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In his book *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became an American Icon*, Stephen Prothero, Professor of

Paris Speaks on New Challenges in End-of-Life Care

On March 24th, John Paris, Professor of Ethics in the Theology department at Boston College, spoke on the ethical problems that arise when, at the end of life, families enter and demand treatment that the physician believes to be inappropriate.

Paris spoke of two distinct eras in end of life debates. From the time of the Hippocratic Oath until 1960, there was little change in what medicine could provide to the dying other than palliative care. In the 1960's, dramatic innovations in medical technology resulted in the ability to sustain life for longer and longer periods of time. Between 1960-1990, we also saw the emergence of third party payment, which Paris says was "like giving people an American Express Gold card", feeding a tremendous expansion in the demand for medical treatment. Two values also emerged at this time, which Paris sees as originating in a culture of autonomous rights and rampant self-interest. These values are that 1) cost should not be a consideration in medical treatment, and 2) everyone should have equal access to the medical treatment they need. This has resulted in what Paris sees as an untenable system in which people expect the best quality of medical care for everyone but are unwilling to pay for it.

These issues are illuminated at the end of life when families, unwilling to let go of loved ones, demand that doctors do everything in their power to extend the life of the patient, regardless of cost or outcome. This raises an ethical dilemma, namely, "Who gets to decide what to do in this case?" Plato and Hippocrates argued that the doctor is in the best position to exercise the moral judgement necessary. The courts have decided that in judgements of value between doctors and patients, patients will always win. The economist Lester Thurow argued that society must collectively decide what is bad medicine, or else the market will control these decisions through one's economic ability to pay.

The timing of Paris' talk followed almost immediately on a recent statement from the Vatican which Paris incorporated into his talk in a critical fashion. Until recently, the Vatican's "Declaration on Euthanasia" (1980) stated that account should be taken of the "reasonable wishes of families" and the "judgement of doctors." This view has been revised however by an address by the Pope to a conference of the World Academy of Catholic Medical Associations and the Pontifical Academy of Life on March 20th of this year stating that:

> *"The sick person in a vegetative state, awaiting recovery or a natural end, still has the right to basic health care (nutrition, hydration, cleanliness, warmth, etc.), and to the prevention of complications related to his confinement to bed...I should like particularly to underline how the administration of water and food, even when provided by artificial means, always represents a natural means of preserving life, not a medical act. Its use, furthermore, should be considered, in principle, ordinary and proportionate, and as such morally obligatory, insofar as and until it is seen to have attained its proper finality, which in the present case consists in providing nourishment to the patient and alleviation of his suffering"*
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> ~ ***John Paul II, March 20 2004***

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Virtue Ethics and Sexuality

James P. Keenan, Gasson Professor of Theology, spoke at the Boisi Center on April 6 at a lunch seminar in which he addressed the question of what a study of the virtues can bring to our understanding of sexual ethics. He critiqued the current discourse on sexual ethics as focusing too narrowly on specific issues such as abortion, gene therapy, or abuse. Chastity is often raised in this discussion as a chief virtue, but the problem with this is that its message is often simply to "slow down" and "set boundaries," which is not enough. It applies to the function or nature of sexuality, rather than providing guidance that helps us understand how to handle people and relationships in sexual situations in an ethical fashion.

Keenan argued for a broader virtue-based ethics, suggesting as its basis four cardinal virtues including justice, fidelity, self-care and prudence along with a number of auxiliary virtues which would include chastity. These virtues would be used to orient us to the questions of "Who are we?" "Who are we to become?" and "How are we to get there?"

Thus in relation to a sexual ethic, an application of the virtue of justice, for example, would lead us to ask "What is due each person in the relationship?" and to appreciate what sexuality means in each person's life. Keenan acknowledged that culture should also play a role in defining these virtues. In the United States, justice is defined in terms of autonomy and rights, whereas in the Philippines, it might have a more communal definition.

The advantage of a broader virtue-based ethics, Keenan argued, is also to provide a way to name the ways that these virtues are related and to ask how the virtues make claims on one another. For example, this approach to sexual ethics allows us to bring justice to bear on issues of fidelity and to create a virtues language that is more accessible and flexible to a range of issues. Such a language takes us away from talking about specific actions, such as abortion, or pedophilia, or homosexuality, and gives us a framework for reaching greater moral honesty.

eign policy is so concentrated in the office of the President, Kamarck believes that voters will vote for the person whom they feel can best serve them as a global leader. understand006 are rel

Third Annual Prophetic Voices in American Religion Lecture: Being the Hands of God: The Jewish Call to Social Justice

Rabbi David Saperstein, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and one of the most influential religious lobbyists in Washington, delivered the 3rd annual *Prophetic Voices in American Religion* lecture on the evening of March 23rd. The topic of his lecture was social mission in the American Jewish tradition.

Saperstein argued that prophetic mission is a definitive characteristic of the Jewish people and pointed to evidence that although American Jews are only 2.5% of the population, they comprise a noticeably higher proportion of progressive activists, are elected to public office at a higher rate than their proportion in the population, and vote at a rate of 80-90%. He argued that this sense of participation and social justice comes directly from the Prophets, in particular, passages of Isaiah which claim the infinite value of all human people.

The Jewish tradition, he claimed, calls for the belief in the perfectibility of people, society, and humanity which called into being the first system of universal education. The structure of Jewish law and thinking focuses on responsibilities rather than rights. It also calls for the sword to enter where justice is denied and a belief that what is right is also just.

On the role of the prophetic voice, Saperstein stated that the role of religion is to be a prophetic voice to government. He pointed to the rising influence of religion in public debates, giving as examples the role that religious communities played in calling for a nuclear freeze, the introduction of Just War theory into political debates since the first Gulf War, and the humanitarian motivations for sending Americans into Somalia.

Saperstein ended his lecture on an exhortatory note to the assembled students. "This is the first generation in which we can make real everything the Prophets dreamed of," he said, calling upon students to be the prophetic voices of their generation.

French Perceptions of American Religion

Addressing an audience of French and American scholars, Denis Lacorne, the Director of Research at the Center for International Studies in Paris, spoke at the Boisi Center on February 23rd on the perceptions and misperceptions that French have of American religion. The French are, in general, continually astonished by the frequent references that Americans make to God in their political rhetoric. This rhetoric reinforces the popular image the French have of Americans as 17th century Puritans, ascetic and prudish in their attitudes towards sex and morality. The average French person, Lacorne argued, has very little understanding of mainstream American religion and its variants.

Lacorne compared attitudes in France, where a strict separation of Church and State is taken much more seriously than in the United States. During the French Revolution, the Church was seen as the primary institution supporting the political legitimacy of the monarchy and its divine right to rule. Against this history, subsequent leaders have been extremely wary of permitting religion to have too much power within the Republic. This is a contrast to the United States, in which the founders felt that religion offered a necessary constraint against the base self-interests that could potentially be released in a popular democracy. In this context, many of the symbols and materials of Protestant culture were absorbed as part of the secular culture in order to provide moral safeguards and mechanisms of social control.

During a lively discussion period, many issues were discussed, including the recent vote in France on whether Muslim girls would be allowed to wear headscarves to school. An American scholar of French-Muslim descent argued that constitutional guarantees of freedom of conscience were worthless unless citizens were allowed to act upon their freedom by displaying and exhibiting their religious beliefs. LaCorne acknowledged this and added that there is no "First Amendment Culture" in France the way there is in the United States, and that the fears that the French people have of radical Islam might be exaggerated.

On March 19th, the Boisi Center invited Amitai Etzioni, University Professor of Sociology at George Washington University, former President of the American Sociological Association, founding President of the International Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics, and Founder and Director of the Communitarian Network, to speak on campus.

Etzioni spoke broadly on the communitarian perspective, which developed in the late 1980's into a formal institution concerned with the breakdown in the moral fabric of society. Attributing this condition to an excessive emphasis on individualism in the public sphere, the communitarian perspective recognizes the need for a social philosophy that both protects individual rights and attends to corresponding responsibilities to the community. Transcending the stalemate between left and right, this new "responsive communitarian" philosophy articulates a middle way between the politics of radical individualism and excessive statism.

Etzioni argued that today transnational corporations, INGOs, NGOs, and terrorist networks such as al Qaeda, have created global networks that are superimposed over the old nation-state system. Because these networks span national boundaries and affect events within them, one of the important unanswered questions we face today is how to hold them accountable.

Etzioni also addressed issues related to the globalization of human values and religious conflict. He argued that the rights governing the global system today are primarily western ones: universal values, human rights, democracy and free markets. He argued that the message this sends to the East is that "you have nothing to contribute to this" and precludes whole societies from engaging in conversation. He pointed out that from the Islamic perspective, Americans respect "goods not