



Boston Catholic Journal



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DEDICATED TO MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

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PROFESS\$IONAL CATHOLIC\$

Making a “Living” off Catholicism



Parasites in the Body of Christ

Making a “Living” off Catholicism

First: a short, but extremely helpful aside:

In Thucydides’ History of the Peloponnesian War, the greatest Commander in classical antiquity, the Spartan General Brasidas, in the winter of the 8th year of the war, laid siege to the strategic city of Amphipolis in northern Hellas in 424 BC (visited, incidentally, by Socrates while serving in the Athenian Army) where, in a later battle in 421 BC, Brasidas himself was to die. He headed the most successful army of Sparta.

It was not, however, by force of arms that Brasidas entered the besieged city, but through sedition — and not, interestingly enough — by the demos, or people, of Amphipolis, but principally through the people of the neighboring city of Argilus “who had their own designs on Amphipolis” (Bk. 4/103) and together with their countrymen inside its walls. Amphipolis fell without a fight, and even in subsequent wars was never recovered by Athens.

The Peloponnesian Paradigm

So ... you ask, what possible connection exists between today's “Professional” Catholics in the Church, and the Argilians who lived inside the walls of Amphipolis?

First, we must understand that the Argilians lived, profited through, enacted perfunctory rituals within, and took shelter under the aegis of Amphipolis ... even as they planned and executed the betrayal of the native Hellenes or Athenians within her. While not native Amphipolans, or, for that matter, Athenians, they were, in a manner of speaking, “professional” Amphipolans.

They earned their wages and some made their small fortunes solely through their association with Amphipolis. They had no allegiance to — except inasmuch as they could earn a living through — the Athenians at Amphipolis, whom they emulated even as they despised them.

It is not the case that the Argilians looked to the Lacedemonians (the Spartans) as their liberators (which Brasidas sincerely believed himself and his army to be); they did not love Sparta, but they hated Athens. Yet, daily they passed in and out of her walls, ate in her fields and sold in her markets. They could earn **a living** in Amphipolis ... even as they hated her.

It is notable that even as their hatred festered, they did nothing overtly treasonable until an opportune time ... in fact, until the appearance of the leading elements of Brasidas' cavalry at the gates of Argilus. The designs they could not effect on Amphipolis of themselves, they could, they understood at once, effect through Brasidas, and they used him to this end.

Catholicism as “a job

The Church is dangerously bloated with “Professional” Catholics — that is to say, Catholics to whom, and for whom, “being Catholic” is a means to making, money, and for whom Catholicism is a job, an income, and in many cases a “profession” (not a Profession of Faith).

Given the American Corporate model around which the Church in America appears to be increasingly molding itself, there is no inherent contradiction in working for the corporation and hating the boss who runs it.

The point of significant divergence, however, is that in secular Corporate America, the expression of such sentiments is likely to end at the back of the unemployment line. What is strange is that in such an event, we seldom, or rarely encounter the charge of intolerance. The reasoning appears to be legitimate: if you do not like it here, you are free to leave and find a job elsewhere and more to your liking. XYZ Company produces and pushes products and services much more to your liking, and in better keeping with, or at least more amenable to, your lifestyle.

However, ... if you choose to stay here at ABC Company which produces and markets goods and services deeply antithetical to those of XYZ Company's – whose interests are not only at odds with, but in fact inimical to our own – we presume that you will be loyal to the interests of ABC Company who is, after all, paying you to produce our own authentic goods and providing loyal services. If you are willing to take our money, you must be willing to agree with, and abide by, our policies. This is not tyranny. If you find such policies repugnant to you, you are free to keep them to yourself, or to leave.

You are not, however, free to disseminate policy of your own making, or goods and services promoted by XYZ Company and pass them off as ours. This is egregiously duplicitous and dishonest, is it not? In this way only do we see a significant divergence between the secular corporate model and its ecclesiastical emulation:

To wit: In the Church you *can* stay, promote your own unique and incompatible agenda ... and even get paid for it! Not a bad deal. Except for the Church ... and her children.

To do otherwise clearly requires a measure of some integrity. It requires something more than a neurotic paralysis between incompatible choices. Integrity should compel us to do, not what is profitable at any cost ... but what is right. To be paid to make one thing and to make another is one example. To be paid to teach one thing, and then to take it upon ourselves to teach its contradictory for the same pay is, I suggest, another and extremely eminent example of the absence of integrity.

This breach of integrity — however lamely excused (and there are always excuses, and they will always be cleverly couched, for they are self-interested) is exponentially compounded, not by the intrinsic disorder within it, and not even by a breach of faith with what is presumed to be holy.

It is, in the end, *theft* of the most execrable kind: it is predation of the Widow's Mite. It is a taking of the .25 cents from the 7-year-old girl, the dollar from the 85-year-old man, and sometimes the lunch money from some destitute student to make a comfortable living dissenting from the very things which they hold sacred and to which they contribute at so great a cost in so little a gift. It is, as it ever has been, a taking by the powerful from the powerless. It is nothing less. We know the victims. They fill every pew. Now ... who are the predators?

The

“Professional

Catholics”

The fleecing of the Faithful to other ends ... which is to say, teaching them *defiance of*, and in *contradiction to*, the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church while “earning a living off it” to which parents pay tribute in coppers of real sacrifice ... is distributed between Catholic academics in nominally Catholic colleges and universities and the monetarily-engaged-laity in any teaching capacity. The nearly one-thousand-year-old teaching of the Church which maintains that Faith and Reason are, as we had seen earlier, mutually complementary, neither conflicting nor

contradictory — and as such constituted an ideal basis upon which to found an authentic Catholic education.

As with so much once uniquely and identifiably Catholic following Vatican II, this was thoroughly repudiated in the *Land-o-Lakes Conference* which, renouncing Catholicism as objectively informative in education, favored not simply *rapprochement* with the secular educational world, but complete submission to it. The conference stated this capitulation in no uncertain terms:

“the Catholic university must have a true autonomy and academic freedom in the face of authority of whatever kind, lay or clerical, external to the academic community itself.”

This is especially true in those who inhabit that indistinct penumbra between the priest and his local “Pastoral Assistant,” and later, in higher education, to theologian-*cum-Mandatum*. Let us enumerate a few. All are putative docents of sorts, and the one thread binding their diversity is this: disaffection. Disaffection from the Church. From Rome; and sometimes — perhaps more often than not — from God.

Now that we have put a point on the needle, let us touch a few of the more bloated institutions ... but with the blunt end first; you know, the one with the proverbial “eye” ... the passage through which bloated purses and personalities are said to be so problematic. Too quick a thrust with the pointed end would – at least narratively – be anticlimactically implosive. Let us start with the Catholic Colleges, Seminaries, and “Theological Institutes” where the “profession” is most lucrative, the dissension most strident and the disaffection deepest.

Where

to

begin?

The list is long, involuted, and often redundant. Perhaps it is well to start at the apex where the dissidence — and, commensurably, the “professional” salaries — are greatest; in other words, where dissidence is most amply rewarded and appears to be the sine qua non of “academic” credibility.

We must, however, and in all fairness, preface our consideration of this implosive topic by a clear understanding of something contractual and signatory in nature and morally binding in purpose, scope, and intent. In other words, if you “sign on the dotted line” you agree, in taking the money, to do the job, not as **you** see it, but according to the job description clearly outlined in the contract. To do otherwise is clearly duplicitous.

You want the money and you want the job title — both are very appealing and the latter redounds to your notability — but the fact of the matter is that you really do not want to do that particular job. The perquisites, nevertheless, are very compelling indeed. It is vexing, but it remains the case withal that, once you have entered into the contract, you have agreed, for example, to refrain from insider trading and to act honestly on behalf of the brokerage and its legitimate interests which, presumably, coincide with yours, as well as those of the investors who have entrusted their interests to you ... or you would not have applied in the first place right? You will not, by contract, say, broker securities that are not within the portfolio of the brokerage, offer misleading advice, or encourage your investors to go elsewhere. You concurred with the terms of the contract; they are amenable to you, and the compensation is handsome, so ... you sign up. Correct?

Yes and no. In the cut-throat, self-interested world of corrupt Corporate America such agreements, such contracts are, in fact, binding and even actionable; however

often they are violated as a matter of fact, there is a real or at least a presumed binding in such contractual agreements, together with legal recourse and punitive sanctions in the event of breach. In fact, it is of the essence of contractual agreements that they bind; otherwise, the notion of a contract becomes meaningless.

The moral, the ethical, dimension that has a direct bearing on the integrity of the individual signatory to the contract is much simpler. One simply does not (or clearly ought not) enter into — nor remain within — affairs that entail a conflict of interest. It is both morally reprehensible and egregiously self-interested. One does not earn ones living by violating ones keep. It is a matter of irreconcilable contrariety. One, for example, who agrees to work for, and to be paid by, the Anti-Defamation League, and then use that money and position to promote anti-Semitism, is, I suggest, guilty of more than mere duplicity in advocating the liquidation of his employer. And now, literally, to the heart of the matter: What is the Contract and what is the Breach?

Ex Corde Ecclesiae: “Out of the Heart of the Church”

The Apostolic Constitution on Higher Education, “*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*” – “Out of the Heart of the Church” – was issued by Pope John Paul II in 1990 and requires professors of Catholic theology within Catholic colleges and universities obtain a *mandatum*, or mandate, from the local bishop. Professors must petition for the mandate, the purpose of which is ensure that Catholic theologians teach authentically Catholic doctrine, and “refrain from putting forth as Catholic teaching anything contrary to the Church's Magisterium.” Such a petition may be denied by the local bishop, or a given mandate withdrawn if the bishop deems that the theologian is not teaching doctrine that accords with the Magisterium of the Church; in other words, if it does not proceed *ex corde Ecclesiae*. Let us briefly look at some of the more

pertinent quotations from *The Apostolic Constitution* itself:

Excerpts from The Apostolic Constitution on Higher Education:

“Fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church” (Part I.3)

- “In a Catholic University...Catholic ideals, attitudes and principles penetrate and inform university activities ...” (ibid. 1.14) 6
- “a recognition of and adherence to the teaching authority of the Church in matters of faith and morals. Catholic members of the University community are also called to a personal fidelity to the Church with all that this implies.” (ibid. 3.27)
- “If need be, a Catholic University must have the courage to speak uncomfortable truths which do not please public opinion, but which are necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society.” (ibid. 32)
- “A Catholic University, as Catholic, informs and carries out its research, teaching, and all other activities with Catholic ideals, principles, and attitudes.” (ibid. 2.2)
- “... all Catholic teachers are to be faithful to, and all other teachers are to respect, Catholic doctrine and morals in their research and teaching. In particular, Catholic theologians, aware that they fulfill a mandate received from the Church, are to be faithful to the Magisterium of the Church as the authentic interpreter of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.” (ibid. 4.3)

then the “Dissidents” ...

As we see in the Apostolic Constitution, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, the Holy See is unequivocally clear and succinct in the stipulations outlined in the contract binding the Catholic theologian to the *Magisterium*, or authentic teaching, of the Church. Its clarity, in fact, is pristine; there is little, if any, room for casuistic interpretation of the Holy See’s expectations. There is equally little room for latitude in interpreting

the commitment to teaching authentic Church doctrine — that is to say, explicitly, doctrine that completely accords with the Magisterium of the Church — on the part of the applicant, the professor-hopeful.

The difficulty comes to us, really, in the form of the simplest disjunction in syllogistic reasoning evidencing itself in the manifest absence of correspondence between otherwise irreconcilable propositions:

- You must explicitly agree to abide by the terms (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*).
- “I explicitly agree to abide by the terms. So much so, in fact, that I am signatory to them. **Nevertheless**, I hold myself to be exempt from them.” (bishop, professor, theologian, teacher etc.)

Apart from the formal, or logical inconsistency, there is the salient ethical breach, and this, of the two, strikes us most forcefully. Inadvertent errors in reasoning are of the nature of defect; deliberated breaches of ethics are of the nature of malice. As Alasdair MacIntyre, perhaps the most eminent 21st century moral philosopher, once astutely noted, to hold oneself in exception to, or in self-exemption from, otherwise universally binding norms, is not simply immoral, but is of the essence of the unethical, the immoral. In other words, I hold myself to be an exception to the rule ... to which all others must, or at least ought, to comply. I hold such rules to be legitimately binding ... but not upon me.

Were it simply a matter of cognitive dissonance we could dismiss the matter merely as a psychological aberration ... were it not pandemic within Catholic theological academia, where, as we have said, open and abrasive dissent is the *sine qua non* of

acceptable academic credentials and the appropriate posture of plausibility. The problem is deeper.

“Father Dan”

Let us take, for example, the curious figure of one “Fr.” Daniel Moynihan who insists that, “We listened much too much to the penis when we should have sought an audience with the clitoris.” (*The Religious Consultation on Population, Reproductive Health & Ethics*)

“Daniel C. Maguire is a Professor of Moral Theological Ethics at Marquette University, a Catholic, Jesuit Institution and President of the Religious Consultation on Population, Reproductive Health and Ethics. ... the author of *Sacred Choices: The Right to Contraception and Abortion in Ten World Religions* ... The articles include “Different but Equal: A Moral Assessment of the Woman's Liberation” “The Freedom to Die,” “Sex and Ethical Methodology,” and “The New Look of Death.”

Clearly, as an ethicist and prominent moral theologian, “father Dan” has much to teach the young Catholic entrusted by the Church to his tutelage ... once, that is, the student is sufficiently adept at discerning that he is lecturing on ethics and not being gratuitously salacious.

To wit, consider the following: (Father) Daniel Maguire’s Memorable address to:

**Planned Parenthood Federation of America 2002 Annual
Conference Interfaith Prayer Breakfast 9 March 21, 2001**

“Pleasure is what sex is all about. Historic philosophy invaded western culture with the idea that sexual pleasure is presumed guilty until proven innocent. Only procreative intent could bring acquittal. Such nonsense. Sex rarely has anything to do with procreation. The old axiom listen to your body was misapplied here. We listened much too much to the penis when we should have sought an audience with the clitoris. The penis has divided loyalties and multiple missions. It is concerned with procreation and waste removal. The clitoris is single-minded. It’s one goal, as Susan Ross, the ethicist says, is exquisite sexual pleasure.”

Unique ...

How many scholars outside of the Catholic Church, have not simply the propensity to discuss ethical issues with vulvae, but seek to an audience with, and hope to elicit an answer from, interlabial anatomical features? And anticipate being enlightened? That is a rare gift. Would, then, “Fr. Dan” interview a clitoris? A distinct possibility ... even if he is the only one who hears it speaking.

An exemplary Catholic scholar, to be sure ... despite the absence of any consonance between “Dan’s” teaching, and the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church at a Catholic Jesuit University. Is something immediately amiss?

Who pays “Dan” handsomely to teach “Moral Theological Catholic Ethics”? The Catholic Jesuit Marquette University. Who pays the university that pays Dan? Where do the students get their tuition to pay the university to pay Dan? From their parents. Are their parents Catholic? Largely. Was it their expectation that by sending their son or daughter to a Catholic University that their children would receive a genuine “Catholic” education? Presumably. Was someone sold a bill of goods? I think so.

Who have you been listening to lately ...?

Well, we have a clear take on “what” – not “who” — Dan has been listening to lately, and even if we do not hear what Dan hears from his own ... well, private, sources, he is ready to proclaim it to the world ... but who is listening, besides his unfortunate students? Certainly not the bishops! They are, by the latest polls, apparently too busy listening for a knock at the door by a State Prosecutor for the sexual predators whom they have been hiding, or shuffling about ... or perhaps for they themselves. Were they attentive to the moral turpitude of “Dan,” they would have stripped him of his faculties as a priest, prohibited him from celebrating Mass, and wearing a clerical collar (which Dan does not, anyway.)

Demand a Refund

Have you been defrauded? Have you been sold a bill of goods? Did you get what you paid for? Did you get who you pay for? Who broke faith? The “Catholic” University? The bishop? Dan of the sub-Sibyline gifts?

Actually ... all three: One for profit, one for power, and one for prestige. And ... alas ... no one stood with Christ.

Sounds like a viable class-action suit to me.

Wasn't it a fixation with genitalia that brought the Church in Boston to this sad state to begin with? Or are the two somehow related?

It depends on Who — and “what” you are listening to.

Geoffrey K. Mondello

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