

Common Ground as Battleground: The Culture Wars Framing Bioethics Continue (Part II)#

Pontos comuns como resultado do campo de batalha: guerras culturais e o enquadramento da bioética continuam (Parte II)

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...Continuation

CHAPTER SEVEN

IX Theology Reconsidered: The Roots of Bioethics Reconsidered

The theology and bioethics of the Orthodox Church are radically different from those of the West, which were shaped by the cathedral schools, especially those of Chartres and Notre Dame in the 12th century, as well as the University of Paris, founded in 1208, all of which led to a radical recasting of Christian thought under the influence of Aristotle. This dramatic change was associated inter alia with the introduction by Dominicus Gundissalinus (1110-1190) of a view of metaphysics shaped by Avicenna (Fidora 2013). As already indicated, the translation of Aristotle's works into Latin (A.D. 1210) marked a watershed in Western Christian theology and in Western culture generally. The result is that for the West the office of the theologian in the strict sense became that of a philosophically trained scholar in the academy reflecting on and analyzing texts and ideas. For the West, theology in the strict sense became an academic undertaking. For Orthodox Christianity, theology in the strict sense remains located in the unbroken noetic experience of God, which unites all true theologians over time

and over space. It is the unity of the Church in one mind with the Fathers and the Apostles, one in Christ in the Holy Spirit. Orthodox Christianity also has theologians in the secondary sense of theologian, who function something like theological science writers who report on what real theological scientists experience and know (i.e., on what those who have noetic experience know). Theologians in the secondary sense are usually academics such as myself. But the truth of even this secondary theology is at its core not a set of propositions, but the Persons of the Trinity. For Orthodox Christianity, theology and the bioethics it supports are not philosophical. In the Church as the Body of Christ in the Holy Spirit, theology is and lives—it does not develop new doctrines. As the veridical theological experience, it unites over space and time in one Spirit all right-believing and right-worshipping Christians.

The non-Orthodox are not here invited to concede the truth of Orthodoxy's claims, but only to examine whether the claims were true, whether they would show a way beyond

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intractable moral and bioethical pluralism, as well as beyond the demoralization and deflation of morality and bioethics. The claim is not just that one can envisage a God's-eye perspective as Kant did for morality, but that one can experience the existence and force of that God's-eye perspective with a compelling force of truth on a distant analogy with what occurs in first-person reports such as "I see blue." The claim is that humans have a nous, a capacity non-empirically to see reality and that this is realized by theologians. This is not to deny that such knowledge does not require techniques for its successful development such as attention to whether the results remain the same over time, indeed through history, as well as whether one is being distracted by self-love and pride (which opens the way to diabolic deception, regarding which there will also be techniques to test its presence). There will also be techniques to engage so as to focus and refine one's noetic experience. What is at stake are three claims. The first claim is that there is a God's-eye view. The second claim is that this perspective can be experienced. The third claim is that if one knows experientially that there is a God's-eye perspective, as well as what this perspective requires, then one can avoid bioethical and moral pluralism as well as the demoralization of bioethics and morality. This approach to theology has led to an Orthodox Christian theology that contrasts on a number of key points with that of the Western Christianities. Roman Catholicism, given its greater doctrinal coherence, will be used as the exemplar Western Christianity to display the difference from traditional Christianities.

Orthodox Christianity is distinguished from Western Christianity in not having accepted any of the novel dogmas that developed in the West, most of which (save for the filioque) Protestants rejected in their protest against Roman

Catholicism. These include (1) the Western teaching that the Father is not the origin of all. As indicated in chapter 4, Orthodoxy rejects the filioque, the Western teaching, affirmed at the Second Council of Lyon (1274) that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, rather than just from the unique person of the Father alone, as taught in John 15:26 as well as at Constantinople I in A.D. 381. This difference changes how one orients in prayer to God and how one is open to experiencing the Father. As a logical point, the views of God in the two cases are conceptually in profound contrast. The West has a different concept of God. They indeed have a concept of God, not an experience of Him.

The second major difference bears on ecclesiology, (2) the rejection of what became the Roman Catholic claims of papal universal original jurisdiction. One bishop indeed has been recognized as having primacy as the successor of Peter, although the office of primacy is like the speaker of the house (i.e., speaker of the synod of all bishops), all along remaining the bishop of one diocese and having only one vote.¹ Moreover, the place of this bishop's see is not necessarily tied to any particular city (e.g., Rome), as is clear from Canon 28 of Chalcedon (A.D. 451).

Following in all things the decisions of the holy Fathers, and acknowledging the canon, which has been just read, of the One Hundred and Fifty Bishops beloved-of-God (who assembled in the imperial city of Constantinople, which is New Rome, in the time of the Emperor Theodosius of happy memory [Constantinople I, A.D. 381]), we also do enact and decree the same things concerning the privileges of the most holy Church of Constantinople, which is New Rome. For the Fathers rightly granted privileges to the throne of old Rome,

¹Regarding the nature of proper papal authority, one might consider the famous letter (A.D. 1386) of Nikitas, Archbishop of Nicomedia, to the German bishop Anselm of Havelberg.

My dearest brother, we do not deny to the Roman Church the primacy amongst the five sister Patriarchates; and we recognize her right to the most honourable seat at an Ecumenical Council. But she has separated herself from us by her own deeds, when through pride she assumed a monarchy which does not belong to her office...How shall we accept from her decrees that have been issued without consulting us and even without our knowledge? If the Roman Pontiff, seated on the lofty throne of his glory, wishes to thunder at us and, so to speak, hurl his mandates at us from on high, and if he wishes to judge us and even to rule us and our Churches, not by taking counsel from us but at his own arbitrary pleasure, what kind of brotherhood, or even what kind of parenthood can this be? We should be the slaves, not the sons, of such a Church, and the Roman See would not be the pious mother but a hard and imperious mistress of slaves (Runciman 1955, p. 116).

because it was the royal city. And the One Hundred and Fifty most religious Bishops, actuated by the same consideration, gave equal privileges to the most holy throne of New Rome, justly judging that the city which is honoured with the Sovereignty and the Senate, and enjoys equal privileges with the old imperial Rome, should in ecclesiastical matters also be magnified as she is, and rank next after her; so that, in the Pontic, the Asian, and the Thracian dioceses, the metropolitans only and such bishops also of the Dioceses aforesaid as are among the barbarians, should be ordained by the aforesaid most holy throne of the most holy Church of Constantinople; every metropolitan of the aforesaid dioceses, together with the bishops of his province, ordaining his own provincial bishops, as has been declared by the divine canons; but that, as has been above said, the metropolitans of the aforesaid Dioceses should be ordained by the archbishop of Constantinople, after the proper elections have been held according to custom and have been reported to him (Schaff & Wace 1994, vol. 14, p. 287).

The Church could in the future acknowledge the leading city of the world as the capitol of Texas (perhaps Santa Fe, once the original boundaries of Texas are restored), as the fourth Rome after old Rome, Constantinople, and Moscow.² The Orthodox Church rejects the Roman Catholic ecclesiological and epistemological doctrine of (3) papal infallibility out of hand as having no root in the Church of the Apostles and the Fathers. The legates from the pope of Rome, for example, were examined for their Orthodoxy at the Council of Chalcedon.

(4) Claims are also rejected regarding

purgatory where, according to Roman Catholics, one is punished in order to make up for supposed temporal punishment due to sin. At stake is the Roman distinction between the forgiveness of guilt and a remaining penalty due to sin, which distinction led to the conclusion that absolution in confession relieves the guilt of sin but not the penalties due to sin, the temporal punishment due to sin.³ However, the gift of the forgiveness of sins given by Christ to the Apostles is unqualified. When Christ forgives sin, there is no sense that the person forgiven may still owe punishment in purgatory due to the penalties owed for sin, even though the sins have been absolved. Quite to the contrary, the priest in giving absolution absolves absolutely:

My spiritual child, who hast confessed to my humble self, I, humble and a sinner, have not power on earth to forgive sins, but God alone; yet through that divinely spoken word which came to the Apostles after the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, saying: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained, we too are emboldened to say: Whatsoever thou hast said to my most humble self, and whatsoever thou hast not succeeded in saying, either through ignorance, or through forgetfulness, whatever it may be: God forgive thee in this present world, and in that which is to come.

God it was Who forgave David through Nathan the Prophet, when he confessed his sons, and Peter weeping bitterly for his denial, and the sinful woman in tears at His feet, and the Publican, and the Prodigal Son: May that same God forgive thee all things, through me a sinner, both in this present world, and in that which is to come, and set thee uncondemned before His

² For a discussion of where the fourth Rome should be established, see Engelhardt 2000, pp. 393-396.

³ On 25 November 1551, during the 14th session, the Council of Trent published the following canons concerning the doctrine of the temporal punishment due to sin:

12. If anyone says that the entire punishment is always remitted by God along with the sin, and that the satisfaction made by penitents is nothing else but the faith by which they grasp that Christ has made satisfaction on their behalf: let him be anathema.

13. If anyone says that, for temporal punishment for sins, no satisfaction at all is made to God, through the merits of Christ, by the sufferings imposed by God and patiently borne; or by the penances enjoined by a priest; or, further, by those voluntarily undertaken such as fasts, prayers, almsgiving or other additional works of devotion; and consequently that the best penance is only a new life: let him be anathema. ...

15. If anyone says that the keys have been given to the church only for loosing and not also for binding; and that, consequently, when priests impose penalties on those who confess, they are acting contrary to the purpose of the keys and to the institution of Christ; ...: let him be anathema (Tanner 1990, vol. 2, p. 713).

See also Brzana 1953.

dead Judgment Seat. And now, having no further care for the sins which thou hast declared, depart in peace (Pocket Prayer Book 1956, pp. 44-45).

(5) Because there is no recognition of purgatory (a place for the purging of the temporal punishment due to sin), there is no recognition of indulgences. Also, due to the absence of a treasury of excess merits of the saints,⁴ only Christ merits our redemption, and even then not in terms of an understanding under which His excess merits would be stored in a spiritual treasury to be given out by the pope. Even today, Roman Catholicism emphasizes the role of indulgences, as for example when during Pope Francis's visit to Brazil, July 23-29, 2013, he declared that those who could not physically attend World Youth Day would receive a plenary indulgence by participating in the week's devotions "via the new means of social communication," including the pope's twitter feed (Kidd 2013, p. 64).⁵ The differences lie also in the quite disparate views of the significance of suffering that took shape in Western Christianity. As a consequence, the Orthodox Christian appreciation of suffering and its understanding of the propriety of medical interventions in many ways contrast with those of Western Christianity. Before the Reformation, Western Christianity came to place suffering within an economy of sin, propitiatory punishment, and salvation, in which suffering plays a central role in paying off a penalty, namely, temporal punishment due to sin. One's personal suffering, the suffering offered up on one's behalf, or an indulgence can free one from purgatory as a temporal punishment due to sin. This view of suffering, when combined with the view that the penance a priest imposes in confession

serves as a punishment merited by the temporal punishment due to sin, created a background spiritual currency in which the penalties due to sin can be set aside by current tribulation, pain, and suffering. None of this exists in Orthodox Christianity. Again, the Orthodox priest at the end of confession absolves the penitent of the sins confessed so as to make pain and suffering to avoid purgatory beside the point. Any penance imposed serves a therapeutic goal focused on the particular needs of the penitent. So, too, with suffering generally: it offers an opportunity for repentance and humble submission to the will of God.

(6) The Roman Catholic prohibition of remarriage before the death of the spouse and after divorce when the first marriage has been broken by adultery (more broadly pornoi, see Matthew 19:9) is not recognized. The Orthodox know that sacramental marriage is not a contract, but is conveyed by the Church through the priest to the couple. Christian marriage restores the icon of the unique union of husband and wife. Abraham and other patriarchs, as well as kings, had not just multiple wives, which was allowed to all before Christ, but also lawful concubines (see, for example, Genesis 25:6).⁶ But now even a second and surely a third spouse after the death of the first spouse are generally discouraged (and forbidden to a priest and his wife). What is so shocking for those around Jesus is not just His setting aside the usual easy grounds for divorce, but that His changing the rules for divorce announced that He is the Messiah. There had been a dispute regarding the grounds for divorce. Hillel had accepted as pornoi anything that displeased a husband (e.g., his wife's bringing the students of the rabbi to laugh at their teacher), while Shammai had accepted only the strong ground approved by

⁴ The Roman Catholic doctrine of indulgences developed out of a practice of commuting or ameliorating severe penances, such as years of strict fasting, if the penitent engaged in some good act such as building a monastery.

⁵ A more complete statement concerning the July, 2013, indulgences granted by Pope Francis I is provided by the news service Zenit, sponsored by the Legionaries of Christ.

A plenary indulgence will also be granted for those who cannot attend World Youth Day. "The faithful who on account of a legitimate impediment cannot attend the aforementioned celebrations may obtain Plenary Indulgence under the usual spiritual, sacramental and prayer conditions, in a spirit of filial submission to the Roman Pontiff, by participation in the sacred functions on the days indicated, following the same rites and spiritual exercises as they occur via television or radio or, with due devotion, via the new means of social communication," the decree states.

See: <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-decrees-plenary-indulgence-for-world-youth-day> [accessed August 17, 2013]

⁶ In commenting on the prerogative of kings to have concubines, Maimonides remarks: "The Oral Tradition states that he may take no more than eighteen wives. The figure eighteen includes both wives and concubines" (Maimonides 2001, p. 518).

Jesus. When the question was asked as to whom they should follow, the answer was generally to follow Hillel until the Messiah came, whom Jesus announced Himself as being.

(7) The immaculate conception is rejected, because if the Theotokos were born without the consequences of original sin, then no one could be saved, because Christ would not have taken on our sinful flesh and redeemed it. Moreover, it is because Christ did take on our sinful flesh that the Letter to the Hebrews states: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin" (Heb 4:15). Adam before the Fall was not tempted as we are. Both the Theotokos and the Body of Christ before the Resurrection were touched by the consequences of "original sin".⁷ The great triumph of the Theotokos is that, despite her sharing with all men the fallen flesh of Adam, she submitted to the will of God. Within the second millennium, Western Christendom had embraced radically new dogmas, separating itself not just through schism, but through heresy from the Church of the Apostles and the Fathers.

This short list of some of the important doctrinal differences separating the Christian community that emerged in the West from the original Christianity⁸ does not include a very important and indeed cardinal difference, one not maintained by Protestantism: Orthodox Christianity understands the Church as the Body of Christ in the Holy Spirit, so that the Church is united in history (i.e., apostolic succession) and belief with the Church of the Apostles and the Fathers. Those without apostolic succession, who are separated by heresy (e.g., the Roman Catholics) are not within the Church. St. Basil draws the following important distinction

between heretics, schismatics, and unlawful congregations.

By heresies they meant men who were altogether broken off and alienated in matters relating to the actual faith; by schisms men who had separated for some ecclesiastical reasons and questions capable of mutual solution; by unlawful congregations gatherings held by disorderly presbyters or bishops or by uninstructed laymen. ... So it seemed good to the ancient authorities to reject the baptism of heretics altogether (Basil 1994, Letter CLXXXVIII.I, vol. 8, pp. 223-224).

Protestantism could not maintain the sense of the church as an actual community of believers that is one and apostolic in its origins and over time, possessing theological continuity with the Church of the Apostles and the Fathers. In addition, because the Protestants were protesting against what appeared factually in the West to be the exemplar of church, namely, Roman Catholicism, the meaning of church had to be revised. The ecclesial body of Roman Catholicism they knew to have created doctrinal novelties such as purgatory, as well as disciplinary novelties such as compulsory clerical celibacy. Their reaction against Roman Catholicism encouraged a new *lex orandi*, which proclaimed a new *lex credendi*. In order plausibly to attempt to start Christianity anew in the 16th century, one was forced to abandon the recognition of the church as one and apostolic, as a real ecclesial body that was the Body of Christ in the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:23). As Protestantism fragmented into a plurality of denominations in bitter disagreement, Protestantism had to abandon the claim to being catholic.

The Orthodox Church lives across history

⁷ For a study of the difference between the Roman Catholic doctrine of original sin and the Orthodox view of ancestral sin, see Romanides 2002. The Vulgate inaccurately translates the Greek of Romans 5:12 as: "Propterea sicut per unum hominem peccatum in hunc mundum intravit, et per peccatum mors; et ita in omnes homines mors pertransiit, in quo omnes peccaverunt" (Romans 5:12, Biblia Sacra 1956). The correct translation of the Greek original into English is: "Therefore, even as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, thus death passed to all men, on account of which all have sinned" (Holy Apostles 2000, p. 98). The key issue in the Latin translation is the *quo* (by which), which does not adequately translate the Greek that refers to death, which is indeed passed on, along with the inclination to sin to which all except Christ have succumbed. John Romanides makes clear that the Patristic tradition was of one mind about the fact that the original Greek is "because of which", where "which" refers to death. Thus, the fact that "all have sinned" is the case through their exposure to death and the resulting omnipresent inclination to sin: "death was viewed as the root from which sin springs up" (Romanides 2002, p. 166f). See also Sopko 1998.

⁸ There are numerous other differences in dogma separating Orthodox Christians from Roman Catholics, such as whether grace is created.

in the same dogmas, that is, without any development of new dogmas (e.g., the immaculate conception). The Orthodox Church invites all into the mind of the Apostles and the Fathers so as to live at one with Christ. The preservation of the traditional fasts (e.g., the fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, known since the time of the Fathers⁹) aids the control over our self-love and also allows one to be united in common ascetical struggle over time with the Apostles. The result is that Orthodox Christians experience reality, morality, and bioethics in categories that have not been available for Western Christians for 1200 years. There is, for example, the appreciation of involuntary sins, that to be causally involved in the death of another human (e.g., as with a spontaneous abortion¹⁰), even without any intention or negligence, often harms the heart so as to require ascetical support by the Church (e.g., before communion one asks for the forgiveness of sins, before voluntary and involuntary¹¹). Among the differences, there is no recognition of the doctrine of double effect to allow one to consider “indirect” therapeutic abortions to be without moral harm (Engelhardt 2000, pp. 277-280). The result is that sin is approached more medicinally and less juridically with the focus on using fasting, almsgiving, and vigils not as a punishment, but as a treatment.

The view of sexuality is also other than what became salient in parts of Western Christianity. The Church is rich with holy monks, as well as with priests who are usually married. As

mentioned in chapter 4, it is a Church that affirms marital sexuality. It emphasizes the chastity of the marriage act. The Church of the Apostles and the Fathers affirms that the marriage bed is undefiled as in Canon LI of the 85 Apostolic Canons.

If any Bishop, or Presbyter, or Deacon, or anyone at all on the sacerdotal list, abstains from marriage, or meat, or wine, not as a matter of mortification, but out of an abhorrence thereof, forgetting that all things are exceedingly good, and that God made man male and female, and blasphemously misrepresenting God’s work of creation, either let him mend his ways or let him be deposited from office and expelled from the Church. Let a layman be treated similarly (Sts. Nicodemus and Agapius 1994, p. 91).

Indeed, in describing the marriage act, St. John Chrysostom affirms the goodness of the orgasm of the wife. As he states,

And how become they one flesh? As if thou shouldst take away the purest part of gold, and mingle it with other gold; so in truth here also the woman as it were receiving the richest part fused by pleasure, nourisheth it and cherisheth it, and withal contributing her own share, restoreth it back a Man. And the child is a sort of bridge, so that the three become one flesh, the child connecting, on either side, each to other (Chrysostom 1994, vol. 13, p. 319).

Man is to be redeemed in flesh and spirit,

⁹ The Didache, a text from the early second century, but perhaps from as early as A.D. 60, enjoins that one “fast on Wednesdays and Fridays” (Didache viii.1, vol. 1, p. 321).

¹⁰ Consider, for example, the absolution for the involuntary miscarriage of an unborn child, which absolution recognizes the need for God’s grace when our bodies fall short of the mark.

O Master, Lord our God, Who was born of the Holy Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary, and Who, as an infant, lay in the manger: According to Your great mercy, be merciful to Your servant, N., who is in sin, having been involved in the loss of a life, whether voluntary or involuntary, for she has miscarried that which was conceived in her. Forgive her transgressions, both voluntary and involuntary, and protect her from every snare of the Devil. Cleanse her stain and heal her infirmities. And grant to her, Lover of Mankind, health and strength of soul and body. Guard her with a shining Angel from all assaults of the unseen demons; Yea, O Lord, from sickness and infirmity. Purify her from bodily uncleanness and the various troubles within her womb. By Your many mercies lead her up in her humbled body from the bed on which she lies. For we all have been born in sins and transgressions, and all of us are defiled in Your sight, O Lord. Therefore, with fear we cry out and say: Look down from heaven and behold the feebleness of us who are condemned. Forgive this, Your servant, N., who is in sin, having been involved in the loss of a life, whether voluntary or involuntary, for she has miscarried that which was conceived in her. And, according to Your great mercy as the Good God Who loves mankind, be merciful and forgive all those who are here present and who have touched her. For You alone have the power to remit sins and transgressions, through the prayers of Your Most-pure Mother and of all the Saints (Monk 1987, pp. 6-7).

¹¹ The prayer before communion includes a petition that one be absolved of one’s involuntary sins. “Wherefore I pray thee, have mercy upon me and forgive my transgressions both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, of knowledge and of ignorance; and make me worthy to partake without condemnation of thine immaculate Mysteries, unto remission of my sins and unto life everlasting” (Pocket Prayer Book 1956, p. 98). See also Petrà 2011.

body and soul. When married, the wife and the children under the husband and father constitute the family as a domestic church. All is to be transformed by the uncreated energies of God. All is to be rendered holy.

How, then, is one to locate Orthodox Christianity along with its bioethics in terms of the history of Christianity? The Orthodox share with Western Christianity the first seven ecumenical councils. However, Orthodoxy recognizes a different eighth council, namely, the Council in the Temple of Holy Wisdom held in Constantinople 879-880, which was attended by legates of Pope John VIII. This Council during the reign of Emperor Basil I (reigned 867-886) affirmed the actions of St. Photios the Great (ca. 820-891), who excommunicated Pope Nicholas I (ca. 800-867) for having *inter alia* accepted the filioque, the Western dogma that the Holy Spirit proceeds in His existence not just from the Father but also from the Son. The West instead accepts a council held in Constantinople in 869-870, which Orthodoxy rejects as a Robber Council. The last ecumenical council assembled in Constantinople in 1341, 1344, and 1347 under Emperor John V Palaiologos (reigned 1341-1376). This Ninth Ecumenical Council articulated the position of Orthodoxy *inter alia* over against a Scholasticism that would render theology into a philosophical academic endeavor. The Council supported St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1356), who defended the Christian epistemology of the first millennium from a recasting in the image and likeness of a philosophical view of theology. It reaffirmed the recognition that theologians are those with hesychia¹² who have through asceticism overcome their self-love so as to love God with their whole heart, soul, and mind, so as to be able to love their neighbor in the light of this love (Matthew 22:37-40) and be allowed to experience God. Real theologians know God. They do not merely know about God.

The cardinal importance of this last Ecumenical Council is that it resisted the rational horn of Plato's Euthyphro. It rejected the view

that the good, the right, and the virtuous can rightly be known without the holy, without an experience of God. It affirmed instead that that which is good, right, and/or virtuous is good, right, and/or virtuous because it leads to holiness, to God. Theology in the strict sense, in the primary sense, is not discursive reflection on God but an actual relationship with Him and an actual experience of Him. This theology is not about abstract principles, but about persons, about our relationship with the Persons of the Trinity. That is, this theology is not primarily reflection about God, but about knowing and being united to God. The theologies of Orthodoxy and the West thus involve fundamentally different understandings of the nature and of the sociology of theology (i.e., as to who is a theologian in the strict sense), which has very important implications for what one will recognize as the foundation of a Christian bioethics. In the West, one came to expect that theologians in the strict sense would be found in the Academy, so that theology became an academic profession, one of the four faculties of the university. Such theologians helped shape the magisterium of Western Christianity. In stark contrast, in the Church of the first millennium one expects to find most real theologians among ascetics. This would not necessarily rule out academicians being theologians, for academicians can live ascetic lives and know God. However, all things being equal, one would expect that the majority of theologians in the strict sense would be found in holy monasteries among those who with violence against their passions had turned to wholehearted love of God. Holding honorary doctorates is not necessarily an impediment to being a theologian in the strict sense, but it is not a support towards being a theologian in the strict sense and indeed might through inciting pride constitute a stumbling block. As John Romanides has put it: "The Fathers do not say anything about God on the basis of philosophical reflection. They do not sit at their desks like the Scholastics in order to do

¹² Hesychasm (from hesychia, "stillness, rest, quiet, silence") is the ascetical practice that follows Christ's injunction that "when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray" (Matthew 6:6), so that in prayer (especially through the Jesus Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner) one turns away from the world and the senses to experience God (i.e., theoria). Hesychasm is the process of retiring within oneself in order that through prayer one may cease to be misdirected by the senses, so that one may be granted an experiential knowledge of God.

theology, because when the Church Fathers theologize, speculation or reflection is strictly forbidden” (Romanides 2008, p. 85).

Among other things, this means that the bioethics of the Orthodox Church is not grounded in the moral-philosophical project that has shipwrecked with the collapse of foundations. It is grounded instead in an encounter and experience of God. Its discursive dimension will be an analysis of the content delivered and maintained by the experience of its theologians who are theologians in the strict sense (Engelhardt 2011). As a consequence, this bioethics will increasingly contrast with the bioethics of the dominant secular culture, as well as with the “rationalized” Christian bioethics of the Western Christianities (Engelhardt 2000).

Theology in the strict sense is always nested in prayer, most particularly in the prayer of the Church assembled in Liturgy. The Liturgy compasses all true theologians in the strict sense. Because of this, as Archimandrite Vasileios of Stavronikita Monastery on Mount Athos stated, “The Gospel cannot be understood outside the Church nor dogma outside worship” (Vasileios 1984, p. 18). It is for this reason that biblical scholarship is of such marginal significance in the Orthodox Church. Consequently, “outside the Church the Gospel is a sealed and incomprehensible book” (Vasileios 1984, p. 18). Those outside the Church will approach the Bible in a fashion not at one with the mind of the Apostles and the Fathers, generating various and diverse interpretations as within Protestantism. The result will be a legion of Christian bioethics. The Liturgy provides the privileged epistemic standpoint that unites. Because the Liturgy unites all who are truly theologians, the Liturgy ranks only after the Bible as the record of revelation. Consider, for example, Archbishop Hilarion’s [Alfeyev] remarks, who on October 22, 2008, at the University of Toronto stated:

For an Orthodox theologian, liturgical texts are not simply the works of outstanding theologians and poets, but also the fruits of the prayerful experience of those who have attained sanctity and theosis. The theological authority of liturgical texts is, in my opinion, higher than that of the works of the Fathers of the Church, for not everything in the works of the latter is of

equal theological value and not everything has been accepted by the fullness of the Church. Liturgical texts, on the contrary, have been accepted by the whole Church as a ‘rule of faith’ (kanon pisteos), for they have been read and sung everywhere in Orthodox churches over many centuries.... The *lex credendi* grows out of the *lex orandi*, and dogmas are considered divinely revealed because they are born in the life of prayer and revealed to the Church through its divine services. Thus, if there are divergences in the understanding of a dogma between a certain theological authority and liturgical texts, I would be inclined to give preference to the latter. And if a textbook of dogmatic theology contains views different from those found in liturgical texts, it is the textbook, not the liturgical texts, that need correction (Hilarion 2008).

A very similar point is also made by Archimandrite Vasileios:

among the creedal and dogmatic monuments of the Orthodox Catholic Church... the liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil the Great, complete with their *typikon* or liturgical rubrics and the actual manner of their celebration. For it is not only prayers with dogmatic content but the whole liturgical action and life of the Church that constitutes a unique theological witness and grace (Vasileios 1984, p. 19).

With the recognition of the importance of the Liturgy comes the appreciation of Tradition, even the accretion of traditions that serve as insights about how to live the faith in a hostile, post-Christian, secular world. It involves an understanding not anchored in a faith in philosophical rationality, but in the presence of God. Its bioethics will not embrace the Enlightenment, but will be rooted in the transcendent.

Western Christianity and its bioethics have largely disengaged from this traditional life-world and its theology. In particular, Roman Catholicism’s life-world is a *novum*. The *lex orandi* has radically changed, leading to fundamental changes in the *lex credendi*. Fish-on-Friday-eating Christians of the West are no more (or at least very few). Western Christians

live in a post-ascetic lifeworld, which contrasts with that of Orthodox Christians, and which is different from that of the Fathers. The theological substance, character, and “style” of the Church of the first millennium is incompatible with that which emerged in the early second millennium in the West, first producing the medical ethics of the manualist tradition, as well as what took shape in the West at the end of the second millennium and then supporting a weak bioethics.

Following the Reformation and the Enlightenment, worship and belief were transformed in the mainstream culture of the West, eventually producing a low-church Kantian moral domain and a high-church Hegelian cultural domain. The first, as with reformed Judaism and secularized low-church Protestantism, emphasizes the moral life, while generally minimizing ritual, even ritual without metaphysical force. The second, with the high-church Hegelians, supports ritual as integral to culture, but without metaphysical force.¹³ All this led to a secular culture vastly different from the Church of the first millennium, as well as different even from the Western Christianities prior to the Enlightenment and prior to the subsequent death of God in Western culture. Although, at its inception, the bioethics of the 1970s still had an early medieval and Enlightenment faith in reason, this is now being lost. Such a faith has now been seen to be clearly unfounded, leading to the demoralization and deflation of bioethics. The Roman Catholicism

that had generated a manualist medical ethics and the transformed, post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism that then replaced it with the bioethics of the 1970s is now on its way to a further transformation and a bioethics framed by a weak theology congenial in important ways with a bioethics after God. The result is a secular culture cum morality and bioethics at odds with that of traditional Christianity that post-traditional Christianity will increasingly support. The bioethics battles in the culture wars will be ever more complex.

X. A Conflict of Life-Worlds: Morality, Bioethics, and the Culture Wars

The moral as well as metaphysical geography just sketched brings one back to the character of morality and bioethics after God, as well as to a better appreciation of the likely future character of the bioethical battles in the culture wars. Traditional Christianity is alive and well not only in fundamental Protestantism, but in Orthodox Christianity. Traditional Christianity gives good grounds to hold that the culture wars over bioethical issues between the now-dominant secular culture of the West and traditional Christianity will not go away. This is the case even though the mainline Christianities has become deeply secularized, and even though Roman Catholicism, which still holds that the gulf between Christianity and the secular culture can be bridged by philosophy, is being further radically secularized by that

¹³ For a Roman Catholic approach to ritual as valuable in itself apart from God, see Perniola 2001. As a fully cultural matter, one can state, “I am an atheist, I am not a Christian, but I am surely Roman Catholic,” thus affirming the culture and/or ritual form but not the metaphysical or dogmatic dimension of Roman Catholicism. The atheist Marcello Pera, a friend of Benedict XVI, in his portion of their jointly authored *Without Roots*, endorses a Christian morality, but without recognizing God much less Christ as the Redeemer (Ratzinger & Pera 2006). Indeed, Pera has become well known for endorsing a Christianity without God, arguing for an essential tie between Christianity and liberal democracy. He endorses the importance of the Christian heritage or tradition (Pera 2011). In short, there are a number of ways in which atheists, agnostics, and deists can be cultural Christians. This persistence of a “religious” culture as a moral commitment after the traditional religious core is gone exists in forms of Judaism as well. One might think, for example, of Ethical Culture, which was founded by Felix Adler (1851-1933), a former Reform Jewish rabbi, who convoked the initial members of the movement on May 15, 1876. He had already espoused many of its foundational ideas in a sermon at Temple Emanu-El on October 11, 1873, in New York under the title “The Judaism of the Future” (see Kraut 1979). It was not until February 21, 1877, that the New York Society for Ethical Culture was incorporated. Adler’s influence was also significant in Europe. With his inspiration, the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für ethische Kultur* was established in 1892. In 1894 *Die ethische Gemeinde* was founded in Vienna and in 1896 the International Ethical Union (IEU) was formed. See Friess 1981. There is as well a high church or ritual form of the persistence of a “religious” community after it has passed beyond belief. For example, in addition to Perniola’s reflections, one might consider high-church Anglicans who might not recognize that Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead or even that God exists, but who can be committed to a substantive ritualism. One encounters agnosticism celebrated in good Christian cultural style, all without having to belabor traditional belief. One must distinguish such post-Christian, ritual friendly Christianity from the late-19th-century Anglican ritualism movement, which under Queen Victoria led to Anglican ministers being arrested, convicted, and imprisoned for excessive high-church ritualism, and which appeared to many as flagrantly “Romish”. For an account of this 19th-century phenomenon, see Reed 1970.

surrounding culture. The more the secular culture attempts to force traditional Christians to violate their obligations to God (and not merely what in more secular terms is referred to as violating the integrity of their conscience), the more this cultural gulf between the dominant secular culture and traditional Christianity becomes a place of intense disagreement. This will especially be the case in health care, as chapter five showed. Health care and the ethics of healthcare professionalism will constitute the cultural equivalent of a fault-line along which major cultural tectonic plates will collide, eliciting earthquakes of cultural reaction. The more that Western cultures recognize the foundationless character of their secular moralities and bioethics, the more fundamentalist and threatening the morality and bioethics of traditional Christians will appear.

The dominant secular culture will continue to respond vigorously to the presence of traditional Christianity. Given traditional Christianity, this will sustain the culture wars. Nevertheless, the secular culture will seek as far as possible to make the presence of traditional Christianity, and of traditional religion generally, seem invisible. One might note, for example, how infrequently the dominant secular media, in analyzing Vladimir Putin's role in the social changes of contemporary Russia, avoid calling attention to the circumstance that he has made Orthodox Christianity the de facto established religion of Russia. In analyses of Putin and contemporary Russia, recognition of the importance of Orthodox Christianity in Russia and of Russia's support of Bashar al-Assad of Syria (Syria has an ancient Orthodox Christian population that looks to Russia for protection) is minor at best.¹⁴ The marginalization of the role of Christianity from public reflection and from healthcare policy is thus achieved at the price of a highly skewed and inaccurate account of the contemporary state of affairs. This marginalization is demanded by an established secular culture that seeks to be after Christendom, Christianity, and a Christian bioethics. This attempted marginalization can only intensify the disagreements. If traditional

Christianity responds, then the attempt to make traditional Christianity invisible will make it only more visible.

Where does all of this leave us? The answer is: with irreconcilable moral and bioethical controversies. We do not share common ground. Christianity has ancient roots that are immune from the consequences of the collapse of the Western moral-philosophical project. The culture wars about matters moral and bioethics are rooted deeply in contrary and incompatible views about the ultimate meaning of reality and the character of moral as well as bioethical knowledge. The contemporary normative geography within which the moral and bioethical culture wars are waged has taken its current shape due to wide-ranging changes in the dominant culture of the West. These include changes from the 1960s and onward, many due to the consequences of Vatican II, which have reached far beyond Roman Catholicism. As this chapter argues, popes John XXIII and Paul VI did not appreciate the destabilizing forces they helped unleash. Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI even failed to appreciate the character and depth of the deChristianization that is occurring. They regarded the current cultural crisis as one of philosophical rationality rather than of Christian faith. They did not fully appreciate that the bioethical battles in the culture wars are due to the widening gulf between the dominant culture and traditional Christianity. Faith in reason discounted the depth of the gulf and supported the presumption that reason can bridge it.

Matters are different with Pope Francis. He appears ready to embrace the cultural changes underway, thus further refashioning Roman Catholic bioethics. Unlike his predecessors, he seems to be attempting to change Roman Catholicism's focus by internalizing the post-modern character of the contemporary moral and bioethical terrain so as to move towards a weak theology and bioethics. This tack, which has wide-ranging consequences for bioethics, is in deep tension with traditional Christianity, as this chapter shows. This new focus will likely strengthen the grounds for disagreement

¹⁴ As an example of the discounting by the secular media of the role that religion plays in public affairs, see Simon Shuster's recent article concerning Vladimir Putin, which makes only two brief mentions of Orthodox Christianity (Shuster 2013).

between traditional and post-traditional Christians, not to mention the disagreements between the traditional Christian and the fully secularized post-Christian culture and its bioethics. The bioethical battles in the culture wars will not just involve a conflict of Christianity with a post-Christian culture, but between traditional and post-traditional Christians.

Our contemporary moral and bioethical disputes are set within the collision of life-worlds. Morality and bioethics are inextricably

defined by controversy and disagreement. Surely, secular morality and bioethics are firmly after God.

Because of regarding its medical ethics as rationally equivalent to secular medical ethics, Roman Catholicism will be at peace with a secular bioethics after God. In addition, in having made peace with its bioethical battlers in the culture wars, Roman Catholic intellectuals will also aspire to being part of Hegel's Absolute Spirit.

Living Without God

CHAPTER EIGHT

I. Hegel and Post-Modernity

We are after modernity. The dominant culture, which is now a secular culture, is after God. We are quite distant, even from Western Europe and America of the 1950s. It is this culture after God that Hegel foresaw. The dominant life-world has taken on a new form. This book has explored this state of affairs and its implications for morality, bioethics, and public policy. It has examined how very different reality and morality *cum* bioethics and healthcare policy appear without God.¹⁵ Before the Enlightenment, the regnant culture recognized God and immortality. With dramatic implications, God and immortality are now widely forgotten: morality is both demoralized and deflated. Kant attempted, without really acknowledging God's existence, to hide from these implications by affirming as practical moral postulates God and immortality.¹⁶ In fact, Kant hoped to secure all of the content of traditional Western Christian morality without Christ as God, indeed without even an actually existing God.¹⁷ The descendants of these Kantians took for granted that they could have a well-developed culture along with a bioethics

built on a morality of human dignity and human rights. As Rorty summarized this state of affairs, Kantians "are the people who think there are such things as intrinsic human dignity, intrinsic human rights, and an ahistorical distinction between the demands of morality and those of prudence" (Rorty 1991, p. 197). They presumed a rational substitute for a God's-eye perspective. They are wrong. Such does not exist.

Hegel knew this Kantian hope was not feasible. He affirmed the implications of the post-theistic Christian culture that was gaining dominance. Hegel did this by philosophically resituating the significance of Christianity, God, and morality (and thus implicitly bioethics), while renouncing any claims about a canonical, content-full morality transcending time and place. As Rorty summarized matters, Hegelians recognize "that there is no human dignity that is not derivative from the dignity of some specific community, and no appeal beyond the relative merits of various actual or proposed communities to impartial criteria which will help us weigh those merits" (Rorty 1991, p. 197). Where Kant moralized religion, Hegel

¹⁵There is a considerable literature concerning the death of God in contemporary culture. For a small sampling, see Altizer 2006; Altizer & Hamilton 1966; Caputo & Vattimo 2007; Peterson 2005; Robinson 1963; and Williams 2012.

¹⁶As to Kant's postulates of practical reason, "These postulates are those of immortality, of freedom affirmatively regarded (as the causality of a being so far as he belongs to the intelligible world), and of the existence of God" (Kant 1956, p. 137, AK V.133).

¹⁷For Kant, in our actions God serves a moral, not a religious purpose, all without Kant's actually affirming the existence of a transcendent God. In the process, Kant construes Christian norms in terms of his rationally grounded morality.

The Christian principle of morality is not theological and thus heteronomous, being rather the autonomy of pure practical reason itself, because it does not make the knowledge of God and His will the basis of these laws but makes such knowledge the basis only of succeeding to the highest good on condition of obedience to these laws; it places the real incentive for obedience to the law not in the desired consequences of obedience but in the conception of duty alone, in true observance of which the worthiness to attain the latter alone consists (Kant 1956, pp. 133–34, AK V 129–30).

Kant embraces the rationalist horn of Euthyphro's dilemma.

rendered religion after God in not only the theistic, but after God in even the deistic sense of God. Hegel both diagnosed the roots of post-modernity and contributed to the loss of the remnants of modernity's faith that reason is one and canonical.

If the Hegelians are right, then there are no ahistorical criteria for deciding when it is or is not a responsible act to desert a community, any more than for deciding when to change lovers or professions. The Hegelians see nothing to be responsible to except persons and actual or possible historical communities; so they view the Kantians' use of 'social responsibility' as misleading (Rorty 1991, p. 198).

It is now apparent that all secular moral categories are socio-historically conditioned and as a consequence secular moral pluralism is intractable. So, too, bioethics is a plural noun. Hegel is at the root of post-modernity,¹⁸ the recognition of the unavoidable condition of secular moral and bioethical pluralism, as well as the loss of any ultimate, transcendent point of orientation.

In 1802 in "Glauben und Wissen", Hegel appreciated the significance of the growing cultural salience of "the feeling that 'God Himself is dead,' upon which the religion of more recent times rests" (Hegel 1977, p. 190; Hegel 1968, pp. 413-4).¹⁹ Everything, he recognized, was now different. All being, all culture, all reality would need to be rethought. This cultural watershed loss of transcendence constituted "the Golgotha of Absolute Spirit" of which Hegel in 1807 speaks on the last page of *The Phenomenology of Mind* (Hegel 1910, p. 808). Hegel demanded that all that is anchored in the transcendent die to the beyond and be philosophically reborn, that is, be relocated

within the ambit of speculative thought.²⁰ This radical shift in perspective "must re-establish for philosophy the Idea of absolute freedom and along with it the absolute Passion, the speculative Good Friday in place of the historic Good Friday. Good Friday must be speculatively re-established in the whole truth and harshness of its God-forsakenness" (Hegel 1977, p. 190; Hegel 1968, p. 414). God and the Resurrection are to be relocated within a philosophical vision, in which God has been rendered fully immanent. This is the kenosis of which Vattimo speaks and to which we will shortly turn: the kenosis of the god incarnate within immanence who is dead to any hint of the transcendent (Rorty & Vattimo 2005). Hegel accepted that, once God's transcendent standpoint is no longer recognized within a culture, reality along with morality (and by implication bioethics) is cut loose from moorings in anything beyond our immanence. When God is dead in a culture, all is embedded in being-as-it-is-for-us, cut off from being-as-it-is-in-itself apart from us. All is without ultimate meaning. Not being able to settle "the most profound human disagreements" (Owen 2001, p. 2), a culture after God must try to make do with attempting to deflate those questions.

An implication of this state of affairs for Hegel is that philosophers and, more broadly, intellectuals, including bioethicists, who are one with the dominant culture of the age, become an immanent surrogate for god. In self-conscious reflection, they constitute the final standpoint, the final criterion for reality and morality. They are as close as it gets within the horizon of the finite and the immanent to a God's-eye perspective. This is the force of Hegel's acknowledgement of philosophers as Absolute Spirit or God conscious of himself: "God is God only so far as he knows himself: his self-knowledge is,

¹⁸As elsewhere in this book, the term post-modernity is used to identify the cultural recognition that secular rationality cannot provide: a canonical, universal narrative, grammar, or account of reality and/or of morality. Such a universal canonical account had been the hope of modernity. It had been promised by the moral-philosophical project of the West. Indeed, it was taken for granted. Modernity had faith that reason was one, as God had been recognized as One. In post-modernity, this faith in reason is shown to be, and is acknowledged to be, unfounded. What was always the case regarding secular accounts of morality, bioethics, and reality, namely, the intractable plurality of such accounts, is finally openly admitted.

¹⁹Frederick Beiser defends the view that Hegel did not make a radical break from traditional Christianity. Beiser interprets Hegel's remarks regarding the death of God as a reference to "Johann Rist's [1607-1667] hymn 'O grosse Not! Gott selbst ist tod. Am Kreuz ist er gestorben' (Oh, great need! God himself is dead. He has died on the cross)" (Beiser 2005, p. 138). My position, along with others such as Walter Kaufmann and Horst Althaus, is that Hegel was an atheist, or at least an agnostic, and that he set out radically to transform the meaning of Christianity and therefore the meaning of being a Lutheran (Kaufmann 1966; Althaus 2000).

²⁰There has been a fair amount of puzzling concerning Hegel and his views regarding the death of God in the dominant culture of his time. See, for example, Amengual 2003; Brinkmann 2006; Desmond 2005 and 2003; Franke 2007; Hodgson 2005; Houlgate 2005; Lauer 1982; Nichols 2005; and Olson 1992.

further, a self-consciousness in man and man's knowledge of God, which proceeds to man's self-knowledge in God" (Hegel 1971, p. 298, §564). Once locked within the horizon of the finite and the immanent, there is no perspective beyond the perspective of these intellectuals. It is these intellectuals within a secular culture as self-reflective who articulate the final (albeit always provisional and historically conditioned) answers to the questions of the age, including all the questions raised in secular bioethics.

Peter Berger correctly recognizes this group of intellectuals and the definitive role it plays in the now-dominant secular culture. He observes:

There exists an international subculture composed of people with Western-type higher education, especially in the humanities and social sciences that is indeed secularized. This subculture is the principal "carrier" of progressive, Enlightened beliefs and values. While its members are relatively thin on the ground, they are very influential, as they control the institutions that provide the "official" definitions of reality, notably the educational system, the media of mass communication, and the higher reaches of the legal system. They are remarkably similar all over the world today, as they have been for a long time (though, as we have seen, there are also defectors from this subculture, especially in the Muslim countries). Again, regrettably, I cannot speculate here as to why people with this type of education should be so prone to secularization. I can only point out that what we have here is a globalized elite culture (Berger 1999, p. 10).

This Absolute Spirit of the early 21st century includes not just philosophers and bioethicists, but also members of the media, as well as artists and liberal theologians.²¹ It would not include traditional Christian theologians who have

been placed by the post-Christian culture in an intellectual exclave for holding a set of moral and intellectual viewpoints considered beyond the pale (e.g., for having a politically "insensitive" bioethics that condemns such actions as abortion and the insemination of lesbians). But it would include post-Pope-Francis-I Roman Catholic bioethicists and their bioethics, insofar as they have embraced a weak theology and thus softly distanced themselves from the intellectual ghetto into which traditional Christians are placed, and have turned instead to socio-economic concerns that frame contemporary secular debates about law and public policy. The global secular intellectual class incarnates the final perspective on contemporary reality, morality, and bioethics. As the explicitly self-reflective class, as those who reason about reason, philosophers are the higher truth of all there is. They are Absolute Spirit's full and final meaning. All discursive rational questions within the dominant culture are in the end settled by this intellectual class, insofar as these questions within any age can be rationally raised and settled.

For Hegel, Absolute Spirit is the final and highest instance of the "true infinite", the philosophical reflection that appreciates the one-sidedness and incompleteness of all finite or particular perspectives, insofar as this can be done. Without a transcendent God's-eye perspective to relativize the perspective of philosophy, there is no reality to be recognized beyond the sphere of human reflective thought.²²

There are only relative Absolute Spirits. All immanent perspectives, including all morality and bioethics, are always socio-historically conditioned. Moreover, they are always in principle plural. One confronts "[t]he disappearance of a unitary sense of history, conceived as objective rationality, [which] is a

²¹Art, religion, and philosophy are major categories of Absolute Spirit. They are different shapes, Gestalten, through and in which one knows materially the same content. See, for example, Part Three of Hegel's *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences: The Philosophy of Mind*, especially §§ 556, 564, and 572.

²²As already noted, a non-metaphysical reading of Hegel is advanced in this volume. Nevertheless, there are defenders of a metaphysical reading of Hegel's God, who would even make Hegel out to be a theist. One might consider the position taken by Quentin Lauer.

The philosophy of which Hegel speaks has turned out to be startlingly – for some, perhaps, frighteningly – theological, and yet, for all that it is not less but all the more philosophical. If it is possible to identify God with infinite "Reason," absolute "Spirit," then it must be said that God, in what he is and what he does, is supremely rational, that he is infinite "rationality." To know God, then, is man's rational goal, and to be thoroughly rational is to know God. But this can make sense only if human reason is somehow "divine," continuous with "infinite" Reason, since "reason" is one, not many (Lauer 1982, pp. 323–24).

See also, for example, Hodgson 2012. For another defense of a non-metaphysical reading, see Pinkard 1996.

consequence, an aspect, or rather the true and proper meaning, of the death of God" (Vattimo 2004, p. 52). Philosophy can at best provide an overview of this pluralism. Philosophy cannot through rational analyses and sound rational argument set this pluralism aside. This intellectual class, especially philosophers, can recognize and intellectually place post-modernity. They can recognize that moral pluralism in bioethics is intractable, and that post-modernity is entrenched in the fallen human condition, because after God there is no canonical secular perspective. Nevertheless, secular philosophers thinking about thought are Absolute Spirit, because they chart, as well as rationally, self-consciously apprehend within the dominant culture as best as possible after God the cultural terrain of our condition. They perform this function even when they dismiss the rationality undergirding foundationalisms such as Kant's. Within the horizon of the finite and the immanent, they are "the self-thinking Idea, the truth aware of itself" (Hegel 1971, p. 313, §574).

In the spirit of Hegel, one can even have a Christianity that is after God, after any ultimate answers, after any "truths" that point beyond the horizon of the finite and the immanent and towards the transcendent. Such Christianities after God step beyond Kant's "as-if" and beyond his postulated God. One can in this context after God appreciate the place of post-theistic Christian theologians such as Paul Tillich (1886–1965), regarding whom Rorty mused:

When people asked why he [Tillich] didn't stop pretending to be a Christian theologian and instead bill himself as a Heideggerian philosopher...[h]e would say, in effect, that it was precisely the job of a Christian theologian these days to find a way of making it possible for Christians to continue using the term "Christ" even after they had given up supernaturalism (as he hoped they eventually would) (Rorty 1991, p. 70).

As Santiago Zabala observed, such a "Christianity without God represents a faith free from the objectivistic metaphysics that believed in its own ability to demonstrate, on the basis of 'sound natural reason,' the existence of a Supreme Being" (Zabala 2005, p. 14). The very notion of a Supreme Being is

recast within the compass of human culture. Religion, following Ronald Dworkin, becomes without God (Dworkin 2013). The truth of the dominant culture of the contemporary age is fully immanent.

The force for the dominant secular culture of Hegel's claim that "thought and being are one" is vertiginous (Hegel, 1977, p. 190; Hegel 1968, p. 413). There is no reality that is not being-for-us. There is no secular bioethics that is not the bioethics of a particular secular community. After God, the notion of a world in itself is rethought in immanent terms. One can reflect on the post-modern context within which we find ourselves, but secular philosophy cannot transcend it. It is not simply that philosophy cannot show us a way free from our socio-historically conditioned context, but as Hegel recognized, philosophy has been recast so as to cut off any reference to true transcendence. The result is not simply that for post-modernity God is immanentized into the perspective of the dominant philosophical, intellectual class, but that all reality and morality (including bioethics) is to be regarded as existing fully within that particular culture's grand narrative. Because one is to eschew reference to, or even thought about, a thing-in-itself, a reality that is not socio-historically conditioned, nothing is recognized beyond the horizon of the finite and the immanent. It is for this reason that the dominant secular cultural narrative, including secular bioethics, is a freestanding account that floats unanchored within the horizon of the finite and the immanent, supported only by Hegel's very immanent Absolute Spirit. In this way, Hegel sought to undermine what he took to be the half-measures of Kant. As James Kreines correctly puts it,

Hegel seeks to advance yet farther Kant's revolution against pre-critical metaphysics.... Hegel denies all need to even conceive of Kant's things in themselves, leaving no contrast relative to which our own knowledge could be said to be merely limited or restricted. That is, Hegel aims not to surpass Kant's restriction so much as to eliminate that restriction from the inside (Kreines 2007, p. 307).

There are no constraints beyond the constraints or grammar of thought, and these

are socio-historically conditioned. Not only is God dead, but so, too, is the possibility of a canonical secular grammar. All in the end floats freely without any anchor in being or in a canonical rationality.

The result is that within the horizon of the finite and the immanent all changes when the categories of the dominant culture change. Absolute Spirit as the final available self-reflective perspective not only registers but affirms the depth and breadth of these changes in reality. The question is then how deep the changes go. The answer is that the changes go to the roots, but that the roots do not transcend being for us, they do not reach beyond the horizon of the finite and the immanent. Hegel argues, for example:

All cultural change reduces itself to a difference of categories. All revolutions, whether in the sciences or world history, occur merely because spirit has changed its categories in order to understand and examine what belongs to it, in order to possess and grasp itself in a truer, deeper, more intimate and unified manner (Hegel 1970, p. 202).

One might be tempted to construe Hegel in conformity with a weak reading of Thomas Kuhn (1962), taking the full force of a change of categories as involving only a change of paradigms of knowing. However, Hegel's claim is far more radical than a claim about a Kuhnian change of paradigm that involves just a change in the categories of the knower. Within a particular culture, its ideology, its "paradigm", is reality. At stake are the categories not just of appearance, but of being, because all being is regarded as being for us. After God, a change of paradigms involves a change in the ontology of the known, a change in being insofar as one can refer to being, because insofar as being is, being is for us. Kuhn did not dare explicitly to go quite that far.

As thought changes, reality changes, because within the horizon of the immanent, thought and being are one. As the major ways in which thought apprehends being (i.e., categories) change, so, too, does being, for all being is being for us; after God, being can only be insofar as it is for thought. The ways in which being is for thought are congruent with the ways in which

thought apprehends being, for again thought and being are one. This recognition lies as well behind the linguistic turn of analytic philosophy, as Arthur Danto appreciates in his reflections on Nietzsche, no less.

The pages of *Mind* would have been one of the forums in which what we think of of philosophy are au fond problems of language, however heavily disguised. But just this, I came to believe, was Nietzsche's own view, that the structures of language determine what are the structures of reality for those whose language it is, and that the deep order of the world, so sought by philosophers of the past, is but the cast shadow of the deep order of their grammar (Danto 1980, p. 8).

If there is no reality beyond the reality that is for us, then there is no reality beyond the deep structure of our language and our thought. On this point, Dupré embraces a similar viewpoint that captures the force of Hegel's position.

Cultural changes, such as the one that gave birth to the modern age, have a definitive and irreversible impact that transforms the very essence of reality. Not merely our thinking about the real changes: reality itself changes as we think about it differently. History carries an ontic significance that excludes any reversal of the present. Nor is it possible to capture that changing reality in an ahistorical system (Dupré 1993, p. 6).

As we saw in chapter 2, it is for this reason that, cut off from any anchor in being-as-it-is-in-itself apart from how being-as-it-is-for-us, morality is demoralized and deflated. Each particular secular bioethics with its account of abortion, third-party-assisted reproduction, healthcare resource allocation, informed consent, physician-assisted suicide, and euthanasia is a collection of life-style choices framed by the macro life-style choice of bioethics itself, which is always a particular bioethics.

Within this account, at least in broad categorical terms, reality, morality, and bioethics are as the dominant culture construes them. Again, the narrative of the dominant culture, along with the morality and reality it sustains, floats free of any ultimate anchor within the horizon of the finite and the immanent. It is

morality and reality for those who live within the narrative that supports that morality and reality. For this reason, secular moral philosophers, bioethicists, and intellectuals generally can invoke their own moral intuitions as normative for the dominant secular morality and bioethics.

Their intuitions are normative for their culture, because their intuitions disclose reality. As Absolute Spirit, they are those who articulate the cardinal intuitions of the dominant narrative. For their culture these people are the final judge of reality and of the dominant morality and bioethics. They reveal what is the case. They state the force of reality. They disclose the meaning of what is law and public policy, or at least of what within that dominant culture should be law and public policy. Within the dominant culture, these intellectuals as Absolute Spirit are able on their own to exposit the character of their morality, politics, and reality after God. Their reality, though socially constructed, is displayed as a fact of the matter. As a consequence, Hegel can be characterized as defending a naturalism with family resemblances to Aristotle (Pinkard 2012).

Given the demoralization and deflation of morality (and therefore of bioethics), as well as the delegitimization of political authority (and therefore of healthcare policy), along with any canonical grounds for liberal constitutionalism, the members of this intellectual class are by default also the defenders of the dominant secular and liberal-democratic faith against those who challenge it. They conceptually articulate the political agenda, including the healthcare policy agenda, of the secular fundamentalist state (Engelhardt 2010a and 2010b), as if they were simply expositing facts of the matter, even though they are unable by conclusive sound rational argument to justify their morality or their political agenda, including their vision of the politically reasonable and of the proper constitutional framework. However, they are able to articulate a political rhetoric that poses as moral truth, because they are the class that articulates and sustains the established culture, its morality, its view of bioethics, and its account of the state. One finds a secular culture in which bioethical, moral, and political claims

regarding human rights, human dignity, and equality are advanced as if they were definitive and canonical, all without sufficient justification and despite a growing acknowledgement of the ethnocentrism of these claims (Rorty 1991, p. 2). The boundaries are erased that were once invoked to separate morality and political ideology. With no final point of reference, the expositors of the regnant morality, the community of intellectual reflection, is the god of the age. This community of intellectuals is the ground of the reality that this culture embraces. As a consequence, those who fundamentally disagree with the dominant secular view of morality and reality are regarded, as Rorty observes, as crazy because “the limits of sanity are set by what we [like-minded secular liberals] can take seriously” (Rorty 1991, pp. 187–188). They are crazy because they do not recognize the established reality.²³

The now-dominant secular culture is after God, even when it talks about God. Hegel stands out in that he saw this, endorsed this state of affairs, and supported its development, including a Christianity after God. In Hegel’s thought, one can make out the watershed that marks the emergence of our contemporary secular culture. Much of what was somewhat obscurely occurring at the beginning of the 19th century, and which Hegel appreciated and articulated, by the beginning of the 21st century had become manifest. Hegel in his mid-thirties lived through the end of the Western Christian empire as the last emperor, Francis II, abdicated on August 6, 1806. Hegel saw the death of what had been the living symbol of the unity of Western Christendom: the Western Christian empire. Hegel surveyed a Western Christendom reduced to shards. The surviving traditional Christians had been left to live in the ruins. Over against the dominant secular culture, there do remain various counter-cultures, such as those of traditional Christianity and Orthodox Judaism. These counter-cultures at times still unexpectedly invade the public forum. The dominant culture is also marked by a range of agnosticisms and atheisms of different levels of explicitness and passion. On the one hand, there are the militant new atheists

²³John Rawls takes a position similar to Rorty’s in characterizing some comprehensive doctrines as “mad” (Rawls 1993, p. xvii).

such as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens. On the other hand, there are those who have a “spirituality” separated from any traditional religious roots, such as that of John D. Caputo, G. Elijah Dann, Paul Tillich, and Gianni Vattimo. They include post-traditional, indeed post-theistic Christians, who in the spirit of Hegel are committed to being “believers” but without the affirmation of any transcendent truth. In any event, for them canonical objectivity and traditional Christianity are gone.

Vattimo articulates his Christianity through a substantial recasting of the kenosis of Christ.²⁴ Vattimo construes Christ’s Incarnation as a rejection of transcendence, as Christ’s becoming only human, thus allowing a “nihilistic rediscovery of Christianity” (Vattimo 1999, p. 34). Christ’s kenosis becomes “God’s renunciation of his own sovereign transcendence” (Rorty & Vattimo 2005, p. 51). Vattimo uses this reading as a way of forwarding his claim that “postmodern nihilism (the end of meta-narratives) is the truth of Christianity” (Rorty & Vattimo 2005, p. 51). Vattimo’s post-theism, which grows out of Hegel, eschews the metaphysics of the new atheists (Rorty & Vattimo 2005, p. 63), while rendering explicit what is implicit in Hegel. A shadow of Christianity is allowed to remain, explicitly emptied of any claims to objective truth, such that the force of its images is set within a particular, post-metaphysical narrative. Christianity is to become a belief without metaphysical substance, guided by a “theology of secularization” (Vattimo 1999, p. 63). As with Habermas’s “non-destruction secularization” of religion (Habermas & Ratzinger 2006, p. 29), religion is allowed to be seen in public, but only as long as it appears without any substance that is not merely cultural. Religion, and in particular Christianity as a whole, is itself to be dethologized, while being allowed to persist in secularly transformed “religious” images and rituals. This was all affirmed by Hegel. Is it obliquely suggested by Pope Francis I?

It is now much clearer what it means to recognize that the now-dominant culture is after

God. The implications for morality, bioethics, and political authority are now salient. The dominant secular culture’s severance from a God’s-eye perspective and from God as the guarantor of rewards and punishments leaves morality demoralized and deflated, as well as its political structures delegitimated in the sense of remaining only as *modi vivendi*. The secularization that has occurred and that is occurring nurtured a complex laicism that seeks to expunge not just traditional Christianity, but all traditional religious belief from the public fora and as far as possible from public spaces. Where they still remain, the ruins of Christendom are being either removed from public view or transformed in their significance. That is, they are being rendered post-theistic. After God, not only are what once had been serious moral choices regarding sexual activity, reproduction, abortion, suicide, and euthanasia rendered into life-style choices, but all of morality has been reduced to being macro life-style choices. As chapter 3 has shown, the wide acceptance of concubinage and the dramatic increase in the percentage of children born outside of marriage reflect the impact of these changes (Murray 2012). In a culture after God, the very substance and character of morality and bioethics, as well as of tolerance, have been altered. As indicated in chapter 3, the counter-traditional Christian rallying cry in the culture wars, “no tolerance for the intolerant”, is meant to protect the demoralization of sex outside the demoralization of the marriage of a man and a woman, abortion, physician-assisted suicide, and euthanasia, indeed of the whole range of now-abandoned traditional Christian norms. The goal is to bully traditional believers into silence, to drive them from the public square, to marginalize them sufficiently so that they constitute no threat to the culture of humans become dogs “content to sleep in the sun” (Fukuyama 1992, p. 311).

Kant had thought he could have his atheism while still having his traditional Western Christian morality. Hegel appreciated that this is not possible. The death of God is as well the

²⁴Reflections on kenosis take their point of departure from a passage in Philippians. “[5] Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, [7] but emptied himself [ekenōsen], taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, [8] he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

death of man. It is the death of any hope for a canonical sense of the humanissimus vir, of the most truly human man, and of what it is to live humaniter (Engelhardt 1991). Humanism is left with only an ambiguous meaning, for there is no canonical account of the truly human. Vattimo summarizes this state of affairs by paraphrasing a joke: “God is dead, but man isn’t doing so well himself” (Vattimo 1988, p. 30). Among the consequences is that the medical humanities have no canonical meaning. All is adrift. What Hegel recognized in the early 19th century laid the basis for Alexander Kojève (1902–1968) and Francis Fukuyama recasting Hegel so as to talk about the end of history through regarding as normative the human as becoming again the human animal. The world after God leads to a world after man, after humanism, after morality, after bioethics, and after the state as more than a *modus vivendi*.

II. The Contemporary Human Condition: A Culture Resolutely Without Roots²⁵

We surely have not yet experienced the full consequences of the secularization of the dominant culture and the large-scale collapse of the mainline Western Christianities, along with the loss of any anchor in reality beyond the merely socio-historically conditioned. We have not yet frankly confronted, much less experienced, the full consequences of having no ultimate point of orientation, having no recognition of ultimate meaning. The difficulties that secular bioethics and secular ethics still have in confronting what it is to be a moralist and bioethicist after God show that this radical transformation has not yet been widely or sufficiently appreciated. Supporters of liberal constitutionalism, democracy, and human rights are only beginning to acknowledge the unnerving state

of affairs in which we find ourselves: secular morality and secular bioethics, along with human equality, human rights, human dignity, and liberal social-democratic commitments, are elements of what turns out to be only a macro life-style choice. Secular morality and bioethics are only reflections of the now-dominant secular moral and political culture, an ethnocentrism, even if this represents, as Rorty put it, an anti-ethnocentric ethnocentrism (Rorty 1991, p. 2).

As we go to the future, the full implications of the lack of foundations for secular morality, secular bioethics, clinical ethics, politics, biopolitics, liberal constitutionalism, democracy, and human rights will become clearer. This will happen as the dominant culture experiences the results of the spreading recognition of the demoralization and deflation of public morality and bioethics, along with the acknowledgement of the moral delegitimization of political authority.²⁶ The character of secular societies is likely to change substantially when a major portion of society is innocent of the commitments of traditional Christianity or Judaism, or even of the zeal of true-believing utilitarians, Kantians, or defenders of the liberal democratic vision who have the zeal of the Enlightenment. When the grandparents of most people will not have been raised in a traditional religion, when people are the third generation after God, everything will feel, look, and be for them quite different. A generation will have grown up fully after God, as well as fully within the demoralization and deflation of morality and bioethics, and after the delegitimization of political structures. People nurtured, schooled, and directed by such a culture will increasingly be without any nostalgia for God, metaphysics, or foundations. This generation will have even less of an anchor in being than the pagans of the pre-Christian Roman Empire, who were

²⁵The subtitle of this section, “A Culture Without Roots”, may recall to the reader the book co-authored by Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, with Marcello Pera, *Without Roots* (Ratzinger & Pera 2006). On some points, I agree with Benedict XVI’s appreciation of the rootless character of the contemporary post-Christian culture of the West. However, my account of what is at stake, as well as of the proper response to our condition, differs profoundly from, and is much more radical than, that offered by Ratzinger. In his portions of *Without Roots*, Ratzinger in great measure attributes the rootlessness of the contemporary age to the failure of philosophical rationality to connect contemporary culture with objective truth, a failure he holds can be remedied by philosophy. As I have argued, Ratzinger’s faith in philosophical reason is unjustified, indeed misguided. Ratzinger’s account falls short of the mark by failing to recognize the depth and the character of the crisis in European, indeed Western, civilization. He does not appreciate that there is not only no hope to establish a secular vision of a canonical morality, but he fails to see what is essential to restoring a Christian culture, namely, a return to right worship and right belief, in particular through re-embracing the ascetical disciplines of the Church of the Apostles and the Fathers, which aid in turning one from self-love to the transcendent God and to a noetic experience of His Will.

²⁶For a study of the emerging recognition of bioethics as biopolitics in the sense of being a political movement with a particular political agenda, see Engelhardt 2012.

nested within a framework of beliefs that gave testimony regarding a transcendent world.

The Christian West had survived as the public ethos in some areas of the West, even into the mid- and in some cases the late-20th century (e.g., in the American Southern Bible belt, upper Bavaria, and Ireland). The traditional Christian ethos of the West characterized the life-world of a great many, if not the majority, of the people I encountered on the streets of Italy in 1954. In contrast, the thoroughly secular generation, the generation that is still fully to come, the generation that will take for granted the demoralization and deflation of the morality, as well as the moral delegitimization of public authority, will unself-consciously feel, see, experience, and know everything within a framework of meaning radically different from that of the traditional Christianity of Italy of the 1950s. They will take for granted a life-world fully after Christendom. Their choices regarding sexuality, reproduction, social relations, marriage, and end-of-life decision-making, their whole way of viewing bioethics, will have been encompassingly transformed into post-moral life-style and death-style choices.²⁷ They will not recognize moral issues where in the past moral issues had been encountered as abundant, salient, and experienced as substantive. In their ways of life, discourse, and governance, there will be no suggestion of a transcendent ground for morality or for appreciating the evil of abortion, of sexual relations outside of the marriage of a man and woman, and of the birth of children outside of such a marriage, as well as of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia. It will simply be that different life-style choices will have been made. These people will have no direct remembrance of a life-world ordered towards ultimate meaning. They will live fully after sin, after any transcendentally anchored sense of wrong-doing or ultimate purpose. Even a traditional sense of shame will have evanesced.

These people, locked within the bounds of the finite and the immanent, will gain content for their lives from that which hands can touch,

noses smell, tongues taste, ears hear, eyes can see, and immanent reason assess. Their culture's moral and bioethical vision will be framed in terms of an understanding of human flourishing that is not simply innocent of any reference to the transcendent, but one that positively eschews interest in the transcendent to the point of being phobic regarding the transcendent. The transcendent will threaten the reappearance of sin, shame, and the recognition of wrongdoing when making improper life-style choices. The life-world within which they will be nourished will not support a hunger for a reality beyond the horizon of the finite and the immanent. These humans will have become, to engage a metaphor from Alexander Kojève (1902–1968), human animals. Kojève sees in the American culture of the late 1940s and 1950s the beginning of "Man's return to animality" (Kojève 1969, p. 161, Note), an entrance into a future in which "man will remain alive [but only] as animal."²⁸ Kojève's Hegelian interpretation of history affirmatively looks towards history coming to an end when humans will no longer be engaged in conflicts and wars moved by ideas, much less by concerns for the transcendent. Kojève envisages a final resting point in a human animalistic mutual recognition as satisfied animals. Then history would not start up again, nor would one once again enter into conflicts moved by ideas. Under such circumstances, according to Kojève and Fukuyama, there would still be various events about which there would be a historical narrative, but history as a conflict among humans would have ceased. On this point, Fukuyama still saw "the danger that we will be happy on one level, but still dissatisfied with ourselves on another, and hence ready to drag the world back into history with all its wars, injustice, and revolution" (Fukuyama 1992, p. 312). Fukuyama's hope is that self-indulgence, consumerism, and a fully immanent mutual recognition can maintain an enduring peace by rendering humans into animals.

To sustain its focus on the immanent, on self-indulgence, self-satisfaction, and an immanently directed mutual recognition, such

²⁷Those who recognize God tend to be committed to raising a new generation of pious young men and women who will beget and raise further generations of rightly-directed worshippers of God. For an account of the Hasidic Jewish view, see Fader 2009.

²⁸Even as a philosopher participating in the higher truth of Absolute Spirit, one is still not necessarily more than one of Kojève's and Fukuyama's human animals, insofar as one is disposed to enjoy one's ease and is not disposed to die for ideas.

a society will need not only to marginalize, if not to ban outright, any public intimation of the transcendent, but the culture will also need to be nourished by a faith that there is nothing transcendent. It will need positively to promote the view that human flourishing can be fully realized and supported within a life-world set within the horizon of the finite and the immanent. Kojève's lifeworld, amplified by Fukuyama, endorses a consumerism placed within the social safety of a substantial social-welfare system supported by democratic structures that provide for a formal mutual recognition, all within a context where "[r]eligion has...been relegated to the sphere of private life" (Fukuyama 1992, p. 271), in that, as Fukuyama holds, Christianity "had to abolish itself through a secularization of its goals before liberalism could emerge" (Fukuyama 1992, p. 216). Fukuyama, like Hegel and Vattimo, celebrates a post-theistic Christianity. In such circumstances, history as struggle can end.

For if man is defined by his desire to struggle for recognition, and by his work in dominating nature, and if at the end of history he achieves both recognition of his humanity and material abundance, then "Man properly so-called" will cease to exist because he will have ceased to work and struggle (Fukuyama 1992, p. 310).

Fukuyama held that Hegel's relocation within the immanent of all that is transcendent allowed envisaging the possibility of a perpetual peace, a consumer culture that can secure mutual recognition so as to realize the end of history, within which there would be no more ideas for which to fight. This view of history extracted from Hegel,²⁹ communicated to Francis Fukuyama through Allan Bloom (1930–1992) and grounded in Kojève, led Fukuyama to look for an enduring peace that would be realized once there were no longer men ready to die for ideas, but instead only human animals, who would live for immanent pleasures and satisfactions. As Fukuyama opined,

The end of history would mean the end of

wars and bloody revolutions. Agreeing on ends, men would have no large causes for which to fight. They would satisfy their needs through economic activity, but they would no longer have to risk their lives in battle. They would, in other words, become animals again, as they were before the bloody battle that began history. A dog is content to sleep in the sun all day provided he is fed, because he is not dissatisfied with what he is. He does not worry that other dogs are doing better than him [sic], or that his career as a dog has stagnated or that dogs are being oppressed in a distant part of the world (Fukuyama 1992, p. 311).

Hegel's account of history is thus recast in the service of offering a development of Hegel's key insights regarding the radical immanentization of morality, reality, and human flourishing. History's final intellectual standpoint in history is to be a liberal democratic consumerism within which the notion of the truly human is radically deflated.

In this context, in a world after God and after history, bioethics, indeed all of ethics, is resituated within the pursuit of the satisfaction not just of needs, but of desires set within a framework of mutual recognition. This encourages a developed aesthetic of consumption, in which all are invited to aspire to the hyper-aestheticism of a consumerism that is portrayed in the Wall Street Journal's weekend sections "Off Duty" and "Mansion", where the latter offers estates for the truly affluent, where one can live in (or at least fantasize about living in) opulent settings (e.g., a private island, a large ranch, a seascape, etc.) supported by outbuildings for staff, sports, private jet planes, etc., all marked by an encompassing luxury, including \$200,000 closets for wardrobes. Given the hunger for stimulus, and confined within the horizon of the finite and the immanent, without any ultimate anchor, one will need distractions from the danger of confronting and recognizing ultimate meaninglessness. There will be a pursuit of the

²⁹Kojève's and Fukuyama's account of Hegel's view of history is not *sensu stricto* congruent with what Hegel actually argued. This Fukuyama himself concedes. (p 144). For a critique of Fukuyama's account of Hegel (especially Fukuyama's assertion that "Hegel declared that history had ended after the Battle of Jena in 1806" [Fukuyama 1992, p. 64]), as well as of the views of Kojève, see Grier 1990. Such criticisms to the contrary notwithstanding, Kojève and Fukuyama correctly saw a higher truth of what Hegel actually argued, at least as it bears on the character of our age. Once all is regarded within the horizon of the finite and the immanent, there are no transcendental goals, only immanent satisfactions to be sought.

bizarre and the novel, that is, of the distracting. For instance, the Wall Street Journal reports on fashion shows for the wealthy that reveal a desperate need to overcome boredom: “Thom Browne’s [fashion] show was a theater of the absurd set in a mental asylum” (Binkley 2013, p. D1). For those of ordinary means, there will be the hope that their children can realize this abundance. In the meantime, there will be rock concerts, drugs, and video games.³⁰

In the latter part of the 20th century and before September 11, 2001, and the destruction of the twin towers in New York, for many this all seemed quite plausible. The large-scale decline in commitment to the once-dominant metaphysical world-views of dialectical materialism (e.g., with the collapse of the Soviet Union) and Roman Catholicism (e.g., after its theological disarray and decline following Vatican II) left most societies characterized by liberal constitutional commitments, fully immersed in the pursuit of self-satisfaction, self-realization, and self-indulgence. Most appeared aimed at a life framed within the horizon of the finite and the immanent. In this spirit, Vattimo could approve of the West as “a synonym for consumerism, hedonism, a Babel-like pluralism of cultures, loss of center, and obliviousness to any reference to ‘natural’ law” (Vattimo 2002, p. 70). Yet, traditionalists such as Peter Mullen could see this state of affairs as pointing to where history might start up again: “Ours is the culture which devout Muslims rightly despise as morally bankrupt” (Mullen 2009, p. 43).³¹

Over against the threat that history may restart, protection is sought from the large-scale violence that would ensue if self-indulgence set within a consumerist welfare state, and justified within a liberal-democratic mutual recognition, inspired a “return to metaphysics”.

In a culture after God and with a demoralized and deflated morality cum bioethics, one must

even guard against a revolution on behalf of a substantive view of freedom as the source of authority (e.g., permission), as a cardinal value, as the substance of rational (Kantian) choice, or as freedom through union with God. One is not to advocate too stridently on behalf of a global acceptance of individual autonomy and patient rights. Instead, there is to be a final embrace of immanent self-realization and self-satisfaction so as to achieve a putative final historical development that will forever set aside the bloodshed inspired by the power of ideas. One is to maintain at all costs the hegemony of Vattimo’s “weak thought”.³² One is to eschew any thought that could legitimate conflict, even the immoderate pursuit of equality and democracy, including a fully social-democratically-framed bioethics. The zealous pursuit of justice and/or liberation, of any non-demoralized view of morality and bioethics, is to be replaced by an acquiescence in the truly human as the happy human animal, as the happy and satisfied dog.

The pursuit of weak thought, the animus against objective moral truth and even the embrace of moral decadence as a protection against violence, translates into an animus against traditional Christianity. Traditional Christianity seeks to wake up the happy and satisfied dog. Traditional Christianity discloses a reality worth dying for. It shows that certain ways of life are perverse. This gives ground enough for the defenders of the dominant culture to be opposed to traditional Christianity. Christianity supports norms for conduct and sustains a bioethics at odds with the contemporary dominant culture and the pursuit of peace through self-love and self-satisfaction. Worse yet, traditional Christianity invites the recognition of real norms and a reality about which there could be conflict. Santiago Zabala underscores that to prevent

³⁰Psychotropic drugs associated with rock concerts have become an ordinary element of life with the dominant secular culture. See, for example, Campo-Flores & Elinson 2013.

³¹Although Fukuyama wrote after the establishment of Ayatollah Khomeini’s (1900-1989) Iran in 1979, he does not recognize Islam as having a constellation of ideas that could drive history – i.e., restart history. Fukuyama dismisses the significance of Islam on the grounds inter alia that it “has no resonance for young people in Berlin, Tokyo, or Moscow” (Fukuyama 1992, p. 46). Fukuyama rather sees the contemporary success of fundamentalist Islam as lying in resentments due to the persistent economic failures of Islamic countries, as well as to what he terms slights of history suffered by those countries.

³²For a definition of ‘weak thought’, consider:

The theses that I and other Italian post-Heideggerian philosophers have called “weak thought” have become very popular in a certain part of Italian Catholic thought because they have been interpreted, though with a degree of partiality, as a pure and simple confession of reason’s weakness. True, the demise of the metanarratives is a recognition of weakness in this sense ... (Vattimo 2002, p. 20).

metaphysical inclinations from re-surfacing, “Thought must abandon all objective, universal, and apodictic foundational claims in order to prevent Christianity, allied with metaphysics in the search for first principles, from making room for violence” (Zabala 2005, p. 13). An atheistic or at least agnostic methodological postulate must govern the dominant culture in order to re-enforce the ongoing rejection of the transcendent so that the content of everyday life can remain grounded in the hedonic. The peaceable pursuit of pleasure with consenting others becomes central. The byword becomes Pope Francis I’s statements, “Who am I to judge?”³³ One attempts to pursue a pan-ecumenism embracing Christians, Jews, Moslems, Buddhists, Hindus, etc., in an endless inter-religious dialogue that obscures any matters of substantive difference. Will there be boredom? Such a culture will likely tend to seek the distracting but find only a much reduced and truncated aesthetic divorced from epiphany and transcendence.

Under these circumstances, the only moral and bioethical commitments that will be tolerated (and these only if they are radically domesticated) by the secular culture will be those affirmed by a post-Christian morality that asserts a cardinal but nevertheless “weak” status for liberty, equality, and human dignity, insofar as these aid in sustaining the pursuit of self-indulgence. These commitments are themselves of course without foundations and will also be demoralized, deflated, and weakened. They will not be goals worth dying for. They would be leit-motifs that point to self-realization, the pursuit of “me”. This vision of humans fully at home within the horizon of the finite and the immanent is captured, without any nostalgia for the transcendent, by Albert Camus (1913–1960), who speaks of the “godless summer sky” in Algiers.

with nothing tender in it, before which all truths can be uttered and on which no deceptive divinity has traced the signs of hope or of redemption. Between this sky and these faces turned toward it, nothing on which to hang a mythology, a literature, an ethic, or a religion, but stones, flesh, stars,

and those truths the hand can touch (Camus 1961, p. 151).

Camus’s vision of human flourishing is aggressively immanent and submerged in the sensuous. One might recall that Camus during the week before his death in an automobile accident wrote from his home in Provence (where he was staying with his wife and their two children), expressing affection to three different lovers (Campbell 2013, p. C6). The pursuit of self-realization was central.

The irony is that Camus’s Algiers, this land that was supposed to be after God, was substantively desecularized within a half century of Camus’s writing his essay, “Summer in Algiers”. Hunger for the transcendent reasserted itself. Has history restarted? This new Algiers of the 21st century, marked by an acknowledgement of God’s existence and shaped by a civil society with a strong presence of religion, has come to France. With the significant Moslem immigration from northern Africa, the expectations of Camus, indeed of the French Republic and its *laïcité*, have been brought into question. There is in particular.

The failure of the dream of “les cites”—the building blocks erected in the suburbs of cities all around France. Initially conceived as a place where everyone [in great measure Moslem immigrants] would become French and thank the generous state for the opportunity provided, they slowly became ghettos, where the lowliest people in the society are gathered. The crisis of the assimilationist state begins here in the banlieues. Here, religion has its strongest pull. Thus fundamentalism grows in places where the secular state wanted to erase diversity and propagate republican values. By involuntarily creating these new communities in the banlieues, the French state shreds its “Rousseauist myth of a republic where there is nothing between the state and the citizen-individual in his.

The contemporary residents of France are not united in a common vision of tolerance, pluralism, and human rights. They have instead created within France substantial exclaves from

³³The statement “Who am I to judge?” made by Pope Francis I while returning from Brazil on July 29, 2013, has become a battle cry against the remoralization of life-style choices and has even spawned a T-shirt.

France.³⁴ What all this means for the survival of the secular state is far from clear.

Many simply fail to see what is at stake. As Zucca notes, "After the terrorist attacks in London perpetrated by British Muslims, the reaction was clear and painful. The prime minister [Tony Blair was] reduced to insisting on British values, as if to kindle the French Rousseauist myth, hoping to install them in all of society" (Zucca 2009, p. 502). Core secular myths collide with reality. Among the secular myths that have been undermined is the pious secular belief that we all share a sufficiently common view of morality and reality, so that citizens can on the model of a Socratic dialogue frame a deliberative democracy (Gutmann & Thompson 2004). As we have also seen, citizens at best can frame a *modus vivendi* in which like bargainers in a market perhaps enough can strike an at least *pro tempore* agreement so that a *modus vivendi* can be sustained. The question remains, how long can such a secular *modus vivendi* be maintained? Is a society after God sustainable? Will a mass of unemployed youth, often with college degrees and social-democratic passions along with access to social media, create a succession of "democratic springs", leading to continual unrest and further unemployment (Parker 2014)? Even Fukuyama, now older and perhaps wiser, recognizes that this state of affairs may wake the sleeping dog (Fukuyama 2013). Can the social-democratic *modus vivendi* after God continue? At the very least, the future is opaque.

Affluence, complex media distractions, social welfare (i.e., bread and complex circuses), combined with a nearly anesthetizing pursuit of self-realization and self-satisfaction have made it possible for many, often with the aid of psychotherapy and medical intervention, to live without nostalgia for metaphysics and without foundations, to live without God. For those within this culture, abortion, infanticide, physician-assisted suicide, and euthanasia will not just be easily accepted, but strongly affirmed to be mere life-style choices. Yet, the question remains (especially after comparing the Algiers of the late 1950s and that of the early 21st century): is Camus's vision of Algiers a stable

resting point? As we go to the future, as the full implications of secular morality and bioethics without foundations become clearer, as we more deeply experience the demoralization and deflation of morality and bioethics, along with the concomitant moral delegitimization of public authority and the ultimate disorientation of all human projects, including that of bioethics, as the dominant culture attempts to regard everything as ultimately meaningless, will this state of affairs be stable socially and politically? As the demoralization and deflation of morality becomes more widespread and pervasive, as the dominant secular culture absorbs fully the recognition that secular morality and bioethics cannot rationally justify the conditions necessary for rational persons to be held to have acted in ways that are praiseworthy or worthy of happiness, how will people order their lives? When the dominant secular morality and bioethics are recognized as reflecting an ethnocentrism cum bioethics, will social order be maintained, given an all-encompassing pursuit of self-realization and self-absorption? Will it be enough to attempt to raise people to be nice, other-respecting, sympathetic, and empathetic, while ensuring that they are secure and well off? Will this culture in fact be compatible with social stability?

For those who are not partisans of the particular political movement whose morality is established at law and public policy, the established morality and bioethics will have legal governance and legal force, but no intrinsic moral force or authority. The notion of political legitimacy will have been radically reduced, becoming a mere legal fact of the matter. Political legitimacy will be a matter of power. It will be a brute fact of the matter. The dominant secular culture may find it increasingly difficult not explicitly to recognize that the established morality and its view of human flourishing is merely a secular ideology that happens to be established, and that its bioethics does not possess the traditional moral force of right-making conditions and/or a view of the good that all should endorse. Secular morality and bioethics have been disclosed as nothing more than macro life-style choices made within a

³⁴"Islam seems to call into question the very identity of the country, or at least the nature of its institutions. People mobilize for the defense of 'republican values' and 'laïcité'" (Roy 2007, p. 1).

particular cultural viewpoint, as particular ethnocentrism rendered incarnate in a particular *modus vivendi* that is sustained by a particular state's use of indoctrination, propaganda, seduction, and coercion. That which is forwarded as normative, as morally rational or politically reasonable, has been disclosed as no more than one contingent perspective among a plurality of other contingent moral perspectives. In addition, the moral point of view itself has been deflated so that it no longer necessarily trumps personal, prudential concerns.

One is left in a world that is being fully exorcised of all ultimate, indeed non-contingent meaning. As Rorty puts it, we are invited to "the point where we no longer worship *anything*, where we treat *nothing* as a quasi divinity, where we treat *everything*—our language, our conscience, our community—as a product of time and chance" (Rorty 1989, p. 22). Rorty appreciates that the secular moral and political project has stepwise been despoiled of any ultimate point of orientation.

I can crudely sum up the story which historians like [Hans] Blumenberg [1920–1996] tell by saying that once upon a time we felt a need to worship something which lay beyond the visible world. Beginning in the seventeenth century we tried to substitute a love of truth for a love of God, creating the world described by science as a quasi divinity. Beginning at the end of the eighteenth century we tried to substitute a love of ourselves for a love of scientific truth, a worship of our own deep spiritual or poetic nature, treated as one more quasi divinity (Rorty 1989, p. 22).

Rorty, however, wishes to go further. As he acknowledges, "In its ideal form, the culture of liberalism would be one which was enlightened, secular, through and through. It would be one in which no trace of divinity remained" (Rorty 1989, p. 45). Rorty correctly points to the post-Christian, post-religious world in which nothing possesses ultimate significance and in which morality has been both demoralized and deflated. The result will likely be a transformation of the public ethos so as radically to thin out the legitimacy of the state as it becomes ever clearer that rational moral argument cannot secure a

particular moral vision as morally canonical or as necessarily trumping the interests of individual prudence or individual advantage.

After God, after the demoralization and deflation of morality, as well as after the delegitimization of the state, what more striking example of the worship of the creature rather than the Creator can there be than the emergence of Absolute Spirit. By ignoring the presence of God and by then entering into the collective solipsism of a narrative that floats free of any ultimate anchor so as to be able to live fully within the horizon of the finite and the immanent one gets to do things "my way". One turns a blind eye to the God Who shines through reality as through an icon, and one gains a *carte blanche* for one's peaceable life-style and death-style choices. One enters into the soft and easy decadence realized in northern Western Europe and affirmed by the European Union. But again, over the long run will that be enough? Can humans remain sufficiently in love with themselves so as to ignore the presence of God? Can they maintain the cultural sovereignty of their Absolute Spirit? They do not appear to be able to reproduce at a rate sufficient to maintain their population. But besides being demographically unsustainable, are they able to remain deaf to God?

Facing the circumstance that all secular moralities and bioethics are only foundationless fabrics of moral intuitions supported by particular moral narratives, which can at best be recognized as constituting one freestanding moral position among others, will likely generate practical problems for societal coherence. What happens when ever more people realize that Judd Owen's description is right?

There is nothing to which we can appeal in order to settle the most profound human disagreements, and thus there is no possibility that the awesome variety of conflicting opinions about the things most important to human beings, including the best political order, can be transcended toward universal and objective knowledge (Owen 2001, p. 2).

Will it be enough to be a well-fed dog in the sun? When it is appreciated that secular bioethics and morality have been fully demoralized and

deflated, why ought one to try very hard to be moral? Why should one do more than conform to the particular morality and bioethics that are established at law, insofar as disobedience as disobedience involves the likelihood of sufficiently costly consequences? After all, the more-than-minimal state is only a *modus vivendi*. Can such a society within such a culture after God sustain a fabric of law and order when moral authority is reduced to the mere force of the law, when one feels obliged to act “rightly”, support “the good”, or be “virtuous” only when someone else is looking?³⁵ What can one make of one’s own life and any “obligation” to obey the law when all is viewed as ultimately meaningless? What this portends for the societies of the future is far from clear. And again, there is the question raised by the transformation of Camus’ Algiers, namely, whether a renewed recognition of God, of metaphysics, and of ultimate meaning will not always break in so as to disestablish the contemporary dominant secular culture, as occurred in Algiers.

III. Cultural Guerrilla Wars in the Ruins of Christendom

Fundamentalist Christians and Orthodox Jews know that there is a God Who commands. They have a bioethics rooted in God. These Christians and Jews will remain. They will increasingly be joined by traditionalist Muslims. Their normative commitments will contrast, indeed conflict with the established secular culture, along with its morality and bioethics. The tensions will be profound. The very existence of such believers will be provocative within the secular culture of the fundamentalist secular state. Their bioethics will collide with the secular professional demands of an increasingly secular fundamentalist state. Among other things, by their difference traditional believers will underscore the poverty of a moral discourse that is demoralized, deflated, “weakened”, and radically secularized. Authentic religious

fundamentalists will also be intransigent impediments to much secular public policy, including much secular healthcare policy bearing on sexuality, reproduction, abortion, and end-of-life decision-making, because it will not be possible for these believers to be reconciled to a secular moral vision as well as to what its law and public policy requires. Religious fundamentalists know that their moral vision is anchored in a reality beyond the horizon of the finite and the immanent. Moreover, they know that a transcendently grounded morality and bioethics can be worth dying for. They will have anchored their normative commitments in a transcendent God Who demands their full devotion and commitment. They will not be human animals.

The dominant secular culture and its bioethics in contrast has located itself fully within the horizon of the finite and the immanent. Its members live within a life-world at odds with that of traditional believers. Secularists and traditional believers are moral strangers to each other. Yet, moral strangers can be affective friends. In our broken culture, persons are often married to moral strangers. They often have children who are moral strangers to them. The gulf separating the parties cannot be adequately addressed through an account of secular moral rationality, secular rational game theory, and/or secular resolutions to prisoners’ dilemmas that function, if at all, only for those who live fully within the horizon of the finite and the immanent, as well as affirm the same ranking of cardinal human values. On a range of issues, fundamentalist Christians, Orthodox Jews, and Muslims will rather die than compromise their obligations to God. There is no common secular solution to a prisoner’s dilemma problem when one of the prisoners is willing and perhaps quite glad to die as a martyr. In the ruins of Christendom, these believers will adamantly resist the demoralization and deflation of their normative commitments. Secularists and the fundamentalist religious will be moral enemies,

³⁵For an example of a society whose members by and large only obey the law only when someone is looking, one might consider Banfield’s classic study of the dysfunctional character of the Italian commune of Chiaromonte in Basilicata (population 3,400), where although there was nominal belief in God and the presence of intact families, there were few effective extrafamilial norms. As Banfield describes the state of affairs,

In a society of amoral familists, the law will be disregarded when there is no reason to fear punishment. Therefore individuals will not enter into agreements which depend upon legal processes for their enforcement unless it is likely that the law will be enforced and unless the cost of securing enforcement will not be so great as to make the undertaking unprofitable (Banfield 1958, p. 90).

even if they may also be affective friends.³⁶ Even if God does not allow the committed religious as of yet to claim the field, they can and must on many points of disagreement simply refuse to collaborate. For a number of reasons, such fundamentalists will not go away. Among other things, fundamentalists tend to out-reproduce secularists.³⁷ Those who try to accommodate to the secular culture, including Orthodox Christians among them, will demographically die out. However, male chauvinist fundamentalists, especially those who are young women, know that not only will their children disproportionately influence the future (i.e., they will have more children than liberal women of their cohort), but most importantly, if they raise their children to be faithful Orthodox Christians, they will be saved (I Tim 2:15). Such women are a scandal to the secular world, but they are the mothers who bear the future. As with Hassidic Jewish women, such Orthodox Christian girls realize that they are the Mitzvah girls (Fader 2009). Moreover, as Christians and Jews know, the presence of the transcendent always breaks through the horizon of the finite and the immanent. The conflicts will persist.

We are in new and strange territory. Until the 20th century, there had never before been a culture fully without God, without some transcendent anchor. Many persons have lived as if there were no God, but no large-scale culture has ever affirmed ultimate meaninglessness. Most hoped in some way to scry a deeper meaning, to find orientation from beyond the horizon of the finite and the immanent.

The pattern of what-is-for-us was regarded as in some way tied to what-is-in-and-for-itself. The attempts of the I-Ching to disclose the mandate of heaven, or of Cicero in his office as the augurer for Rome to search for contact with the divine, all gestured beyond the finite and the immanent. But what of a culture that wishes to eschew any hint of the divine with the result that its morality and bioethics are fully

demoralized and deflated, so that in addition its political structures can claim no ultimate or final legitimization beyond the sword? After so great a God as the God of Abraham, what will it be like to have shut the door on all ultimate meaning? Under such circumstances, how will bioethics and morality be experienced? We really do not know. Will such a moral and political vacuum call the anti-Christ from the depths of Hell? Can people have a stable existence as human animals? Can one really live as if all were in the end pointless? Can one over the long run make do with a fully immanentized human flourishing (e.g., as fat and happy human dogs) while holding existence to be thoroughly surd? Against the background of such an atheism or at least agnosticism, how should people live and act in the face of quotidian temptations and passions? Is such a life in the end actually livable? Are a demoralized morality and bioethics enough? Can one in the end avoid theological questions? Can one avoid reflecting on the meaning of it all?

We face a puzzle: a universe immense over space and time. What can we make of it? A universe out of a big bang some thirteen-and-a-half billion years ago? What if there may be numerous parallel universes, each with a different Max Planck constant? What, then? Can one avoid the question of the why of it all? Why is it all here? There is so much unconscious stuff about which we are conscious, indeed, even self-conscious. It would have been so much easier, had there been nothing. But there is something. And so much of it. So much vast, surd stuff. How can all this stuff account for itself? Can unconscious stuff account for unconscious stuff, or must there be Someone self-conscious and the source of Itself (Himself) to do the accounting? Does so much, indeed anything, call out for an infinite, self-conscious, self-sufficient Creator? A recognition of the presence of God occurs as one experiences the principle of sufficient reason: why is there not nothing? As Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

³⁶After giving a paper in German in a German-speaking country, a Moslem professor at the institution asked if I had any grandchildren. He had stereotyped me as a non-reproducing European. (None of my European intellectual friends has grandchildren.) I responded by listing my grandchildren. The most recently born at that time was Stefan Daniel. I explained that he was named after St. Stefan the Great, warrior-king of Romania, who had won 47 battles against the Moslems. He looked at me in silence for a moment. Then he said, "The rest of the people here only worship ideas. We both worship God and know that it is good to die fighting for Him."

³⁷Data indicate, as Phillip Longman has observed, that male chauvinist fundamentalist religions out-reproduce liberal ones (Longman 2004a, 2004b, and 2006).

(1646–1716) realized, “This principle having been stated, the first question which we have a right to ask will be, ‘Why is there something rather than nothing?’ For nothing is simpler and easier than something” (Leibniz 1969, p. 639). The presence of anything raises the question of everything, of God’s existence. Only God Himself can account for the existence of something.

The challenge is whether over the long run most can in the face of such a vast horizon of space and time prevent a moment of puzzlement about a sufficient reason for it all, thus opening their hearts to the presence of God. Can the committed agnostic secularist avoid God by always trying to change the subject so as not to be confronted with theological questions, questions about God’s existence? And what if one looks through this immense panorama of existence, sees through it like through an icon, and noetically encounters God? What if icons weep when we pray before them? How do we face recurring miracles? Even without a miracle in sight, we nevertheless encounter God. At stake is not a discursive philosophical argument from evidence to God, but rather a noetic recognition, a knowing through the reality we confront as through an icon: an experience through the visible of the Energies of the Invisible (Romans 1:19–21). Even though non-believers decide to worship the creature rather than the Creator (Romans 1:18, 22–25), the presence of God persists. The transcendent always breaks in, even if we then try at once to avert our attention. Attempts to stifle any hint of the transcendent go aground as we try to think of ourselves as finite beings in an immense and ultimately senseless universe. Reality is always an icon disclosing the presence of the sufficient Ground, the Creator, God.

Knowledge of God (not just knowledge about God), as St. Paul makes clear, is not the conclusion of a discursive argument from evidence, from data concerning God’s existence, to God’s existence. This would require an inference from the finite to the infinite. Instead, what is at stake involves a perceiving of His Existence (Romans 1:19). The recognition of God’s existence is not on the basis of conclusions from evidence used in a discursive argument that leads to proving

God’s existence, but a move from an encounter with Presence to an acknowledgement of His Presence. Can the transcendent fail to break in? St. Paul’s answer is no. God always breaks in, becomes manifest to each person through reality. Our response establishes the significance of our lives. St. Paul insists that agnostics, not to mention atheists, are therefore always without excuse, for they have sufficiently encountered God’s Presence. Atheists as well as agnostics, St. Paul also insists, are culpable for their failure to acknowledge God, because there is always enough knowledge of His Presence (i.e., noetic experience of His existence), so that one is culpable for having worshipped the creature, rather than the Creator (Romans 1:20–21). But if the heart opens, anything can happen.

IV. Looking to the Future: God Lives

Only God knows the future. Philosophers are not prophets. “[T]he owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk” (Hegel 1991, p. 23). The present is full of unanticipated occurrences. There are again Orthodox churches in Rome. Converts stand in the catholicon. Icons weep. Across the world, a literature of traditional Christian bioethics is developing with a significant contribution from Orthodox Christians. In a culture after God, many know that God lives, philosophers among them (Vitz 2012). What all this will mean, no ordinary human can say. In any event, things unanticipated are taking place in the ruins of Christendom. In the meantime, we must be committed and patient, as Christians were called to be during the rule of pagan Rome. We must remember that nearly three centuries passed before St. Constantine, Equal-to-the-Apostles, sat at the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325).

The Southern writer Walker Percy (1916–1990) in various ways called attention to the survival of traditional belief, indeed to the presence of the sustaining power of God. After a lecture, his hosts once asked to take him to a restaurant, inquiring what kind of food he would like. His response ran somewhat in this fashion: “Thank you,” he said, “please take me to a Hittite restaurant.” After some confusion, the hosts responded that there were no Hittite restaurants. Percy then asked, feigning surprise,

“Then please take me to a Jewish restaurant.” The point is that the Hittites had been a mighty people with a developed culture who possessed an extensive empire.

Their empire and culture seemed enduring. However, the Hittites are now all gone, lost in the past. In their midst was Abraham and his small band of believers in the true God (Gen 23:3–20). The Jews were seemingly

insignificant. However, they were the icon of the living God. Orthodox Jews remain. They are still an icon of God’s presence, fully realized in the synagogue of the Messiah. The Orthodox Church, the synagogue of the Messiah Who rose from the dead and will come again, shall endure until He comes. Even in the face of secularization, committed true belief will not evanesce, especially if God is on one’s side.

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