THE ATHANASIAN

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Gun Control: The Coming Showdown

John Kenneth Weiskittel

What a difference a year makes. During last year's presidential campaign, the National Rifle Association (NRA) aided its member, Republican George Bush, in his quest for the White House by noting how Democratic challenger Michael Dukakis had advocated that only the police and military should be permitted to keep firearms. (Dukakis denied having said: "I do not believe in people owning guns, only the police and military.") But now, less than a year later, President Bush has moved to call for a ban on the importation of certain semiautomatic rifles, leading some in the NRA to demand his expulsion.

The latest debate over gun sales and ownership was set off last January when a deranged welder killed five schoolchildren and wounded 30 other adults and children in Stockton, California, with a Chinese-made AK-47 rifle. Gun control advocates in the liberal mass media exploited the shock felt by the nation to push for greater restrictions on what were misleadingly labeled "assault rifles." This cause was then championed by their Congressional allies, including Senator Howard Metzenbaum (D-OH), who introduced a bill that would ban the sale of almost all semiautomatic firearms and require all who presently own such weapons to register them with the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

To many casual observers the current battle appears merely to be the most recent skirmish in a decades-long war over the interpretation of the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution. But for the 60 to 65 million gun owners in America, the overwhelming majority of whom *never* use their weapons in criminal acts, the new phase of the struggle is ominous.

The battleground centers around the estimated 200 million guns privately owned in the USA, between 60 and 65 million of which are handguns. Donald S. McAlvany, a contributing editor for *The New American* magazine, writing in his own significant publication, *The McAlvany Intelligence Advisor,* notes that, after the Stockton murders:

> ...the political left across America began to scream in well-orchestrated unison—"assault rifles are evil and barbaric" and must be banned. After a week's national media blitz on this theme, they began to substitute for the phrase "assault rifles," the phrase "semiautomatic weapons"—*which includes most of the rifles and over half of the handguns and shotguns in America.* So the second phase was to launch a cry for the banning of *all* semiautomatic firearms. (Special Report: "Gun Control: The Ominous Plunge Toward Registration and Confiscation," Spring 1989, p. 1.)

In other words, the actions of a lone lunatic is the excuse used to foist new restrictions on the rights of millions of law-abiding citizens. Their only "crime," it would appear, is *gun ownership.*

The question over the right to bear arms is one of vital importance and the current round of fighting may well be the beginning of a major push to severely limit that right. We believe that it is therefore essential that every American, regardless of whether or not he owns a gun, needs to be armed with the facts in order to see through the emotional propaganda of the anti-gun lobby.

Anti-Gun Myths

It has long been a tactic of gun control advocates—often a very effective one—to slant the issue in ways calculated to exploit the fear that many people have of firearms. Thus, the AK-47 used in the Stockton shootings becomes an "assault rifle." This is a classic example of a *half-truth*—defined by *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* as "(a) statement of part of the facts, the remaining facts being purposely suppressed."

But *isn't* the AK-47 a weapon designed for military use and, hence, accurately described as an assault rifle? Ordinarily, yes, but the suppressed fact involves the way it is modified before being sold in this country. In order for a firearm to qualify as an assault weapon it must be *selective-fire,* that is, it must be "self-loading" and able to "fire in fully automatic or semiautomatic (or, perhaps, burst fire) modes at the option of the firer." (*NRA Firearms Fact Book,* 1988 ed., pp. 290-291, 313) For the uninformed, fully automatic means bullets are fired as long as the finger remains on the trigger while semiautomatic means there is only one shot for each pull of the trigger. "According to the U.S. Defense Department," writes McAlvany, "'assault rifles' are by definition *'fully automatic.'"* (p. 2) The key here is that the AK-47 used in the Stockton incident (as well as other imported military rifles, such as the Uzi) may only be sold in our nation after they have been altered to fire solely in the semiauto-

matic mode and cannot be used as a fully automatic without considerable retooling. In addition, most of the hunting rifles used in the USA are semiautomatic and in no way can be seriously thought to be assault rifles.

One of the persistent myths regarding guns is the claim that communities will lower their crime rates by merely adopting stringent gun control laws. This sounds good in theory but it isn't backed up by statistical evidence. In the *NRA Firearms Fact Book* we read:

> Gun laws have not reduced violent crime or slowed its rate of growth in any city, state or nation, compared to similar jurisdictions without such laws. With "tough" gun laws, enforced with federal aid, violent crime increased faster in Massachusetts than in the rest of the nation (43% vs. 35%, 1974-1986). Washington, D.C.'s rose over twice as fast (48% vs. 22%, 1976-1982), until adopting an NRA-backed mandatory penalty and returning to national trends. Chicago's (1982-1986) violent crime rate rose over 150%, while the national rate rose just 8%. (p. 283)

But haven't gun laws worked in other countries? Criminologists hesitate to make such simple comparisons, notes the NRA, since "(i)t is virtually impossible to draw valid conclusions without taking into account differences in the collection of crime data, and the political, cultural, racial, religious, and economic disparities among countries." (p. 285) An example of significant cultural differences may be seen in the behavior of spectators at sporting events: At American football games fan violence is almost nonexistent, while in Latin and European matches riots are not uncommon, leading to destruction of property, serious injuries and deaths. Keeping this in mind, the NRA states:

> ...England, with strict gun laws, has a low murder rate, but Northern Ireland, with a more restrictive gun ban, has a murder rate higher than the U.S.; Switzerland and Israel, with most households armed, have murder rates comparable to England and Japan—or lower.
>
> England annually has twice as many homicides with firearms as before adopting its tough laws. During a recent 10-year period (1975-1985), the handgun-related robbery rate rose over 700% in Britain, compared to a 25% drop in the U.S. (p. 286)

The fact remains that, gun laws or not, the criminal will be able to secure weapons, either stealing them or buying them on the black market. (We need only remember that the Coast Guard is able to stop but a fraction of the illegal drugs being brought into this country each day to see that shipments of firearms can just as easily be smuggled.)

Other commonly encountered deceptions often call into question the mentality of the average gun owner or whether there is even a need for private ownership of firearms in modern society. For sheer viciousness it would be difficult to top the following character profile of gun owners, found in *Under the Gun: Weapons, Crime and Violence in America* by James D. Wright (and others): "irresponsible, nervous, potentially dangerous, prone to accidental or careless firearms handling, or as using their firearms to bolster sagging masculine self-images...a demented and bloodthirsty lot." (Cited, Franklin E. Zimring and Gordon Hawkins, *The Citizen's Guide to Gun Control*, Macmillan, 1987, p. 76.) Then there is the claim that gun ownership is a vestige of bygone frontier days; "rugged individualism" may have been a virtue then, but it is said to have no place in the Space Age. If so, perhaps someone should so inform those who live in America's urban jungles where rape, murder, armed robbery and other violent crimes are as commonplace as smog and traffic jams. But, our liberal friends remind us, that is why we pay for police departments with their high-tech crime fighting equipment—let *them* deal with law breakers.

This sounds good, of course, and is perfectly reasonable as far as it goes, but there are many crisis situations that take place too suddenly for the police to respond in time. In such moments, the ability to defend one's self is all that separates the victim from the *near* victim. And acts of self-defense in which a gun is used are far more common than might be thought. McAlvany writes:

> According to respected Florida State University criminologist Gary Kleck, in a scholarly article in the February 1988 issue of *SOCIAL PROBLEMS*: *"Personal defense with firearms in America occurs more than 2,000 times per day."* He estimates that "there are 645,000 defensive uses of handguns against criminals per year (excluding police and military uses.)" Kleck concludes: "Civilian ownership and use of guns has a deterrent and social control effect on violent crime and burglary." (p. 2)

As confirmation of Kleck's position, the NRA's monthly magazine, *American Rifleman*, regularly carries a column, "The Armed Citizen," which is a digest of news briefs from around the country that report instances in which rank-and-file Americans are able to foil crimes by the use or, in some cases, the mere presence of a firearm.

The Second Amendment Is Under Attack

"A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state," reads the Second Amendment to the Constitution, "the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." This basic right has, for the better part of our nation's history, gone largely unchallenged but, in 1983, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a Federal Appeals Court ruling that upheld the constitutionality of a 1981 ordinance of Morton Grove, Illinois, banning handguns.

As with so many issues today, the bottom line in the Morton Grove affair is how the Constitution is interpreted or misinterpreted. By siding with the lower court decision, the Supreme Court has set a very dangerous precedent because it makes the Second Amendment a "collective right" rather than an individual one. The ramifications that may ensue un-

less such a ruling is overturned are staggering to contemplate. Zimring and Hawkins, two gun control advocates, observe:

> ...One can argue that courts should regard the right to bear arms as individual rather than collective, and that particular types of firearms should be the subject of individual rights. But challenges to laws like that of Morton Grove can succeed only if the courts change their minds. A ban on civilian handgun ownership seems unconnected to the continued efficacy of a well-regulated militia. Even a general restriction on civilian gun ownership might not contravene the terms of the Second Amendment. (p. 146)

In other words, such a reading of the Constitution has the potential to allow a *total* ban on the private ownership of *any* firearms in America.

Does the "collective right" theory of the Second Amendment hold water? Only, we suggest, if one chooses to ignore the intentions of the Founding Fathers and better than two centuries of American freedom. If we are to be perfectly accurate, we should say that the amendment addresses both individual *and* collective rights, since the concept of militia involves citizens joining together for the common defense of the country.

Two terms referred to in the Second Amendment, essential to an accurate interpretation of its intent, are "militia" and "the people." A militia is comprised of ordinary citizens who are organized into fighting units in time of national emergency and who then disband and resume their everyday lives after the crisis has passed. In the U.S. today we have official militia in the form of the National Guard and the armed forces reserve troops but, in the broader sense, every able-bodied American may justly be said to make up the militia as well. Contrary to what the liberals argue, it is certain that the Constitution's framers had in mind the latter sense of the terms. The National Guard did not come into existence until the twentieth century. Conservative researcher William H. McAlvany writes:

> The Bill of Rights was modeled after the Virginia Declaration of Rights. The author of the Declaration, George Mason of Virginia, conceived of the militia, referred to in the Second Amendment, as consisting of "the whole population of the people except a few public officials." (*The ACLU on Trial,* Arlington House, 1976, p. 233n.)

This view of the militia was shared by Richard Henry Lee, signatory of the Declaration of Independence and cousin of Robert E. Lee's father, who wrote: "To preserve liberty it is essential that the *whole body* of the people *always possess arms, and be taught alike, especially when young, how to use them."* (Cited, McAlvany, p. 1, emphasis added)

As for "the people," the gun control lobby would have us believe that the Founding Fathers really meant to say "the state." The 1989 NRA *Firearms Fact Card* refutes this, stating:

> The phrase "the right of the people" occurs in the 1st and 4th Amendments in the same way as in the Second Amendment. To claim "the people" in the Second Amendment means only "the state" would, by the same reasoning, eliminate the individual liberties of "the people" peaceably to assemble and to be free from unreasonable searches and seizure. (The NRA card can be found as an insert to the April 1989 issue of *American Rifleman.*)

Final proof of the individual character of the Second Amendment is evident in the following remark from John Adams: "Arms in the hands of the citizens may be used at *individual discretion* for the defense of the country, the overthrow of tyranny , or *private* self-defense." (Cited, McAlvany, p. 1, emphasis added)

Firearms and Freedom

Of all the freedoms we enjoy in America, the right to keep and bear arms is surely one of the most vital. For if this right is ever taken from us, it is certain that the others will fall as well.

That this is true is evident from the fact that the totalitarian regimes have made a point of disarming the people as soon as possible after seizing power. *Newsweek* notes:

> Some gun owners see their weapons as foils against government tyranny. "I never gave any thought to owning an AK-47, but I do now because of what those nuts in Washington are doing," says George Grahovac of Springfield, Ohio. Grahovac cannot help remembering his adolescence in Yugoslavia when, he says, Nazis massacred his relatives after confiscating all private weapons. (Donald Baer with others, "Guns," May 8, 1989, p. 22)

The consequences of an unarmed citizenry were tragically demonstrated when, in early June, thousands of peaceful protestors were slaughtered by the Red Chinese army in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. One man who escaped the bloody repression, educator Wen Bin Chen, told *The New American:*

> There is no way to obtain guns legally or even illegally in China. The government can kill you for having a gun. When the army started shooting at us, we wished we had guns. But we fought back with whatever we had: bricks, bottles, sticks, bare hands. ("Ten Million People Know the Truth," July 31, 1989, p. 17)

Chinese Communist Mao Tse Tung knew well this truth when he wrote: "Political power comes from the barrel of a gun."

Millions of Americans own guns for various uses such as self-defense, protection of property, target practice. But, should there ever come a time when the government attempts to seize their firearms, they will be obliged to add another use—the preservation of freedom. Donald McAlvany predicts that, if a gun grab is tried, "(b)loodshed and even a revolution could follow." (p. 4) It could well be that the day may come when, humanly speaking, all that prevents our nation from becoming a slave state is the possession and ownership of arms by the people of this nation. *We must never permit this precious right to be taken from us.* †

THE MASS

Amid all the features of greatness and grandeur that Almighty God has bestowed upon His Church, there is nothing more sublime, nothing more awesome than the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is the supreme act of man's worship of God, a spiritual treasure of inestimable worth, a supernatural drama of unsurpassed beauty. It is the heart and center of our divine Faith, the prayer par excellence of the Roman Catholic Church, the focal point around which the entire life of Christ's Mystical Body revolves, "the fountainhead of all the blessings of redemption."

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WEAK AND TIMID CATHOLICS

In our time more than ever before, the chief strength of the wicked lies in the cowardice and weakness of good men...All the strength of Satan's reign is due to the easygoing weakness of Catholics. Oh, if I might ask the divine Redeemer, as the prophet Zachary did in spirit: "What are the wounds in the midst of Thy hands?" The answer would not be doubtful: "With these was I wounded in the house of them that loved Me. I was wounded by My friends who did nothing to defend Me and who, on every occasion, made themselves the accomplices of My adversaries." And this reproach can be leveled at the weak and timid Catholics of all countries. (Pope Saint Pius X)

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POPE SAINT PIUS V

Fr. Oswald Baker (England)

Pope Saint Pius V ruled the Church (1566-72) in a period of serious turmoil. Some of the disorders afflicting the Church in his time have recurred in our own day. Saint Pius V was confronted with a demand, led by the German Emperor Maximilian II, that he relax the obligation of priestly celibacy to help conciliate the Protestant Reformers. Our saint firmly rejected the demand and insisted on the universal observance of a law so sacred.

Saint Pius V was himself one of the eminent reformer popes. He drastically reduced the crime rate in Rome, purged the city of robbers and assassins and women of ill-repute, and extirpated various other scandals and abuses. He excommunicated participants in bullfighting. He established a fund for dowries for the marriages of poor girls. He put a stop to begging in churches. He insisted on silence in churches, and definitely established the mostly silent form of Mass familiar to Catholics the world over ever since.

In the most solemn of papal documents, a Bull, Pope Saint Pius V in July, 1570, issued his famous *Quo Primum* decree on the Mass standardized by order of the Council of Trent. Saint Pius V declared in the Bull that this was the outcome of the "Decrees of the Sacred Council of Trent." Hence the title, "The Roman Missal restored according to the Decrees of the Holy Council of Trent; edited by Saint Pius V."

Saint Pius V was an exceptionally holy Pope. Prayer and meditation were his delight and, from his early days as a Dominican novice, his only ambition was to excel in obedience, submission, modesty, humility, fasting, and tenderness for the poor. An English Protestant was converted after observing the affection with which Saint Pius V kissed the ulcers on the feet of one poor man.

The relationship of the saint was not so happy with the rest of Protestant England, in which he maintained a profound paternal interest. He wrote to Mary Queen of Scots in 1570 to console her in prison at Fotheringay, and in the same year excommunicated Queen Elizabeth, who had then ruled England for twelve years, in which time she had done her utmost to destroy Catholicism. Acts of Parliament in 1559 made attendance at the new Protestant services obligatory by law, under penalty of heavy fines. To maintain the supremacy of the Pope incurred increasingly heavy penalties, fines, imprisonment and death. The people of England submitted to the new religion, not through hatred of Popery or through love of Protestantism, but through fear, fear of fines, imprisonment, and worse. If Popery was so dreadful a tyranny as its enemies alleged, people would not have needed to be frightened out of it by terror of the law.

England had for many centuries been a Catholic country. All its ancient traditions and customs, all its successes and glories, were bound up with its Catholicism. Protestantism was a foreign innovation in the land, a revolt against the highest religious and moral authority in the world and opposed to all the cherished associations of the people. The people naturally felt that no earthly power was justified in depriving them of their dearest and most precious heritage. That was what Queen Elizabeth was intent on doing. By her cruel persecution of her Catholic subjects and the violent suppression of their religion she drew upon herself the sentence of excommunication (February 25, 1570) pronounced by Saint Pius V. The Bull declared her subjects relieved of all religious obligations towards her. Catholics continued in civil allegiance to the queen and, far from attempting any kind of insurrection, did not commit a single disturbance of the public peace.

At no time were our Catholic forefathers of those days traitors to their country. It was fidelity to their religion, not disloyalty to their sovereign, which was the occasion of the persecution they suffered. Of all the Catholic priests who were executed on the charge of being traitors to the state (128 in Elizabeth's reign), not a single one was convicted of preaching any seditious doctrines, or holding treasonable correspondence, or having defended or even mentioned the Bull of Excommunication. The Catholics of England were patriotic and peaceful. The Pope excommunicated and deposed their queen because she was a tyrant and a persecutor of her unoffending Catholic subjects.

The following year, 1571, a league of European forces, formed at Pope Pius V's request, defeated the Turks at the famous Battle of Lepanto and saved Christendom from enslavement to Islam, a victory universally attributed to the rosary and to the Pope's prayers rather than to naval strategy.

Saint Pius V's deepest devotion was to the crucifix, which he always kissed on leaving and entering his room. One day the feet mysteriously moved away from his lips. He feared he might unwittingly have committed some offence and said a fervent prayer of contrition, but still he could not kiss the feet. It was found that they had been daubed with poison by an enemy.

Crucifix in his hands, Pope Saint Pius V died on May 1, 1572. It was before the sacred image of Jesus crucified that he had learnt the heroic constancy and perseverance that made him a saviour of the Church and of the Christian world.†

LEST WE FORGET, IT'S STILL GOD'S WORLD

Fr. Francis E. Fenton

The Athanasian is definitely not a publication for those who seek comfort and consolation in the material they read. So much of its content over the past several years has been anything but cheerful or encouraging or optimistic. Indeed, quite the contrary has been the case and, from all indications, it is likely to continue to be the case. While it certainly is not my desire to be a purveyor of doom and gloom, yet the fact is that there is simply nothing of real significance on the national or world scene which constitutes any genuine cause for joy or optimism at the present time or in the foreseeable future. The picture is an exceedingly grim one in practically every respect. Such is the stark reality, a reality which no honorable and well-informed individual can deny. (Regrettably, those who possess both qualities are forever in short supply.) Nor is any commendable purpose served in concealing or watering down the situation—and doing so would be dishonest as well. The hour is late. The enemies of God and country and freedom are taking over. Immorality is running riot. The devil is in the driver's seat. And anyone who thinks that those statements are merely the rantings of an "extremist," well, that person just doesn't know the score and should start doing his homework.

Countless and seemingly endless are the examples which can be offered to indicate how critical the situation is, some of the latest (as of this writing) having to do with the sexual escapades of a number of members of the U.S. Congress (mainly, but not exclusively, involving the House of Representatives). When one adds to that number those Congressmen who are openly pro-Communist plus the indeterminate number of others who would likely be willing to sell their souls if the price was right, it is hardly an exaggeration to say—just on that score alone—that the USA is in very bad shape indeed. While "Honorable" is merely the proper form of address to be employed in corresponding with members of Congress, to refer to the characters mentioned above as honorable is an excellent illustration of the distortion of the primary meaning of words, another being the terms "His Holiness" or "Most Holy Father" in reference to John Paul II. (For what it's worth, it appears that John Paul II meets annually in Rome with members of the Trilateral Commission, discussing no doubt—what else but?—the planned One World Order and One World Church.)

For some years now this newsletter (and for many years other publications which specialize in promulgating the truth) has been endeavoring to convey the message of the frightful, and ever increasing, immoral condition of our day as reflected in entertainment, in civil government (including treason), in the Churches, in the communications media, etc. (Indeed, one wonders how the overwhelming state of immorality and of even outright contempt for the moral law of God on the American scene today could possibly degenerate much further.) And what has been accomplished over the years by the sustained efforts of informed and dedicated individuals to alert their fellowmen to the approaching crisis and its consequences? What is there to show for it? Of course, we can always say that things would be much worse were it not for those sustained efforts. No doubt they would.

In any case, why is it that the forces for good have been unable to reverse the massive tide of immorality of all kinds which is now so very far advanced in the destruction of America? Could it be that not enough of the morally good and decent people in this country have gotten the message and consequently remain in ignorance of what is happening? Or could it be that, while enough may have gotten the message, so many of them are nonetheless content to remain passive and apathetic despite their awareness of the crisis? It is my impression that there may well be a very sizable number of individuals in this latter group, morally sound men and women who are quite knowledgeable as to the horrendous reality of the present situation but who do little or nothing beyond moaning and groaning about how bad things are. If this be true and if such people continue in their state of passivity, then they surely will be one segment of the population responsible if and when America goes down. Well, at least they will have the distinction of being among the better informed slaves in their particular Communist gulag.

Just as millions of "Catholics" still think that the Conciliar Church to which they belong is the Roman Catholic Church, so do multitudes of Americans think that the USA is being run by Americans. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those in key positions of power and influence in the American government today and the powers that be above them are hell-bent on destroying the sovereignty of this country and of merging it with Soviet Russia, this being a major step in the formation of the One World Order. The same process is occurring in the field of "ecumenism," the ultimate objective being a One World Church. And, although only a very small minority of individuals seems even remotely aware of it, this gigantic movement towards a global godless "religion" and a global tyrannical government is becoming ever more obvious as it continues to accelerate on the international scene. While the identities of the power-hungry and amoral elite (Insiders) who manipulate and control this incredible worldwide operation are unknown to the generality of people, there are three individuals presently playing major roles in the One World movement whose names are universally known: George Bush, Mikhail Gorbachev and John Paul II.

Now, in view of the fact that the forces of evil so very clearly predominate at the present time in every major area of our society, the question arises as to whether a reversal is pos-

sible. Because, ultimately, this is God's world and He is still in charge and because with Him all things are possible, the answer, of course, is: Yes, a reversal is possible. Apart from a miracle, however, this reversal (if it is not already too late) will not come about unless there is, by way of the Roman Catholic Church, a massive return to God on the part of the generality of mankind. Just as, in the words of Saint Augustine, "although God made us without us, He will not save us without us," so also in the present tragic course of human affairs, God will not intervene to turn the tide without man's cooperation. In other words, divine intervention is dependent upon man's doing his part—and what applies to the individual applies to mankind in general.

The fact that multitudes have abandoned God and His revealed truth and His moral law for a mess of pottage or, to put it another way, the fact that man has attempted to dethrone the Almighty and to usurp His place of supreme domination—this is the heart of the surpassing problems which today so gravely affect and afflict humanity. But, again, this is God's world and, unless man recognizes (while, and if, there is yet time) the supremacy of the Almighty and submits to His will and obeys His eternal law, well, the future is a very bleak one indeed. One thing's for sure, God will not be forever mocked with impunity. †

Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.

(Psalm 126, 1)

...history is cluttered with the wreckage of nations that became indifferent to God and died.

(Whittaker Chambers)

Those people who are not governed by God will be ruled by tyrants.

(William Penn)

The problem is basically theological.

(General Douglas MacArthur)

The Church is like the moon; it may wane but never be destroyed; it may be darkened but it can never disappear.

(Saint Ambrose)

The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who, in a period of moral crisis, maintain their neutrality.

(Dante)

GOD'S SCALE OF VALUES

The overwhelming majority of Americans lack any recognizable scale of values. If they can be said to have any sense or scale of values at all, it is a very twisted and distorted one indeed. Nor is any particular brilliance or insight required to arrive at that conclusion. Any reasonably intelligent person of principle cannot help but conclude likewise for the signs are everywhere. Money, sex, sports, fun—these are the things which occupy the time and attention of the typical American. Not that any of them are wrong or immoral in themselves. Money is an essential commodity of life; morally licit sex is a part of God's creative plan; sports are a legitimate form of recreation and entertainment; fun or enjoyment as such is surely not frowned upon by God. But proper and lawful and orderly use is one thing; abuse, immoderation, excess is something else again.

In this country today money and sex and sports and fun and the like—these are the overriding interests and concerns of countless Americans. Indeed, they are so preoccupied with, and absorbed in, them that these things are, in effect, gods or idols to which all else in life is subordinate. "Have fun"—that's the word, whatever be the abominable state of religion, family and country.

But in the eternal plan of God there is a divine order of priorities, a scale of values which we must observe if we would live our lives in a rational and intelligent manner. "God made us to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him in this world and to be happy with Him forever in Heaven." This one simple catechism statement says it all. God created every human being for eternal union with Him in Heaven, the Beatific Vision, to be attained by man through knowing and loving and serving God in this world. Such is the very simple principle upon which the life of each and every person must be based and upon which the only true scale of values can be established. The things of God must come before those of man; the spiritual must take precedence over the temporal and material; our lives on this earth must be ever lived with an eye on eternity.

In a word, the only kind of life that makes sense in the final analysis is that which is lived according to the plan of God and in obedience to His moral law. Any other kind of life is a mockery, a contradiction in which an individual lives according to his own rules—or according to no rules—while often enough risking the loss of his immortal soul in the process. And if, God forbid, this ultimate tragedy should befall him, what, pray tell, will all of his earthly successes and pleasures avail him? "What doth it profit a man if he gain the world and suffer the loss of his soul?" †

ANXIETY

Fr. Oswald Baker (England)

One of the fashionable psychological observations on modern man is that he has an "anxiety complex." In modern parlance a complex seems to mean a collection of memories and desires of which we are not conscious but which nevertheless affect our personality. An anxiety complex would be some unhappy memories submerged in the unconscious and producing various symptoms. Presumably, while everyone experiences some anxiety, not everyone has such a complex. Anxiety has been increased and complicated in our industrial civilization, not, perhaps, because people are "run down" but because they are "wound up." Certainly, whereas in former days men were anxious about their souls, modern anxiety is principally concerned with the body, the material. The major worries of today relate to economic security and material abundance, health, wealth, prestige and pleasure. Disproportionate emphasis on earthly enjoyment is extremely unhealthy. Our Lord warns us that all earthly concerns must be subordinated to the pursuit of our eternal destiny, Heaven. The more firmly we fix our hearts on Heaven, the less we shall experience any unhealthy anxiety. The sad truth is that we have an innate, lifelong tendency to gravitate to the animal level and, if the tendency is not resisted, it degrades us. None of us is immune from this propensity, and the safeguard or remedy is the same for all. We must deliberately and firmly control our desires, and we must look to the well-being of the soul rather than the body.

Uncontrolled desires are the cause of frustration and anxiety. The conspicuous uncontrolled desires nowadays are for money, leisure and pleasure in the pathetic belief that they are the essentials of happiness. So long as we hanker after them we shall never be satisfied. We shall continue discontented and frustrated because the nobler part of our God-given nature can never find true satisfaction in wealth and ease. Uncontrolled desires grow like weeds, stifle the spirit and induce a sense of emptiness and anxiety. To conquer anxiety does not require that we eliminate desires but that we order them aright, arranging a pyramid of values: all material things at the base, above things comes man, and at the peak is God. To be correct we live by the pattern of such a pyramid, overcoming anxiety by making all material things subject to the human, to reason, restraining the body until it is subject to the soul—and submitting our whole person to God. Once we genuinely recognise that we are made for God, we abandon the delusion that wealth can bring contentment and see the possessions and pleasures we have coveted as only trashy substitutes for Him Who alone can satisfy and calm our soul. Direct the heart toward God, and peace comes over the soul. Turn the heart from God, and frustration and anxiety set in.

The conflict between noble and ignoble desires is in our very nature by reason of original sin. Each of us is the defective object we are, not because of our parents or grandparents or great grandparents, but because of our first parents. Each of us is a possible seat of neuroses, with darkened intellect and weak will, with passions rebelling against reason, with good instincts such as sex becoming lust, hunger becoming gluttony, thirst becoming intemperance, the body being treated as more important than the soul—in short, with an inherent tendency to sin. The inclination to sin not only has a part in our discontents but is basic to all else, this resistance to the eternal laws of moral right and wrong.

Those psychiatrists, who see moral precepts not as the law of God but merely the result of historical social development, propose that old-fashioned ideas have to be given up and replaced by others more congenial to man's present state. That is the way governments think and act. Finding that traditional morals are violated on a wide scale, they change the law to suit the evil way men live—and so they sanction divorce, abortion, prostitution, unnatural vice, and the rest. This is the outcome of the illusion that difficulties are all unhealthy, comfort and pleasure being the all-important factors in life, which must be made smooth and agreeable, entailing a minimum of effort and a maximum of pleasure. Such an outlook, flatly contradicting the only safe and sane way of life, the way of the Cross, is at the root of discord in industrial and other human relations, and the cause of much anxiety and unrest.

Everyone has anxiety. Whether we experience peace of soul or discontent depends on the *kind* of anxiety we have. The broadest division is between earthly goods and the values of eternity. On the first, Our Lord admonishes us, "Be not anxious, for your heavenly Father knoweth you have need of these things." (Matthew VI:8) Peace of soul comes to those who have the right kind of anxiety, about attaining true and perfect happiness, which will be the heavenly vision and possession of God. "O bone Jesu, illumina me. O bone Jesu, confirma me." ("O good Jesus, enlighten me. O good Jesus, strengthen me.") †

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