

# John D. Rockefeller, 3rd, Theodore M. Hesburgh, and the Contraceptive Revolution: How the Church's Teaching Almost Got Changed

by E. Michael Jones

In June of 1970 the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., president of the University of Notre Dame, received the American Association of University Professor's Alexander Meiklejohn Award for his "outstanding contribution to the cause of academic freedom." Hesburgh was the first Catholic ever to receive the award, and the AAUP went out of its way to explain that this fact was not some fortuitous afterthought in its deliberations. Hesburgh was being rewarded for defending the integrity of the Catholic university against the predations of the Catholic Church. Hesburgh received the award because he believed that a "Catholic university must have true autonomy and academic freedom in face of authority of whatever kind, lay or clerical, external to the academic community itself." Lest there be any doubt about which authority might prove most threatening at Notre Dame, the AAUP cited Notre Dame's stance in the wake of *Humanae Vitae*, the 1968 encyclical of Pope Paul VI which labelled contraception immoral. Hesburgh was praised because "external ecclesiastical controls at some other Catholic universities have not been permitted at Notre Dame."

The sentiments were edifying if one shared the ideological view which spawned them, but they were deceptive as well. Hesburgh after all did claim to be defending the Catholic university against "authority of whatever kind, lay or clerical, to the

university itself," but in practice—and the AAUP award makes this clear—the main defense was against the meddling of the Catholic Church, specifically the curia in Rome. Hesburgh makes this fairly explicit in his autobiography, *God, Country, and Notre Dame*, where he dedicates an entire chapter to the topic of academic freedom. "In 1954," he writes, "we had a classic confrontation over the issue of academic freedom, with Notre Dame on one side and the Vatican on the other." In this confrontation, Father Hesburgh sided with the liberal American Jesuit John Courtney Murray against every liberal Catholic's favorite villain since the time of Vatican II, Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani. In this Enlightenment morality play, the forces of American light and progress triumph over the forces of Italian darkness and dogma. It's a bit like a Henry James plot as told by a less refined mind.

Reading Hesburgh's autobiography, one comes quickly to the conclusion that this American progressive vs. Roman authoritarian paradigm was not only representative; it was normative; it was exhaustive. "Authority of any kind" was Hesburgh's way of saying the Vatican. As long as he could define the struggle in those terms he would look good to everyone but people in the curia. Certainly he was looking good to the people at the AAUP in 1970. But casting the conflict in those terms tells in effect only half the story. Rome was not the only threat to academic freedom at the time, nor was it the most serious. Curious by its absence from Hesburgh's largely self-serving account of himself as a defender of academic freedom is any mention of the role which foundations played at Notre Dame at the time. One gets the impression that the only

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people who threatened academic were aging clerics like Cardinal Ottaviani or that the progressive types who staffed places like the Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations at the time were completely disinterested when it came to how their money was to be spent. Subsequent research shows that this was not the case.

In many respects, Notre Dame's attitude toward academic freedom was a one way street. It blocked traffic from Rome as a way of expediting commerce with New York and Washington, home

of the foundations and the Supreme Court respectively. Hesburgh's position looks plausible as a defense of academic freedom only when he gets to present the evidence. Notre Dame's attitude toward the showing of Martin Scorcese's film *The Last Temptation of Christ* on campus in 1989 is a good indication of this double standard in action. When a number of people, professors and students alike, claimed that the film was blasphemous and that a Catholic university had no business exposing undergraduates to scenes of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalen having sexual intercourse, Hesburgh's successor Rev. Edward Malloy, C.S.C. wrote to the effect,

"The movie, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, is but one of a wide range of films to be shown on campus this year. I am confident that those who choose to view it will have plenty of opportunity for discussion and analysis, including from a Christian perspective." The message is clear: some people might consider this sort of thing disrespectful of the person of Jesus Christ, but academic freedom prevails at Notre Dame, even when it involves highly-offensive portrayals of Christ's non-existent sex life. The undergraduates at Notre Dame duly

absorbed the message that they were to be scrupulously tolerant when it came to matters venereal, even if they involved aspersions cast on their Lord and Savior. "So what Jesus did in his private life is totally up to Him," one sophomore opined at the time.

Twenty-five years earlier, however, when Notre Dame was run by the man destined to receive the Meiklejohn Academic Freedom award the university had a different attitude toward films and censorship. In December of 1964, the University of

Notre Dame, with President Theodore M. Hesburgh co-signing as a plaintiff, filed suit in New York Supreme court seeking to enjoin Twentieth Century Fox from releasing *John Goldfarb, Please Come Home*, a film starring Shirley McLain which revolves around the complications which arise when a rich Arab purchases the Notre Dame football team. Hesburgh claimed that the film was guilty of "knowingly exploiting for private benefit the high prestige and good name of the University without consent and over its objections." Father

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Hesburgh went onto claim that distribution of the film would "cause irreparable damage" to Notre Dame.

If Father Hesburgh's willingness to haul people into court is any indication of what he holds sacred, then it is clear that the person of Jesus Christ finishes a distant second to Notre Dame's football team. It is also clear that academic freedom at Notre Dame suffered from the same double standard in its application. When it came to "au-

thority of whatever kind . . . external to the university itself" there were no enemies to the left. The only threat came from the Vatican. This may have become the conventional wisdom of academe by 1970, but it was not always so. During late 1954, a Congressional subcommittee chaired by Carroll Reece of Tennessee came to the conclusion that the tax-exempt foundations were much more than a threat to academic freedom, they were a threat to the institutions of the republic itself. "These institutions," Rene Wormser wrote in his account of the hearings,

may exert political influence, support subversion, or exhibit tendencies conflicting with our national traditions. The emergence of richly endowed juridical persons with self-perpetuating boards of directors, free from any formal responsibility for their policies and actions and growing in number and wealth, deserves the fullest attention of all who are concerned for the future of our Republic. (p. 4)

Eventually Reece and his committee were tarred with the brush of McCarthyism and the hearings were sabotaged, primarily as a result of the outrageous and disruptive behavior of Rep. Wayne Hays of Ohio, but the issue they raised were not going to go away. To give just one instance, one that particularly raised the ire of Hays, the Reece Committee looked into Rockefeller's funding of Kinsey and the deleterious social consequences that was having. The investigation eventually got shut down, mostly because of Hays, but three decades later when it had become apparent that 1) Kinsey was involved in criminal activity in doing his sex surveys and 2) that his statistics were skewed in favor of homosexual deviance, the deleterious social effects had long since become a disruptive part of the fabric of American life. The conservative guardians of the republic's institutions were all too often handicapped by a political view which saw communism as the *radix malorum*. Although it is true that Alger Hiss was in the employ of the Carnegie Foundation, communism in the main was not the issue. As Rockefeller's funding of Kinsey showed, sexual liberation was much more to the point. The ideology in vogue at the foundations was at root sexual, ultimately having more to do with the transvaluation of all values which Nietzsche proposed than with the Communist Manifesto. Its vehicle was libido, which in classical parlance meant both sexual desire and the spirit of rebellion; the cover was population control, a movement which peaked in influence during the 60s when it came up with dire predictions of famine and revolution all supposed to

happen within months of the publication of Paul Ehrlich's millennialist tract, *The Population Bomb*. The bomb, one can safely now say, never went off, but at the time population control became a convenient meeting place between Catholics who wanted acceptance and foundation money and population controllers like John D. Rockefeller, 3rd, who quite rightly saw that the Catholic Church was the major remaining obstacle to universal acceptance of contraception. Father Hesburgh, who served on the board of the Rockefeller Foundation for 16 years, would prove to be a key link in this regard.

What happened during the '60s was *Kulturkampf*, and in many ways it was a continuation of the struggle of the same name which took place in Germany during the 1870s. In both instances, the Enlightenment locked horns with the Catholic Church; in both instances there was a struggle over control of schools. However, there were differences as well. In *Kulturkampf* in America in the 1960s, the Enlightenment battled the Catholic church over sexual morals. It was a contest to see whose values would determine the default settings for the culture, the secular humanists or the Catholics who had picked up the sexual standards the mainline Protestants had let fall. There was another major difference as well. In Germany the Catholics presented a united front against Bismark, who had to turn to the schismatic Old Catholics for allies in undermining the Church. In America, this was not the case. The secularists found a considerable fifth column of collaborators in the Catholic Church, which they wooed not so much with the stick of prohibition as with the carrot of funding, publishing contracts, etc. In

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Prussia Bismark had to content himself with forcing an Old Catholic teacher down the throats of the Catholic Gymnasium in Braunsberg. In America, the Rockefellers discovered Father Hesburgh, the man who would provide them an entre to the Catholic Church, the only institution in this country which opposed what they had in mind.

By the 1960s the mainline Protestant churches, after campaigning for anti-contraception statutes like the one which the Supreme Court would strike down in *Griswold v. Connecticut*, had reached the conclusion that not using contraception was immoral. In late 1962 Richard M. Fagley, Executive Secretary of the Commission of Churches on International Affairs in New York City described what he saw as "the emerging Protestant consensus regarding the concept of responsible parenthood within the doctrine of marriage." According to this consensus, "motives, rather than means form the primary moral issue." The couple can use whatever method it chooses as long as the motive is not selfishness, etc, etc. Fagley gives no indication of how to assess motives in his presentation. He does claim that the consensus found "no inherent distinction between periodic continence or the use of contraceptives." He mentions the story of Onan, "the one biblical mention of an act with contraceptive intent," but finds the story ultimately "rather ambiguous." His reading of the history of the Protestant reformers on the issue takes a similar tack. They "did not re-examine the generally profertility teaching on parenthood" most probably because they lived in "the underpopulated state of northwestern Europe at the time." As if that weren't reason enough to retard progressive views on contraception, "the emergence of the new Protestant consensus was long delayed by the expansion of Europe through the Industrial Revolution and immigration to the Americas and later by Puritanism and Victorian prudery. Its growth has been primarily a development of this century."

If all this sounds like special pleading, it might be helpful to elucidate the context of the document. Fagley is writing to Frank Notestein, who at the time was head of the Population Council, a tax-exempt foundation created by John D. Rockefeller 3rd in 1952 when he became disenchanted with the reticence of his brothers in funding controversial issues like sexuality studies and population control. "Its goal" according to the Population Council's own description of itself, "has been to bring about a reduction in the number of births that occur in the world." The fact that the

Rockefeller Foundation had funded Kinsey's sex surveys throughout the '40s and early '50s give some indication of what JDR III construed as reticence. JDR III's father had subsidized Margaret Sanger and her Birth Control League as well, prompting one critic to say that the Rockefellers were to abortion and contraception in America what the Krupp family was to munitions in Germany. After undergoing a conversion experience on the issue of population control at the age of 28, JDR III became convinced that overpopulation was the source of all of the world's problems. John D. Rockefeller, 3rd, according to his biographers Ensor and Johnson,

never could explain exactly why he had developed such a strong interest in the population field long before it came into vogue or was generally recognized as an area of concern. He had seen the negative effects of too much population growth in his visit to China in 1929. He had chosen population as the subject for a reading course he took at Princeton, where he studied the works of Malthus and others. He had served on the board of an organization his father had created, the Bureau of Social Hygiene, which had supported a number of projects related to the population field, including aid to the the clinics of the intrepid birth control pioneer Margaret Sanger.

In fact, it was Junior's decision to terminate the Bureau that led his oldest son to volunteer to make the population field a major focus of his interest and to do what he could to carry on the work. In a letter to his father in 1934, he expressed concern that the support of population studies and projects would not be picked up by any of the other Rockefeller organizations, including the foundation, because of "the element of propaganda and controversy which so often is attached to endeavors in birth control." JDR wrote: "I have come pretty definitely to the conclusion that [birth control] is the field in which I will be interested, for the present at least, to concentrate my own giving, as I feel it is so fundamental and underlying." (Ensor and Johnson, p. 24)

To state the case more precisely, JDR III came to the conclusion that population control, including sterilization, contraception and abortion, had become the *conditio sine qua non* of solving problems like hunger and development in the Third World. JDR III spent much of the late '40s and early '50s travelling around the Far East at the behest of John Foster Dulles, a fact which earned him the name Mr. Asia at *The New Yorker*. His travels there only reconfirmed what he had con-

cluded in his late 20s. Population was the problem.

The Population Council considered the development of the IUD as one of its crowning achievements. Later to be driven off the market in the United States as a result of product liability lawsuits, the IUD looked to be the solution JDR sought during the 50s. While in Taiwan visiting a small provincial town where the Population Council was experimenting with the IUD, JDR III looked at the mass of people there and said, 'Well, that's the problem, isn't it?' Then he turned and headed off for his next meeting." (Horowitz and Collier, *The Rockefellers*, p. 291)

Fagley sent the above cited paper to Notestein with a note adding that "any criticism or counsel would be welcome" The paper as may be surmised from its content was not really intended for Protestants; it was intended to explain Protestants to outsiders, in this particular instance Catholics. Fagley sent his paper to Notestein for approval because he was intending to present it at a 1962 conference to be held at the University of Notre Dame on population which was sponsored by a grant from the Population Council. As a final point in describing the Protestant Consensus in favor of contraception, Fagley added that "in the Protestant consensus abortion is strongly condemned as a method of family limitation, since it involves the destruction of human life." Time would show the Protestant Consensus flexible on this issue as well, primarily as a result of Rockefeller money going to the Methodist sponsored Religious Coalition on Abortion Rights. But Notestein raised no objection to Fagley's statement on abortion at the time, probably because he felt that opposition to abortion would sit well with the Catholics convening at Notre Dame.

Rockefeller's interest in the Catholic Church awakened in the early '60s, as the result of the fact that with the defection of the mainline Protestants on sexual issues, Catholics were the main obstacle to the policies Rockefeller wanted to implement throughout the world. JDR III was also intrigued by the news he was hearing about the impending Vatican Council. During the early '60s it had become virtually a foregone conclusion among liberal Catholics that the Church would change its teaching on birth control. Rockefeller's biographers, Ensor and Johnson, mention that "the papacy of John XXIII, who was elevated in 1958, seemed to promise a liberalizing of Roman Catholic doctrine."

But the attraction was mutual. At the same time Rockefeller was looking for an opening whereby he could influence the Catholic Church's opposition to the modern world in the sexual arena, the Catholics were looking for more acceptance from the Protestant consensus, and the people who ran the foundations. Rene Wormser complained that Catholics were frozen out of social science research as a result of the conscious policy of the foundations. As of 1957, Wormser claims,

There are 30 million Catholics in this country, who maintain scores of universities and colleges. Their institutions do not figure among the favored of the foundation complex, nor are academicians connected with them likely to receive research grants from the complex. Perhaps there is a good reason for this discrimination. If so, I cannot guess what it might be. True, Catholic institutions were included among the institutional donees to which The Ford Foundation recently donated a huge aggregate of money, a step which deserved the most enthusiastic approval of the general public. But when it comes to special, individual grants, to find a Catholic institution as a donee is a rarity indeed. (p. 235).

For some time during the late '50s Father Hesburgh had been concerned about this lack of support from the foundations. Hesburgh, according to one source, went to the foundations, who told him that to qualify for money he would have to remove certain faculty members. Hesburgh proved amenable to the suggestion and as a result not only started to get grant money but also was appointed a trustee of the Rockefeller Foundation in 1961. He would later become its chairman during the years when the Rockefeller Foundation was heavily involved in abortion advocacy.

Hesburgh's decision to accept the chairmanship of the Rockefeller Foundation on January 14, 1977 unleashed a storm of indignation on the part of prolife activists across the country in general and Catholic proliferers in particular. Stung by the criticism, Hesburgh responded in the Notre Dame student newspaper by claiming that his critics were misinformed about the Rockefeller's stand on abortion. "The foundation has nothing to do with abortion," opined Hesburgh, "In fact you'll never find the word 'abortion' in the report." Father Hesburgh concluded that his critics should know the facts before they make inflammatory statements.

In an article published in the same student newspaper on April 20, 1977, Professor Charles E.

Rice of the Notre Dame Law School proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the word 'abortion' did in fact rear its ugly head in the reports of the Rockefeller Foundation. The foundation report for 1975 lists a grant to the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation for \$5,000 "for distribution to American obstetricians/gynecologists of the educational brochure, *The Abortion Controversy—A Doctor's Guide to the Law*." Planned Parenthood Federation of America received \$900,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation in the second quarter of 1974 for its "Centers for Family Planning Program Development."

Rice goes on to cite one instance of Rockefeller-funded support for abortion after another:

The February 1977 issue of the Rockefeller-subsidized publication, *Abortion Research Notes*, announced the formation in September 1976 of the National Abortion Council as a successor organization to the Association for the Study of Abortion, another group supported by the Rockefeller Foundation. The National Abortion Council was formed "with the primary aim of fostering the accessibility of quality abortion services." The Rockefeller-supported *Abortion Research Notes* announced that it had participated in the organizational meeting of NAC and was "pleased to present the NAC Statement of Principles," the tenor of which is exemplified by the statements, "It is essential that abortion be readily available at reasonable fees," and "parental and spousal consent should not be required."

Rice also cites Rockefeller Foundation support for the Population Law Center, formerly the James Madison Constitutional Law Institute, which "has played," according to Rice, "a crucial role in chang-

ing American law to permit abortion." In the last half of 1974, the Rockefeller Foundation made a grant of \$50,000 to the Institute for its "program in population law." Rice cites a similar grant made in 1972 and sees it as particularly significant because "during 1972 the James Madison Constitutional Law Institute handled the entire appeal for the abortion side in *Roe v. Wade*, and in the companion case of *Doe v. Bolton* it filed the principal proabortion brief and wrote the legal arguments related to the medical aspect of the case. All of this lead Rice to conclude that "in a realistic sense the Center is the legal spearhead of the abortion movement."

Father Hesburgh was a member of the board of directors of the Rockefeller Foundation during this entire period. It is, therefore, difficult to understand just exactly what he means when he says that "the foundation has nothing to do with abortion." When Hesburgh was asked for a clarification after the appearance of the Rice article by the National Catholic News Service, he declined further comment.

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They wanted an entre to the interlocking world of foundation respectability, where grantsmanship was in many respects an all or nothing proposition. Because of their interlocking nature, once you got money from one you were in the position of getting money from all of them, and as the '60s progressed and the government expanded its role in funding higher education, foundation acceptance meant access to government money as well. But more importantly for people like Hesburgh, acceptance by the foundations meant intellectual

respectability, which the catholic universities of the time evidently felt they lacked.

What the foundations wanted was just as specific but not as apparent at the time. The history of the first Notre Dame conference on population goes a long way toward indicating what it is the foundations, specifically JDR III's Population Council wanted from amenable Catholics like the people at Notre Dame. On October 10, 1962, one day before the opening of the Second Vatican Council, the Population Council, "following discussions among leading Catholic authorities, representatives of Planned Parenthood, and the officers of the Population Council" granted \$5,000 to the University of Notre Dame to host a "two-day meeting in December which would bring together representatives of different religious and other points of view to discuss problems of population growth, with particular interest in exploring areas of possible convergence in approaching these problems."

The conference would actually not take place until early 1963, but the groundwork preparing for it took place throughout the summer of 1962. The initial impetus for the conference came not from Hesburgh but from a CBS documentary "Birth Control and the Law," which aired on May 10, 1962. One of the participants was the Rev. John A. O'Brien, C.S.C. a Notre Dame theologian who had caught the eye of the pro-contraceptive crowd when an article of his entitled "Let's Take Birth Control Out of Politics" had appeared in the November 10, 1961 issue of *Look* magazine. The CBS documentary was widely denounced in the Catholic press as procontraceptive propaganda. Rev. John B. Sheehin criticized moderator Eric Severeid's fawning attitude toward Planned Parenthood and called the documentary "an extended commercial for that organization."

The Rev. John C. Knott, family life director of the National Catholic Welfare Conference in Washington claimed that "CBS gave evidence of having become a public relations medium for a particular philosophy of life with an oversimplified solution to human problems" and went on to wonder why CBS didn't allow Catholics equal time. Evidently he missed the contribution of Father O'Brien, or perhaps he didn't feel that Father O'Brien's suggestion that a group of Catholic and Protestant experts should get together to "try to iron out the problem" qualified as the Catholic position. Either way he was evidently not impressed with Father O'Brien's position.

Other people were, however. On July 6, 1962 Cass Canfield, Chairman of Planned Parenthood Foundation of America and a board member of the Population Council, wrote to Father O'Brien to tell him how he had been following his writings on birth control for a number of years and how impressed he had been with what O'Brien had to say on the recent CBS telecast. In the interest of fostering "dialogue" in this area among religious groups, Canfield invited O'Brien to take part in a "small discussion—primarily of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish clergymen" at a New York hotel on the morning of October 25 "to discuss fertility regulation in the context of responsible parenthood and population growth." In closing, Canfield added a few "very general questions" which might be discussed at the meeting: such as "what is the general thinking from various viewpoints on the 'population problem'" and "what are the opportunities—among religious groups themselves, and between religious groups and the Planned Parenthood Federation—for cooperative thought and action on these vital matters."

On July 24, Canfield received a response not from Father O'Brien, but from George Shuster, assistant to Father Hesburgh at Notre Dame, informing him that O'Brien's attendance at the Planned Parenthood conference was out of the question. "It is impossible, as matters stand now," Shuster wrote

for Catholic priests and laymen who follow directives (and this is the kind you doubtless want) to attend a meeting sponsored by Planned Parenthood. The time is not yet ripe for that. Those invited would have to secure permission from the New York Chancery Office to attend, and there would seem no possibility that the answer would be affirmative.

Shuster's objections, upon closer inspection, revolved more around form than substance. Consequently, instead of the New York meeting, Shuster proposed holding virtually the same venue at Notre Dame, implying that the name Notre Dame would somehow purge the meeting of disagreeable associations as well as helping to evade the watchful eye of Cardinal Spellman:

This arrangement would enable prominent Catholics to attend without difficulty, for any problem involving participation in a meeting sponsored by Planned Parenthood would have been removed. The University has arranged and is currently doing so in a series of meetings in various fields at which important problems are being discussed on a basis of parity between Catholics and others.

In a letter to JDR 3rd on July 31, Canfield can hardly contain himself, calling Shuster's response "the answer to a maiden's prayer." An opening of some significance had finally been found with the Catholics, the last roadblock to universal acceptance of contraception. During the '50s the Population Council had had contact with a Jesuit from Baltimore by the name of William J. Gibbons, who requested funding for a "New York Professional Sodality" from the Population Council which would attempt to study the problem of overpopulation as essentially a moral problem."

The Population Council was underwhelmed by the proposal. Frederic Osborn in a memo to Dudley Kirk opined that "it is hard to see how there could be much serious exchange of ideas on such premises," especially since Father Gibbon was proposing that each meeting start with a pledge "to respect the right of each parent to participate in the creation of life." If this was what the Catholics had in mind, then the Population Council wasn't interested. What Shuster was proposing at Notre Dame was a whole new ball game, however, and Canfield urged JDR III to fund it claiming that it "should serve a very useful purpose."

Frank Notestein, who was in on the discussion, seemed to concur with Canfield and listed a number of potential positive outcomes as resulting from it. To begin with the Population Council and the pro-contraception Protestants who were invited could exert pressure

of the supportive sort on the liberal Catholics attending, to strengthen in the Church those elements which recognize a) the need for tolerance of non-Catholic views, b) the desirability for restraint on the part of Catholics seeking legal restrictions that prevent non-Catholics from following their own moral views, and c) the need for greater attention to parental responsibility in Catholic teaching.

Beyond that, the conference would provide

an opportunity for the Catholics to educate non-Catholics in their position, particularly with a view to letting us see, in sophisticated form, the almost immutable constraints faced by the Church in certain parts of its position and the operations which are amenable to change.

Notestein felt that it was unrealistic to feel that a conference of this sort could get the Church to change its teaching on birth control but it could help

to strengthen that element in the Church with which we have many common aspirations and a minimum of differences." With this in mind, it would be pointless to publish the results of the conference because that would incur the wrath of episcopal authorities and harden the positions into two immutable fronts. The only influence the pro-contraceptive party can have is on those influential Catholics who attend the meeting.

With this in mind, Notestein adds, "it is also important, on these premises, that we select for attendance not representative Catholics but Catholics who represent the position nearest our own. This is the group whose influence we would be endeavoring to enlarge." The Population Council would fund the Notre Dame meeting, in other words, on the condition that only "liberal" Catholics, i.e., those willing to work for a change in the Church's position on birth control be invited. Notestein even suggests "leaving out people such as Father Zimmerman," evidently referring to the Rev. Anthony Zimmerman, S.V.D. a noted opponent of population control. In another letter to JDR III on August 2, Notestein reiterated his opposition to inviting "representative Catholics." The only people to be invited were Catholics "who represent the position nearest our own."

Personally I would like to reemphasize my opinion that an endeavor be made to have this group include only the liberal minded Catholics. We will get simply nowhere if right wing groups are involved. These conversations should be between the people on both sides who have minimum differences of opinion

Throughout the negotiations for the conference, there is no indication that either Shuster, who conducted the correspondence, or Hesburgh, whose approval is noted throughout, objected in any way to the Population Council's dictating to Notre Dame the type of Catholic Notre Dame was allowed to invite to its conference. Evidently Notestein's specification that only liberal Catholics should be invited was not construed as an offense against Hesburgh's principle of "true autonomy and academic freedom in the face of authority of whatever kind lay or clerical external to the academic community itself." When it came to the demands of the Population Council, Hesburgh's truculence evaporated and was replaced by the most supine amenability. Notestein obviously feels that Father Hesburgh is precisely one of their kind of Catholic and nominates him as chairman of the conference in place of JDR III, whose connection with contraception and population control might prove too controversial. "My guess," Notestein



wrote referring to Hesburgh, "is that he would be effective in blocking long-winded arguments in theology, which are useless once the positions are understood. No one is going to make converts at the theological level."

JDR III was evidently persuaded by Notestein's arguments. In a letter to Cass Canfield on August 6, JDR III characterized Shuster's proposal as "an encouraging next step in an important and sensitive area." He is also persuaded by Notestein's suggestion "that the individuals who might attend be selected from those who have liberal views; otherwise it would be difficult for the meetings to be very constructive."

By early August the Notre Dame Conference was pretty much a done deal, at least in the higher echelons of the Population Council. By September of 1962 the Population Council was dictating not only who was to be invited but what books were to be displayed and discussed (e.g. *A Citizen's Perspective on Population* by J. D. Rockefeller and *Does Overpopulation Mean Poverty*, by Joseph Jones) as well as the questions to be asked and without too much stretching of the imagination the answers to those questions as well. Hesburgh's abject acceptance of Rockefeller's terms gives some indication that academic freedom was a one way street. It was used in 1962, as it was in the Land O'Lakes statement in 1967, to protect Catholic students from the influence of the Catholic Church. When it came to the stipulations the Population Council put on the 1962 conference at Notre Dame, it was not used at all. "Conferees," Canfield writes in his memo "Some Random Suggestions about the Notre Dame Conference," "should discuss question of whether the adherents of any faith have a right to try and influence legislation, except as individuals expressing their own views."

It didn't take a genius to figure out the right answer to a question phrased in that tendentious manner. Catholics of the liberal sort were to proclaim publicly that their opposition to contraception was "personal" and that they wouldn't dream of imposing their views on others, and most certainly would not try to influence legislation.

The fact of the matter is that at this point Rockefeller did not feel he could get the Church to change its teaching on contraception—at a later date he would be of another opinion on the matter. He did feel though that the Population Council might persuade liberal Catholics to persuade their less enlightened co-religionists that they as Catholics had no business trying to influence legislation

concerning contraception in the United States. Planned Parenthood had already targeted the Connecticut contraception statute for overturning, as a prelude, Leo Pfeffer would later say, for state subsidized contraception aimed at primarily Negro welfare recipients. The main obstacle in the implementation of this design was the opposition of the Catholic Church.

Canfield kept hammering home the point that when it came to contraception reasonable Catholics—i.e., the kind who wanted money from the Rockefellers—were supposed to keep their opinions to themselves. This was the purpose of the conference, and by accepting the Population Council's money on their terms, Hesburgh showed that he acquiesced in the arrangement. The conferees were to understand that if "a religious group, as such, should try and influence legislation, [that] would bring up the question of Tolerance." The reason, according to Canfield, the Population Council was putting up the money was in the "hope that the liberal views of certain Catholics will gain greater currency within the Church and that practical considerations in connection with limiting population (as well as biological research, partly or wholly sponsored by Catholics) will lead them to become less and less restrictive as to methods."

Fred Jaffe, associate director of information and education at Planned Parenthood, took part in the memo dialogue and came to pretty much the same conclusions. The conference should "focus on objectives rather than methods." this would pare the differences down to size and also, although he doesn't state this, make the Church seem unreasonable by its insistence that certain methods are illicit, whereas the Population Council could give the impression to being open to them all. Jaffe concluded by submitting his list of acceptable Catholics. These would include the already mentioned Father Gibbons, S.J., Father Joseph Gremillion of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, who would have a long association with Notre Dame, Father Hesburgh, and Father Walter Imborski of the Cana Conference in Chicago.

On October 29, Shuster again wrote to Canfield discussing publicity and indicating that he was involved in not a little duplicity in this regard. He requests that no advance publicity be given to the conference lest the wrong people get wind of it, including perhaps the local bishop, but in the same letter he indicates that in the hope of "indirect benefits" he has invited "one or two editors of key Catholic periodicals." This echoes pretty much

what Shuster said to Canfield in August when he claimed that "we are walking upon relatively difficult terrain and a measure of caution, in the hope of better things to follow is indicated." Shuster was not so much interested in keeping the symposium secret as he was in managing the way the information on it came out. Publicity would only be harmful if the wrong people showed up beforehand. Notestein in a note written after the conference hopes that "there were no unfortunate leaks so far as publicity is concerned," and Shuster assures him that "there were no leaks, thank heavens."

"Hope of better things to follow" from Shuster and Hesburgh's point of view meant more money from more foundations for more conferences undermining the Church's position on contraception. On June 5, 1963 Shuster submitted a proposal asking for funding for virtually the same conference to the Ford Foundation. The conference was "to achieve a consensus which would first serve as a firm and clear basis for dialogue, and second point out areas for future study and discussion." which is pretty much what the first one had done. However, this time Shuster sweetens the pot by adding that "the objective is to prepare a final statement and distribute it widely." The statement would, it was understood, be Catholic academe calling for a change in the Church's teaching, something that would most probably not change the teaching but something which would prove embarrassing to the Church nonetheless, especially if it were promoted by the media. "I am not going to stress further the obvious importance of this effort." Shuster wrote to Oscar Harkavy, head of the Ford Foundation, "The interest of *Cardinal Meyer* [Shuster's emphasis]—which is the only part of this letter which is at present confidential—suffices to indicate that these deliberations may find an echo far beyond the confines of the United States."

The Rockefeller crowd got the proposal passed on to them directly from Harkavy (something which indicates just how close the interlock between the foundations was). Harkavy was in effect asking the people at the Population Council whether he should fund Notre Dame's grant or not, and the Pop Council seemed less than enthused by the prospect of another conference much less a whole series of conferences. The Population Council had gone to bed with Notre Dame and in the morning decided that it didn't respect her anymore. Ford would eventually go on to sponsor a whole series of conferences during which the Catholics assembled at Notre Dame denounced in increasingly strident terms the Church's position opposing con-

traception. But the contempt in which the Pop Council held Notre Dame is evident in the tone of their memos. Dudley Kirk after suggesting that they might "sponsor this and play it further by ear" goes on to wonder "whether to feel flattered or otherwise at being the only heretic proposed for inclusion in the first conference." Which prompts Marshall C. Balfour to add, "Hooray for the heretic: the cards are surely stacked against him! That is, unless, the way is being prepared for Pope Paul to change the rules of the game."

The wing of the Catholic church whose conferences were sponsored by Rockefeller money were clearly planning for such an eventuality. Since most of the players were both old and ostensibly celibate, there is no reason to believe that they were hoping to benefit directly from such a change. But a change in the Church's teaching would mean that they as Catholic academics would be acceptable to the foundation power brokers and an acceptable member of the Protestant consensus as well. They would be considered Americans in full standing, which has always been the aspiration of a certain kind of Catholic in this country. With people like Father Hesburgh calling the shots for Catholics in the United States, the pope could unpack his bags. It would furthermore show that Hesburgh and company had considerable clout among their co-religionists. If they could show that they had delivered the vote on contraception, they might be valuable for wringing other concessions from the Church further down the line—in case the Protestant consensus did a 180 degree turn on abortion, for example. Perhaps this is why people like Shuster and Hesburgh pursued the idea of the contraception conferences with such avidity throughout the mid-'60s.

Throughout the entire degrading process of applying for a grant which specified not only who Notre Dame could and could not invite, the books that were to be discussed as well as the questions and (by implication) answers that were to arise during the course of discussion, there is not one indication that Father Hesburgh thought that the academic freedom of Notre Dame was being compromised. His vigilance for academic freedom virtually ceased to exist when it came to the Rockefellers, who set much more stringent stipulations than any proposed by Cardinal Ottaviani or the Vatican. This policy of no enemies to the left was to have several far-reaching consequences. First of all, academic freedom was defined as *de facto* the right to proselytize for sexual liberation. This was true not only of Catholic universities but

across the board. Political correctness is in the final analysis the use of the tropes of academe for this end, including most especially race, something which I have written on at length elsewhere. Secondly, through Hesburgh's efforts, the Church lost control of Notre Dame and in the place of Catholicism liberalism was installed as the university's regnant ideology. Thirdly, sexual liberation has come home to roost at Notre Dame as the theology department was plagued by a series of sexual scandals throughout the period following the Land O Lakes statement, its declaration of independence from Church control. the 1967. In September 1987, Rev. Niels K. Rasmussen, OP, head of the liturgy program at Notre Dame, was found shot to death in the basement of his home surrounded by homosexual pornography, the paraphernalia of sado-masochism, and automatic weapons. When Notre Dame tried to give Rasmussen a Christian burial—against the express wishes of his will-cum-suicide note—a bomb threat interrupted the services and emptied Sacred Heart Church on campus. Rasmussen's case is only the most spectacular instance of a series of sexual scandals which take place with such regularity that no gets very upset about them anymore (See "Requiem for a Liturgist," *Fidelity*, January 1988).

On June 27, 1992, John Howard Yoder, a Mennonite theologian and professor of Christian ethics at Notre Dame was defrocked by the Mennonite Church for sexually molesting a number of female graduate students. The Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church specifies that teachers at Catholic institutions must lead upright moral lives to teach there, but Notre Dame has long since decided that that canon law is an impermissible infringement on its academic freedom, and so Yoder after being stripped of his ministerial credentials by the Mennonites continued as a professor in good standing at Notre Dame.

Experience has shown that expressing reservations about the secularization of Notre Dame is not conducive to advancement there. In April and May of 1991, Rev. James T. Burtchaell, C.S.C. published a series of articles in the neoconservative journal *First Things* entitled "The Decline and Fall of the Christian College." Although he was writing ostensibly about Vanderbilt, it was not difficult to see that what he had to say applied to Notre Dame as well. Burtchaell, it should be remembered, was Notre Dame's provost under Hesburgh, when the university issued its declaration of independence from the Church, the Land o' Lakes statement of 1967. "The alienation," Burtchaell wrote describing the separation of the university from the Church,

usually required as well an academic administrator [i.e., Father Hesburgh] whose determination to transfigure the institution and whose ego (if those be not synonymous) inclined him to neutralize all potential rivals to his leadership [i.e. Father Burtchaell]. Typically the board of trustees was reconfigured to follow administrative leadership without let or hindrance [i.e. the lay board established by Land o' Lakes], the faculty was tamed with increased emoluments and funds for scholarship, and the donors and public were won over by a rhetoric of assurance. The only threat remaining resided within the church. Because the church's members, by and large, were not so impressed by higher education that they were ready to subsidize, or abide it when it became too outspoken and critical and because its officers [i.e. the bishops] sensed no competence in themselves to interact with academics save from a position of control, the administration sensed rightly that the church held the latent power to bring down everything he [i.e., . . . Hesburgh] was striving to build up.

**B**urtchaell's description of Vanderbilt was more than just a *roman a clef* describing Notre Dame. It was to prove his downfall as well. In December of 1991, the only man at Notre Dame who had the temerity to stand up to John D. Rockefeller 3rd (see the preface to Burtchaell's *Rachel Weeping*) found himself accused of homosexual misconduct and expelled from the university. Given the sexual dereliction rampant in Notre Dame's theology department, it was at best—even if the allegations were true, and Burtchaell gave some indication that they were not—a case of selective prosecution. It was also one more sign that academic freedom at Notre Dame was defined in a peculiar way that was dangerous to misinterpret. Those who think it entails the freedom to disagree with the Rockefeller agenda would do well to ponder the case of Father Burtchaell.

Those who think the morality tale applies to Notre Dame alone are invited to ponder the parlous state of academic life in general in this country where academic freedom has become a one-way street and passable only to those who are willing to sign on as footsoldiers in the sexual revolution. Those who think that Hesburgh's alienation of Notre Dame from the Catholic Church is a purely academic matter would do well to read *Splendor Veritatis*, the pope's latest encyclical. Dissent from the Church's sexual teaching has had a devastating effect on the Church in the West, and the heart of that dissent is the alienated Catholic university. Until these universities are either cut loose or brought in line, there will be no peace in the Church.

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## JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, 3RD, THEODORE M. HESBURGH, AND THE CONTRACEPTIVE REVOLUTION:



HOW THE CHURCH'S TEACHING  
ALMOST GOT CHANGED