

SOCIAL ACTION

The last forty years of discourse with our Roman Catholic friends has centered mainly on biblical and theological issues. We have examined doctrinal issues from scriptural and historical perspectives and occasionally refought the Reformation. However, during the last few decades tremendous social change and a cultural disintegration has occurred in American society. Neither informed Roman Catholics nor evangelicals are of the opinion that this country was founded to be a “Christian” nation in the theocratic sense. Nonetheless, it is true that the United States has been informed morally by what has been called the basic “Judeo-Christian ethic,” and because these ethical guidelines were universal (reflected in the “natural law,” if you will), they were accepted by those of other faiths as well.¹

The cultural climate has regrettably changed in a secularistic direction. One Roman Catholic observer of the current scene identifies movement toward “religious cleansing” as an attempt to challenge the Judeo-Christian foundation of our nation. “Religious cleansing is a term I use to describe the current hostility and bigotry toward religion and people of faith that are leading to covert and overt attempts to remove any religious influence from the public arena.”² Those who champion religious cleansing “are usually secularists bent on removing any vestige of religious influence from all places but the private sphere.”³ Some Roman Catholics and evangelicals feel it’s time to “circle the wagons” and face this moral relativism together whenever possible.

1 A recently published work, *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Libreria Editrice Vaticana* (Boston: St. Paul Books and Media, 1994), addresses the Roman Catholic response to many of the issues covered in this chapter. Consult the index for topics such as abortion, euthanasia, and homosexuality.

2 Keith A. Fournier, *Religious Cleansing in the American Republic* (Washington, D.C.: Liberty, Life and Family Publications, 1993), pp. 4–5.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

One issue that seems to be a major catalyst bringing our two groups together is the social and moral tragedy of abortion. The status of the unborn began to be seriously debated by large segments of society at the time of the 1973 abortion decision known as *Roe v. Wade*. The coming together of Catholics—laity, priests, nuns, and the occasional bishop—on one side and evangelicals/fundamentalists on the other caused a great deal of soul-searching and reevaluation by both groups. Praying together in Jesus’ name helps one identify core issues.

Perhaps evangelicals felt a bit guilty when they realized they were “Johnnie-come-latelies,” given the fact that Roman Catholics had been alert to the moral dimensions of the problem while their evangelical neighbors were spiritually asleep. In this chapter, we will discuss abortion and other issues that have brought Roman Catholics and evangelicals together to “stake out” common moral ground.⁴

CULTURAL DISINTEGRATION

The attack on religious values in Western culture began at least as far back as the Enlightenment. Employing tools acquired from the Renaissance, various people and movements mounted an assault against Christianity on a number of different fronts. James Turner, professor of history at the University of Michigan, has written an important book concerning this assault in America.⁵ Turner develops the interesting thesis that, contrary to conventional thinking, religious belief has not collapsed under an attack from atheistic sources. “On the contrary, religion caused unbelief. In trying to adapt their religious beliefs to socioeconomic change, to new moral challenges, to novel problems of knowledge, to the tightening standards of science, the defenders of God slowly strangled Him.”⁶ In attempting to refashion Christianity to fit “modern” ideas, we have emasculated the gospel; “we have met the enemy and he is us.”

A perceptive observer of these issues is James Hitchcock, professor of history at St. Louis University. Recognized as a leading spokesman among traditional Roman Catholics, Hitchcock has written a number of significant books on related topics.⁷ Hitchcock has lectured widely before Roman Catholic and Protestant groups and is a

4 For an insightful treatment of the subject of this chapter, see Ronald Nash, “Evangelical and Catholic Cooperation in the Public Arena,” in Armstrong, *Roman Catholicism: Evangelical Protestants*, pp. 180–97. Nash is a valuable observer in that he teaches philosophy and theology at a Reformed seminary and his evangelical credentials are impeccable.

5 *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

6 *Ibid.*, preface, p. xiii.

7 Among them: *Catholicism and Modernity* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979); *Years of Crisis: Collected Essays, 1970–1983* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985); and *What Is Secular Humanism?* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1982).

member of the Allies for Faith and Renewal Movement.⁸ He has a special affinity for evangelicals, and sees them as allies united with believing Roman Catholics to battle unbelief in the culture. The real ecumenical task “is to begin explorations with the Protestant groups broadly called evangelical. The greatest difficulties are found here, because these groups take their own beliefs very seriously. . . . However, the greatest rewards are also to be found here because by the end of the twentieth century the liberal denominations will probably have ceased to be Christian . . . and the future of Christianity will depend on Catholics, Orthodox and evangelical Protestants.”⁹

Another important figure on this scene is William Bentley Ball, a practicing Roman Catholic and distinguished “religious freedom” attorney. Ball has been lead counsel in first and fourteenth Amendment litigations before the Supreme Court and in twenty-two states. (We will say more about Ball under “Legal Issues” below.)

William Bentley Ball, like fellow Roman Catholic James Hitchcock, finds common cause with evangelicals. Ball says, “*certain* Catholics and *certain* evangelicals should be hanging together. Excluded, for example, would be those Catholics whose sentiments clustered . . . (around persons like) Fr. Richard McBrien of Notre Dame . . . whose ideological compass needle invariably point to political causes of the Left.” Also excluded are “the Edward Kennedys, the Mario Cuomos, various gay-rights folks, socialists, and do-your-own thing doctrinaires.”¹⁰ In other words, if you are a “milk and water” Catholic, stay off Ball’s bus.

Ball notes that cooperation between Roman Catholics and evangelicals has already begun. Catholics worked with Pat Robertson in 1988. Jerry Falwell reported that one-third of his Moral Majority membership was Catholic. Ball would like to see “Catholics and evangelicals sit down with one another to address pressing problems in the political order. For that they will both need, in the name of public duty, to suppress old suspicions and antagonisms and endeavor to see in one another brothers and sisters in Christ.”¹¹

Ralph Martin (discussed at length in chap. 20) is another Roman Catholic who recognizes the degree that unbelief has impacted our culture as well as Roman Catholicism and mainline Protestantism. Liberation theology has its tentacles in both jurisdictions.¹² Radical feminism has also worked its baleful effect in Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.¹³

8 See chap. 20 .

9 Hitchcock, *Catholicism and Modernity*, p. 231.

10 “Why Can’t We Work Together?” *Christianity Today*, 16 June 1990, p. 22.

11 “We’d Better Hang Together,” *Crisis*, October 1989, p. 21.

12 For the effect that liberation theology has had in the Roman Catholic Church, see Ralph Martin, *A Crisis of Truth* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1982), pp. 87–97.

13 For a good treatment of the debate over inclusive God-language (which springs from radical feminism), see Donald G. Bloesch, *The Battle for the Trinity* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1985). For an evangelical treatment of feminism, see Mary A. Kassian, *The*

Many other persons could be mentioned concerning this subject. Some are noted later in this chapter. Our cultural and societal frameworks are in spiritual and moral disarray. Both Roman Catholics and evangelicals have a vested interest in the outcome of this battle. Our yard is a mess; let's clean it up together.

RELIGION AND POLITICS

One author remembers with fondness the stimulating discussions with Fr. Coughlin of Birmingham, Michigan. We often dealt with the forbidden subjects of religion and politics. To the chagrin of secularists they have been linked closely throughout American history. In dealing with different issues such as slavery and the war in Vietnam, a well-known Catholic statesman observes that “Americans have vigorously debated how religious convictions relate to the working of government.”¹⁴

However, a change has occurred in our culture. The moral relativists claim that “democracy itself rests on the conviction that there are no ultimate convictions . . . none about which we can know and on which we can form a public consensus to guide public policy.”¹⁵

The idea that human government should be ordered by the norms of a transcendent moral order (“natural law”) is unacceptable to “progressives.” Hence, a popular governor (a “practicing” Roman Catholic) can proclaim that, while he is “personally opposed to abortion,” he cannot let his religious views influence his “public deportment.” Happily there are some persons in public life (Roman Catholic as well as evangelical) who resist this “value-neutral” political posture. We will mention some Roman Catholic examples below and cite other examples as we deal with topics later in this chapter.

CONGRESSMAN HENRY J. HYDE

Henry J. Hyde has represented the Sixth District of Illinois since 1974. A devout Roman Catholic, Hyde has been an eloquent defender of traditional values in general and the rights of the unborn in particular. Henry Hyde is the author of the “Hyde Amendment” (presently under siege), which has prevented the use of federal funds to pay for abortions since 1976. He is an accomplished writer and contributed to the volume just cited, which is a “Manifesto for Evangelicals and Catholics.”

Feminist Gospel (Wheaton: Crossway, 1992). For an investigation of Roman Catholic feminism, see Donna Steichen, *Ungodly Rage: The Hidden Face of Catholic Feminism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992).

14 Henry J. Hyde, “Religion and Politics,” in William Bentley Ball, ed., *In Search of a National Morality: A Manifesto for Evangelicals and Catholics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), p. 91.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 92.

GOVERNOR ROBERT CASEY

Robert Casey (Democrat) is governor of Pennsylvania. Casey, a practicing Roman Catholic, is staunchly pro-life, a position which causes him no end of difficulty in the currently structured Democratic Party. Casey was the main author of a bill (Pennsylvania's Abortion Control Act) which—concerning abortion—has some restrictions. Namely, women seeking abortions must be offered information on fetal development and alternatives to abortion, followed by a 24-hour waiting period. Also, parental or judicial consent is mandatory for minors. This act has been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court [June 29, 1992].

Governor Casey, who is a textbook liberal on issues that do not involve social/ moral questions, is about as popular in the Democratic Party as ants at a picnic. Fearing his pro-life rhetoric, the organizers of the 1992 Democratic Convention refused Casey speaking time. He cancelled a planned appearance at a local Democratic Party dinner after learning that Hillary Clinton was scheduled to be at the same event.¹⁶ Governor Casey is a courageous man in resisting moral and spiritual relativism.

REPRESENTATIVE JIM LIGHTFOOT

Jim Lightfoot (Republican from Iowa) is another Roman Catholic who is up-front in his pro-life commitment. He defended his position on the Phil Donahue show opposite abortion advocate Representative Barbara Boxer (Democrat from California). Among the points he made were: "No one has ever listened to the people who are the product of this whole process. . . . I happen to be one of those kids. I was adopted as a baby."¹⁷

After speaking without notes, Lightfoot answered questions from a skeptical audience. Among the points raised was the situation of a severely handicapped baby and the resulting financial and emotional stress on the family. Lightfoot responded: "I have a daughter that was born with spina bifida and the way people are thinking today, had that been identified during the pregnancy, she would have been terminated. She's a 20-year-old kid who's got the usual problems that all 20-year-old kids have."

One woman posed a hypothetical question: "I'd like to know if your 12-year-old daughter was raped and she told you three weeks later and then you found out she was pregnant, would you make her have that baby?" Lightfoot answered, "It's very important with children to teach them values and taking an innocent life is not the value I want to teach my kids."¹⁸ Phil Donahue—who evidently never met a perversion or an aberration

16 "Gov. Casey Refuses to Appear with Hillary Clinton," *The Wanderer*, 5 November 1992. Concerning pro-life members of the Democratic Party, see Fred Barnes, "No Womb for Debate," *The New Republic*, 27 July 1992, pp. 36–38.

17 Martin Johnson, "In 'Rape and Incest' Debate, Unborn Find New Hero," *World*, 4 November 1989.

18 Ibid.

he could not sympathize with—claimed, nevertheless, to be impressed with Representative Jim Lightfoot.

ORGANIZATIONS

There are a number of organizations and publications made up of Roman Catholics and evangelicals (and a few Orthodox Jews and Eastern Orthodox Christians). They address a myriad of issues—from America’s role in the world to physician-assisted suicide here at home. Important scholars from both Roman Catholic and evangelical camps team up to address issues which threaten basic Christian values. We can mention but a few.

The Ethics and Public Policy Center. This organization publishes a newsletter and books. Also conferences and seminars are held addressing a number of different issues. Michael Cromartie, George Weigel, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Terry Eastland, Fr. Richard John Neuhaus, and Carl F. H. Henry are among those who have participated with this group.

The Institute on Religion and Public Life. This group publishes a monthly journal, *First Things*, of which Richard John Neuhaus, a Lutheran turned Catholic, is editor-in-chief. Articles by the aforementioned Henry Hyde and James Hitchcock have appeared on the pages of this journal. There are also a number of Christian journalists (e.g., evangelical Cal Thomas and Catholic Pat Buchanan) who write columns and address issues from the classic Christian perspective.

ISSUES OF LIFE AND DEATH

Orthodox Christians, evangelical and Roman Catholic, are united in their opposition to abortion and euthanasia. From the theological perspective the basic reason is the *imago Dei*: “Of all his material creatures, man and man alone is made in the image and likeness of God.”¹⁹ Put in terms of common moral ground (i.e., natural law), the reason is that unborn babies are *human*, and it is morally wrong to intentionally take the life of an innocent human being, which an unborn child is.²⁰

EUTHANASIA

¹⁹ William E. May, “The Sanctity of Human Life,” in Ball, *In Search of a National Morality*, p. 104.

²⁰ Good material covering the subject of life and death issues can be found in James T. Burtchaell, C.S.C., *Rachel Weeping* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982); Frank Beckwith and Norman L. Geisler, *Matters of Life and Death* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), pp. 24–30, 84–92.

The word *euthanasia* means “good” or “easy” death. While not as prominent as its unholy sister, abortion, it is an act condemned by the believing Christian community. The Catholic Catechism states: “Why does Catholic Christianity condemn euthanasia? Because, no matter what sentimentalists or social engineers may say, it is a grave crime against justice, both human and divine.” Therefore, “the sin committed is either murder or suicide.”²¹

Most of the arguments advanced against abortion also are relevant in examining the question of euthanasia. The people we will discuss who oppose abortion also regard euthanasia as unacceptable. All agree that an individual human life begins at conception, and that it is morally wrong to intentionally take such a life.

ABORTION

The Roman Catholic Church has been very clear in addressing the issue of abortion: “The tradition of the Church has always held that human life must be protected and cherished from the beginning, just as at the various stages of its development.” And further, “In the course of history, the Fathers of the Church, her Pastors and her Doctors have taught the same doctrine—the various opinions on the infusion of the spiritual soul did not cast doubt on the illicitness of abortion.”²²

Traditional Roman Catholics have discovered to their dismay that the “pro-choice” movement has made inroads in the Catholic church. On May 21, 1990, Rembert Weakland, archbishop of Milwaukee (“Successor to the Apostles”), made headlines with the assertion—“Pro-Choice May Be O.K.” His statement was hailed by Francis Kissling of *Catholics for Free Choice* as a “real breakthrough.” This sentiment is not shared by the following people.

Dr. Jérôme Lejeune. Dr. Lejeune is a world-famous geneticist, and his credentials establish him as one of the world’s foremost authorities in his field. He is Professor of Fundamental Genetics in the renowned Children’s Hospital and Faculty of Medicine of Paris. He first won international fame in 1959 when he discovered the first human chromosomal abnormality—the cause of Down’s Syndrome. This discovery earned him the William Allen Memorial medal, the highest prize in genetics.

Dr. Lejeune was called to testify in a case involving abortion at the Municipal Court at Morris County, New Jersey, in 1991. He stated that he sees in his practice some 2,000 children a year and keeps records on some 30,000 of them. Concerning his task Lejeune said, “Our job is really to try to understand what makes the nature of every human being; why some of them are afflicted by constitutional difficulty, and to try later to treat that, if

21 Hardon, *Catholic Catechism*, p. 330.

22 Austin Flannery, O.P., *Vatican Collection: Vatican Council II*, vol. 2, rev. (North Port: Costello Publishing Co., 1992), p. 443. Of course, modern science made the exact point of the beginning of human life more evident. But Catholics have always held that human life is sacred from its very inception in the womb.

we can; so that we would be able to someday bring them back to normal.” As to the process of human reproduction, “science knows, beyond any doubt, that a new individual is formed at the moment of fertilization.” Therefore, “What exists at the moment of fertilization . . . is a human, because the information on the chromosomes and in the cells is human.”²³

Dr. Lejeune described an eight-week-old fetus as being the size of his thumb. If he held “Tom Thumb” in his fist, “You would not see I had anything inside. But if I was opening my hand you would see a tiny human being with fingers, with toes, with a face and with the palm prints you could read with a microscope.” Finally, in answer to the question of what happens when an abortion is performed involving an eight-week-old fetus, Lejeune replied, “It kills a member of our species.”²⁴

Mother Teresa. On June 6, 1988, the 200th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) was preparing to convene. A group of evangelicals called “Presbyterians Pro-Life” hosted a presentation for over 2,000 commissioners, General Assembly officials, and members of the press. The featured speaker was Mother Teresa of Calcutta, whom Baptist layman Chuck Colson calls “the greatest living example of holiness.”

As she addressed the gathering, “The softness of her voice forced a hush upon her audience as she wove the words of scripture through her plea for the life of the unborn.” Mother Teresa spoke of the pregnancy of Mary and her visit to the home of her cousin, Elizabeth. Concerning the “leaping with joy” on the part of the then unborn John the Baptist, she noted that it is “Very strange that God used an unborn child to proclaim the coming of Christ. And we know today that terrible things are happening to that little unborn child; how the mother kills, destroys, murders her own child created by God Himself for greater things. . . . The mother kills two: the child and her conscience.” Mother Teresa added, “When we look at the cross, we understand how much God loves us. We too must learn from Him how to love one another, so that we are ready to give our all to save life, especially the little unborn child.”²⁵ Imagine a tiny Roman Catholic nun teaching “Ethics 101” to a group of sophisticated mainline Presbyterians!²⁶

23 Elena Muller Garcia, “Tom Thumb Is a Person,” *San Diego Catholic News Notes*, July 1992 (reprinted from the *Human Life Review*, Spring 1992).

24 Ibid.

25 *The Presbyterian Layman* 21, no. 4, July/August 1988.

26 A contemporary ecumenical journal quotes a lovely story told by Mother Teresa about an act of mercy that led to the opportunity for evangelism: “Communion with Christ gives us our strength, our joy and our love. . . . The sisters care for forty-nine thousand lepers. They are among the most unwanted, unloved . . . people. . . . One of our sisters was washing a leper covered with sores. A Muslim holy man was present, standing close to her. He said, ‘All the years I have believed that Jesus Christ is a prophet. Today I believe that Jesus Christ is God since he has been able to give such joy to this sister.’ ” *One Heart of Love* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1984), p. 89; quoted in J. Daryl Charles,

Helen Alvare. Helen Alvare is pro-life but doesn't fit the media's image. She is thirty-one years old, Hispanic, Ivy League educated, a lawyer, and identifies herself as a feminist. She is the Director of Planning and Information for Pro-Life Activities for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB). In describing her stance, she explains: "Feminism seemed natural. I do not mean the kind (of feminism) that thinks men and women must be androgynous, or in the same role in every situation. . . . I think society should accommodate the differences men and women have, as well as provide equal opportunity."

Alvare is a member of Feminists For Life (FFL) and her position is summarized by the bumper sticker on her small truck: "Real Feminists Don't Kill Babies." Her job requires her to speak regularly with members of the media. She was scheduled to appear on ABC's "Abortion: A Civil War" but was replaced at the last moment by Fr. Richard McBrien of Notre Dame. Concerning the last minute change: "Perhaps the media—80 percent of whom identify themselves as 'strongly in support of legal abortion'—hesitate to broadcast such an articulate, attractive spokeswoman, who argues so convincingly on abortion and related issues."²⁷

HOMOSEXUALITY

Roman Catholics, united with evangelicals, oppose homosexuality as an acceptable Christian lifestyle. It is more accurate to say that orthodox Christians reject homosexual *behavior*, to be distinguished from homosexual *orientation*; the latter condition is not necessarily sin in itself.²⁸

Unfortunately, the Roman Catholic Church, like the Protestant mainline denominations, finds people receptive to homosexual behavior within its ranks. In a recent article in *Time* magazine, when asked just how common homosexuality among the Catholic clergy is, "a September *Washington Post* article cited the figures of a Baltimore therapist, A. W. Richard Sipe, who, after 25 years of interviewing 1,000 priests, concluded that 20% of the nation's Catholic clergy are gay, half of those sexually active." Another study concludes that "In a new anthology *Homosexuality in the Priesthood and in Religious Life*, Salvatorian priest Robert Nugent, who has worked among gay Catholics for twelve years, says estimates on the number of homosexual clergy range from 'the most conservative 10% to a more reasonable 20%' or higher." This article also makes the point that "Catholic teaching holds that all homosexual acts are sinful, though a homosexual orientation is not. There are U.S. Catholic bishops willing to ordain priests

"Evangelical-Catholic Dialogue: Basis, Boundaries, Benefits," *Pro Ecclesia* 3, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 294 n. 21.

27 Susan Moran, "The Bishop's Voice," *Crisis*, July/August 1992.

28 Leo IX (A.D. 1054), Alexander VII (1665–66), Innocent XI (1679), Pius XI (1929–30), Pius XII (1955), and John XXIII (1961) all issued documents concerning the problem of homosexual orientation.

with homosexual proclivities as long as they promise to remain celibate and support church teaching on the topic.”²⁹

Some ecclesiastically placed officials in the Roman Catholic Church have resisted the traditional position and opted for a more “broad-minded” stance, more in keeping with this “enlightened” age. A major newspaper ran an article on the Vatican and gays: “Three Roman Catholic bishops have joined more than 1,500 Catholics in signing a statement rejecting a Vatican document that supports legal discrimination against gays and lesbians in some cases.”³⁰ The above signers were Bishop Walter Sullivan of Richmond, Virginia; Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit, Michigan; and retired Bishop Charles A. Buswell of Pueblo, Colorado. This information was released through New Ways Ministry, which describes itself as an “educational and bridge-building ministry of reconciliation between the Catholic gay and lesbian community and the Catholic Church.”³¹

THE CARDINAL AND THE PRESBYTERIANS

On June 5, 1991, John Cardinal O’Connor, the 11th Bishop, the 8th Archbishop, and the 6th Cardinal of the See of New York, addressed the commissioners of the 203rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Sponsored by the same group (Presbyterians Pro-Life) that brought Mother Teresa to address the issue of abortion three years earlier, Cardinal O’Connor spoke to the issues of AIDS and the homosexual lifestyle. An editorial comment concerning the cardinal noted that “Because the Cardinal has stood firm where the integrity of the Church’s teaching is concerned, his counsel is widely sought by leaders throughout the United States, including those who disagree with him on isolated issues.”³²

The Executive Director of Presbyterians Pro-Life, Terry Schlossberg, spoke highly of O’Connor: “John Cardinal O’Connor is at the very center of the controversy over sexual matters which is sweeping the church.” She continued, “We in PPL see the obvious benefit this man can be to General Assembly Commissioners who are looking for the historical and biblical context in which to evaluate the report from the Human Sexuality Task Force.”³³

AIDS AND HOMOSEXUALITY MINISTRIES

29 Richard N. Ostling, “The Battle over Gay Clergy,” *Time*, 13 November 1989.

30 “Three Bishops Oppose Vatican on Gays,” in the *San Diego Union and Tribune*, 31 November 1992.

31 Ibid.

32 Thus we have a Roman Catholic cleric encouraging products of the Reformation to pay closer attention to biblical norms. One can only wonder what John Calvin and John Knox would say? “Cardinal O’Connor to Address Commissioners,” *Presbyterian Layman*, May/June 1991.

33 Ibid.

Courage. As a result of the cultural furor over homosexuality and the emergence of the AIDS crisis, a number of support groups and ministries have come into being. One such group is *Courage*. Its founder, John F. Harvey, O.S.F.S., says:

Let me state that I emphatically agree with the Church's teaching on sexual matters. That is why I founded *Courage*, a support group for persons tempted to homosexual behavior who seek to live chaste lives. And I realize that soft-pedaling traditional morality often only encourages persons with sexual disorders to deny their problem. Still, as Christians, we are called to love all people. With love comes responsibility, especially for those in need, as we all are, of the healing of Christ.

Fr. Harvey has been active in developing programs to deal with priests who are pedophilic, a problem which is presently of grave concern in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. The shortage of priests is another motivator to try to restore those caught up in this serious situation.³⁴

Dignity vs. Courage. Jim Johnson was a practicing homosexual who came into contact with *Courage* when he met Fr. Harvey at a conference in 1985. He opened Providence House in Long Beach, California, in 1987 as an interfaith ministry that provided hospice care for AIDS patients.

Concerning the Catholic church's position on gays, Johnson says, "the church's message is that the condition of homosexuality is not sin. It's the activity bent on that disorder, a proclivity toward something unnatural and therefore intrinsically evil, that is sinful." Johnson is not a detached observer: "I've seen the results of that activity firsthand. My godfather died of AIDS. Since I started my ministry, I've buried almost 400 people."³⁵

When Jim Johnson came to San Diego and established Ariel House (based on the Providence House model) he encountered people from the United AIDS Coalition of Los Angeles. "The next thing I knew, San Diego was inundated with negative letters about me." These letters were "distributed by *Dignity* people and their friends in San Diego. (*Dignity* is a national Catholic homosexual group, started in San Diego, that rejects the Church's teaching on homosexuality.)"³⁶

Johnson has received death threats from those who feel the only people who are sympathetic to homosexual activity are qualified to minister to AIDS victims. He is continuing to serve this needy culture. "My recommendation to married couples and young singles is . . . devote yourselves to your family to prevent divorce, to prevent dysfunctional children. The teachings of Vatican II use the term 'the cell' that the family is the cell of society, the backbone of civilization."³⁷

34 John F. Harvey, "Priests Who Stray," *Crisis* (November 1992): 37–42.

35 Tim Ryland, "The Catholic Homosexual," *News Notes*, November 1991.

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.*

Other Ministries. There are a number of groups ministering to HIV positive/ AIDS and homosexual persons. *Alternatives* is an organization that is committed to assisting those who want to come out of the homosexual lifestyle. *Homosexuals Anonymous* basically has the same goal: groups of men and women meet for mutual support and counsel while observing a simple, theologically sound step-program to guide the struggler out of homosexual bondage. *Spatula Ministries* is a support group for parents, friends, and loved ones who are involved one way or another with those enmeshed in this condition.

Before leaving this subject we must touch on the ministry of Dr. Joseph Nicolosi. In the late 1970s, possessing a doctorate from Los Angeles School of Professional Psychology, Nicolosi founded the Thomas Aquinas Psychological Clinic in Encino, California. His purpose was “to establish a psychological service specifically for the Catholic population . . . in harmony with Catholic teaching.” His reparative therapy “has helped men—more than 200 of them—overcome their homosexual tendencies and has established him as a dissenting voice.” Dr. Nicolosi has written two books: *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality: A New Clinical Approach* (1991) and *Healing Homosexuality: Clinical Stories of Reparative Therapy* (spring 1993).³⁸

Roman Catholics and evangelicals are involved in all of the programs, presentations, and ministries mentioned in this section. The common denominator is the premise that the moral prescriptions that have come from the Judeo-Christian tradition are not up for grabs; cultural norms may change but God’s moral laws do not.³⁹

CHRISTIANITY AND THE LEGAL SYSTEM

That Christians are to involve themselves—to some extent—in society is a truth that can be supported by numerous examples from Scripture. The Pharisees and the Herodians once attempted to draw Jesus into a church vs. state argument concerning the payment of taxes (Matt. 22:15–22). Our Lord indicated that Caesar (the state) has legitimate responsibilities and thus deserves the support of Christians. The apostle Paul taught that Christians are to be “subordinate to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been established by God” (Rom. 13:1). And Peter said: “Be subject to every human institution for the Lord’s sake. . . . Give honor to all, love the community, fear God, honor the king” (1 Pet. 2:13 , 17). Therefore, Christians are inexorably linked to the state. However, due to pressures from secular forces, some

38 Tim Ryland, “A Proper Sense of Celibacy,” *ibid.*, April 1993.

39 Concerning AIDS, see Franklin E. Payne, Jr., M.D., *What Every Christian Should Know about the AIDS Epidemic* (Augusta: Covenant Books, 1991). Good material on homosexuality may be found in Harry V. Jaffa, *Homosexuality and the Natural Law* (Montclair: Claremont Institute, 1990) and J. Isamu Yamamoto, ed., *The Crisis of Homosexuality* (Wheaton: Victor, 1990).

have attempted to use the state to limit the church and hamper its mission in the world. This pressure can be clearly discerned in the legal system.

In 1977, Paul Ellwanger, a Roman Catholic layman from South Carolina, formed “Citizens for Fairness in Education,” a group which sponsored “balanced treatment for creation-evolution” bills in various state legislatures. In Arkansas, such a bill was signed into law by the governor in March 1981. The following May the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a challenge to the constitutionality of the bill. A trial was held and the bill was judged to be unconstitutional. One of the authors was the first expert witness for the defense at this court case.⁴⁰

Many such situations could be cited. We wish to draw attention to efforts in the legal arena by William Bentley Ball, already featured in this chapter. He has involved himself in numerous cases involving religious rights of Christians in the public and legal sectors. In 1992 Assistant Chief Robert Vernon of the Los Angeles Police Department was forced to retire because of attacks on his Christian faith. Vernon had served the L.A.P.D. for nearly thirty-eight years and is an elder at Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California, pastored by John F. MacArthur, Jr.

Chief Vernon has filed a lawsuit against the city of Los Angeles for this breach of his religious rights and William Bentley Ball has signed on as lead counsel in this case. Ball had stated at the time that this case might be the most significant religious liberty case of our generation. This is an example of Roman Catholic/evangelical teamwork addressing the dangerous effect of secularism and hostility leveled at those who stand for Christ in our time.⁴¹ Ball sums up his concerns in this area: “It is time that Catholics and evangelicals sit down with one another to address pressing problems in the political order. For that they will both need, in the name of public duty, to suppress old suspicions and antagonisms and endeavor to see in one another brothers and sisters in Christ.”⁴²

PRISON REFORM

Throughout the Scriptures, we find references to many of God’s people spending time in prison. In the Old Testament, Joseph was imprisoned for alleged improprieties with Potiphar’s wife (Gen. 39) and King Zedekiah incarcerated Jeremiah for his prophetic utterances (Jer. 32:2–5). In the New Testament, John the Baptist (Matt. 11:2), the apostles (Acts 5:17–23), and Paul with Silas (Acts 16:19–24) spent time behind bars. Jesus instructed his followers to minister to those in prison (Matt. 25:31–40).

40 See Norman L. Geisler, *The Creator in the Courtroom* (Milford: Mott Media, 1982).

41 For background on this incident, see Robert Vernon, “L.A. Justice Not for All,” *Focus on the Family: Citizen 7*, no. 2, 15 February 1993. The case is ongoing at this time. William Bentley Ball is being assisted by the Western Center for Law and Religious Freedom.

42 William Bentley Ball, “We’d Better Hang Together,” *Crisis* (October 1989): 21.

In the history of the church, God has used time spent in prison to deepen commitment and produce new insights among his people. A contemporary example of prison reform is Charles Colson, who went to jail for his involvement in Watergate, was converted, and subsequently formed *Prison Fellowship Ministries*.

PRISON FELLOWSHIP MINISTRIES

Charles Colson was a member of Richard Nixon's "inner circle." Known as Nixon's "hatchet man," Colson was tried and convicted of leaking F.B.I. documents to the press during the Watergate scandal.

The forthright testimony of Boston businessman Tom Phillips and his reading of such works as C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity* convinced Colson of the truthfulness of Christianity and he was subsequently converted. It was while he served a seven-month jail term that he discovered the need for programs geared to meet the spiritual needs of those in prison.⁴³

In 1976, Colson founded *Prison Fellowship*, a program which seeks to rehabilitate those behind bars. Prisoners, ex-prisoners, victims, and their families are exposed to the power and healing of the gospel. *Prison Fellowship Ministries* is the largest prison outreach program in the world and is active not only in the United States but also in fifty-five countries around the world. It ministers to about 250,000 people.

Charles Colson is a widely acclaimed author, speaker, and commentator. He has recently been awarded the one million dollar 1993 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. This prestigious award is presented annually to a person who shows exceptional thinking in advancing humanity's understanding of God. Previous recipients include former Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn, evangelist Billy Graham, and Mother Teresa.

The Roman Catholic Connection. It is not well known in evangelical circles that Colson receives a great amount of friendship and assistance from Roman Catholics. William F. Buckley, the host of "Firing Line" and editor of *The National Review*, is a close friend and has participated with Colson in conferences.

While Benigno Aquino was imprisoned by Ferdinand Marcos, he received a copy of Colson's book *Born Again*. Aquino was convicted of his need for salvation and gave his life to Jesus Christ. Upon his release, he was tragically gunned down as he deplaned in Manila. Colson's friendship with the dead patriot helped him obtain access for *Prison Fellowship* in the Philippines, and has gained a powerful ally there in Jaime Cardinal Sin, the leading Roman Catholic prelate in that country. Cardinal Sin, in addressing a Prison Fellowship International Conference in

43 Charles Colson wrote two books that detail these events: *Born Again* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming Revell, 1976) and *Life Sentence* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming Revell, 1979).

Nairobi in 1986, said: “Justice without mercy is tyranny, and mercy without justice is weakness. Justice without love is pure socialism, and love without justice is baloney.”⁴⁴

When *Prison Fellowship* outgrew its facilities and moved into a new headquarters, Charles Colson invited his close friend Fr. Michael Scanlan, T.O.R., president of Franciscan University of Steubenville (Ohio), to speak at the dedication. In the course of his homily, Fr. Scanlan said, “God made Jesus a felon that the rest of us felons could go free!” Indeed. (We will have more to say about Michael Scanlan in chapter 18.)

St. Francis Church and Jail Ministry. Every Tuesday evening, a team from St. Francis Roman Catholic Church minister to inmates at the jail in Vista, California. Led by evangelism coordinator John Clauder, the team provides music and singing for up to forty prisoners who attend the meeting.

After the singing, the team members stand and give their testimonies as to how the gospel has impacted their lives. Speakers have included former inmates, recovering drug addicts, and family members of inmates. John Clauder draws attention to the fact that Jesus mentions that he was “in prison” (Matt. 25:35–40) and when Christians minister to those in prison they are in a real sense ministering to Christ. Clauder says, “Maybe I’m selfish because I come here to see Jesus in all of you.”⁴⁵

The singing and testimonies of those committed Christians have a positive impact on the inmates. James Martin, age 26, has been in and out of prison since age 12. Martin says that the group from St. Francis, “. . . gives me peace of mind. . . . It lets you know people out there care. It helps me not to dwell on myself.”⁴⁶

A number of inmates have found Christ since coming to Vista, and John Clauder with his associates teach these new believers how to reach out and tell others about the gospel. Bible study is stressed and a support system is being formed to help released prisoners grow in Christ. The St. Francis Roman Catholics do, indeed, take Jesus’ words in Matthew 25 seriously.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have first attempted to sketch briefly the cultural deterioration which has caused concern among Christians of all denominations. Given the purpose of this book, particular attention has been focused on the thinking and contributions of believing Roman Catholics such as William Bentley Ball. He is the editor of a current work already cited (*In Search of a National Morality*), which addresses the areas of concern:

44 Quoted in Charles Colson, *Kingdoms in Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), p. 313.

45 Tracy Walsh, “A Celebration behind Bars,” *The Southern Cross*, 2 July 1992, p. 7.

46 Ibid.

secularization, morals, government leadership, issues of human life, family values, and the like. Contributors are equally divided between Roman Catholics and evangelicals. In the preface—entitled “Life in an Occupied Country”—Ball speaks to the moral decline we see all around. “We are assaulted by media (and, widely, through our educational institutions) in ways no less distressing to Christians than political propaganda was to people of occupied countries.”⁴⁷

As a Roman Catholic, Ball had been encouraged by the firm moral stand that his church has exhibited through the twentieth century. But a change was coming. He wrote: “in the 1970’s I, along with many other Catholics, shared in the appalling experience that many evangelicals had earlier experienced—the entry of modernism into the church, the rise of dissenters within its body who boldly attacked the fundamental teachings of the faith and, indeed, the very teaching authority of the Church.”⁴⁸ Because of this new situation and his contacts with evangelicals in the school movements and other social areas, Ball concluded that “ ‘orthodox’ Catholics and ‘orthodox’ evangelical Protestants should work together in the battle against rampant secularism. I defined ‘orthodox’ as those who hold belief in God, the Trinity, the divinity of Christ as our personal Savior, the Virgin Birth, the Holy Spirit, inerrancy of Scripture, the existence of Satan, man as created by God in His image and likeness, man’s salvation through Christ.”⁴⁹

In short, William Bentley Ball is encouraging an alliance between Roman Catholics and evangelicals who, in the words of Charles Colson, “Serve in the ‘little platoons’ around the world, faithfully evidencing the love and justice of the Kingdom of God in the midst of the kingdoms of this world.”⁵⁰

47 Ball, *In Search of a National Morality*, p. 10.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

50 Colson, *Kingdoms in Conflict*, dedication.