

From the Mail

Cardinal Dulles On The Incarnation And Social Teaching

If *From the Mail* has a Christmas wish it wishes to come true, it would be that more Catholics, in this country and worldwide, open their hearts to the Church's social doctrine and work together to create a just social order, which, as we all know, is sorely lacking.

Therefore, this edition of *From the Mail* offers two timely reminders, the first occasioned by the death of Avery Cardinal Dulles, the first American Jesuit to be named a cardinal, and the first American priest to enter the College of Cardinals without being named a bishop first.

Cardinal Dulles has been widely praised, correctly, for his lucidity in explaining Catholic doctrine, and his customary lucidity was on display in a 1999 interview he gave with the Acton Institute, published in its *Religion & Liberty* journal, May-June, 1999.

Here is an excerpt:

"R&L: How do you envision the role of the Church in culture?"

"Dulles: Religion, since it concerns itself with the relationship between human beings and God, lies close to the heart of culture. Christians believe that God has manifested His truth, beauty, and goodness unsurpassably in His incarnate Son. The Church, by celebrating the memory and continued presence of Christ, attempts to form human beings in a spirit of gratitude, love, and generous service. It thereby contributes to the building of a civilization of peace and love. Without religion as an independent force, morality is turned into a tool for the forces of politics and the market; in this way, morality becomes denatured.

"R&L: What does Catholic social teaching have to say about the role and limits of the state? Why?"

"Dulles: Catholic social teaching recognizes the importance of the state for safeguarding the public order, which must be grounded in truth, justice, charity, and freedom. But the state has limited competence. It exists for the sake of serving its citizens, not for dominating over them. Subject to the eternal law of God, the state has no right to set itself up as judge over matters of truth, morality, or revealed religion. It must respect the prior rights of individuals and families, including the private ownership of property and the right of parents to choose the form of education for their children. According to the principle of subsidiarity, the state may not arrogate to itself functions that can be adequately performed by lesser bodies, including private agencies.

"R&L: What are the most pressing challenges for the Church and for Christian social teaching as we enter the next millennium?"

"Dulles: On the verge of the third millennium Christians have two major tasks. One is to assimilate the finest fruits of their own heritage, so that they know what to believe and say. The other is to communicate their vision and their values to the complex and turbulent world of our day. God has given us in Christ a Revelation of truth and holiness that is valid for all times, places, and cultures, but we have failed to share this gift with others who are spiritually starving for lack of it. Without Christ, people will never find the true meaning and purpose of life, nor will they achieve the unity and peace that God intends for the whole human family.

"Our first task is to believe, to rise to the challenge of faith. If our faith were strong and sound, we would be good witnesses to Christ and the Gospel. Our failure to evangelize is due in great part to the weakness of our faith."

Decline And Fall And Restoration

Where to start?

A few weeks ago, *FTM* was speaking with a classics scholar and asked him what stage in the long process of decline and fall of the Roman Empire is the U.S. in now. Without any reluctance, the scholar answered, "the age of Pope Gregory the Great."

That age, some *Wanderer* readers may recall, was marked by violence and the breakdown of institutions — the civil government, the economy, the military, health care — and out of that tumultuous breakdown rose the Church, led by the sixth-century Pope St. Gregory and his monks, who proposed the liturgy as the basis for social renewal, as well as the engine for the expansion of the Church.

On March 4, 1904, Pope St. Pius X marked the 13th century of Gregory's death with an encyclical *Iucunda Sane*, describing Gregory as "the honor of the Church and its glory," and it is particularly timely, *FTM* thinks, to recall this encyclical in view of so many of today's news stories, especially the Holy See's document, released two weeks ago, on bioethics, *Dignitas Personae*.

"When Gregory assumed the Supreme Pontificate," Pius X recalled, "the disorder in public affairs had reached its climax; the ancient civilization had all but disappeared and barbarism was spreading throughout the dominions of the crumbling Roman Empire. Italy, abandoned by the Emperors of Byzantium, had been left a prey of the still unsettled Lombards who roamed up and down the whole country laying waste everywhere with fire and sword and bringing desolation and death in their train. This very city, threatened from without by its enemies, tried from within by the scourges of pestilence, floods, and famine, was reduced to such a miserable plight that it had become a problem how to keep the breath of life in the citizens and in the immense multitudes who flocked hither for refuge. Here were to be found men and women of all conditions, bishops and priests carrying the sacred vessels they had saved from plunder, monks and innocent spouses of Christ who had sought safety in flight from the swords of the enemy or from the brutal insults of abandoned men. . . .

"Truly wonderful is the work he was able to effect during his reign of little more than 13 years. He was the restorer of Christian life in its entirety, stimulating the devotion of the faithful, the observance of the monks, the discipline of the clergy, the pastoral solicitude of the bishops. Most prudent father of the family of Christ that he was, he preserved and increased the patrimony of the Church, and liberally succored the impoverished people, Christian society, and individual churches, according to the necessities of each.

"Becoming truly God's Consul (Epitaph), he pushed his fruitful activity far beyond the walls of Rome, and entirely for the advantage of civilized society. He opposed energetically the unjust claims of the Byzantine Emperors; he checked the audacity and curbed the shameless avarice of the exarchs and the imperial administrators, and stood up in public as the defender of social justice. He tamed the ferocity of the Lombards, and did not hesitate to meet Agulfus at the gates of Rome in order to prevail upon him to raise the siege of the city, just as the Pontiff Leo the Great did in the case of Attila; nor did he desist in his prayers, in his gentle persuasion, in his skillful negotiation, until he saw that dreaded people settle down and adopt a more regular government; until he knew that they were won to the Catholic faith, mainly through the influence of the pious Queen Theodolinda, his daughter in Christ. Hence Gregory may justly be called the savior and liberator of Italy — his own land, as he tenderly calls her. . . .

"The constant aim of his life, as shown in all his words and works, was, therefore, this: to preserve in himself, and to stimulate in others this same lively faith and confidence, doing all the good possible at the moment in expectation of the Divine judgment.

"And this produced in him the fixed resolve to adopt for the salvation of all the abundant wealth of supernatural means given by God to His Church, such as the infallible teaching of revealed truth, and the preaching of the same teaching in the whole world, and the sacraments which have the power of infusing or increasing the life of the soul, and the grace of prayer in the name of Christ which assures heavenly protection.

"These memories, Venerable Brethren, are a source of unspeakable comfort to us. When we glance around from the walls of the Vatican we find that like Gregory, and perhaps with even more reason than he, we have grounds for fear, with so many storms gathering on every side, with so many hostile forces massed and advancing against us, and at the same time so utterly deprived are we of all human aid to ward off the former and to help us to meet the shock of the latter. . . .

"Kingdoms and empires have passed away; peoples once renowned for their history and civilization have disappeared; time and again the nations, as though overwhelmed by the weight of years, have fallen asunder; while the Church, indefectible in her essence, united by ties indissoluble with her heavenly Spouse, is here today radiant with eternal youth, strong with the same primitive vigor with which she came from the Heart of Christ dead upon the cross. Men powerful in the world have risen up against her. They have disappeared, and she remains. Philosophical systems without number, of every form and every kind, rose up against her, arrogantly vaunting themselves her masters, as though they had at last destroyed the doctrine of the Church, refuted the dogmas of her faith, proved the absurdity of her teachings. But those systems, one after another, have passed into books of history, forgotten, bankrupt; while from the Rock of Peter the light of truth shines forth as brilliantly as on the day when Jesus first kindled it on His appearance in the world, and fed it with His Divine words: 'Heaven and earth shall pass, but my words shall not pass' (*Matt. 24:35*).

"We, strengthened by this faith, firmly established on this rock, realizing to the full all the heavy duties that the Primacy imposes on us — but also all the vigor that comes to us from the Divine Will — calmly wait until all the voices be scattered to the winds that now shout around us proclaiming that the Church has gone beyond her time, that her doctrines are passed away for ever, that the day is at hand when she will be condemned either to accept the tenets of a Godless science and civilization or to disappear from human society. . . .

"Wherefore, to use the words of the Holy Pontiff, 'Turn your steps toward this unshaken rock upon which Our Savior founded the Universal Church, so that the path of him who is sincere of heart may not be lost in devious windings.' It is only the charity of the Church and union with her which 'unite what is divided, restore order where there is confusion, temper inequalities, fill up imperfections.'

"It is to be firmly held 'that nobody can rightly govern in earthly things, unless he knows how to treat divine things, and that the peace of states depends upon the universal peace of the Church.' Hence the absolute necessity of a perfect harmony between the two powers, ecclesiastical and civil, each being by the will of God called to sustain the other. For, 'power over all men was given from Heaven that those who aspire to do well may be aided, that the path to Heaven may be made broader, and that earthly sovereignty may be handmaid to heavenly sovereignty.'

"Such were the fundamental maxims which the Pontiff Gregory constantly proclaimed, and men listened to him. And thus, with princes and peoples docile to his words, the world regained true salvation, and put itself on the path of a civilization which was noble and fruitful in blessings in proportion as it was founded on the incontrovertible dictates of reason and moral discipline, and derived its force from truth divinely revealed and from the maxims of the Gospel. . . .

"Take away the principle that there is anything divine outside this visible world, and you take away all check upon unbridled passions even of the lowest and most shameful kind, and the minds that become slaves to them riot in disorders of every species. . . . You are well aware, Venerable Brethren, how truly the plague of depravity triumphs on all sides, and how the civil authority wherever it fails to have recourse to the means of help offered by the supernatural order, finds itself quite unequal to the task of checking it. Nay, authority will never be able to heal other evils as long as it forgets or denies that all power comes from God. The only check a government can command in this case is that of force; but force cannot be constantly employed, nor is it always available yet the people continue to be undermined as by a secret disease, they become discontented with everything, they proclaim the right to act as they please, they stir up rebellions, they provoke revolutions, often of extreme violence, in the state; they overthrow all rights human and divine.

"Take away God, and all respect for civil laws, all regard for even the most necessary institutions disappears; justice is scouted; the very liberty that belongs to the law of nature is trodden underfoot; and men go so far as to destroy the very structure of the family, which is the first and firmest foundation of the social structure. The result is that in these days hostile to Christ, it has become more difficult to apply the powerful remedies which the Redeemer has put into the hands of the Church in order to keep the peoples within the lines of duty. . . .

"Gregory rebukes the bishop who, through love of spiritual solitude and prayer, fails to go out into the battlefield to combat strenuously for the cause of the Lord: 'The name of bishop, which he bears, is an empty one.' And rightly so, for men's intellects are to be enlightened by continual preaching of the truth, and errors are to be efficaciously refuted by the principles of true and solid philosophy and theology, and by all the means provided by the genuine progress of historical investigation. It is still more necessary to inculcate properly on the minds of all the moral maxims taught by Jesus Christ, so that everybody may learn to conquer himself, to curb the passions of the mind, to stifle pride, to live in obedience to authority, to love justice, to show charity toward all, to temper with Christian love the bitterness of social inequalities, to detach the heart from the goods of the world, to live contented with the state in which Providence has placed us, while striving to better it by the fulfillment of our duties, to thirst after the future life in the hope of eternal reward. But, above all, is it necessary that these principles be instilled and made to penetrate into the heart, so that true and solid piety may strike root there. . . .

"And so too are all they seriously mistaken who, occupying themselves with the welfare of the people, and especially upholding the cause of the lower classes, seek to promote above all else the material well-being of the body and of life, but are utterly silent about their spiritual welfare and the very serious duties which their profession as Christians enjoins upon them. They are not ashamed to conceal sometimes, as though with a veil, certain fundamental maxims of the Gospel, for fear lest otherwise the people refuse to hear and follow them. It will certainly be the part of prudence to proceed gradually in laying down the truth, when one has to do with men completely strangers to us and completely separated from God. . . .

"And since, for our moral discipline, the Divine Redeemer proposes as our supreme model of perfection His heavenly Father, that is, the Divine goodness itself, who can fail to see the mighty impulse thence accruing to the ever-more perfect observance of the natural law inscribed in our hearts, and consequently to the greater welfare of the individual, the family, and universal society? The ferocity of the barbarians was thus transformed to gentleness, woman was freed from subjection, slavery was repressed, order was restored in the due and reciprocal independence upon one another of the various classes of society, justice was recognized, the true liberty of souls was proclaimed, and social and domestic peace assured."

The miracle of Christmas, let us never forget, is the Church.

What Do You Think?

Send your comments on any of the above items to: *From the Mail, The Wanderer*, 201 Ohio St., St. Paul, MN 55107. We would also like to know your reactions to *The Wanderer's* online edition, www.thewandererpress.com.

A Christmas Day Conversion . . .

Alfred S. Regnery: Witness To American Conservatism's Rise

By MARY CLAIRE KENDALL

Alfred S. Regnery, publisher of *The American Spectator* and son of conservative luminary Henry Regnery, has, since childhood, had a ringside seat on the epic story of American conservatism's rise.

His 2008 book, *Upstream: The Ascendance of American Conservatism*, tells this story as only he can, about which he spoke during a wide-ranging interview. And, in a marvelous bit of timing, given the election of the most liberal president in American history, Simon & Schuster Threshold Editions has just released the paperback edition.

First-term Sen. Barack Obama's election as 44th president of the United States has, of course, brought many conservatives to their knees. It was, in fact, shortly after the election of the last liberal president that Regnery, himself, had a spiritual conversion, sparked on Christmas Day 1993, which he also touched upon in our conversation.

Upstream presents, in intellectually and humanly rich detail, the myriad players and historical circumstances that coalesced, like an elaborate symphony, to achieve amazing feats including, first and foremost, the demise of Communism, symbolized by the Berlin Wall's crumbling in 1989.

"I didn't really understand the movement," said Regnery, "even though I had been so involved in it and knew so many people, until I put it all together."

Naturally, Ronald Reagan — with his eloquence and affability, impeccable timing, principled conservatism, and innate sense of right and wrong, grounded in "human dignity" — plays the starring role. That his good friend Pope John Paul II also championed "human dignity," understanding the rights of God and man fall or rise together, sheds light on their close relationship — a relationship nurtured by active letter-writing. Former Reagan aide Martin Anderson, currently writing his own book about Reagan, seen through the prism of these highly classified National Security documents, considers the Reagan-John Paul II letters "the most interesting correspondence," Regnery said.

The close Reagan-John Paul II relationship was a fitting denouement, given, as *Upstream* illuminates, the pivotal role the Catholic Church played in the demise of Communism, the cancerous spread of which was precisely what precipitated conservatism's concomitant rapid growth.

In encyclicals dating back to the 1840s, the Church, writes Regnery, "had, without equivocation, stated that Marxism and secularism were 'the great enemy of Catholicism, the ultimate expression of man's revolt against God, the Church and civilization.'" Furthermore, "Wherever Communism had come to power it had persecuted and tortured Catholics."

The Church responded by launching "a worldwide anti-Communist campaign" exemplified by successful Knights of Columbus efforts to add "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954, and to have the new phrase "In God We Trust" engraved on United States currency starting in 1957. Even President Dwight D. Eisenhower got into the act. "Spiritual weapons," he said, "forever will be our country's most powerful resource in peace and war."

At the same time, writes Regnery, American conservatism was gradually starting to emerge in small pockets of academia and the media, among individuals, who, separately and quite unaware of the others' efforts, were challenging Communism's assault on individual liberty.

Many of the books and periodicals that established conservatism's intellectual foundation were published by Chicago-based Henry Regnery Company (later Regnery Publishing), founded by Regnery's father in 1947, three years after he started publishing *Human Events*, Reagan's favorite.

One of Regnery's first titles, *Blueprint for World Conquest*, edited by William Henry Chamberlain, was a "compilation of documents that set forth the international aims of Soviet Communism," which *had never before* been published in America.

Then there was *New York Times* bestseller, *God and Man at Yale*, by William F. Buckley Jr., published in 1951, putting the liberal establishment on notice that their elite perch of unquestioned intellectual and cultural pre-eminence was about to be challenged — and how!

The charming Buckley was a frequent guest of the Regnerys as he began to launch his own publishing career, the purpose of which he famously summed up in the first issue of *National Review* in November 1955 — "Standing athwart history, yelling Stop."

Buckley captured the imagination of eight-year-old Al when he tickled the ivories one night with a jazzed-up version of *Three Blind Mice*, a delightful change from the family's usual classical fare.

"Without Buckley," Regnery writes, "the conservative movement, had it existed at all, would have taken on a far less sophisticated face, and would have been far less effective."

The Richness Of The Faith

Buckley, like so many of Henry Regnery's friends, was Catholic, which makes perfect sense since his father, Regnery said, was an Episcopalian, who "always wanted to be a Catholic." (His grandfather did, in fact, convert.) Not surprisingly, Henry Regnery published many Catholic authors including Paul Claudel, Edith Stein, and most important, German-Italian theologian Romano Guardini, who was close to the family.

Of his own conversion, Regnery said, it was "a long process" starting as a child when he accompanied his grandfather to Mass, which "made a distinct impression." (His mother, by contrast, was Quaker and "Quakers are not baptized.") Later, while in boarding school at age 15 "in a very Catholic part of Germany," he said, "I first recognized the vast influence the Church had on Western civilization." In the mid-

1980s, Regnery read Guardini's book *The Lord*, published by his father, which "was a big influence and still is."

But it was on Christmas Day, 1993, while reading Regnery Publishing's *Solzhenitsyn in the Modern World* by Ed Ericson, that his desire for God was catalyzed. Regnery relates the particular piece he was reading was "about Solzhenitsyn's childhood in Russia in a small town during the pogroms after World War I. And, he recounted someone saying, 'Why are all these terrible things happening to us?' And, an old man in town said, 'It's because you've forgotten God.'"

Regnery was baptized in the Episcopalian Church. But, Anglicanism left him wanting, so he started to seek out a more "rigorous" spirituality to bring him closer to "The Lord." Then John Haas, his good friend from Philadelphia, introduced him to Fr. C. John McCloskey (a/k/a "convert maker") and his quest was complete. "He got his claws into me," Regnery quipped.

Years and many retreats later, absorbing the richness of the faith under McCloskey's guidance, he was admitted, in August 2001, into the Catholic Church.

Many challenges, Regnery noted, remain for the conservative movement. "Liberals," he said "tend to think of politics as the answer to everything. 'Elect us and it will all be fine.' Conservatives deal in the long term and, other than politics, they're concerned about the preservation of Western civilization, the culture, the American ideal, the Constitution. And, they're in it for the long haul."

Prescient words for this new, hopefully short-lived, liberal era!

The Coming Of Our Prince

By FRANK MORRIS

Tecum principatus die ortus tui in splendore sanctitatis: ante luciferum, tamque rorum genui te — Psalm 109, translation by the Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1945.

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From birth princely state shall be thine, holy and glorious; thou art my son, born like dew before the day-star rises — translation by Ronald Knox, 1947.

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Our Prince comes this night,
Haloed in light unseen since death
Shrouded it in Eden. How bright
The stable, outshining thronerooms
Of monarchs at war with day's ending,
Calling for more lamps and torches
So that their glory not gutter out,
Their scepters' gleam unseen. This light
Gracing Mother and Child rises from
Eternal burning of triune-Personed
Inextinguishable and divine Galax.

Our Prince is heard this night, voice stilled
Since Adam's Creator forsook Eden,
Echoing dreadfully a curse that crushed
Satan to the ground, with promise of defeat
And shame by One to come. Now royal voice
Is divine Babe's mewling, telling shepherds,
Astronomers, rulers of restless hours that
The One come now is one of us, taking
Flesh, bone, blood and all from Maiden,
Child of Eve, but sinless and innocent,
Kept free of Serpent's purpose to nurse
And prosper the infant Rescuer of human fate.

Night of marvels — angelic choristers
Inviting shepherds to royal rendezvous
Wandering comet summoning seekers, stars
Dancing as brilliant diadems, all heralding
Divine victory in man's behalf. Most marvelous,
That triumph in our race's name won by Prince
In rude swaddling, unarmed putting once proud chieftain
Of Archangels to rout, and offering peace beyond purchase
By enlistment in kingdom kept waiting to be opened
When obedience replaced arrogant infidelity.

In Bethlehem, tonight a holy family makes glorious
Submission: God puts aside Eden's tragedy,
That peace can be our gift beyond merit or mind,
Held out to us in tiny Prince's blessed hands.

PRACTICE THE DEVOTION OF THE FIRST SATURDAYS AS REQUESTED BY OUR LADY OF FATIMA

On December 10, 1925, Our Lady appeared to Sister Lucia (seer of Fatima) and spoke these words: "Announce in my name that I promise to assist at the hour of death with the graces necessary for the salvation of their souls, all those who on the first Saturday of five consecutive months shall:

1. Go to confession; 2. Receive Holy Communion; 3. Recite the Rosary (5 decades); and 4. Keep me company for 15 minutes while meditating on the 15 mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to me."

In a spirit of reparation, the above conditions are each to be preceded by the words: "In reparation for the offenses committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

Confessions may be made during 8 days before or after the first Saturday, and Holy Communion may be received at either the morning or evening Mass on the first Saturday.