

Living in the Ruins of Christendom[#]

Viver nas Ruínas da Cristandade

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REALITY, MORALITY, AND BIOETHICS AFTER GOD^a

Christendom has fallen. It is more than in ruins. Stone no longer lies upon stone. A new orthodoxy has been established, and it is secular. We have entered an age resolutely set “after God”. The contemporary dominant culture^b of the West is committed to acting as if God did not exist. The implications of this culture without God are vast. They include, as we shall see, morality and bioethics being rendered into micro-life-style choices, the loss of the authority of the moral point of view, and the loss of the moral legitimacy of the state, leaving the state as a mere *modus vivendi*. Morality, bioethics, and political authority within this new culture generally need to be thoroughly reconsidered. Without a God’s-eye perspective, without an ultimate point of moral orientation, meaning, and enforcement of morality, what once seemed so secure is set adrift. Secular claims for morality, bioethics, and political authority can now rest only on particular clusters of intuitions and practices that constitute more or less coherent freestanding positions supported by particular narratives floating within the horizon of the finite and the immanent without any anchor in being. Much, if not most, of what had been taken for granted about morality, bioethics, and political authority is left unsecured. The very meaning of bioethics must be critically reassessed.

We are in new cultural and moral territory. The full implications of the loss of a God’s-eye perspective are only now becoming clear. Never before has there been a large-scale, politically established culture that explicitly acted as if God did not exist, as if all were without all ultimate meaning. No culture like this existed before the 20th century. Even the First French Republic (22 September

1792-1801) on the 7th of May (18 Floréal) 1794 under Maximilien Robespierre forbade atheism and established *le culte de l’Être suprême*. The contemporary dominant secular post-Christian culture, including that of the European Union and the United States, has taken up, albeit in softer agnostic forms, the atheist commitments of the October Revolution (26 October 1917, 7 November new style). This secular culture not only removes public mention of Christ, but it also removes God from the public space. To clear the ruins of Christendom, there is to be a thorough exorcism by the secular culture of any hint of ultimate meaning.

The now-dominant culture eschews any point of transcendent orientation. Officially, all is approached as if there were no ultimate significance. All is to be regarded as if ultimately coming from nowhere, going nowhere, and for no enduring purpose. Within the now-dominant secular culture, one is to approach morality, bioethics, law, public policy, and ordinary life guided by an atheistic, or at least an agnostic, methodological postulate. That is, one acts according to the postulate that God does not exist. The public forum, as well as discourse within the public space, has been relocated fully within the horizon of the finite and the immanent, so that all mention of the transcendent is ruled out of order. A new fabric of public cultural reality now dominates. The recognition of sin has been erased from the public square. This volume explores this radically new cultural territory and its implications for morality, bioethics, and political authority.

Now I must attempt to forestall some possible misreadings of this volume. In recognizing the recent watershed change in the character of the dominant

DOI: 10.15343/1981-8254.20140802199212

[#] Dando continuidade à seção “artigos em séries” iniciada em 2014;8(1):80-88, publicaremos nesta edição o primeiro capítulo da obra “After God: Morality and Bioethics in a Secular Age”, a ser publicada ainda como livro. An ancestral version of this paper, “Religion, Politics, and the State in Modern Secularized Societies” was delivered for the Comune di Napoli in Naples on February 6, 2012, where I was honored with an award “cantore della diversità morale e della tolleranza”. I am in deep debt to Naples for its flawless and generous hospitality, as well as for the fruitful discussions that marked my time there.

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a. The phrase “after God” is used to indicate that the now-dominant secular culture has set itself apart from God by ignoring the question of the existence of God, the existence of ultimate meaning. Obviously, not all would fully agree with the view advanced in this volume. See, for example, Sinott-Armstrong¹. “After God” is employed to indicate that the absence of a canonical God’s-eye perspective radically changes the force and meaning of morality and bioethics.

b. In this volume, the term culture is invoked, recognizing all its ambiguity. The etymology of culture ties tilling the soil and worshipping God (*cultus*). The Latin *cultus* embraces both agricultural cultivation and religious reverence, as does the noun *cultor*. By the time of Cicero (106-43 B.C.), *cultura* had come to compass not just agricultural cultivation, but also the refinement exemplified by philosophy and manners at court. Culture here will be used with an additional Hegelian valence to identify the dominant spirit or *Geist* of the time so that culture is compassed in *Geist*. What all is compassed by this notion of spirit will become clearer in chapter 8, where Absolute Spirit is the intellectual self-apprehension, self-consciousness of a culture. Here it is enough to observe that a culture frames and sustains what is at any time the dominant view of reality and morality.

O autor declara não haver conflitos de interesse.

culture due to its loss of a God's-eye perspective, I am not claiming that, before this change, there was cultural unanimity, uniformity, or agreement. Pluralism has always characterized the fallen human condition. I am not claiming that there was no great sin. However, without a recognition of sin, repentance is now impossible. What is new is that the dominant culture, that culture established at law and in public policy, is now secular in the radical sense of being after God and therefore after sin. Moreover, this dominant, now-secular culture is being confronted with a recognition of its post-modern character: that its ethics and bioethics have no ultimate anchor and are from the perspective of sound rational argument plural nouns. This intractable pluralism has always been a part of the fallen human condition. However, the Western moral-philosophical project, as we will see, was framed by an unfounded faith that this was not the case, that secular rationality could establish *the* canonical ethics and bioethics. This faith in secular rationality induced many, if not most, to ignore the intractability of secular moral and bioethical pluralism. Post-modernity involves the recognition of a truth modernity sought to deny: there is no canonical secular moral rationality or vision. This book explores the historical roots and the implications of this recognition of the ultimate groundlessness of the ethics and bioethics of the dominant secular culture. It is as if one had awakened one morning in a second-floor apartment and found there was no first floor, while many living in the other apartments were firm in holding that this did not matter. Again, this is not to deny that the world in the past was replete with agnostics and atheists. However, they did not define the dominant culture.

A world explicitly without a God's-eye perspective is a novum in a way that some post-modernists such as Stanley Fish (1938) will not fully admit. He claims, for example, that

the unavailability of an absolutely objective vantage point, of a god's eye view, doesn't take anything away from us. If, as postmodernists sometimes assert, objective standards of a publicly verifiable kind are unavailable, they are so only in the sense that they have

always been unavailable (this is not, in other words, a condition post-modernism has caused), and we have always managed to get along without them, doing a great many things, despite the fact that we might be unable to shore them up in accordance with the most rigorous philosophical demands (p. 140)².

Pace Fish, what constitutes post-modernity is not intractable secular moral pluralism or the absence in secular culture of a rationally justifiable God's-eye view (as Fish underscores, such has always been the case), but the recognition of this intractability and of the absence of any rationally justified secular ultimate meaning. Fish fails to appreciate that in the dominant secular culture we were able to "manage", as he puts it, by embracing a position similar to that of Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804), that is, by acting as if God existed (*Critique of Pure Reason* A685=B713f) and/or by embracing the equivalent of Kant's practical moral postulates of God and immortality (*Critique of Practical Reason* AK V.133), or at least by not frankly facing the consequences of being "after God"^c. It is the position taken by Marcello Pera, Pope Benedict XVI's agnostic friend who invites us "to act *velut si Deus daretur*, as if God existed" (p. 160)³. However, once morality and bioethics are explicitly set within a reality widely regarded as ultimately meaningless, the character of morality and political legitimacy changes substantially. Morality and bioethics are demoralized and deflated.

The character of the dominant secular culture is so altered after the recognition of the absence of foundations that even Richard Rorty (1931-2007) admits that liberal moral and constitutional commitments are merely a function of a particular ethnocentrism. He hopes nevertheless that his ethnocentrism can prevail by being open

to encounters with other actual and possible cultures, and to make this openness central to its self-image. This culture is an *ethnos* which prides itself on its suspicion of ethnocentrism – on its ability to increase the freedom and openness of encounters, rather than on its possession of truth (p. 2)⁴.

c. Save for references to the first *Critique*, which identify passages from the first edition (1781) as A and the second edition (1787) as B, pagination is given to the Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften edition (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1902 and subsequently published volumes) as AK followed by the volume indicated in Roman numerals and the page in Arabic numerals.

An ethnocentrism remains an ethnocentrism. Given Rorty's view of morality, the force of Rorty's "strategy" rests on empirical sociopolitical claims regarding the strategy's promised future success. However, the strategy does nothing to erase the consequences of the loss for morality and political legitimacy of any ultimate anchor and meaning. One should also note that these observations regarding the loss of a God's-eye perspective do not involve a claim that the content of all or even most theologically anchored moralities and bioethics is better than that of bioethics moralities framed apart from a God's-eye perspective (this volume defends only the norms of Orthodox Christianity). The claim is quite different. The claim is that, *contra* Stanley Fish, if one faces what it means to be without a God's-eye perspective, then the meaning of morality, bioethics, and political legitimacy is radically altered, in the sense of being demoralized and deflated. Moreover, the dominant secular culture is now beginning to face the consequences of being "after God". The next seven chapters will develop and defend this claim.

This book is not an autobiography. However, in this chapter and at the beginning of the next, the arguments and analyses are located with reference to some events in my life and the beginning of contemporary bioethics. This is done not because these events have any importance in themselves, but in order more concretely to situate the arguments. In part, this is meant in an illustrative fashion to shed an introductory light on the immense cultural changes of the latter part of the 20th century, which are a focus of this volume. This is also done in order to avoid what might otherwise appear to be an unbridgeable divide between my early work and my later work, differences that have posed a serious and unintended puzzle for some readers^d. In particular, autobiographical reflections are used to locate the arguments developed in *The Foundations of Bioethics*^{5,6} in terms of what I argued in subsequent work⁷.

Previous works examined why sound rational argument cannot supply canonical foundations for a rationally justified secular morality or secular bioethics^{5,6,8}. However, I have never comprehensively addressed how this state of

affairs is tied to the now-dominant secular culture's severance from God, although the question was in the background of *The Foundations of Bioethics* and *Bioethics and Secular Humanism*. Even *Viaggi in Italia: Saggi di bioetica*⁹ addresses only piecemeal and tangentially what it means to live without God, without ultimate meaning. In none of these volumes lays out the full enormity of the cultural changes that we face, given the dominant culture's commitment to acting as if God did not exist, as if all were ultimately surd. Nor did I sufficiently address the roots of this now-dominant secular culture, as well as why, cut loose from a recognition of God, the establishment of atheism or at least agnosticism constitutes such a startling and devastating cultural novum.

This present volume shoulders these tasks. It explores the now-dominant secular culture's severance from God: its foundations (and lack thereof) and its implications of its forsaking God for morality, bioethics, public policy, law, and political structures. This volume shows why in the absence of a God's-eye perspective there is a demoralization and deflation of morality and bioethics, along with a delegitimization of the state. This volume also looks at how this secular culture is in tension with traditional Christianity^e, and why, when a culture's morality and bioethics are after God, they are radically different from a culture, morality, and bioethics organized around an experience of ultimate meaning. Finally, this volume asks if this new culture's morality, bioethics, and political structure are stable and sustainable. Do we face a major crisis in the secular culture with important implications for how we can understand bioethics? Can the project of morality with bioethics continue without foundations, while prescinding from ultimate meaning? Is society sustainable when set fully within the horizon of the finite and the immanent? This book ends with this puzzle.

MEINE ITALIENISCHEN REISEN: THE ROAD THAT LED TO NEW ROME^f

This work is tied to Italy. It was in Italy in the 1980s that I finally and fully faced the implications of a life-

d. To illustrate the puzzle regarding my early and my late work, one university in Europe has had a course on Engelhardt 1 versus Engelhardt 2.

e. In this volume, the terms traditional Christian and traditional Christianity identify that Christianity at one with the Church of the first seven Councils.

f. My friend Maurizio Mori, co-editor of *Viaggi in Italia*, chose the title to make allusion to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's (1749-1832) autobiographical *Italienische Reise*, which chronicles Goethe's artistic rebirth in Italy, and to indicate the important role Italy has played and continues to play in my flourishing as a scholar. Goethe's *Italienische Reise* was a work that spanned most of Goethe's lifetime, beginning with a simple diary for Charlotte von Stein as indicated in his letter to her of 14 October 1786, to a work revised and expanded in 1816/1817 following his travels through Italy in 1815, and which was then given its final form in three volumes in 1829. Italy was for Goethe a place of recovery, rebirth, and transformation. Mora recognized that it was the same for me.

world without God. More particularly, the core of this volume, an ancestor of which appeared in Italian¹⁰, grew out of a series of six lectures on bioethics delivered in Italy in 2012 from January 30 in Milan to February 6 in Naples, with presentations in Turin on January 31, in Lecce on February 1, and two presentations in Naples on February 3. These lectures followed the publication of *Viaggi in Italia: Saggi di bioetica*, a volume of papers on bioethics delivered in Italy, or published in Italian⁹. *Viaggi* presents twenty years of scholarly connections with Italy, from 1991 through 2010. This present volume (and all my past work) is also in many ways indirectly tied to Italy. Anyone who has been a Roman Catholic has been connected at least implicitly with Italy. With a Roman pontiff and his administrative offices claiming universal jurisdiction, the perspective of Rome and Italy touches everything Roman Catholic. In addition, I have from my youth had many particular and pleasant connections with Italy⁸.

Public conversations with Italian scholars about bioethics began with a conference held in Milan on November 8-10, 1991, which had a major focus on the Italian translation of the first edition of *The Foundations of Bioethics*¹¹. Because the volume denied that moral philosophy could by sound rational argument severed from God identify universal canonical content-full bioethical and moral norms, it collided with Roman Catholic views of the capacities of moral philosophy. *The Foundations* was at a white-hot point of collision between a Roman Catholic and a post-Christian Italy so that it engendered a controversy that reached into the public media. With the pope and the curia in Rome, the capital of a secular republic, disputes about the proper character of Italian mores, law, bioethics, and public policy carry theological implications. *The Foundations* had become enmeshed in these debates. These public scholarly controversies and the discussions they engendered were driven by an intimation of what it might mean to live and do bioethics “after God”.

Private discussions in Italy and elsewhere in Europe preceded these public lectures and debates they forced

me to recognize that public morality and bioethics had been severed from its taken-for-granted moorings. At the time I was still Roman Catholic, indeed a practicing Roman Catholic increasingly attending Tridentine masses whenever possible. Although my family and I were never officially associated with the Society of St. Pius X, the Society provided masses at least in part anchored in tradition and in a commitment to Roman Catholic orthopraxis in contrast to the prevailing liturgical and theological chaos¹². From 1984 to 1990, in association with the Steering Committee of the Study Group of Bioethics of the International Federation of Catholic Universities, with which I was involved from 1984, and officially a member from 1987 to 1990, I took part in discussions on bioethics and moral theory with Roman Catholic scholars, including the late Carlo Cardinal Martini of Milan (1927–2012). I was for the first time immersed in the intellectual culture and controversies of Roman Catholicism, bringing contact with theologians such as Bruno Schüller of Münster (1925-2006), Klaus Demmer of Rome (1931-), and John Mahoney, S.J., of London (1931-), as well as the Catalan bioethicist Francesc Abel, S.J. (1933-2011) and the bioethicist Paul Schotsmans (1950-). As a result of these conversations, I was forced to face the question of what it meant to be a Christian, even what it meant to acknowledge the existence of God.

Cardinal Martini was a warm, personable, dynamic, and charming intellectual who wished to be pope. Because the time of the next papal election is generally unknown (unless as in the Middle Ages one has planned to accelerate a pontiff’s appearance before the dread judgment seat of Christ, or bring the reigning pope to retire), one is forced to proceed with circumspection and patience^h. Martini was cautious and spoke with discretion. I found myself engaged by, and engaging in, well-informed discussions about Roman Catholicism, European culture, morality, bioethics, and the remnants of Christendom. He had a particular interest in bioethics and healthcare policy. At times the possibilities were discussed for significantly liberalizing Roman Catholicism beyond what had been realized by

g. As a young man, I loved Italy. During my first papal audience in the summer of 1958, as the name of the diocese of Galveston-Houston was read out in St. Peter’s, I gave out a loud “yahoo!” The aging Pope Pius XII (1876-1958, elected 1939) turned to me and smiled while he blessed me.

h. The death of Pope John Paul I (26 August 1978-28 September 1978) is an intriguing puzzle. Some consider him to have been murdered.

Vatican II. The airs of *aggiornamento* were still blowing through the halls of theological reflection in ways that were often disorienting for clerics, theologians, and the laityⁱ. Cardinal Martini himself wished to recast Roman Catholicism in a much more post-traditional modeⁱ. There was no attention to the possibility that the chaos

in Roman Catholicism that had begun in the mid-1960s was a result of the rupture of post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism from its past.

During these discussions with Cardinal Martini and those with whom I had become associated, remarkably little if any attention was directed to the major collapse

i. *Aggiornamento* has had a generally deleterious impact on Roman Catholicism, engendering confusion and conflict. "In the United States, ... Catholic subculture has been quite impressive right up to the very recent past. The trouble with opening windows is that you can't control what comes in, and a lot has come in – indeed, the whole turbulent world of modern culture – that has been very troubling to the Church" (p. 5)¹³. Conservative Roman Catholics have attributed the major decline in church attendance, not just to the doctrinal and liturgical chaos, but also in part to the "dumbing down" of the Roman mass.

Why has Church attendance dropped despite the introduction of a "more accessible" Mass? It is because people are *not* stupid! They see Father ad-libbing the re-presentation of Jesus on Calvary and presume it is no more than a religious show. When one walks into a modern Catholic church, instead of being drawn to God by beautiful artwork, vestments, and music, the individual is confronted with the same worldliness seen in everyday life (p. 33)¹⁴.

Among other things, Roman Catholicism lost faith in itself. For example, Professor Ruiping Fan (City University of Hong Kong), while a graduate student, was shocked by his initial encounter with Western Christianity, especially Roman Catholicism. He offers the following account.

In the fall of 1992, I took a plane from the People's Republic of China to accept a graduate fellowship in philosophy at Rice University, Houston, Texas. At the time, I never dreamt I was about to encounter at least some remnants of Christianity: a mystical faith that claims access to the true God and would, if it could, baptize every available pagan, including myself. Prior to that event, I had only episodic encounters with Christians, most of whom were nominal at best. They either were embarrassed to be called Christian, rejected the categorization outright, or reduced its meaning to a matter of cultural taste. Still, in my home town in Inner Mongolia, I recall a Christian teacher who, when asked to confess that Mao Tse-tung was better than Christ, refused and died for her commitment during "the cultural revolution" in the late 1960s. This seemed to me even then when I was a child to indicate a courage and a wholeheartedness of belief that I came to find was deep and admirable. Then in 1989 I had the opportunity to visit West Germany, a nominally Christian country with two established Christian religions. At the conference, an ordained Lutheran minister, now a professor of philosophy, took pains to invite members of the Chinese delegation, male and female, to the pleasures of a mixed nude German sauna. It was only later that I recognized that such behavior was at odds with traditional Christianity, as well as with the faith to which the woman was committed who died in my Inner Mongolian town. Initially, it seemed quite clear that the Christianity I was encountering played largely a cultural or aesthetic role. ... In our attempt to become better acquainted with the local culture [in Houston, Texas], my wife and I proceeded to the neighboring Roman Catholic church for Christmas services and received their communion, noticing that among the priests handing out communion to a long and anonymous stream of visitors was a fellow graduate student at Rice. This seemed pleasantly inclusive and culturally enriching. My wife and I enjoyed exploring American Christianity, which at least in most of its forms presented itself in an non-judgmental fashion that affirmed people as they were.

It was only later that I asked if one of the co-editors of *Christian Bioethics* would be so kind as to allow me to visit his Orthodox church. Though my wife and I had visited a number of Christian churches, we had not fully anticipated the difference. To begin with, these people took extended worship quite seriously, spending some three hours in the endeavor each Sunday morning. Their God is for them a very serious matter. In addition, unlike the other churches, they took painstaking efforts to make sure that no one who was not an Orthodox Christian in good standing came close to participating in what they referred to as their Mysteries. First, their church bulletin announced that no one should dare come up for their Eucharist who was not Orthodox and who had not kept their fast. Also, they positioned a half-dozen robust gentlemen in the altar area, who seemed to watch the communicants and guard the approach. Finally, the priest appeared to know everyone by name. As I came to recognize over time, the elaborate ceremonies so much cherished by the Orthodox Christians had their roots in a piety drawn from the ancient Jewish temple services. In a Christendom generally bland, ecumenical, and all-embracing, the Orthodox Christians were loving but persistently intent on both excluding those beyond the faith and converting everyone who showed interest in their religion. When invited to receptions in their parish hall, I was quite clear that, if my wife and I showed the slightest interest, they would be more than pleased to submerge us under water three times. Though mainstream Western Christendom may have generally evaporated in a vague cosmopolitan social gospel, this Christianity was unembarrassed in its sectarian commitments. ... After a number of bioethical discussions with Roman Catholic thinkers, quite a few took pains to assure me that they considered me not a pagan, but an anonymous Christian. As I came to appreciate, this was an expression of the ecumenism of the West as well as the particular influence of the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner, who opined that "the Christian will regard the non-Christians as anonymous Christians who do not know what they really are deep down in conscience, by grace and by a possibly very implicit yet true realization of what the Christian too realizes (p. 357)¹⁵.

How could it be that these people would accuse me of being an anonymous Christian? First, it was clear that not all Christians would make such a claim. The Orthodox Christians, for their part, would take great pains to remind me to keep distant from their Mysteries until I in fact converted. Indeed, prior to conversion, in their more pious monasteries Orthodox Christians were quite willing, lovingly but firmly, to exclude all not able to participate in their Mysteries from standing in the main part of the church. If one took seriously the significance of their belief in the power of baptism, this all made excellent sense. The easiest way to understand the allegation of Western Christians about my anonymous Christian status was to recognize that they had come to equate being a good person or perhaps being a good philosopher with being a Christian, at least in an anonymous mode. That is, if one could discern and affirm the general lineaments of secular morality, which constitute the general lineaments of Western Christian morality, one was indeed affirming the core of Western Christianity. In part, they could use the term 'anonymous Christians' with such ease because they had become radically secularized. Indeed, in this secularity they were willing to embrace a diversity of religious perspectives. In this robust ecumenism and syncretism, they embraced an authentically pagan position: all gods are in some sense the manifestation of a deeper reality. Once I saw this, I knew what I needed to tell them: I thanked them for having called me an anonymous Christian but told them that, with a few exceptions, they were anonymous pagans. This seems to me to be the destiny of Western Christianity (p. 232-3, 235-6)¹⁶.

j. Because these conversations with the cardinal were private, I will let the past obliterate their content, while noting what others have recorded concerning Cardinal Martini's commitments. With regard to fornication and concubinage, the cardinal stated: Today no bishop or priest is unaware of the fact that physical intimacy before marriage is a fact. We have to rethink this if we wish to protect the family and promote marital fidelity. Nothing will be gained by unrealistic positions or prohibitions. I have learned from friends and acquaintances how young people go on holidays together and sleep in the same room. It has never occurred to anyone to hide this or to consider it a problem. Should I be commenting on this? That is difficult. I cannot understand everything, although I feel that here, perhaps, a new respect for one another, a mutual learning and a strong generational togetherness is emerging. This benefits both old and young and does not leave anyone unsupported in their questions about love and loneliness. I will follow this development with good will, with interest, and with prayer (p. 96)¹⁷.

As to issues of homosexuality, Sporschill recorded that Martini circumspectly advanced his view of changing Roman Catholicism's view concerning homosexual acts so as to protect the children adopted or produced by homosexuals.

The Bible judges homosexuality with strong words. The background to this is the problematic practice in the ancient world, when men would have boys and male lovers alongside their families. Alexander the Great is a famous example, The Bible wants to protect the family, the wife, and the children's space. ... The deepest concern of the Holy Scriptures, however, is the protection of the family and a healthy space for children—something now seen among homosexual couples. As a result, I am already leaning toward a hierarchy of values in these matters and basically not towards equality. I have now said more than I should have said (p. 98)¹⁷.

The cardinal did concede that Orthodox Christianity, the Church at one with the Church of the Councils, is not accepting of homosexual relations (p. 98)¹⁷.

of Western Christianity, in particular of Roman Catholicism, that was occurring in the 1980s. There was no discussion of whether the *aggiornamento* that had just occurred lay at the roots of clergy and congregants deserting the church. These discussions with the Steering Committee took place not only in Milan and Rome, but also in Barcelona, Maastricht, and Vienna. Although focused on Roman Catholic bioethics, these conversations usually involved general matters of theology. However, they also touched on Western culture generally, which in the 1980s still bore salient marks of Roman Catholicism^k. These meetings proceeded against the backdrop of foundational theological reflections that raised challenging questions about the nature of theology and its relationship to philosophy but did not directly confront the dramatic decline of mainline Christianity. They never faced the unjustifiable moral-philosophical foundation supposedly undergirding the phenomenon of bioethics.

I was confronted with puzzles. They were foundational puzzles about the roots of bioethics and of morality generally. Prominent among these questions were what it means to acknowledge the existence of God, and what difference such acknowledgement of God does or should make in how one lives one's life. I was also brought to face the issue as to which church is the Church of the Apostles and the Fathers. For that matter, there was the puzzle of how a religion that arose in Palestine and was guided by Councils held in Constantinople and the Near East ever became Western Christianity. As I reflected, it became ever clearer that Roman Catholicism had created a new and distinct theological and liturgical project as it emerged from Orthodox Christianity and became a separate denomination in stages between the 9th and the 13th centuries. In the process, it had wedded itself to the Greek moral-philosophical project from the 5th century before Christ of rationally grounding morality and eventually bioethics. Indeed, it became evident to

me that Roman Catholicism was not the Church of the Apostles and the Fathers, but instead a Western religion shaped by the cultural concerns that came to dominate Western Europe toward the end of the first millennium and the beginning of the second millennium. It also became clear that the West had recast what is involved in the traditional Christian pursuit of theology.

Within the emerging Western Christian theology, God was regarded ever more as a philosophical concept, rather than the Person of the Father, Who begets the Son and from Whom alone the Holy Spirit proceeds. God as the most personal of all was obscured through a theology with a robust philosophical overlay that rendered the theological approach to God primarily one of scholarship, not of prayerful ascetical struggle. My discussions in association with the Steering Committee about the foundations of bioethics had forced me to examine, indeed often for the first time seriously to consider, the nature of Christian theology, worship, and asceticism. These discussions also disclosed the unsecured character of the moral-philosophical claims framing the phenomenon of bioethics.

These reflections came to a head when I was a Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in West Berlin (1988-1989), finishing a volume that examined secular bioethics and secular humanism, but that also at least tangentially explored the history of Western Christianity⁸. I had the opportunity of extended conversations concerning the history of early Christianity with Prof. Martin Hengel (1926-2009), who was also a Fellow that year and was completing a book on St. John's Gospel^{l,20}. Over the Christmas break I had gone with my family to the University of Istanbul and Marmara University to give lectures. Through grace, not through any clear choice of mine, I was brought to the source of all Christianity, the Christianity that is the Church of the Councils: the Orthodox Church. With

k. The term mainline Christianity was first used in the United States to designate the American Baptists, members of the Congregational Church, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalians, Evangelical Lutherans, Presbyterians, and United Methodists. The notion of mainline Christianity grew out of and around the journal *The Christian Century*. See Coffman¹⁸. This group, the so-called Seven Sisters, was set in contrast with the evangelical, fundamentalist, and/or charismatic Protestants. As Gary Dorrien observes, The mainline churches assumed a leadership role in American society, they built a large stock of cultural capital, they crafted a persuasive rhetoric about modern Christianity and America, they built an eccumenical national church, they were (and still are) overrepresented in the corridors of power, and they served as guardians of America's moral culture (p. 27)¹⁹. In this book, I employ the term mainline Christian to identify those Christian bodies of a liberal-theological commitment that through their social prominence attempt to influence the politics in which they find themselves. In this fashion, I use mainline Christian to identify by implication such Christian groups as the Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands (EKD) and at times the Roman Catholics.

l. Among other things, through my conversations with Martin Hengel, it became clear that the claims advanced by Walter Bauer²¹ and Elaine Pagels²² regarding the absence of an orthodox Christianity from the beginning were false. The Gospel of John fell within the true lineage of Christianity, not one that was developed by the Gnostics under the influence of Greek philosophy. Here I must also acknowledge my years of conversation with Hans Jonas (1903-1993).

my wife and two younger daughters, I had taken a taxi across Constantinople from the Sheraton in Beşiktaş via the Galata Bridge, over the Golden Horn to the “Romans”. After all, in Istanbul it is the “Romans” (i.e., the Orthodox) who are the local Christians, the original *Rōmaíoi*, the old Roman citizens. They are also those who are true to the second Rome; they are Chalcedonians, non-monophysites. In that taxi that morning, we were going home at last to the ancient Roman Catholics. The result was that on Christmas, 1988, we stood in the Cathedral of St. George in the Phanar of Constantinople at our first Orthodox Liturgy, with Demetrios, the Ecumenical Patriarch, the successor of St. Peter, presiding. Unwittingly, my involvement with the International Study Group on Bioethics and with Cardinal Martini had sent us on a journey that was, and indeed still is, inconceivable^m.

After that Christmas, I was forced to reconsider everything. Finally, I resigned from the Steering Committee of the Study Group of Bioethics and from Roman Catholicism in September, 1990, at a meeting in Maastricht, an old Roman city, standing at that moment on a stone floor that had been laid in the 9th century when the West was still Orthodox. The symbolic force was quite clear. I was in remnants of a structure from the time of united Christianity, both East and West. As I tendered my resignation, I recognized the unity that had once existed. Even so, I only dimly envisaged my Great Saturday baptism that would follow in 1991. I had no clear understanding until the beginning of Lent, 1991, about what it was to convert. And I am still learning.

As of that September, 1990, I had begun in full earnest my journey from Old Rome to New Rome, from the Vatican to Constantinople, from Roman Catholicism to Orthodoxy²⁵. I was brought from a philosophically structured theology to the recognition of the 4th century adage that “if you are a theologian, you will pray truly. And if you pray truly, you are a theologian” (p. 62)²⁶. I was confronted with the most disturbing truth for an intellectual, namely, that good arguments and well-crafted books do not save; only true repentance, achieved through grace in a ceaseless

prayer of repentance, can bring one to salvation. I came to appreciate theology anew, especially that theology is not merely an academic undertaking, but rather that in the strict sense theology involves an encounter with God. My reflections leading to this philosophical and theological aporia had been greatly enriched by my discussions, indeed debates, with Italian and other Roman Catholic scholars. Most importantly, they helped me to take God and Christianity seriously. They forced me to consider everything anew, including bioethics. To all of these, my former colleagues, my debt is eternal. My debt is indeed special and profound to a marvelous Catalan, the Jesuit Francesc Abel (1933-2011), who, along with John Collins Harvey, had persuaded me to join the Steering Committee.

To my amazement, on Great Saturday in 1991 in Texas, and in a monastery no less, I resolved to repent from a life of profound self-love and many other grievous sins, including the besetting sin of most philosophers, namely, the unfounded presumption that through my own philosophical reflection I could argue my way to the right norms for life and the true goals of human existence. On that day my daughters Christina and Dorothea followed me in baptism. Then the hieromonk sacramentally married me to Susan, who had been my wife for twenty-six years. On Pascha in 1991 I found myself in the Church from which Roman Catholicism itself had departed nearly a millennium beforehand. I was in a place unlike any place I had been before. I had not even imagined that this place existed. Everything had changed. All that had taken place had led me to a turning point, to an encounter through Orthodoxy with holiness. In a half century of my life, I had met good people, indeed some very good people, but before I came to Orthodoxy I had never met holy people. I had never encountered holiness. The awesomeness, the joyous fear of such encounters brought me to write *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*⁷. As a scholar, I was forced to examine everything anewⁿ. I saw bioethics from what was a radically new perspective. I had come to encounter and to concede a highly politically incorrect truth: the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church is Orthodox Christianity.

m. For my wife's account of her conversion, see Susan Engelhardt^{23,24}.

n. For a sense of my coming to work as an Orthodox Christian scholar, compare Minogue, et al²⁷, with Iltis & Cherry²⁸.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM, THE MORAL-PHILOSOPHICAL PROJECT, AND BIOETHICS

The Foundations of Christian Bioethics^{7,29-31} addresses issues in morality, political theory, and bioethics that are raised but cannot be adequately treated within the limits of secular thought. *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*⁷ lays out the character of moral and bioethical norms grounded in God, the moral norms that traditional Christians share as moral friends^o. In different ways, *The Foundations of Bioethics* and *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics* show that the inabilities of a secular morality and a secular bioethics are the result of not possessing a God's-eye perspective. This involves a cardinal paradox. In order to establish a canonical morality and bioethics, one needs a canonical perspective, not just one moral perspective among a plurality of moral perspectives. A canonical secular view of human flourishing and of proper human conduct cannot adequately be envisaged without reference to God. This is not a religious point, but a philosophical one with broad bioethical implications. One needs a definitive moral perspective, not just one among a multiplicity of webs of moral intuitions affirmed by a particular moral narrative floating within the horizon of the finite and the immanent. One needs a moral perspective that is not one among a multiplicity of socio-historically constituted perspectives. A secular morality thus presupposes what it cannot have: the objectivity of a God's-eye perspective.

In the early third millennium, two books took shape. One, *Allocating Scarce Medical Resources: Roman Catholic Perspectives*³², was supported through the generous aid of a foundation that had supported the Steering Committee of the International Study Group of Bioethics of the International Federation of Catholic Universities. It subvented meetings held in Schaan, Liechtenstein (August 30-September 1, 1997), Houston, Texas (February 7-10 and October 24-27, 1998), and near Dublin, Ireland (13-16 May 1999). Even though I was an apostate from Roman Catholicism, the foundation nevertheless generously subvented this major research project in bioethics, because I was willing to endorse traditional Christian

morality and to recognize that Christ had risen from the dead. By the time the book was published, my co-editor had converted as well. This foundation also supported my role in establishing the Southeast Asian Center for Bioethics, University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines (site visits March 22-27, 1987, and August 8-20, 1989, with contact continuing until October, 1993), also enabling me to conduct intensive courses for Roman Catholic scholars from the Philippines, India, Indonesia, Brazil, and Europe (May 10-29, 1987, May 29-June 5, 1990, July 29-August 9, 1991, and May 17-28, 1993). The foundation's generous help remained strong for my work for a number of years before and after my conversion. Among other things, these contacts allowed me to have a better appreciation of the difficulties besetting Roman Catholicism. Orthodox Jewish colleagues, who participated in some of the conferences, were both amazed and disheartened by what they encountered. At one meeting in Barcelona in the early 1990s, a Jewish scholar began to groan. The organizers asked if he were all right. He said he was, but they were not, and that they should take some minimal advice from a grandson of the Pharisees, namely: Do not throw away all God's commands! The meetings also confirmed through the international scholars who participated that bioethics is intractably plural³³.

The second volume, *Global Bioethics: The Collapse of Consensus*³⁴, explicitly examined the possibility of a universal morality. It took shape with the aid and support of Liberty Fund, drawing participants from America, Europe, and the Pacific Rim, for meetings held in Houston, Texas (October 2001), Palermo, Sicily (January 2003), and near Dublin, Ireland (June 2004). The discussions at the meeting in Sicily were especially fruitful, laying bare the limits of the moral-philosophical project. Italy thus again played an important role. So did an Italian Brazilian, Fr. Leo Pessini, who by securing a Portuguese translation of *Global Bioethics*³⁵ led to my further encounters in Brazil and Portugal with the collapse of the façade of a global morality and the possibilities for a global bioethics. All over, there were premonitions of a coming cultural earthquake. After the publication of *The*

o. Moral friends are persons who share sufficient basic moral premises and understandings of what counts as moral evidence, and/or a common understanding of who is in authority to resolve moral disputes, so that all substantive moral disagreements can in principle be brought to closure.

*Foundations of Christian Bioethics*⁷ and Iltis and Cherry's study of this work²⁸ in Romanian^{30,36}, with subsequent honorary doctorates from the University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Gr. T. Popa" in Iasi on November 9, 2005, and from the faculty of theology of "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia on May 6, 2011, I had come fully home to Orthodoxy, which had no illusions regarding the moral-philosophical project. These events to some extent said grace over the second edition of *The Foundations of Bioethics*⁶. I now saw bioethics from outside of the Western moral-philosophical project.

*Viaggi in Italia*⁹ asks, focusing on bioethics, whether generally recognizable moral and political authority makes sense after an acknowledgement of God's existence is lost. The volume begins to confront the consequent loss of a hoped-for foundation for bioethics, morality, and political authority in sound rational argument. From Aristotle through Kant, an appeal to a God's-eye perspective had been evoked, which promised an unconditional point of reference. In the now-dominant secular culture, all has changed and foundations are gone. Moral-philosophical reflection could not secure this unconditional point of reference. *Viaggi* addresses the core philosophical difficulties underlying the capacities, or rather incapacities, of secular moral reflection to secure foundations for its claims and the bioethics it promised. However, *Viaggi* does not sufficiently address the remarkable change in the dominant culture of the West as a result of its becoming a culture after God. The full force of the loss of ultimate meaning, of transcendent orientation, still remained to be spelled out. Yet, it is this cultural novum that defines the now-dominant secular public mores, secular bioethics, public policy, law, and the state. It is the focus of this present volume.

In his preface to *Viaggi*, Maurizio Mori notes that my work is in tension with the commitments of Roman Catholicism, because it is the defender of a supposedly global ethics and bioethics secured through sound rational argument³⁷. In the late 1980s as I was about to be appointed to the Steering Committee, I was denounced for heresy by a person I knew well. He was a prominent American Roman Catholic bioethicist who did not want me to have any influence on the Steering Committee,

because he considered me (falsely) to be much more post-traditional than he. The accusations were discounted when I responded to a committee appointed to review the issue, and which had apparently been preselected to vindicate me. I explained that I understood *The Foundations of Bioethics*⁵, and my work in general, to have explored *only* that which can be known by reason unaided by grace. I presumed that my defense was accepted not because of its merits (my response was not sufficient within the framework of Roman Catholicism and Roman Catholic bioethics), but because those backing me took me to be an extreme theological liberal. They wanted me for what they held to be my liberal theological, moral-philosophical, and bioethical perspective, which they saw confirmed *inter alia* by my role as chairman for the Advisory Panel "Infertility: Medical and Social Choices" of the Office of Technology Assessment of the United States Congress (1986-1989). My supporters had mistaken my recognition of the incapacities of moral philosophy for a commitment to recast moral theology, along with traditional Roman Catholic bioethics. Of course, my position was threatening because without moral philosophy Roman Catholic moral theology and bioethics collapse.

My views of the inadequacy of moral philosophy were by no means a rebirth of the 13th-century view of the double truths of philosophy and theology, but a judgment of the inadequacy of the claims of secular reason. In defense, I pointed out that *The Foundations* stated:

The differences between the conclusions in this volume and those offered by traditional natural law theory, such as that of St. Thomas Aquinas, will lie in the limitations of reason that this volume will acknowledge. If one cannot establish through reason alone the great body of Judeo-Christian precepts, there will be, as we shall see, a sharp contrast between secular ethics and the ethics of particular moral communities that rely on special traditions or special revelations. The gulf between church and state will widen, and one will find oneself living a moral life within two complementary but distinct moral perspectives (p. 13)⁵.

My position rested on a recognition of the radical limitations of moral philosophy. In a footnote I had added:

Classically, there was a distinction made between what can be concluded by natural reason, by reason unaided by grace and revelation, and what can be known through revelation. As St. Thomas stated, "It was therefore necessary that, besides the philosophical disciplines investigated by reason, there should be a sacred doctrine by way of revelation." *Summa Theologica* I, art. 1. *The Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Anton C. Pegis (ed.), vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1945), p. 6 (p. 15)⁵.

However, Roman Catholicism does not recognize such radical limitations on moral philosophy. By the late 20th century, the Roman Catholic faith in reason had if anything become more desperate in its attempts to secure bioethics and healthcare policy positions by reason alone. My defense was no longer, and actually had never been, sufficient for Roman Catholicism. I was again denounced after a presentation in Hannover, Germany, at the Forschungsinstitut für Philosophie on the 13th of July, 1989. But by the time this came to be a problem, the matter was moot. I was on the way to becoming Orthodox.

With the appearance of the Italian translation of the first edition of *Foundations of Bioethics*^{p,11}, the distinction I offered between what could be established through philosophical reason and what theology supplies was not only not accepted, but had become provocative, even though I was no longer Roman Catholic. On this point, one should underscore again that the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics are separated *inter alia* not just by incompatible understandings of theology, indeed of reality and morality, but of the foundations of bioethics as well. The limits to moral philosophy that I described made perfect sense to the Orthodox but were repudiated by Roman Catholics. My work received a condemnation in *La Civiltà Cattolica*⁴⁴. Some Roman Catholic critics even regarded *The Foundations of Bioethics* as taking a utilitarian position, *mirabile factu*, similar to that of

Peter Singer (p. 12)³⁷. My Italian Roman Catholic critics did not realize, or if they did realize, they did not take seriously, that I had embraced what should have been characterized by them as a Christian, albeit from their perspective a heretical Christian, position. I had in fact become an apostate-not for having abandoned Christianity, but for having embraced through baptism the Christianity of the Fathers. In any event, I was surely not a utilitarian, as I had been described by Elio Cardinal Sgreccia, as well as by others^q.

For many Roman Catholics, it was hard to imagine that, while still remaining a traditional Christian, one could reject moral philosophy's project of establishing through discursive moral reasoning objective moral truths along with the Roman Catholic account of natural law, bioethics, and social justice. For them, the bond between faith and reason, which forged medieval Christianity, creating Roman Catholicism, was so strong as to fashion a life-world within which my views were impossible. Our points of reference were radically different. Their "traditional" Christianity is a Christianity born of the Western European medieval synthesis, not the Christianity of the first centuries. As a consequence, St. Basil and St. Gregory the Theologian look exotic to Roman Catholics, while Thomas Aquinas, at least until recently, was taken for granted as "current". Even dissident Roman Catholic theologians tend to employ discursive philosophy as core to their theology and surely live in a paradigm startlingly apart from Orthodox Christians. Even if the moral philosophical project has collapsed, and with it Roman Catholic moral theology and bioethics, this bad news has not yet arrived for most Roman Catholics.

As clear as yesterday, I can remember sitting with a distinguished, fairly liberal Roman Catholic theologian at Leahy's Bar in the Morris Inn at Notre Dame after having given the 1992 Clarke Lecture on March 20, "The Moral Inevitability of a Two-Tier Health Care System"⁴⁶. She was aghast at my presentation. It was not simply that she disagreed with the conclusions, and she surely did disagree, for among other things my presentation was critical of the Roman Catholic vision of social

p. The first edition of *The Foundations of Bioethics*⁷ appeared in Japanese and Italian^{11,38}. The second edition appeared in Italian³⁹, Chinese^{40,41}, Spanish⁴², and Portuguese⁴³.

q. Cardinal Sgreccia remained a strong defender of the Roman Catholic faith in reason, in particular in philosophy, which he has developed within the paradigm of personalism. His well-known *Manuale di Bioetica* has appeared in an English translation⁴⁵.

justice and bioethics. More fundamentally, the lecture was framed in terms of the failure of moral philosophy to deliver a canonical secular account of the proper allocation of medical resources, a promise noted in the medieval moral-philosophical synthesis. This seemed to her to be impossible, because moral philosophy, especially in various forms of new natural-law theory that are cut free of an experience of the transcendent God^r, had become one with Roman Catholicism⁴⁸⁻⁵⁰. To bring into question the moral-philosophical project was to bring into question the moral viewpoint Roman Catholicism had created.

Given the circumstance that moral philosophy cannot establish canonical moral norms, including canonical secular norms for justice in health care, and given that in secular moral terms the state cannot be shown to be more than a *modus vivendi*, we do not possess a canonical secular account of justice that can require a single one-tier system from which one could be morally obliged not to buy out by purchasing better basic health care⁵. When she had finally realized that I did not credit Roman Catholicism's account of natural law's or moral philosophy's supposed capacities to establish a canonical content-full moral understanding of justice in health care, in exasperation she accused me of being an atheist, not of being a fideist, but an atheist^s. Although she knew I had converted to Orthodox Christianity, for her it was inconceivable that one could be a Christian, indeed a believer, without recognizing the claims of moral philosophy that undergird Roman Catholicism. Again, this reaction is fully understandable. In 1992 we were living in entirely different life-worlds framed by radically different paradigms. I had rejected the moral-philosophical paradigm that has fashioned Roman Catholicism and been at the roots of Western Christian theology and culture for a millennium. Instead, I had embraced the paradigm within which the Christianity of the first centuries

lived and within which Orthodox Christianity still lives. I had entered a life-world that Western Christians had not enjoyed for a thousand years. Everything, including bioethics, looked different.

THE WORLD AFTER GOD

This sliver of an autobiography is meant concretely to introduce how the complex cultural transformations that resulted from the collapse of Christendom and from the recognition of the failure of the Western moral-philosophical project framed the contemporary dominant culture^t. The failure of the Western moral-philosophical project is a cultural event as momentous as the Renaissance and the Reformation. The aspiration had been to provide the modern secular state with a secular moral authority secured by reason through philosophical arguments that could be recognized by all persons as conclusive. The secular state would then enjoy a canonical moral authority, as well as a canonical account of secular constitutionalism. As Sajó asserts, "The sovereignty of a people exercising its faculty of reasoning is the essence of the constitutionalism that necessitates secularism" (p. 629)⁵³. On the basis of this claim, secular constitutionalism is seen to preclude religion from being "a political project", thus "keep[ing] religion out of the public sphere" (p. 621)⁵³. Moreover, all would be shown to be members of one, universal, rationally justified, moral community. This undertaking promised a political and canonical moral and bioethical vision of commonly justifiable values, human dignity, and human rights that could be expressed in terms recognizable as rationally binding on all. This project, not to mention the Western Christian project of grounding theology in philosophy, has proved to be without general rational justification. The full force of what has occurred has not yet been adequately appreciated. Even now, there still remain

r. It should be noted that by the 16th century it was quite clear that natural law on the one hand was supposedly embedded in natural reason and knowable without a life of right worship and right belief, while the law of God on the other hand established prohibitions such as against fornication and lying not justifiable through reason alone. See, for example, Francisco de Vitoria (1492-1546), Relection of the distinguished master Friar Francisco de Vitoria *On Dietary Laws* delivered in Salamanca, A.D. 1537: On Self-Restraint, Second Conclusion (p. 221)⁴⁷.

s. Orthodox Christians understood my position not as fideist, but as grounded in the non-sensible, empirical, noetic knowledge of Orthodox Christianity.

t. The term "Western moral-philosophical project" is used in realization of the complexity and heterogeneity of Western moral philosophy and its multiple agendas. The term "Western moral-philosophical project" is nevertheless engaged to identify a major intellectual undertaking that emerged in Athens in the 5th century before Christ and that in different ways was embraced anew in the West in the second millennium. The project of justifying morality sought to anchor morality and political authority in being and/or reason through philosophical arguments, including importantly natural-law arguments articulated without any root in an experience of the transcendent God. One might think of new natural-law theory as a prime example^{48,49,51,52}. This project has failed.

powerful but unfounded philosophical expectations regarding the existence of a generally secularly justifiable morality, bioethics, and political authority that persist as remnants from the *via antiqua* of the Western Christian Middle Ages^u.

Intellectually, the break from Christendom and from an orientation toward God had been affirmed with the Enlightenment, yet the illusion that moral philosophy can deliver on its promises of a canonical morality and bioethics after God still lingers on. Enough cultural residue remains from Western Christendom and the Enlightenment so that many people, bioethicists included, do not yet see how starkly different life is once it is lived after God, after metaphysics, and after foundations. The demoralization and deflation of morality and bioethics, as well as the delegitimization of political authority deprived of a God's-eye perspective, are only beginning adequately to be recognized. This volume explores the collapse of the moral-philosophical illusion and its consequences for bioethics. Most significant is the severance of morality, bioethics, and state authority from any hint of ultimate meaning. Because the contemporary dominant secular culture is after God, secular moral reflection must approach everything as if it came from nowhere, were going nowhere, and for no ultimate purpose. The point is not simply that in a godless universe there is no necessary retribution for immense, unrepented-for acts of evil. More fundamentally, all is in the end ultimately meaningless. At various levels, many already appreciate some of the implications

of the absence of foundations for the now-dominant secular culture. As Judd Owen observes^v:

Today, belief in the comprehensive philosophic teaching of the Enlightenment appears to lie in ruins, and few hope that any other comprehensive philosophy could successfully replace it. This despair is, to a considerable extent, due to a radical critique of reason as such (p. 1)⁵⁴.

The full and consummate force of this surdness is still adequately to be gauged and acknowledged. This volume takes a step in that direction. It explores the geography and implications of this quite new moral, bioethical, and political terrain in all its God-forsakenness.

Even though Christendom has fallen and lies in ruins, Christianity still has its partisans living in its rubble, struggling to maintain the integrity of Christian subcultures. They are loyal to norms embedded in the will of God. In the ruins of Christendom, traditional Christians will continue to wage cultural guerilla wars of resistance against the unfounded claims, the majority of which are unfounded moral-philosophical claims, of the dominant secular culture and of the secular fundamentalist states that this secular culture supports^{56,57}. The issues of bioethics are central to the battles in these culture wars⁵⁸. The chapters that follow explore the character, significance, force, and implications for morality and bioethics of the now-dominant culture that is "after God" and "after foundations". They explore our contemporary post-Christian culture.

u. In this volume, reference is made to both the *via moderna* and the *via antiqua*. In the 14th century, the *via antiqua* identified the Scholasticism of Thomas Aquinas and his followers and was characterized by a confidence that philosophy could by reason justify the core of the moral life. Because Aquinas was a Dominican, the *via antiqua* became associated with the Dominicans. In the 14th century, the term *via moderna* was used to identify a train of thought that has roots in Duns Scotus (ca. 1266-1308) and took full form with William of Ockham (ca. 1287-1347), and which was critical of the views of Thomas Aquinas. Because Scotus and Ockham were Franciscans, this approach to philosophy was associated with the Franciscans.

v. Judd Owen provides a masterful overview of the consequences of the loss of foundations for contemporary culture with a special focus on the work of Stanley Fish and Richard Rorty. Owen himself embraces a form of liberalism.

The principle of religious freedom aims to provide an unparalleled liberty to seek out and discover the truth for oneself in the needed conversation with the contending parties. The true religion is one's own only when it is embraced in full awareness of its truth. And liberalism is ennobled when the human capacity thus to embrace the truth is affirmed. At the core of the freedom to seek out the truth for oneself is a recognition that human dignity is seated ultimately in the dignity of the mind (p. 172)⁵⁴.

Owen with apparent approval quotes Thomas Jefferson's prophecy in a letter to Benjamin Waterhouse dated 26 June 1822: "I trust that there is not a young man now living in the United States who will not die a Unitarian" (p. 170)⁵⁵, (p. 83)⁵⁶. As Pangle summarizes, "Jefferson goes on to indicate doubts, however, as to whether any core of religious truth can be discovered. He speaks as if there is nothing but irresolvable diversity of opinion in religious matters" (p. 82)⁵⁴. Owen himself observes: It is tempting to dismiss Jefferson's predictions about the spread of Unitarianism as manifest folly. Unitarianism remains a tiny sect. Transformation, however, is not quite the same as conversion. In assessing Jefferson's prediction, therefore, it is necessary to take a somewhat broader view of Unitarianism. Unitarianism places little importance on doctrine, creed, and theology, and a very high importance on toleration. By that standard most Presbyterians and Methodists, for example, are much closer to the Unitarians of Jefferson's day than to the Presbyterians and Methodists of Jefferson's day. Ask a typical Methodist what the important doctrinal differences are between him and a Presbyterian that lead him to profess Methodism, and he will likely have very little to say. It seems that Jefferson's scheme has largely, if not entirely, succeeded (p. 197)⁵³.

Owen appears to join Jefferson in approving of this transformation of mainline Christianity.

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Recebido em: 25 de fevereiro de 2014
Aprovado em: 14 de março de 2014