deeply personal love becomes more real and paramount in life, to be where that LOVE desires one to be and to be very practically and quite consciously where such LOVE can intimately suffuse one’s heart and whole being can become the overarching focus of one’s life.

Spontaneous stirrings of our hearts

Discernment of spirits is central to the spirituality of St. Ignatius. It presumes a certain seriousness about life and a belief that God’s love is revealed in Jesus. Discernment hones in on the spontaneous side of each of us. We are moved and stirred in many ways, beyond our choice, often beyond our control. We wake up in a certain mood, not always knowing why. We so easily slip off into daydreaming and fantasizing. Images, feelings, thoughts, impulses and moods at times steal into our consciousness; at other times they invade us. Sometimes they are deep-seated, as though anchored on the ocean floor of our soul. Other times, sparingly, they skitter quickly across the surface of our soul. Where is God in all of this? How is one to discern God’s desires in all of this?

Beyond this slippery spontaneity, we also know a more intentional side of life. We do face up to the apparent mishmash and we do make choices. We own a part of it; we act; we stand for; we become something of that spontaneous mixture inside. But this intentional decision is always somehow rooted in the swirling spontaneous waters of our conscious and unconscious self. For this reason, while discernment is finally aimed at inviting forth our truest intentional self (which is always God’s unique
image of Christ in each of us), discernment’s primary concern is with sorting out and interpreting the spontaneous mixture that boils or hums in each of us. Somehow hidden in the spontaneous mixture is that uniquely beautiful revelation of Christ that God intends as identity for each of us. But this precious identity will not just leap forth at some point. No, it must be experimented with, carefully interpreted and thus teased forth gradually into the beautiful revelation God desires.

Discernment is the process that helps us to face into that spontaneous mixture in ourselves, to sift out and interpret it in light of our identity in faith so as to recognize God’s desire for us here and now. Some people claim that after the mammoth technological achievements of the human mind in the last century, there is an even more crying need now for an education of our spontaneous feelings and affectivity. However mature is the development of the technological mind, on the level of spontaneous impulses, urges and daydreams, we are often violently out of control, slashing at and killing fellow human beings. At times we walk in fear of the uncontrolled violence surging not only in those around us but stirring also in our own breast. Discernment can provide a most needed education of our spontaneities and thereby facilitate our living in greater harmony and unity under God.

Process of discernment

Discernment, as treated here, is a process of daily faith-living that we gradually grow into. To provide a simplicity and clarity to aid understanding, my description of this process of four steps will be briefer and clearer than the way it usually unfolds in the reality of life.

First is a growing realization of how loved I am by and in God from the very first moment of my being. God’s love, though it takes flesh in the love of people in my life (and, sad to say, sometimes doesn’t take flesh when others fail to love me), stands forth on its own and has reality beyond any other love. We are stamped and formed from the very beginning by a God who always and only loves. As we grow in our awareness of this ever-faithful love, we realize that life is first and foremost a matter of receiving this love and responding in love with our whole minds, hearts and strength. In Mark 12.28-34, Jesus answers not only the question of the good young scribe but the same question as it lurks in all our hearts: Be a lover, first of
God, and then of everyone and everything else including yourself. This is the heart of human living in our universe. In this way life is stamped with glory and grandeur. The Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins exclaims, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God. It will flame out like shining from shook foil..." The discernment of a responsive lover allows one to acknowledge and become ever more part of that astonishing glory and grandeur. But it also means that I am where God desires me to be and that I am thereby able to recognize the intimacy of such love in the daily spontaneity of my own life.

This identity revealed in God’s intimate faithful love must strike deep in our own hearts if such an identity is to serve as a dependable lodestone. Beyond any superficial unpredictability of being or whimsy, what we speak of here is a determined resolute desire of will to be a lover first of God and then of everyone and everything else including myself. This realization shapes and casts our lives in love, first God’s ever faithful love giving us life every moment, and then our own love in response as faithfully decided upon. From now on, life will be about love, at times tough love, but love nonetheless, and always. Make no mistake about that! No will-o’-the-wisp fancy here—rather a determined resolute desire of will. Such an identity draws us into the great ongoing project of God’s love transforming our whole universe into the fullness of time. Such an identity also provides a lodestone for attraction in the interpretation of our spontaneous life.

A second step in our discernment process involves the simple honesty of acknowledging the spontaneous stirring of the moment. Whatever we are not acknowledging, we cannot honestly interpret in faith. Though this sounds clear and logical, we all have an armory of tactics whereby we hide from what is really happening. We must learn to stand clear of these deceits and deceptions if we are to discern God’s loving desire in our hearts at every moment. In the past, people often were taught to be out of touch with this affective, feeling part of themselves. Today, in our over-therapeutic society the unexamined presumption can dictate that everything I feel is God’s will for me. Both of these deceptions must be corrected before discernment can reveal how glorious and intimate God’s love is in every practical situation.

The third step in our discernment process involves an interpretation in faith of the present spontaneous experience in my heart. This interpretation results from testing the present experience against the lodestone of my deep-
hearted identity in God's love. If the image, daydream, impulse idea or mood of the moment furthers and is attracted by my own determined resolute desire of will to love God and all, then it is an inspiration of the Holy Spirit and reveals God's desire for me here and now. If the experience of the moment conflicts with and somehow violates this resolute identity, then it is not an inspiration from God. Such fittingness with our deepest sense of truth for ourselves does not always involve easy pleasure. Sometimes the invitation faithfully to love involves great difficulty and pain. We should not be deceived by the presence or lack of an ease of pleasure. The issue always cuts deeper than that. And yet, at the deepest level of our resolute desire for God, whenever the true interpretation is acknowledged whether in pleasure or pain, there is always an encouraging sense of harmony and contentment. Whenever we stand forth, whether in strength or vulnerable weakness, in God's deepest desire of love for us, a deep resonance with self always reveals a contentment of peace and the quiet intimacy of faithful love.

Whether we are God-centered or self-centered will make all the difference. An undetected self-centeredness will betray the important interpretation at this step in a facile pleasure pain instinct. To be attracted to pleasure and to be repulsed by pain is unavoidable and quite healthy on one basic level of human existence. But to name this instinct as God's love for us in the fullness and depth of our humanity is always misleading—even downright dangerous. As we grow into this discernment process, there is always an important transformation that God's love in Jesus works on this basic pleasure pain instinct. We are not simply locked in by such an instinct. The expansiveness of God's love allows us to recognize and embrace such LOVE when it is pleasurable AND when it involves pain and hardship. It is often along this latter route where the heroic leads and inspires the human heart. God's desire and love is such as to be with us in all things, as St. Ignatius so often claimed.

The final step in the process of discernment is the application of decisive tactics enlightened by the faith interpretation of the previous step. Presumably this interpretation through comparison with our lodestone-identity has revealed how God can be found in the present spontaneity. If the present tendency furthers our God-centered identity in love, then we must embrace and follow it so fully as actually to become this present experience. It beckons us to God and deeper into our identity. If, on the other hand, the present
tendency deflects us from our God-centered identity, then it is to be rejected and decisively withstood. It is time to stand strong against the deception however attractive and compelling it may seem. These tactics in all their practicality and boldness allow the grandeur of God to be magnified in us more and more because, whether the invitation is to own profoundly or to buttress ourselves against the present experience, the goal is always golden: finding and being part of God’s intimately transforming love in our hearts and throughout the whole universe.

What I have delineated here as a process in four steps, with practice becomes a daily way of living—a daily way of living in personal relationship with God in Jesus and with all our sisters and brothers in love through the daily discernment of God’s glory in the spontaneities of our hearts. But no one is coerced to this way. The glory of God shining more and more attractively in the shook foil of our lives can always be denied, compromised and overlooked. That way lies death, slavery, and darkness. We do not have to look far to recognize the effects of such an option.

Ignatius Learns Discernment

Ignatius was not born a master of discernment. Especially from age thirty his life became a pilgrimage of discernment as he followed God’s lead step by step. After his wound at Pamplona in 1520 and his sick-bed conversion in the family castle at Loyola, he knew that now his soldiering had to be for Christ. And as usual, his drive for fame and glory pushed him into competition with the holiness of Dominic and Francis of Assisi. He left Loyola for Montserrat and Manresa intending to surpass the great things these saints had done for God.

Though the conversion experience had taught him more than he realized, the discerning eye of his soul was still fairly clouded and unfocused. On his way to Montserrat after a heated debate with a Moor he let his mule “discern” whether its rider would chase and kill the Moor. And the mule’s instinct protected the Moor. In a stone cave at Manresa Ignatius for about ten months was led through the heights and depths of his heart such that at a certain point he feared losing his mind and was tempted to suicide. But this excruciating purification wrought a whole new sensitivity in this happy-go-lucky, coarse, military man. He came away from Manresa competing with
no one—neither the saints, nor God, nor himself. An eager patience had been painfully born which allowed him to wait on whatever greater glory the divine majesty would choose and reveal.

After a perilous voyage to the Holy Land, when his expectation to stay and serve there was foiled, his sensitive heart finally divined that more education would allow him better to care for souls. For the next ten years this conviction of God’s greater glory served as a lodestone to point the way interiorly through some subtle temptations and exteriorly from the universities at Alcala to Salamanca to Paris. And at this point in 1535, though a group of companions had formed around him, clarity about the Company of Jesus as a new religious order in the Church was not even on the horizon.

Discernment came to Ignatius slowly over all the years of his life. But once his soul had been sensitized and enlightened to the glorious grandeur of God in the practical details of his life, that grandeur and glory took such a hold on his heart that nothing was more important. Not even death. Only GOD whose LOVE was glory aplenty. This kind of discerning interpretation of the spontaneity of the human heart is always central to Ignatian spirituality. It is also a trademark of any Jesuit university.

How a Jesuit University Educates for Discernment

Let me conclude this reflection with five suggestions about discernment and education at a Jesuit university.

First, such an educational experience aims at stretching and challenging the students’ awareness of their own inner private world of thriving spontaneity with its double edge both of trustworthiness and of unreliability. Psychology should not be the only discipline that delves into this inner world. Students need to be challenged to a maturing reflectiveness from all sides of their university experience.

Second, Ignatian education stretches students to open-souled wonder and astonishment as they awaken in the breathtaking grandeur of our planet-Earth spinning as part of a whole universe of galaxies. Somehow in the wonder of this enormous, expansive panoply is Someone whose LOVE cares for each and every one of us in a way that invites relationship in intimacy beyond imagining.

Third, such discovery of the glorious grandeur of God sparkles at the
heart of Jesuit education. The whole university and its educational atmosphere invites belief in God and helps students to find their way into God, not just in the theory of thinking but in a personal relationship of faith that enriches life beyond all else.

Fourth, in many different ways, from the religious pastoral experience of Campus Ministry to the serious intellectual challenge of academic exploration, students are invited to discover and believe in their deepest, truest self revealed in the glorious grandeur of God's love flaming out in the shining foil of their lives. They, and all of us, need help in professing that brilliant truth once such a precious diamond has been discovered at the core. This bright shining light should serve as beacon for their own lives way into the future. It should also serve as encouraging inspiration for us all in our shared pilgrimage through life.

Fifth, Ignatian education does not blithely organize all of reality into some cute and harmless neutrality. Rather, the cosmic conflict raging between Good and Evil not only contextualizes each student's education but also takes focus in the unique struggle of his or her own heart. The stakes of this struggle are as real and momentous as life and death. Students can understandably totter in fear before such reality. But, finally a mature confidence rooted in God's victory on Calvary should motivate, stabilize and energize every student's hope for the future.

These five brief suggestions are a few beginning elements for a program whereby a Jesuit university can educate students for discerning the excitement of God's Holy Spirit charging the consciousness of each of us and the expansiveness of the whole universe. They are meant to stimulate your own thinking and your conversation with Jesuits and other members of the Georgetown University community.

Note

1 I have developed this program at greater length in an article in The Scranton Journal, "The Jesuit University Today—An Introduction to the Ignatian Vision in Higher Education," available from the Development Office at Scranton University, Scranton, Pennsylvania, 18510.
James Keenan, S.J.

Casuistry

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I am a Jesuit casuist. These words spoken even ten years ago would have been embarrassing to utter, for on two occasions Jesuit casuistry was repudiated. First when Blaise Pascal wrote the Provincial letters in the seventeenth century and devastated the Jesuits with ridicule and second after the Second Vatican Council when moral theologians threw out the manuals of casuistry that they wrote during the last two centuries. In the first instance, Jesuit casuists were depicted as charlatans who did nothing but water down the demands of the gospel and lead their faithful into perdition. In the second, they were considered simply out of date.

Let me briefly explain what a casuist is. The casuist studies cases, and the word “case” is derived from the Latin casus, which means “what happened.” Most of our interesting TV shows use cases in order to engage the audience. If they want to discuss big topics like abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality they do not ask us, “Do you think abortions are always wrong?” That is, they do not ask us a big general question. Rather they give us a concrete case, a story of what happened to this particular woman who fell into a coma four months after becoming pregnant. After two months in the coma, the doctors are convinced that the woman’s condition has worsened to an irreversible state; that is, that she has slipped into a persistent vegetative state from which it is impossible for her to return. Her husband, in deep denial, wants her to stay on the life support machinery even though the doctors all agree that any life support for this woman is useless. Nonetheless, the doctors wonder whether they should heed the husband’s request not because his hope is reasonable, but so as to bring the fetus to term. The woman’s sister, aware that her sister’s life is effectively over, sees what is happening and demands that her family be allowed to bury her sister rather than leave her as some unliving incubator.

That is a case. It is not about every instance of abortion, but about one specific instance of protecting life in the womb. It does not pretend to deal with all cases as similar. On the contrary, it is so filled with circumstances that we can only think of the case at hand. Watch Homicide, ER, Chicago
Hope, Law and Order, etc. They all rely on cases. I will return to this topic later but first I wanted to explain that, as a casuist, I am a moral theologian who is more at home in the particular and the real than in the general and the abstract.

In this essay I will consider four topics: moral theology, prudence, casuistry, and cooperation.

First I want to consider the most important shift in moral theology in this century. This shift concerns not a topic like intrinsic evil, or proportionalism, or the growing exercise of papal teaching, but simply the role of the moral theologian. Though much has been done to describe the change in the moral theologian vis-a-vis the magisterium, I want to describe the change in the role of the moral theolgian vis-a-vis the people of God. This role has shifted from being judge or arbiter to being teacher, and despite this enormous shift I believe that no one has noted it. Yet it has had an enormous impact on the way Catholics think about morality.

After the Second Vatican Council, the late, great French theologian Yves Congar argued that the greatest shift concerning authority in the Catholic Church was that the *quod* (the what) replaced the *quo* (the who). For example, before the Council if anyone heard a particular teaching and wanted to know how much authority to attach to it, one asked, "Who teaches this?" If the answer was "Pope Pius IX" or "Cardinal Tisserant," then it was considered true and to be held. Likewise, if it was a particular moral teaching and someone answered, "The Gregorian Professor, Father Josef Fuchs," it was also considered true. Roman moral theologians, like popes and cardinals, had a great deal of authority and they determined whether particular courses of action were right or wrong.

In fact, many people mistakenly believe that the only ones who taught moral theology or condemned moral theologians were popes. But as a matter of fact, both papal teaching and their occasional condemnations are relatively new phenomena. We do well to remember that of all the major theologians of the Church who shaped the tradition—Clement, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, Peter Lombard, Bernard of Clairvaux, Abelard, Albert, Bonaventure, Aquinas, Suarez, and Newman—only one was a pope. Likewise, the faculty of the University of Paris probably condemned more people
in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries than the Vatican has in the last two centuries.

The authority of the theologian, Roman or otherwise, was particularly strong in this century. Since truth relied more on the "who" than on the "what," American Roman Catholics looked to their own moral theologians to determine the answers to their moral questions. To assist one another, these moralists met together annually to discuss cases and to consider questions that others raised. Then listening to one another, they espoused their own individual and collective opinions in various subsequent fora. But they were as vulnerable to the priority of the "who" as was everyone else. One tale that I have often heard is a meeting of American Jesuit moral theologians in the mid-1960s where they discussed among other things, birth control. Canvassing the room, one after another declared that artificial birth control was never permitted. However, the last one remarked that he had heard that "The Gregorian Professor Josef Fuchs" was changing his mind on birth control. Then they went around the room again, and several gave other instances when artificial birth control would be permitted!!

From roughly the eighteenth to the twentieth century, these meetings were not uncommon. These moral theologians decided what was right or wrong. They wrote in large text books or what they called "manuals" for which reasons they were subsequently called "manualists." In these manuals, they gave their opinions about all sorts of actions, from worshiping God, paying taxes, masturbating, stealing and killing, to unfair prices. You name it, and they had an opinion on it.

In seminary, local priests were taught these manuals. When those priests came to the parishes they in turn taught from the pulpit, in the schools, and in the confessional what the moral theologians had written on all these matters. The laity learned from the priests. As the years went by, moralists updated their positions by adding new circumstances and offering new decisions that were published in later editions of their manuals.

One way that these moralists learned about new circumstances was through the laity. The laity were so familiar with the variety of theological decisions that they often wrote into their local diocesan newspaper asking circumstantial questions that were answered by the paper's own or another's syndicated columnist. This columnist, of course, relied on a noted moral
theologian, and so the questions raised on the diocesan level were often eventually picked up by some moralist of note. Moreover, the columnist himself may also have put together a collection of letters received and answered. In other words, this system of moral deliberations and promulgated judgments was effectively a cottage industry.

Notice the overall demeanor of the parish priest and the laity. They simply wanted to know what the moral theologian permitted or prohibited. The attitude was not to read what the moral theologian wrote, but simply to find out his decision. No one during all these years wrote any book called, *You Can Reason Okay, I Can Reason Okay,* or *Ten Steps to Reasoning Well.*

In fact, an essay like this would be unthinkable. A Jesuit casuist would never teach you the method of casuistry basically for three reasons. First, because moral theologians did not believe that average persons were capable of moral reasoning about serious topics. Moreover, they were convinced that the church should have a universal teaching on most issues and that moral truth and moral teaching were not served well by people claiming different solutions. Third, most of the material with which they dealt concerned whether a particular activity was a sin or not. What was not a sin was usually permitted.

This third point is very important. Moral theologians made decisions about what was sinful and what was not. They did not consider what was a better action than another. They simply determined what was sinful. If it was not sinful, it was permitted. No one, I repeat, no one of these moral theologians was interested in recommending positive courses of action. Instead, they simply wanted to help the priest and in turn the laity find out what activity was safe and what was not.

This absence of any positive recommendations is striking. Moralists did not recommend that we should be nice to our roommate, that we should develop self-esteem, that we should join JVC. In 1908, Thomas Slater, the first moral theologian to publish a manual in English wrote in his preface:

*Here, however, we must ask the reader to bear in mind that manuals of moral theology are technical works intended to help the confessor and the parish priest in the discharge of his duties. They are as technical*
as the textbooks of the lawyer and the doctor. They are not intended for edification, nor do they hold up a high ideal of Christian perfection for the imitation of the faithful. They deal with what is of obligation under pain of sin; they are books of moral pathology. They are necessary for the Catholic priest to enable him to administer the sacrament of Penance and to fulfill his other duties.

After talking about how spiritual or ascetical theology is the study of the “lofty ideals of life,” Slater adds, “Moral theology proposes to itself the humbler but still necessary task of defining what is right and what is wrong in all of the practical relations of Christian life.”

Until the Second Vatican Council, the moral theologian then determined what was permitted and what was prohibited in nearly every area of life. The laity may have understood to some extent how these theologians reasoned. But they were never taught this. Instead they were taught what the bottom-line verdicts were.

After the Council, however, if one wanted to know how much authority to attach to a position, the question was not, “Who said it?” but rather “What are the reasons for it?” That shift from the who to the what was a shift from obedience to reason. After the Council, we considered it more important to use right reason ourselves, rather than simply to give assent to people who held a particular place of authority. This shift was a return to Thomas Aquinas’ insight that right reason and not a person sitting in a particular office was the source of truth.

At the Council, moral theologians were charged with the task of developing a moral theology that was nourished by the scriptures and that would encourage all people to follow in the footsteps of Christ. Two theologians, Bernard Haring and Josef Fuchs, did much to advance that; but soon after these initial movements, Pope Paul VI presented the encyclical “Humanae Vitae,” the birth control encyclical. That encyclical prohibited artificial birth control, but permitted the natural family planning method. (Note, please, that while moral theologians have changed their self-understanding from being judges to being teachers, other moral teachers, like bishops and popes, have not adopted that model).

In the encyclical, the pope thanked the commission that studied the issue, but acknowledged that he could not accept its majority report. About
this commission, it is helpful to remember that during the Council, Pope John XXIII appointed theologians, physicians, bishops and married couples to study whether birth control was always wrong. When Pope Paul VI was elected, he decided that the commission needed to be toughened; some of its existing members seemed too open to the possibility of changing the teaching on birth control. Thus he appointed several cardinals and several moral theologians, including Josef Fuchs who was at that time, like most moral theologians, against birth control. One of the most important things that happened on that commission was that Fuchs and others changed their minds. In fact, Fuchs later became the chairman that authored the majority report, which all but four or five of the more than forty commission members approved. That report argued that the decision of how to regulate the birth of children ought to be left to married couples.

Fuchs and the others changed their position because they heard the testimony of married people talking about their struggles and about their moral reasoning. This had an enormous impact not only on the topic of birth control, but I think, more importantly, on moral reasoning. Fuchs no longer saw himself and others as the judges or determiners of what was right or wrong. Rather in listening to these married couples who suffered from the determination of earlier moral theologians and who were forced to reason on their own, Fuchs heard that adult Catholics could indeed reason morally.

Fuchs then began writing essays not on what was right or wrong, but rather on what was right reasoning, and more importantly on the primacy of the conscience and its responsibility to reason rightly. That is, he no longer wanted to be a prohibitor or a permitter of particular action; rather, he wanted to be a teacher who helped all people, priests and laity to reason well. That has been an enormous shift. For instance, Fuchs never said in the majority report that married couples are permitted to practice birth control; rather he said that married couples must decide how morally to regulate births in their family. This is a key shift in moral instruction. Thus, it is jarring for moral theologians today to hear people say things like "Charlie Curran or Dick McCormick say it is okay to use birth control." Curran and McCormick, like the rest of us, gave up the role description of permitter or prohibitor. Rather we are now engaged in trying to teach others...
in the church how we think one can reason and judge well. We do this by
looking at method, but also by looking at our tradition and teaching it, espe-
cially those moments, like the patristic period and high scholasticism, that
aimed to help ordinary people understand the scriptures and its call to form
and follow the conscience.

Of course, not everyone agrees with us. The Irish Jesuit Bart Kiely
argues that humans are so dysfunctional that moralists are irrespon-
sible when they recommend to others that they should reason for
themselves. Better, he argues, that we simply reiterate time-honored pre-
scriptions that more or less keep us from worsening the state of affairs. He
has some legitimacy here. Just think of how some of our best friends reason;
or better yet, think of how we reason about things on occasion. Others,
like Pope John Paul II wonder as he did in Veritatis Splendor whether we are
becoming relativists. That is, he wonders whether we are suggesting to
people not that they should reason well, but that they should do whatever
they want. In many ways moralists have painstakingly tried to answer these
charges and have shown that we are interested in right reasoning. Still
others simply presume we have given away the store.

Our task, since the Second Vatican Council, has been to help others to
reason rightly. Moreover, besides giving up our role of judging others’
actions, we no longer think of morals as simply avoiding sin. For the most
part we conceive of morals as what the Council commanded us to do: moral
theology “should draw more fully on the teaching of the Holy Scripture and
should throw light upon the exalted vocation of the faithful in Christ and
their obligation to bring forth fruit in charity for the life of the world”
(Optatam Totius, 16).

On this note, then hopefully we can appreciate the second brief con-
cern. We moral theologians are effectively concerned with teaching the vir-
tue of prudence. Now many think of prudence as self-interest. One sees a
jacket hanging up at J. Crew and goes to put it on his credit card and his best
friend, knowing that the guy is unable to pay for his food bills, asks, “Is this
prudent?” In a good deal of contemporary language the word “prudence” is
used to inhibit us from acting. It is commonly used in phrases like “are you
being prudent,” which means “are you going to regret having done the ac-
tion that you seem bent on doing.” This use of prudence is peculiar, because
Thomas Aquinas\textsuperscript{18} and Aristotle\textsuperscript{19} both considered prudence as the virtue that helps us move forward by setting reasonable goals.

One reason why this negative interpretation of prudence developed seems to be the result of what we thought of as moral theology—that is, as avoiding sin.\textsuperscript{20} If the main task of moral theologians was to warn us against sin, then what they did was “prudence.” Prudence kept us from doing the wrong. But Aristotle and Aquinas viewed ethics not as the avoidance of the wrong but as the pursuit of virtue; for them prudence is the virtue of reasoning well about practical matters.\textsuperscript{21} It is not at all theoretical; rather, prudence is about planning to act.\textsuperscript{22} The prudent person is one who sets goals. Prudence is what each of us need in order to anticipate tomorrow: we need to know what courses to take, what programs to get degrees in, what schools to apply to. All these future-oriented activities are exercises in prudence.

Let me then summarize the two steps that we have taken. First, moral theologians no longer believe that moral theology is about determining which actions are right and which are wrong; rather it is about teaching others how to reason well. Second, the virtue of reasoning well is prudence, which looks to see how we can grow into more virtuous persons.

Before moving to my third point, in light of all this optimism, let me register a bit of realism. It was believed throughout the medieval period that the majority of people were going to hell. This presumption dominated from the fourth century almost until Vatican II. Today, however, we seem to believe not only that everybody is going to heaven, but worse, that everyone is good. Certainly, believing that everyone is going to heaven may well be a right understanding of the scripture. After all, revelation does refer to universal salvation, and more importantly, stresses the depth of God’s mercy. Thus, by God’s doing, we may all be going to heaven. But believing that we are all good is ridiculous, for then we believe that we are all going to heaven by our own doing.

I cannot help but believe that this presumption in universal goodness is simply another reaction to three centuries of moral theologians doing nothing but talking about sin and sinners. It is as if we rejected them without realizing that we may be going irresponsibly to the opposite extreme. I have no idea of when any of us are bad or good.\textsuperscript{23} Indeed, I have no idea of whether I am good, though it is my particular hope that God will
call me to eternal life. But I do think that we should avoid presumption and that we do well to recall the words of St. Paul, later echoed by Søren Kierkegaard, that we are called to work out our redemption with fear and trembling.

Thus as we turn to the exercise of moral reasoning we need to act responsibly, not only because we should be concerned out of love for our neighbor, but out of concern for our own consciences, for which we will be held accountable. Saying that, then, let me turn to a particular way of developing prudence, which is through right moral reasoning, and here is my third topic, casuistry.

I turn to casuistry, not as an indulgent judge, but as a teacher of prudence. Like television shows, instead of discussing broad rules or general theories, we need to see cases in order to reason well. We need to consider Mary, who has a difficult pregnancy on *ER* or Louise, who assists her cancer-ridden husband Joe commit suicide on *NYPD Blue* or the priest who knows the identity of a murderer on *Homicide*. On these television programs we see people dealing with a case. Rather than simply turning to a rule like that a woman has the right to decide about her pregnancy in the first two trimesters of her pregnancy, *ER* is going to raise some complications that make applying the rule difficult. That is, *ER* will introduce a number of circumstances that will make us ask ourselves whether “a woman’s decision” is the only thing we should be considering. The circumstances will present some doubt. That is exactly what will happen on all the other programs: *NYPD Blue* may presume that all illegal killing is always wrong, but will nonetheless ask whether Louise should have helped kill her husband, and the police on *Homicide* will ask the priest whether he should ever break the seal of confession. All the shows will give us a strong enough case that its circumstances will produce a doubt about whether the rule applies.

That doubt is key. It is the same doubt that made Josef Fuchs rethink his position on birth control. Hearing all the different objections to the teaching on birth control, he recognized that some circumstances placed his position in doubt. When a rule is placed into doubt, what should we do?

Over the past ten years, a number of writers have urged us to investigate the way casuistry was done in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
One reason for that is that the casuistry done from the eighteenth to the end of the twentieth century was fairly simplistic. In those more recent centuries, casuistry was no more than taking a rule and applying it to a case. Thus to the rule that all lying is a sin, one could propose the case of lying to protect a life. The moral theologian solved the problem by simply applying the rule to the case, asking, "Are you in fact lying?" If you said, "Yes," then the theologian referred you back to the rule. Certainly there were some exceptions, but for the most part the rule remained firm and cases were solved by directly applying the rule deductively to the case.  

In order to explain the casuistry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is helpful to see that it was not unlike the way families reason today. Indeed that method of reasoning is similar to casuistry and is precisely why we find these TV shows so engaging. For instance, consider when little Johnny asks why his sister Mary got more of an allowance this week. The child is asking what happened to the rule that brothers and sisters get the same allowance. Johnny is basically comparing his case against his sister's and noticing a difference. He went to the rule and found an inequity. He wants an explanation to find out what makes his case different from Mary's. His mother may answer, "Because Mary babysat for us." Notice how she answers him the same way he asked, by comparing the situations of cases inductively.

One rule that children understand is the rule of fairness. They think that everyone should always get the same. They are vigilant about this: at Christmas, birthdays, family feasts, and weekly allowances. Watch their expectant faces. Any departure from the rule causes enormous problems that are only offset by another offering reasons for why one case is not the same as another. Thus parents do not explain rules, but turn to cases. They try to explain the differences by looking to the circumstances in each case that prompts different treatments. "Mary got an expensive guitar, because you got sixteen small presents." "Johnny can stay up late because he did well in school."

Likewise, students do the same. How many professors have faced a student asking, "By why did I get this grade? Johnny did the same work." Such utterances are extraordinary. But whenever we are to justify our grading we usually compare the student's work before us with another work.
And usually we make sure that the other paper to which we compare this one is excellent. Notice, here, how this other student’s paper becomes the norm, the standard.

Casuistry appears then whenever there is doubt and whenever there is need to explain or illustrate some standard. The need to find another standard arises because an existing rule either does not exist or is inadequate to resolve the doubt or to set the standard. In sum, casuistry emerges as a method of moral reasoning whenever extraordinarily new issues materialize.

The reason why casuistry was developed and practiced in the sixteenth century was precisely because of this newness. In their very important work, The Abuse of Casuistry, Albert Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin describe the new issues in the public and private arenas of life that prompted the birth of high casuistry. In the public world, Europeans through the explorations of the New World and their trade with the east could no longer accept the older moral guidelines of the past. For instance, in 1237 Pope Gregory IX declared that maritime insurance was a form of usury and morally wrong. But at the beginning of the sixteenth century, a prohibition against underwriting expeditions to the west and east was unthinkable. No one could afford this teaching and the teaching was considered dated. Thus, merchants petitioned faculty members of the University of Paris to render new decisions on the pope’s decretal. Instead of taking the rule that Gregory offered, that is, that all usury is wrong and maritime insurance is a form of usury, the faculty responded to the doubt with a new standard, the case. They responded by asking whether the case of an insurer guaranteeing the arrival of the worth of a cargo was any different from the case of the captain of a ship who secures the arrival of the cargo.

Thus, the question became a case and was placed against another case that described a standard, that is, an already validated moral activity. By showing congruency between the two, these writers provided new ways of circumscribing the decretal, distinguishing insurance from usury, and proposing ethical grounds to legitimate the insurance. Casuistry was used to liberate institutions from normative determinations that did not keep pace with other developments. But with this freedom came the need for new expressions of moral guidance and thus casuistry also provided those bankers, merchants, missionaries, explorers, and princes
bent on expansionism, a new inductive method of moral logic to navigate the unfamiliar waters before them.

Sometimes the newness of moral dilemmas in the sixteenth century was not occasioned by expeditions. Religious and political conflicts in England at the end of the sixteenth century raised questions that at earlier times were unthinkable: could a priest lie about his identity; could one take an oath and not keep it; could a Catholic landowner contribute to a “heretic” church? There were few principles that addressed these questions and those that did were ill equipped to answer them. But much like those at the University of Paris, these English writers sought to reexamine previous teaching by invoking not principles but rather cases and to make distinctions that were not current in earlier years. A prime example was whether there was a distinction between lying and pretense, and the case that enabled them to entertain this distinction is the pretense of the risen Christ who acted as if he meant to go on rather than to stay with the disciples at Emmaus. That is, since the risen Jesus used pretense, so could priests.

Casuistry was also used in the private arena, particularly for confession. Until the sixteenth century, confessors understood themselves both as physicians who recognized the infection of sin and as judges who determined the fitting penalty for the offense of sin. For these tasks, they turned to the confessional manuals, especially the Summa Angelica and the Summa Summarum which used circumstances to establish more definitively the specific nature of a sin. But in the evangelization of the sixteenth century, many religious orders, especially the Jesuits, came into closer collaboration with lay people, through educational institutions, spiritual direction, and confraternities. In the confessional, then, these priests encountered not simply a disease that needed attention or a crime demanding sentencing but a struggling Christian seeking consolation.

To appreciate the uniqueness of the penitent’s particular struggle, Jesuits entertained as specifically as possible the circumstances affecting the sinner’s conduct. These circumstances turned more closely on the person than on the act and, rather than being tools for applying the law, they were used to understand the penitent. This descent into the particular took the confessor so far away from the manuals that those directives were no longer helpful. Confessors turned not to these ineffective categories but rather to particular cases, embellished with personal circumstances. This study of
cases became so important to the Jesuits that, as John O’Malley notes, the great Jerome Nadal recommended that Jesuit confessors study cases an hour daily!\(^3\)

In the face of antiquated principles, sixteenth century ethicists attentive to the newness of contemporary projects turned for guidance to cases, circumstances, new distinctions and analogous logic; likewise we stand at the end of the century facing the new horizons of medical advances, international business, the geopolitical world, and information technology with an unimaginable set of new ethical questions, and many urge a return to casuistry. The times are similar, and ethicists and historians revisiting this material are struck by the resemblances: new questions, new meetings between people of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, weak principles, a time bent on expansionism, and most importantly, a world where the advances in other fields outpace those in ethics. For these reasons, casuistry makes a comeback today.

One particular issue in casuistry is the question of whether I can help someone do something wrong. It is the case of cooperation, my fourth and final topic. As I mentioned earlier, English casuistry dealt with a series of questions never before raised in ministry. These questions and cases were raised, answered and published at the end of the sixteenth century. Their concerns fall into one of two topics. Either it settles cases for how priests who are secretly infiltrating England should act: what they may wear, where they may say Mass; how they may refrain from bringing certain items of piety with them, etc. Or, it concerns what lay Roman Catholics may do in light of the fact that they are a diminishing group with less and less power and yet have to contend with normal affairs of land, property, taxes, government and worship. Thus, could an innkeeper serve meat to a demanding customer on Friday? Could she house a member of the institutional church? Could she pay the church tax? Could she attend those church services, etc? All these cases were about cooperation.

Eventually a principle of cooperation was articulated that expressed some of the common features among these cases. Let me repeat that. Eventually a principle of cooperation was articulated that expressed some of the common features among these cases. We must realize that principles like cooperation, double effect, and toleration did not come out of thin air. Nor
did they precede the cases about cooperation, toleration or double effect. The opposite is true. That is, after years of solving cases that all were about cooperating with people in wrongdoing, a principle of cooperation was articulated. After years of considering cases that had two effects, one right, the other wrong, moral theologians articulated the principle of double effect. After years of treating cases of toleration, the principle of toleration was articulated. Cases preceded principles and after years of treating similar cases with similar conclusions, moralists found common features among the cases and formulated the particular principles. Principles derived from the right solution of concrete cases; those right solutions ground today’s principles.

I am offering an abbreviated treatment of what I and others like John Kekes and Martha Nussbaum have developed elsewhere. But what we argue is that an appeal to principles is always more sophisticated moral reasoning and that, for instance, Johnny’s mother is using a pretty primitive type of moral reasoning in explaining apparent inequities in allowances. But as a matter of fact, Johnny’s mother’s use of comparative cases; that is, her inductive moral reasoning with Johnny is the stuff that principles are made of.

The manualists of the eighteenth to the twentieth century used cooperation frequently, but it is only during the last five years that the principle has received contemporary American Catholic attention. This should not surprise us. Why? Because moral theology is no longer about avoiding sin, but rather about following in the footsteps of Christ. Thus, if moral theology is no longer about avoiding sin, it is no longer about playing it safe.

Cooperation made its first recent appearance when the National Conference of Catholic Bishops considered the following case: What should a health care worker in a Catholic facility say when faced with a person who has recently tested HIV positive and who insists that he will not be sexually abstinent? In the face of his refusal, should she become silent or should she refer him to the common good and recommend that he take steps to protect it, by using a condom? Let me illustrate the argument, by making the case more specific; that is, the man who is positive is not a married man talking about relations with his wife, but a gay man talking about sex with a variety of different men.
The first thing that we must do regarding cooperation is distinguish the activity of the person doing the wrong action from the activity of the person cooperating. The gay man is intending to engage in activity that the church considers unethical; it teaches that sexual activity outside of marriage is not permitted and that all homosexual activity is always wrong. It may be worth noting that there are many moral theologians who look at homosexual relationships from a variety of perspectives; however, in the case at hand, we have an employee in a Catholic institution. Thus, regardless of her own particular beliefs about the moral rightness or wrongness of homosexual activity, the question here is what ought the health care worker do. As an employee, she must respect the institution’s policy not to recommend what the institution considers illicit moral activity. Thus she notes that she is not recommending sexual activity; in fact, she has already recommended abstinence, without success. Now, she is recommending that he use a prophylactic since he is so intent on sexual activity.

After distinguishing the two activities, she asks another question. Does she as cooperator give advice because she approves his activity? If she approves his activity then she is wrong, because then she is in effect saying that she is helping him do wrong activity because she thinks he is right. Thus she can only morally cooperate in the wrong activity if she does not approve it. That is, she is helping him for some reason other than the reason why he wants to do what he wants to do. She is recommending the prophylactic because she is interested in the common good: she does not want to see more people infected with the frequently deadly virus.

The third step is to put some distance between the agent and the cooperator and their distinguishable activities. Thus, she is certainly not engaging in the sexual activity. Nor is she helping him find a partner or providing any support that may assist him in actually having sexual activity. In fact, she is so distant from his activity, that literally she is not helping him in any way to have the activity. With or without a condom, he can engage in sexual activity. Her activity is so remote from the client’s that it is difficult to see much of a connection.

Fourth, she needs to ask herself to what extent it is morally important to cooperate, that is, to give the advice. She has already recommended abstinence as morally and medically the proper conduct for a person who tests positive for HIV. But he has rejected that advice. Thus, given the
enormity of the AIDS epidemic and given the relative utility of condoms in making sex safer (though not safe), she deems it at least fair to say that such advice to protect the common good is legitimate, indeed, necessary.

Fifth, the cooperator should ask herself whether her assistance is indispensable. That is, in cooperating, one’s assistance should not be so necessary that the person doing the wrong action could not act otherwise. In this case the client is clearly going to engage in the sexual activity regardless of the employee’s advice. Not only is her advice dispensable vis-a-vis his intent to engage in sexual activity, it is absolutely inconsequential to whether he will engage in sexual activity. Her advice only affects the possible harm of other persons.

Finally she needs to avoid giving scandal. That is, anyone who gets involved in another’s wrongdoing has a responsibility to make sure that others do not misconstrue her activity as promoting or advancing this wrongdoing.

These six conditions are then what we use for talking about cases in which we are forced to ask ourselves whether we ought ever to help another who is doing something wrong. The six conditions are: that we should be able to distinguish what we are doing from what the other person is doing; that we should not approve of the other person’s wrongdoing; that we should be able to put some distance between one another’s activity; that what we are doing is morally important; that our action is not indispensable for the other’s action to happen; and that we avoid scandal.

From this exercise we can learn a few important insights. First, cooperation is not a permitting or prohibiting principle, nor is it an excusing principle. It is simply a helpful tool that assists us as we sincerely look to find out what is right. In this instance, the health care worker shows herself as a person who carefully reasons that her activity, advising to protect the common good, is different from his activity, which the church teaches is morally wrong. She is able to explain both how their actions are different and why she acts as she does. The principle serves, then, as a guide to distinguish and to ascertain exactly what one is doing.

Secondly, the distinctions are important. Moral decision-making is not about creating artificial distinctions but recognizing real ones. Above all when we are involved in morally complex material we should determine
exactly what it is that we believe that we are doing. For instance, we cannot
say that by her advising she is promoting unethical activity. As a matter of
fact, she is simply keeping unethical activity from causing greater harm. To
obfuscate what she is doing serves no one.

Third, the six conditions are not specific ones for which there is an
either/or answer. They are more buoys that help us navigate. Thus, a com-
puter could not really use the principle. The principle calls for human judg-
ment: on each level we have to ask ourselves different questions and try to
prudently ascertain how involved ought we to get.

Fourth, we implicitly live with cooperation all the time. For instance,
every time we pay one cent in taxes, whether local, state, or federal, we are
cooperating in wrongdoing, since we can presume that somewhere along the
way the government is engaged in some wrong activity. Does it fund abor-
tions, approve nuclear testing, hunt down immigrants, conduct unlawful
entries, use excessive force? If so we are cooperating in another’s wrongdo-
ing, and unlike the health-care worker who gives advice, we are giving money.
But we are not alone. Even the Vatican has a long history of cooperation,
every time it signs treaties or concordats with another nation.

The principle works, then, in every instance where there is a question
of getting our hands dirty. Here, then, I want to make one thing clear: I like
the principle. I think that it helps us to understand what we should be doing.
In the professional world, there are moral people who are trying to deter-
mine whether they should be involved in genetic counseling, in obstetrics, in
in vitro fertilization, in fetal tissue research who try to negotiate the extent to
which they believe they should be involved in the work of others that they
are convinced is wrong. I think the principle helps us understand when and
to what degree we should or should not cooperate in another’s wrongdoing.

In concluding, let me give you some instances of when the manualists of
the last three centuries used the principle of cooperation. First, manualists
considered the case of employees who are somehow involved in activity
that assists wrongdoing and who want to know whether they have to give up
their job. For instance, centuries ago they considered the case of the servant
who has among many tasks the responsibility to transport letters between
his master and his master’s mistress. Clearly the master is engaged in adul-
tery, but does the servant have to quit because transporting amorous letters
is included in his job description? That case has been updated to the person working at a newspaper stand where the owner has decided to add several pornographic magazines to the stand or to the ticket salesperson at a cinema that occasionally shows a movie judged morally objectionable. Determining what one is actually doing and to what extent one is involved and why one is involved is what cooperation allows us to discern.

More recently we find the case of a Catholic nurse working in a non-Catholic hospital where sterilizations are performed. The nurse assists as she does in other surgical procedures. She understands her activity as distinguishable from the doctor doing the sterilization. Likewise the anesthesiologist. Doing casuistry we can say that the work of both the nurse and the anesthesiologist is similar and distinguishable from that of the doctor. Both are protecting the patient from any harm and are not per se performing the sterilization. Moreover, their presence in the hospital we hope adds to the moral life of the hospital. Thus, these more recent cases were not simply about keeping employment, but rather that the person’s presence rather than her absence may better the promotion of value in important institutions.

But reasons for invoking cooperation are as numerous as its settings. For instance, in the bedroom, what happens when one spouse practices birth control and the other does not approve? Or what about the judge in family court division who tries to bring Christian values to that setting, but who must occasionally preside over divorces? Or what about the priest who is distributing communion and knows that the person standing before him is a known sinner?

These are all different cases of cooperation. None of them is answered with an unequivocal no or an unequivocal yes. As the manualist Henry Davis wrote about trying to figure out how cooperation applies in any instance, “there is no more difficult question than this in the whole range of moral theology.” For the principle of cooperation is not a permitting principle, rather it helps us to decide prudently how involved we ought to be with others whose activities occasionally overlap with ours and whose activities do not reflect the values that our church promotes. But, like the cases in England at the beginning of the seventeenth century, these cases of cooperation help guide us to reason well as we see how we should act in a world in which values conflict.
This method of moral reasoning from the tradition teaches us that avoiding evil is not the only thing that Catholics should look to do when they want to reason well and act well. Rather as prudent people we know that to completely withdraw from the world with all its complexity is not right. To be immersed in the world is to get entangled with it. And so cooperation, an instance of moral reasoning that teaches us a lot about the richness of the tradition, helps us to reason prudently.

I conclude noting that a university that upholds its Catholic identity while facing courageously the modern world invites a Jesuit casuist to speak on prudence. In answering the invitation, I must consider the world in which we actually live. Thus, I hope to respond to the invitation with a sense of the tradition. But I also leave it as a post-conciliar casuist, not telling the university what to do or not to do, but rather offering its audience a teaching moment about the tools that we use to reason well. That is after all what Josef Fuchs taught me: to teach others how to reason well with the tools from the tradition so that we may not worry so much about whether we do wrong, but whether we are following Christ.

Notes

1 Jesuits have long been associated with casuistry, so much so that if you pick up your dictionary, you may find as I found in my *Webster's New World Dictionary* this definition of “Jesuit.” “A crafty schemer; cunning dissembler; casuist.”


5 *Introduction to Christian Ethics: A Reader*, Ronald Hamel and Ken-


11 Thomas Slater, *A Manual of Moral Theology*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1908), 1:6. In his *Cases of Conscience* (I:36) he writes that the object of moral theology "is not to place high ideals of virtue before the people and train them in Christian perfection... its primary object is to teach the priest how to distinguish what is sinful from what is lawful... it is not intended for edification nor for the building up of character." As quoted in Henry McAdoo, *The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology* (London: Longmans, 1949) 10-11.


14 See his *Human Values* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillian, 1970).
16 See note 8.
18 See his *Summa Theologiae* I-II. 57.4, 5; 58.2, 5; 61.3,4; II-II. 47-56.
19 See his *Nicomachean Ethics* Book VI. v-xiii.
27 Precisely the argument of Kopfensteiner above. In a different vein Edward Long argued years ago that casuistry was needed to apply the absolute ideal of love to the concrete in *Conscience and Compromise: An Approach to Protestant Casuistry* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954).
FOR THAT I CAME


Yggdrasil, ‘The Universe Tree,’ ‘The Tree of Life,’ is an ancient, mysterious name which has long been forgotten. Or has it? Several years ago, as I was working to complete a translation of the Heliand, a Northern-European version of the gospel story dating back to the ninth century, the middle of the Dark Ages, I was disconcerted by the curious distortions that had entered into the depiction of the crucifixion. The incident with the lance being thrust into the side of the dead Christ was made into a strangely highlighted action: “One of the enemy came closer, hate in his mind, carrying a well-made spear tightly in his hands. With incredible force he thrust it, cutting a wound in Christ’s side with the spear-head, opening up His body.” More striking is the description of Christ as dying on the cross by hanging from a rope (“. . . the Protector of the Land died on the rope. . .”).

For the hearer or reader of a thousand years ago, the crucifixion has clearly been made to echo the death of the Germanic god Woden (or Odin) on the Tree of the Universe, Yggdrasil, when he both hanged himself on the tree and stabbed himself to death with his spear. In death he reached down and seized the magic runes. The story is told in the Havamal saga:

I know that I hung
on the windswept tree
for nine whole nights
pierced by the spear
and given to Odin—
myself to myself
on that tree
whose roots
no one knows.
In both narratives, in the Germanic *Havamal* and in the Christian *Heliand*, the sacrificial death is followed by magic. In the case of Woden, he has seized the mysterious runes (the Germanic alphabet) which magically allow speech to be converted into writing and into potent spells. In the same way, the death of Christ on the cross magically enables creatures without language to express themselves in speech:

As the Protector of the Land died on the rope, amazing signs were worked immediately so that the ruler’s death, his last day, would be recognized by the many speechless beings. Earth trembled, the high mountains shook, hard boulders in the fields cracked apart. The colorful curtain so wonderfully woven which had for many a day been hanging without harm inside the shrine (the Temple) was torn in two down the middle—Jewish people could then see the treasure hoard! ... What a powerful thing that was, that Christ’s death should be felt and acknowledged by so many beings which had never before spoken a word to human beings in this world! One thinks immediately of the Anglo-Saxon *Song of the Rood* in which the cross comes to speak of the care with which it tried to bear the burden of Christ crucified upon it.

The ancient tradition of a sacred and universal tree which is invisible but is the very structure, the living energy exchange, of the whole universe, is at the very heart of Germanic mythology. It is upon this ever-green tree “whose nature or species no one knows,” that the chief Germanic god comes to realize, through his experience of his mortality, who he is. At its feet is the deepest of all wells, the well of Time, whose bottom no one has fathomed and around which sit the three blind women, the Norns or Fates, spinning the thread of lives and events, measuring the thread, and then cutting it. The great tree behind them is a dynamic entity, always being consumed by the stags who eat at its leaves [something which reflects observation of the habits of deer in wintertime], and by an enormous evil serpent which continually tries to devour the roots of the tree deep below the surface of the middle world in which human beings live. Yggdrasil survives by continually producing as much as is consumed so that it is never diminished nor does it increase—an idea not unknown to modern physics. Yggdrasil, the tree of life, really has only two dangerous enemies in the world of Germanic mythology, and these are the primal, non-living forces of cold and
heat. To all personal beings, both the Germanic gods and human beings, however, these unthinking, inorganic enemy forces are not merely dangerous but lethal. At Ragnarök, the end of the world, the “Twilight of the Gods,” they will put an end to the gods. Human beings will, of course, be even more vulnerable to cosmic cold and heat, unless perhaps...

W hen the end of the world comes, the great glaciers of the North will begin to move again, irresistibly overwhelming all in their path. The great serpent will attack Thor, the god of personal strength, and will kill him with venomous fangs, as at the same moment, Thor will bury his hammer in the serpent’s head, killing the snake. Woden, the god of consciousness and feelings, will be swallowed by the enormous jaws of the wolf Fenrir, whose mouth gapes from one end of space to the other. The whole of the middle world will also be shaken by earthquakes and be enveloped in raging flames that will reach up to the sun and moon. Fireballs will surge from the earth and will fall from the skies as the forces of heat engage in a terrible struggle with cold coming down from the North. All the human beings will be destroyed—except for two. Before the final terrifying cataclysm takes place, Yggdrasil will open up its great tree trunk to admit the last boy and girl and will then close around them to protect them and keep them safe throughout the time of the end of the world. When the end is over, the tree will have survived. And as a new sky appears with a new sun and a new moon and stars, and when the meadows first turn green again with new grass, the tree will open up and let the boy and girl go out to start again in the new world. Yggdrasil is, for human beings, the Savior Tree. To parallel Genesis, Yggdrasil is the Germanic name for the “Tree of Life,” though definitely not because of edible fruit.

I n a mythic world with such a high place for the tree, and in a northern world in which every cold and snowy winter could be seen as a dangerous and prophetic version of the end of the world, it is not surprising that trees which could remain perceptibly alive and green, all through the cold of winter (and survive forest fires, as well), would be seen as visible micro-manifestations of Yggdrasil. They would have been regarded as sacraments, visibly containing the real presence and life force of the unseeable Tree of Life (something which one wishes St. Boniface with his axe might
have realized). One tree, down to our own day, has retained in its very name in English the sacramental reverence that the Germanic people of England, Germany and Scandinavia had for it: the holly. "Holly" is, of course, 'holy,' and thus it was known as the "holy tree," since its holiness enabled it to keep itself alive—green—all through the time of winter cold. All the evergreens in the forest, including the more lowly ivy and laurel, must have been regarded with the same reverence. Christmas carols and Northern custom have long retained a feel for life's green miracle at the winter solstice: "The Holly and the Ivy," "Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly," in English, as well as "O Tannenbaum" in German.

Thus it is not surprising to find the most amazing amalgams of Christianity's cross and the tree of Yggdrasil in Northern Europe. One which I find most moving is a gravestone from this early period of Christianity found in England. It dates from the tenth century and is found in Yorkshire. At first the gravestone appears to be a normal Celtic-style, Latin cross, with the shaft about four or five times as long as the arms. It is immediately clear, however, on even casual observation, that the shaft of the cross does not depict Christ or anything biblical, but rather the body of the man buried beneath the gravestone. It is almost an X-ray of the grave below showing a warrior buried in a wooden box with his spear and shield, his Viking-style helmet and his sax [a single-bladed knife]. By depicting the dead warrior on the cross shaft as he lies in the ground below, the observer sees the dead man as a part of the stem of the cross. He is resting, in other words, not really below the cross; rather he is, as a Christian, within the cross! Only a Northern European familiar with the Yggdrasil story would be at home with the image of seeing himself as protected against the cold cataclysm of death by being safely hidden and defended within the tree of Christ's cross.

This beautifully thoughtful grave cross in Yorkshire led me to wonder if perhaps scholars have not been somewhat misled by the touching description in Beowulf of a dead chieftain sailing off to his unknown destination in a fiery funeral ship. The common man could not afford such a funeral, but did the myth of Yggdrasil's salvation of mankind from death offer another poetic possibility or model for how to bury the dead? The answer, I think, may lie in the many tree-trunk coffins that have been ex-
humed in Germany. If a ‘holy tree’ is felled, the stem hollowed out and sawn in such a way as to create a box and lid, might not that being interred in a tree trunk be a sure way to attain survival after death? This burial form seems to be a close poetic and religious imitation of Yggdrasil’s saving role. One well-preserved pre-Christian tree casket even has an open-mouthed snake, ready to strike, carefully carved into the lid. The snake has no end; however, it has a head at both ends and no tail. The snake is most likely an attempt by rather frightening magic to prevent any grave robbers from opening the lid, but the fact that the carved snake has “no end” may also be a way, through magic, to pray or ensure that the interred will one day exit the grave, through the saving power of the tree trunk, to enjoy a new life “without end.”

Should one wonder what this might say about the origins of the casket of our current burial practice? It may reveal a good deal. In the Mediterranean world whence Christianity came, burial was often in a tomb, the body washed, anointed, wrapped in a shroud and laid upon a slab to dessicate, as we know from the New Testament. In some places the dried out bones were eventually placed in a bone house and the tomb reused for more recent deaths, as at St. Catherine’s in the Sinai. When a Northern European Christian was buried, the casket of evergreen pine, with a cross carved on the lid was considered appropriate, and for centuries this has been the common manner of interment (though perhaps mindlessly ridiculed by those who prefer less meaningful metals to “the pine box” of the the common person). Although no longer fully understanding why, we somehow continue to follow the poetic ways of Northern ancestors, hoping on the last journey through the coldness perhaps for the protection of Yggdrasil, the Tree of life, Christ’s cross.

The curious concept of salvation by being “within the tree,” may also have given birth to the magnificent wooden stave churches of Norway, many of which have lasted even down to our very day. The churches are built with roof upon roof so that they bear some resemblance to a high pagoda. They are most likely descendants of ancient Germanic temples, since the eaves of the upper roofs are still equipped with carved dragon heads to ward off evil spirits from a holy place. The lower roofs are equipped with crosses, no doubt to serve the same function. When Pope Gregory the Great, after much vacillation, arrived at a solution to the problem of whether the new
Northern converts would be permitted to worship in their formerly pagan temples, he followed ancient Roman tradition. It would be allowed for the English to continue to worship in the same (pagan) places and temples which they were accustomed to regard as sacred sites, but the altars inside (because of the blood of human sacrifice) would have to be removed and destroyed. From his time forward, this wise solution permitted the continuation of worship inside pagan temples and the construction of churches built in the Northern, pagan style. The stave church, when looked at from the side or from its entrance, is clearly built to resemble an enormous pine tree—thus the function of the repeated roofs, growing smaller toward the peak. To walk into such a church-temple is therefore to step “inside the Tree.”

When a visitor approaches one of the stave churches he or she will be shocked to see that the sanctuary portal, the doorway, is none other than a representation of Yggdrasil, the Tree of Life. It even has a stag carved into the lower branches, performing his traditional function of devouring the lower branches. Most remarkably, the tree trunk, the central portion of the large carving, opens up, revealing itself to be a door allowing the visitor to enter “the Tree.” Inside, the almost excessive hollowed-out woodiness of the interior, as well as (in one case) the face of Woden himself glaring one-eyed from the wooden capital of one of the supports, tells the medieval churchgoer in his own mythological tradition that, on entering here, a Christian church, you have found the protection of the real Yggdrasil, Christ’s cross, the life tree.

In the High Middle Ages Northern Europe’s “northern barbarians” produced a remarkable new church, the “Gothic” cathedral. “Gothic” was originally a sneer used by admirers of the traditional Romanesque church of Italy and the Mediterranean. To say “Gothic” was a very clear way of saying “Visigoth, Vandal, Germanic, barbarian.” It turns out, I believe, that the insult is quite accurate; the architecture is indeed “Germanic.” My reason for this is the shape of the new church. Traditional churches in Italy had been variants on the basilica, the Roman long-apse style inherited from Roman civil building, and also, rarely, as in the Pantheon, in a round form, with an occasional short transept. In the East, churches were often shaped in square, octagonal, or Greek-cross (four equal arms) or basilica form, also with an occasional short transept. Curiously enough, the Gothic cathedral, looked
down on from above, is always constructed in an unmistakably pronounced cross form, with a very clear and proportional transept, so that the building has the unmistakably clear footprint on the landscape of a very large cross. Why would the Northern barbarians feel so at home with or in such a shape? I would venture it was their continued reverence for the cross as the tree (many early medieval manuscripts in England as well as in Germany depict the cross with nubs of sawn-off branches, thereby emphasizing its nature as a tree), as well as for the traditional felt need to "enter into" it, to feel its protection. If this theory is correct, what scene would one expect to see over the main entrance of the church at the foot end of the church? The Nativity? Christ in glory? I would expect that above the main portal there would be, in christianized version, a depiction of the end of the world, Doomsday, from the deadly consequences of which "entering into the tree" provides protection—saving grace. How many cases are there where one looks up before entering a "Gothic" cathedral and sees above the entrance the dead rising from their graves to come before Christ to face The Last Judgement? Thus the Yggdrasil story may be the ancient and silent key to understanding the dynamic and shape of the Northern cathedral.

The evergreen tree has found its most lasting and most emotional place in our culture, without a doubt, in the Christmas tree. Though the custom of having a Christmas tree survived without too much difficulty in Germany, it was given something of a rough time by some Reformers and by Puritans in England and in America (Christmas was forbidden by the good Puritans of Massachusetts Bay Colony). It was not until the very late 1800s, for example, that the White House felt that it was acceptable to have a Christmas tree, and of course it was unknown in Italy, and in the Mediterranean countries in general, as well as in Mexico and South America. Now that the Christmas tree has spread in our time to many of these more tropical areas, I still get the feeling that the little pine tree is out of place when surrounded by Christmas celebrants in bathing suits and tropical clothing. Snow and coldness are required, methinks, for the evergreen to give its encouraging message that life will be back again. There are very old feelings that encourage "dreaming of a white Christmas."

In December of every year Yggdrasil comes into the house. A tree inside the home after all the centuries that have passed is quite miracle enough.
To glorify and celebrate its ancient, compassionate, magic power, it is decor-
ated with lights (with burning candles in Germany!) and with tinsel, to
make sure it looks radiantly stolid and happy despite the cold and ice. Then
a star is placed at its peak, since Wise Men must surely find their way to this
tree. Below the tree, the true source of the warmth of the Tree of the Uni-
verse and its power to renew life, encouragement, and protection against all
the kinds of cold, is lying in a manger: the new born Child.

In the Roman south it will be the unconquered sun, *sol invictus*, that
will be the object in nature honored on December 25th as being most like the
birth of Christ, since on that date the sun stands still on the horizon and then
turns around to bring light and heat back north again. In Northern Europe
with its cloudy skies and long snowfalls obscuring any view of the sun, it
will be the holly tree, the ever-green pine tree, green leaves and needles
faithfully standing their ground, covered with heavy blankets of winter-cold
snow, surrounded by the bleak and leafless other trees of the forest, which
will speak in its own language, a Christmas angel in green reassuring man-
kind every winter of the fidelity and invincibility of the loving warmth of the
the newly born Child of God, the Lord of Life.

O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Wie treu sind deine Blätter!
Du grünst nicht nur zur Sommerzeit,
Nein, auch im Winter, wenn es schneit!
O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Wie treu sind deine Blätter!

* 

O pine tree, O pine tree,
how faithful are your leaves
you are ever green, not only during the summer,
but even during the winter when the snow falls.
O pine tree, O pine tree,
how faithful are your leaves.

"Yggdrasil," an ancient, mysterious name which has long been forgot-
ten. Or has it?
Note

1 The *Heliand*, the earliest known Northern European version of the gospel, was written in the year 830. In its imaginative reenactment of the traditional story, it anticipates certain Jesuit principles of contemplation. I like to summarize Jesuit spirituality as realization: the attempt to realize what you already know and, to some extent, understand. Ignatius is the first saint I know who encouraged this kind of spirituality. At one point, nervous (as were many other church reformers) about the way people were praying, he said something that sounds almost Buddhist: “Slow down. Pause after each word. Say *our* and stop. Not *my*, not *your*, but *our father*. Realize in your own terms what that says for you.”

Likewise, in meditating on a mystery, picture the circumstances. In recalling the story of the Nativity, picture Joseph and Mary heading down to Bethlehem. Picture Mary nine-months pregnant. And Joseph. Is he worried? When they walk up to the inn, picture the inn keeper. Is he old and bald? Is he young? Kind? Create a Christmas story of your own that permits you to realize what you know.

Jesuits insist that imagination is one of the royal roads to realizing what you already know.

Evidently some Saxon unknown to us felt that, in order to realize what the new Christian gospel coming into Germany meant, he was going to have to reenact it. He could not tell these northerners that Jesus was a rabbi. Saxons were a rough people, a warrior society that the gospel does not envision. Saxons got their name from their side-arm of choice, the tremendously dangerous, bone-cutting knife called a sax. Saxons were the knife people. To Saxons you can not simply say “Let’s be peacemakers. It’s the kingdom of heaven.” The translator's first realization was how to adapt the gospel to his society. He completely re-imagines what goes on. Hence, Jesus is our chieftain and we are his faithful soldiers. Ignatius uses the same metaphor. He was a soldier, too, and he imagined his relationship to Christ in very similar terms.

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