

**EXPERIENCES FROM FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS:
TEACHING ABOUT FAMILY AND POLITICS
AT A SECULAR UNIVERSITY**

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As a professor in a secular university for forty years, my teaching responsibility has been to teach students of political science as well as I could. Mere worldly success depends on doing that, as well as on being a successful scholar, as the profession and ones colleagues define successful. As a Christian, one's salvation depends partly on how conscientiously one fulfills these worldly responsibilities to others. "Thou shalt not steal" and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself:" It is obviously a challenge to try to sanctify one's daily professional work but it is not impossible. The following is a record of how one man has attempted to do that in the admittedly unpromising environment of a secular university. Perhaps these experiences and reflections on them may be useful for others who are considering an academic career.

I Introduction: A Story

Some 35 years ago, I team taught a University Honors class with a Marxist Labor Historian on "History of Socialist Thought." That class gave us a mutual acquaintance, a certain discovered common intellectual interest, and at least some degree of what one might call good fellow feeling.

Around that same time, his daughter took an undergraduate political philosophy class with me. I did not then see her for some years. Then she reappeared and took two or three more classes. I learned from another source that, in the time I did not see her, she had fallen into bad company and bad behavior, including trouble with the law.

One day, her dad stopped me when we met while walking across campus. He spoke to this effect. "Gary, I do not know what you do in your political philosophy classes, but they have saved my daughter's life. I want you to know that and to express my gratitude."

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As is common in my teaching experience, it was not clear to me what it was that had such a salutary effect. I teach history of political philosophy from almost only pagan books. But it was a theme in all my classes that relativism is 1) theoretically incoherent, 2) the root of what I called “the crisis of our time” which meant among other things that democracy could not be rationally preferred to Nazi or Soviet tyranny; that the life of a Martin Luther King was not rationally superior to that of pimps or prostitutes; that a student’s decision to go to college and pursue an education was not rationally better than their friends whose vision of life did not exceed being couch potatoes. The purpose of making the critique of relativism central to each class, was to try to get students to see that they could not be satisfied with the relativism they inhaled with the air they breath growing up in a late democracy. Perhaps that saved my colleague’s daughter.

The pagan books which constitute most of the history of political philosophy take seriously [at least until late modernity (Nietzsche and Heidegger)], the idea that reason is able to grasp a moral reality which is given *to* us not created *by* us, and which exists outside and independent of, our minds. Classical political philosophy discovered that contemplating that reality can give us an understanding of what is right and wrong by nature. In particular, the classics discovered (apparently entirely apart from Biblical Revelation) that our passions are tyrannical and enslave the higher parts of our souls, unless they are tamed *and* bridled by reason, allied both with customary restraints, and with spiritedness manifested as courage and self-discipline. Exposing students to classical political philosophy teaches them, by reason alone, that tyranny and injustice exist as much in the city in their own souls as it does in the city external to their souls. Their personal and generational experience with unbridled use of hallucinogenic drugs and alcohol vividly gives reality to this classical understanding. Perhaps it was Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and their later echoes in this tradition of political philosophic inquiry, notably Burke, who had rescued my colleague’s daughter.

It is the experience of some Church fathers, and my own, that taking this classical teaching seriously lifts the soul out of absorption with oneself and at least make it plausible that what is good or bad for human life here and now has a relation to reality everywhere and always. Something like this experience was a theme of *Fides et Ratio* where Pope John Paul II spoke of “reason’s drive to attain goals which render people’s lives more worthy.” While reason is neither revelation nor theology, John Paul II teaches that, at least under the circumstances of the late modern world and perhaps in principle, reason and Revelation

stand or fall together. He explicitly draws the inference that it therefore becomes the duty of people of faith to defend reason since “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.” (*FR, preamble*). [In this statement I hear the echo of Augustine’s remark that the Platonists, though they did not know our Revelation, yet had seen God.]

The providential threads in this story of my unbelieving colleague’s daughter do not end with his gratitude at the effect of my making those mostly pagan books accessible to her. Many years later, this man became an academic officer of the University. While he held that position, I was invited to present a paper at a conference a friend was organizing at the University of Memphis on “Christians in the Academy.” At the time, I had an especially fine group of University Honors students who had been instrumental in establishing an ongoing seminar which had become one of the most rewarding teaching experiences of my career. That seminar included the first offering of two classes relevant to my topic of marriage and family. One was “Politics and the Family” and the other “Courting, Marrying, and Politics.” This group was going to be graduating shortly and I thought a Memphis field trip would be a suitable “thank you” to them for having encouraged the creation of this seminar. But I needed funds so I approached my Marxist colleague, now the high academic officer, who generously provided them. In fact, I had to go back a bit later and request additional funding, which he provided, with the laughing comment to the effect of “Should I be spending state money to send students to a conference on Christianity?” I responded, knowing of his admiration for Dr. Martin Luther King, “of course you should because our visit will include visiting the National Civil Rights Museum” located in the motel where King had been killed. And then, knowing of his love for jazz, I smiled and added: “and also Beale Street and B.B. King’s restaurant.”

Now here is the rest of the story. The keynote speaker at this conference was Jay Budziszewski, a professor of political philosophy at the University of Texas. Jay was an Episcopalian but his study of natural law had already made him a thoughtful, articulate and courageous defender of family and life issues on our side of the culture wars. He has since converted to Catholicism. Professor Budziszewski gave a persuasive talk on the “philosophy of the body,” the point of which was that, if we listen to and reflect on the structure and functioning of our bodies, we will understand both *that* and *why* abortion is hostile to it and why the body is hostile to abortion. Afterwards, he joined the students and me for conversation over lunch; he generously spent two hours, interacting with the students in the best tradition of serious philosophic

question and answer. The students responded splendidly. My gratitude at the time included the perhaps prideful fact that it is rare that one's students represent a teacher so well to a colleague. Later there was better reason to be even more grateful.

A couple of weeks after our return to DeKalb, my office phone rang late one afternoon. It was one of the women who had made the Memphis trip. "Dr. Glenn," she asked, "are you going to be in your office for awhile, I need to talk." When she arrived, the conversation proceeded along these lines. "I am pregnant and I need advice." "Okay", I replied, "I am glad you have come. Where shall we start?" She said "Well, you don't need to worry about abortion. That is not an option for me." I replied, "Good, but may I ask why?" "Well," she said, after listening to Professor Budziszewski, I do not see how anyone could consider having an abortion."

Today her child, that child, is in grade school. In addition, a few years after this conversation, she married another long-time student. Both had studied "Family and Politics" and "Courting, Marrying and Politics" with me. Both of them have since, and together, found their way back to the Catholic faith in which both had been raised but from which they had fallen away. So her child has both life and a caring and conscientious dad, as well.

In summary, she found him, they found each other, and together they found their way back home. Not all the seed falls on hard ground, does it?

Notice the chain of providential grace in these events which no merely human wisdom, and no overt proselytizing, could have aimed at. I team-taught a class in the early 1970's with a non-believing colleague, whose daughter later benefited from my classes to what her dad reported was a life saving degree. Whether from gratitude, or friendship or simply professional respect, he later made it possible for me to take some students to a conference on Christianity in the secular academy. One of those students (unknown to me but known to Him) needed to hear Budziszewski's message. As a result of which her baby lived. And the rest.

I began with this story partly to share my experience that there is some hope even in the increasingly secular universities. That seems to me worth showing in order to encourage those who might be inclined to academic careers to give thought to seeing the secular university, even now and unpromising as it seems, as mission territory where bearing witness can sometimes bear fruit.

The reference to mission territory is not lightly made. The town in which my university is located is blessed currently to have five

Catholic priests in its two parishes. Two of these priests are Nigerians. I take it this reflects the reality that our country has become the kind of country to which civilized countries used to send missionaries. We are blessed that the Nigerians have come to minister to us.

II. Before the Wilderness: Officially Secular, Unofficially Protestant

My university has been transformed along the same lines as has our country. In 1966, NIU was far smaller (14,000 students) and still run by small town Methodist administrators who regarded character formation in traditional moral virtues as part of what higher education was supposed to do. Indeed, it was then cause for jocular comment among the faculty, about how many administrators attended services at the campus Wesley Foundation student center; which also happened to be where the university president attended church. To my knowledge, none of the six presidents we have had since that president retired in 1967 have attended any church, though about that I may simply be uninformed.

Reflecting the old leadership's belief in Biblical religion, the university took seriously its role "in loco parentis." Most students in practice, and all freshmen and sophomores by university regulations, lived on campus (which was a necessary condition for effective "in loco parentis"). There were "parietal hours" which may no longer be familiar language. The O.E.D. defines it as "Relating to or designating the regulations governing residence of students within a college, *esp.* those which restrict or prohibit visits from members of the opposite sex."

An important parietal was that women had to be in their dorms by midnight—a policy designed to give at least some encouragement to chastity, as well as to regular sleep time. Giving support to students developing regular habits, even regarding morally neutral matters such as sleep, was, of course, one of the traditional means of moral education of the young. Indirectly but effectively, requiring women to be in by midnight also had a salutary effect on the male students.

There was also a dress code, which aimed at inculcating modesty as well as an orderly appearance. The idea was that one had a responsibility to present oneself in a decent and orderly manner for the sake of others. This "other-regarding" code was enforced primarily in the cafeteria food lines. The women running the line did more than check ID's to be sure you were a student and entitled to be eating there; if they thought your dress inappropriate, you didn't eat until you passed inspection. There was also a Dean of Men and Dean of Women

responsible for enforcing various rules governing behavior, both academic and personal. Many of the personal behavioral rules, which were not limited to academic integrity, were to encourage concern for others.

In 40 years, the university has become a far larger place (25,000 students), with what believers in Biblical religion would regard as a naked public square; in fact, however, this description is not accurate. The public square is not lacking in religion except in the sense of theistic or Biblical religion; but in the broader sense, long insisted on by secularists, atheists, philosophers, free thinkers, and in crucial Supreme Court opinions, namely that the word religion includes non-theism, the public square is filled by the religion of secularism. The clear contrast which reveals that this is a new religion is this. The old religion utilized the university's public square to attempt to form students' character in the traditional, other-regarding and self-restraining moral virtues. The new secular religion utilizes that public square to attempt to undermine the old moral virtues and to instead inculcate, encourage, approve, and celebrate, the diversities required by the new religion.

III. Come the Wilderness: Increasingly Secular

In these circumstances, the missionary does what he can to avoid persecution by avoiding pointless, too public criticism of the new religion's hot button sensitivities and becomes willy nilly a voice in the wilderness. It helps to cultivate a missionary mentality: i.e. avoid expecting too much by way of evidence that your presence makes a difference, while being grateful for the occasional evidence that your efforts have not been fruitless. One does what one can and leaves the results to God.

Before I turn specifically to how I try to do that regarding marriage and family, let me speak generally about what a believer can try to do more broadly in an increasingly secular university.

One kind of thing I have tried to do is to teach classes where Biblical religion is not ignored. For example, I introduced and teach regularly a class titled *Religion and the Constitution*. That class studies, without proselytizing, the founding debates about religion and the Constitution's original openness to and support for public expressions of Biblical religious faith and worship and its replacement, beginning rather abruptly in the 1940's, with the new constitutional regime of public secularism. One implicit purpose of this approach is to enable religious students to come to see that their country, and especially its public schools, were taken away from them largely by the black-robed

judges of a new religion. Occasionally, on the anonymous student evaluations administered at the conclusion of this class, students say that it is one of the few classes they have taken that has actually changed their opinions. Characteristically, such students say they began the class by taking for granted the secular judicial understanding that the Constitution requires the separation of Biblical religion from public institutions.

Another example: I teach both undergraduate and graduate classes in American political thought and modern political philosophy. Those classes treat as a serious question whether one can adequately ground a decent politics, without believing in something like the political theology of the Declaration of Independence: that “all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.”

No student has ever said that I proselytize or preach. Last weekend, a local Congregational minister formerly associated with the University Honors program, told me that my students told him that I teach them how to think not what to think. That is accurate as far as it goes but it does not go far enough, as I will try to make clear below.

But without either proselytizing or preaching, there are still options about how one can skin a cat. What I do in many of my classes is challenge students—especially, but not only, those uncomfortable with the Declaration’s political theology—to articulate an alternative merely rational basis for rights other than that we are all brothers and sisters of the same heavenly father, who has given us life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. Characteristically students want to posit or assume such rights so that one can dispense with God and make ourselves owners and not merely stewards of ourselves and our rights. Part of my challenge to them is that they articulate a ground for limitations on government. If our rights are assumed, rather than gifts from the Creator, we are their owners. Why may we not then consent them away to government? What theoretical objection remains to unlimited government? These conversations sometimes enable me to help these students, both those who want to be decent and those who want only to be free from unlimited government, see that their wishes rest on and presuppose, without their knowing it, the morality of self restraint and self-denial, out of regard for both ourselves and others, which originates in the teachings of the Biblical God.

Nietzsche, undoubted atheist that he was and wicked as his teaching is in many ways, is useful in these conversations for stripping away my students’ easy-going belief that everyone should simply take for granted that all human beings have rights. Nietzsche is helpful for his

devastating criticism that the political teachings of the individualist and liberal philosophers of rights reject, explicitly or implicitly, belief in the Biblical God (he targets especially the English philosophers such as Hobbes, Locke and Mill and their progeny); but he heaps scorn on these philosophers for still wanting to keep at least the gentler side of New Testament morality. Modern liberal rights language is their rhetoric for doing that, despite that rhetoric being only a little more than an ethical sounding language for licensing universally strong desires. Nietzsche shows that, philosophically, such language is the posturing of the fatuous for the edification of the gullible. For the truth is, as Nietzsche argues, that absent the New Testament God, the New Testament morality is groundless. Modern natural rights by itself, without the aid of Biblical morality, is a dogmatism resting on relativism. And the consistent inference from relativism is not generous, humane and gentle liberalism, but the harsh and ruthless right of the big ones, without hesitation or qualms, to devour the little ones. If one hesitates or is moved by such qualms, one has not understood what follows from Nietzsche's insight that, for modern man, God is dead; and by such hesitation one has, according to Nietzsche, removed oneself from the camp of those fit to dominate under the new dispensation.

The great usefulness of Nietzsche is that he enables me to show that modern rights have no purchase against its worst enemies: namely those who prefer to dominate others as they please, rather than to respect the wishes, choices and desires of the contemptible human worms who prefer self-preservation, comfort and peace to domination over others. Modern rights language works to restrain only those who already are prepared to be restrained by their acceptance of the New Testament God and His morality; or else those who no longer believe in that God but are still influenced by the moral residue which continues to persist in the culture formed from that belief. The latter describes most of my students.

I try to show the students who are uncomfortable with the Declaration's view of human beings as creatures of the Creator, and hence as stewards rather than owners of their life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness, that 1) rationally they cannot answer Nietzsche's claim of the superior right of Nietzschean psychopaths to dominate; and 2) politically, that the alternative to universal recognition of rights granted by the Creator, is being exposed to government by psychopaths.

In these ways, I try to utilize philosophical dialectics for the purposes of what would once have been called apologetics. The purpose is not merely to teach students to think. It does do that. But in addition, by exposing them to the real consequences of their easy-going post-

Biblical relativism, it encourages them to consider that belief in the Biblical God matters to their life in this world. To this extent, the earlier characterization of my teaching, reported by my students to the Congregational minister, is not the whole story.

Plainly this apologetic does not lead anyone to faith, much less to the true faith. What it can do is show the theoretical and practical consequences of the lack of faith. In the secular university, that is not nothing.

IV. Teaching Marriage and Family

Both Tocqueville and Burke are respectable to teach in a secular university and have important teachings about family. Tocqueville famously argues that American democracy has decisively transformed the family. In America, “the family taken in its Roman sense, no longer exists.” Nevertheless, he finds the democratic family solid and permanent thanks largely to the remarkable, self-sacrificing influence of American women. The women are influenced by Christian religion. In turn they both form the mores which form the children and restrain the men. In this way, Christianity has a decisive, though indirect, effect in making American democracy possible.

There is much useful material here for reflecting on the difference between sound and unsound ideas about equality of the sexes; about the importance of male respect for all women; and about the danger which democracy holds for both.

Burke carries over into modern thought, the pre-modern ideas of family and of politics taught by 16th century Catholic philosophers, notably Suarez and Bellarmine. Against the abstract individualist natural rights and social contract theories of modern political philosophy, he argues that our rights are grounded in our natural sociality and inherited in the same way that we inherit our blood and our names. Society is not merely a contract among those now living, who owe no debt of gratitude to their ancestors and no obligations to posterity. It is therefore a mistake to believe, with Thomas Jefferson and Tom Paine, in “the sovereignty of the present generation.” That conception, derived from Locke, means that every generation is entitled as a matter of right, to reject everything inherited (including obviously the inherited religion) and begin from scratch. Against this self centeredness of the present generation, Burke argues that society is an intergenerational contract “in all arts, in every virtue and in every perfection.” And “as the ends of such a contract cannot be achieve in one generation, it is a contract between those who are living, those who are dead and those yet to be born.” No one

generation has a right either to liquidate the inheritance or to leave future generations to fend for themselves.

Burke is the first to see that the political ideas of the French Revolution were as destructive of family as understood by believers in the Biblical God, as it was destructive of rule by kings and aristocrats. But those anti-Biblical family ideas originate in John Locke's *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, Chapter 6. Locke, the acknowledged source of modern social contract theory, teaches that what had hitherto been called "marriage," under the Christian dispensation, is merely a temporary contract which need not continue after the children are raised. Of course, Locke allows that the couple may choose to consent to stay together, if they calculate that they can thereby accumulate more property. Locke signifies the enormous change which this new teaching institutes by refusing to so much as use the Christian term "marriage." Instead, he speaks of "conjugal society."

Modern (Lockean) ideas of natural rights and social contract permit both marriage and political society to be temporary or transient, as a matter of right. The least one could say is that these ideas draw us away from self-sacrificing love, and from the permanent and the eternal, in light of which Biblical believers understand these things. Burke saw that and strove to show that marriage and the conception of society as intergenerational contract stand or fall together. Hence, the structure of his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, defends the idea of society as intergenerational by comparing society to family. In doing so, he defends the inherited Biblical revelation as well as other inherited benefits. These inherited advantages are given as gifts from previous to succeeding generations. Our benefiting from these gifts entails our obligation to pass them on, improved if possible, to the next generation. Hence, both family and society rest on fidelity to promises, fulfillment of vows, and consciousness of moral obligation to others, explicit or implicit. In contrast to Lockean abstract rights, it is these promises and vows, undergirded by inherited blood, customs, and ways of life, which are the common good which holds society together.

I had long taught Tocqueville in American political thought classes and Locke and Burke in modern political philosophy courses where I was able to make, even emphasize, the above points. However, some years ago, the increasing difficulty of my students in finding marriage partners, and conversations with my marriageable age children about this problem, led me to develop two classes focused on marriage and family.

"Politics and the Family" is basically a history of political philosophy class. The focus is politics and the relation of the family to

it. Except for one book, which I will mention shortly, it has little to do with what Christians have called “marriage”.

As I was planning this class, I knew that I wanted to examine Plato’s proposal to abolish private families for the sake of achieving a perfectly just city (Book 5 of *The Republic*); and also Aristotle’s argument in Book 1 and part of Book 2 of *The Politics* that private families are foundational to politics, both for teaching children the city’s ideas of right and wrong, justice and injustice, and for teaching them to learn to be ruled. More generally, Aristotle distinguishes not one but three relationships of ruling in the family (father over children, husband over wife, master over slave) and uses them to clarify that the private family is the natural origin of political rule. The different forms of rule in the family also show that what justifies all rule, and especially political rule, is that it is for the common good of ruler and ruled. When rule does not do this, it is not *rule* but *tyranny*.

I also knew that I wanted to use Locke’s de-eroticized and temporary “conjugal society” to show what becomes of marriage and family when you begin with Locke’s individualist assumption that human beings do not by nature belong together. This is his famous doctrine of the “state of nature.”

And I knew I wanted to study Rousseau’s *Emile* both for his critique of the destructive effects of Locke and company on relations between men and women and to show how Rousseau hoped to restore, on a purely natural psychological basis, life long marriage based on erotic attachment of husband and wife.

All of these texts I had long taught. As I put together the syllabus, however, I encountered a gap in my knowledge. Rousseau’s critique of Lockeanism was a protest, but in the name of what? What book contained the model of marriage and family which Rousseau sought to restore? Since it was not Plato or Aristotle, I surmised it must be the Christians. But I did not find either Augustine or Aquinas were helpful for the purpose of a class directed mostly to non believers. I did not think it would be very attractive to them because, for Augustine, marriage seems only about remedying concupiscence. While true, that view alone is not likely to inspire anyone either to marry or to be faithful in marriage. Put another way, erotic longings for Augustine seem entirely a problem. While they are that, they can also be a basis for such fulfillment as marriage might make possible. Aquinas’ extensive discussion of marriage is similarly unhelpful. I found no joy about marriage in these giants of Christian thought.

Then Providence intervened. While struggling with this gap in my knowledge of the tradition, I attended a conference of the American

Maritain Society. I have attended that conference neither before nor since. I attended that time only because a friend, who was the President that year, invited me. I discussed this problem with some people at the conference and someone suggested St. John Chrysostom's *Homilies on Marriage and Family Life*. This turned out not only to fit the intellectual gap in the class, but also to be the best thing I have ever read on marriage by a Christian thinker. It has also turned out that the students find it exciting partly because it speaks more directly to what they care about than do the classical philosophers (they also like Rousseau for the same reason). It speaks to marriage and not simply to family. The students care about family and about politics but they do not care about family primarily for how it contributes to politics. The latter is a perspective they have to learn or be taught but it is not what excites them about the class. I learned that when I saw their reaction to Chrysostom.

So here in this secular university, in "the belly of the beast", the bookstore sells and students read this Christian theologian's presentation of a very Christian view of marriage. And nobody says a word. One might speculate that, perhaps the relativism has gotten so bad, that one can teach anything. Even the truth.

As I was teaching Politics and the Family for the first time, a book of readings was published edited by Amy and Leon Kass of the University of Chicago. Its title is *Wing to Wing, Oar to Oar: Essays on Courting and Marrying*. When I saw it, I designed another class as a follow up to Politics and the Family. This is not precisely a political philosophy class but more of a cross-disciplinary class. The book is a collection of the best writing, mostly but not entirely from the Western tradition, on love, courting, marriage, children and family (including the marriage ceremony, the vows, and topics like the marriage name). The selections are from philosophers, poets, novelists, the Bible; there are even some very fine and thought-provoking things by contemporary cultural historians, psychologists and theologians. It is the only class my students will ever take where chivalry, that peculiarly Christian blend of gentleness among ladies and ferocity on the field of battle, is presented sympathetically.

I subsequently created a class I call "Courting, Marrying and Politics." In order to make this interdisciplinary class, plausible as a "social science" class, I combined it with Francis Fukuyama's *The Great Disruption*. Fukuyama marshals data on the decline of marrying and reproduction throughout the industrialized or "first" world. The gist of the data points to Fukuyama's contention that, since the 1960's, the first world has undergone the third massive transformation in human history, after the transition from hunter/gatherer to agricultural civilization, and

from agricultural to industrial civilization. The third transformation, Fukuyama calls The Information Age. The exemplar of this new age is a person sitting at his computer terminal, communicating with people far away with whom he will never have any other relation, while he does not know the person in the next apartment or across the street. The new age undermines all geographically based social institutions, including the workplace, schools, churches, unions, etc. Most of all, it undermines long term human attachments, especially marriage and reproduction (“reproduction” is social science-ese for having children). Since the 1960’s, no first world country (including the Asian industrialized countries) has a fertility rate (TFR) sufficient to maintain a stable population. These societies are rapidly graying and will shortly begin to decline in population, unless immigration from more reproductive countries increases. One illustration: a demographic projection Fukuyama reports for Italy indicates that, unless something changes soon, in two generations 60% of Italians will have no brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, or cousins. This would be the first society anywhere not based on kinship. The consequences for friendship, emotional security, social connectedness, and quality of life in old age can only be inferred; we have no experience of such a society. The political stresses on social security and welfare state policies, which are intergenerational transfer payments, are incalculable.

As a social science phenomenon this is a remarkable and unprecedented happening. Unless something changes, and nobody knows how to bring about such a change by political means, the West is breeding itself out of existence. (I apologize for the crudity. I know that having babies is what people do while breeding is what animals do. But I thought “breeding” packs more punch in the context.) Obviously, social science is not prophecy and no reasonable social scientist can claim to know the future. Trends can change. But, unless they do, dramatically and soon, in the lifetime of my students’ children, Europe will become a Moslem continent and North America will become Hispanic. The U.S. birthrate is not as low as that of any European country. One reason: a June 2005 census bureau report noted that Hispanics accounted for half the 2.9 million U.S. population growth from 2003 to 2004.

I do not have an opinion about what will become of Japan, which does not accept immigrants. In a recent remarkable speech, an Australian Cabinet minister spoke explicitly to the question whether Australians should plan on leaving their country to the Moslems of Indonesia or to the Chinese. Both of these groups are still having children. Of the indigenous Australian Moslems, the minister remarked, in stark contrast to the European Australians, “Our Moslems love their

children.” The question of to whom Australians should leave their country was suggested to the minister by the Australian birth rate which is so low that “it is clear we no longer want our country.”

Aside from liquidating a civilization, the decline of marriage and reproduction in the industrialized countries, is a legitimizing secular hook on which to hang a class the largest focus of which is not on the political or social but on marriage and children as a “personal” matter.

V. Conclusion: A Return from Social Science to the Experience of the Wilderness

A week ago, I attended the wedding of another woman student from that same Honors seminar who had taken the first class on Family and Politics. She invited me to participate in her wedding by reading and commenting on some readings from the Kass book. The wedding was in a Congregational church. While this student is not notably religious, she has moved away from the position of indifference to religion, where she was when I first knew her. Her parents are divorced as are her new husband’s parents. I do not know him but she tells me he is not religious at all. I know nothing else about how His grace is working in her or in them. Apparently it has worked thus far to some extent, including that she wished my presence in the ceremony.

In this matter the eventual result is not given to me to know. But that is normal. One of the most important lessons I have learned from my teaching experience is that mostly a teacher does not know the results, in the lives of students, of the bread he has cast upon the waters. Teaching is, in that way, an act of faith, that at least *some* of that bread will wash up on a shore where there is someone who needs it. In the rare cases where it is given to you to know that it has come back to you (as in the story with which I began) one is of course grateful to have been a channel of His grace to even a single person; But I have also learned from experience that one is not sustained in the wilderness by those rare experiences. Learning this has taught me a special meaning for teachers, of the admonition “Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.”