



Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical *Deus caritas est* has not received the attention it deserves. In "Retreat of Christian Love," Joseph K. Woodard uses Benedict's insights to show how the modern state has co-opted the Church's charitable missions and so deprived Christianity of much its moral authority. This thoughtful and deep analysis covers a broad sweep of history, ties together various themes of modernity, and draws compelling conclusions about the rise of the welfare state. Writing from Canada, which has traveled considerably further down this road than we have, Woodard issues some useful warnings. More importantly, he diagnoses the malaise that afflicts contemporary Catholicism and predicts that the Church will find itself again at the forefront of cultural development as the impersonal mechanisms of the state give way to the need for genuine love.

Debra R. Hanna, R.N., in "The Moral Burdens of Biotechnology," uses her years of experience in neuroscience nursing to reflect on the long-term consequences of patient decisions to use morally compromised materials in the alleviation of illness. Diagnoses of neurological disease are devastating for patients, who naturally grasp at whatever hope might be available, but she notes that we have a responsibility to be honest about the dangers of some of these new biotechnological interventions and about their moral implications. The same is true of the new reproductive technologies. These profoundly affect women in their relation to themselves, their spouses, and their children.

An ardent defender of the Hippocratic tradition transformed by Christianity, Patrick Guinan, M.D., takes on the secular defenders of principlism in "Autonomy Has Not Killed Hippocrates." The moral code of the ancient physician has been out of fashion for decades now, mostly because his oath demands that the physician swear not to perform abortions or to assist patients in committing suicide, or even to make a suggestion to that effect. Modern bioethics has preferred to substitute principles for practical directives, most notably the principles codified by Tom L. Beauchamp and

James F. Childress. Over time, these principles were reduced to autonomy, which has proved unable to bear the full weight of medical ethics. Guinan reports that we now see the return of the principle of beneficence to the center of medical ethics, a standard theme of Hippocratic medicine.

“A Demonstration of the Personhood of the Embryo,” by Dennis A. Scrandis, is a tightly reasoned argument for personhood from conception, relying on the latest scientific evidence and the force of the Catholic philosophical tradition. Why, Scrandis wonders, does the Church hesitate to make a definitive decision on this most crucial bioethical question?

Our journal has published several articles on the question of assisted nutrition and hydration (ANH). In “A Defense of Assisted Nutrition and Hydration in Patients with Dementia,” John Howland takes issue with those who contend that the provision of ANH for patients with dementia does not improve or prolong life. He notes that few studies have been done, and those that have are limited in their data. Howland argues that, as Catholics, we cannot follow a purely secular standard. Death through dehydration is a denial of basic care. Although we must carefully examine each case and allow for exceptions, there should be a presumption in favor of ANH for all patients in Catholic health care.

Christopher Gross takes us on a theological expedition. Pope John Paul II never applied his philosophical anthropology to the question of sex reassignment surgery, but Gross gives us good reason to suppose that we know what the results would be if he had. After providing a description of the procedure and some consideration of the reasons why some consider this surgery appropriate, Gross lays out the principles of Karol Wojtyła’s anthropology. Testing by that standard, the defender of sex reassignment surgery misunderstands the nature of freedom, absolutizes consciousness, and falls prey to a mind–body dualism. Without denying the suffering that transsexual men and women experience, the author shows that their decision to undergo these procedures conflicts with a sound Christian anthropology.

No idea is more important to the defense of human dignity than that of personhood. Thomas K. Nelson, in “The Revelation of Personhood,” follows the unfolding of this idea through its inception in the ancient world, its crystalization in the definition of Boethius, and its rich articulation in the Middle Ages. Aquinas identified the marks of personhood, and these are critical for us if we are to limit the designation “person” to those who merit the name. This philosophical understanding assists us in understanding the Divine Persons, even as it is transcended. Human persons are substances; Divine Persons are relations. The Vatican Instruction *Dignitas personae* makes use of these categories to emphasize the dignity of the human person from conception to natural death.

In our Verbatim section, Helen Alvaré and Christian Brugger from the Culture of Life Foundation consider “Health Care Proposals Pending Before Congress.” They lay out a series of questions for concerned Catholics to consider, suggesting that the nationalization of our health care system may involve more difficulties than first meet the eye.

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