



Review of 'Memory and Identity' In Defense of Christianity

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Memory and Identity: Conversations at the Dawn of a Millennium

New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2005

192 pages, hardcover, \$19.95

About an hour ago, I received a terse report that Pope John Paul II had died. Some days ago, after I had begun the writing of a review of the English edition of the book *Memory and Identity*, I halted my completion of the review out of a saddening sense that these might prove to be the last days of his mortal life. In a manner of speaking, I paused to give this Pope the last word.

Nonetheless, I have changed nothing of what I had begun to write, except to situate that in an appropriate way as my personal expression of regard for my own mourning and others', for our common loss. Even then, as the present title I had already given to this review attests, when I had still hoped for some degree of his recovery to continue his work, the intent of my review was to have been a relevant reflection for today of what this Pope's ministry has meant for the continuity of the apostolic legacy of the Christian Church up through his ministry, to beyond his now-reported passing.

At this moment, as I feared already about the time this report was begun, it is time for me to speak frankly, from the vantage-point of both my special knowledge, and position in world affairs, of certain things concerning the role of the Church, things which have long occupied my innermost reflections. It is an aspect of such matters in which the nature and usefulness of my contribution is both of a unique form, and suitable for my particular personal contribution, as a public figure, to reflections made on this immediate occasion.

At this moment, there is still one earlier criticism of that book itself which I must make here, on even this present solemn occasion. I do this because my criticism pertains to the special continuity of the special legacy of a succession of the relevant three, John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II, of the recent four Popes for the troubled age of nuclear weaponry under

whose threat we continue to live. My point, as one outside the formal body of the Church, but with close ties to it, is an ecumenical thesis respecting the living legacy of that Papacy's continuing, special role for all humanity today. I focus my attention here on certain common achievements of those three Popes' ministries. It is in that context that I point out the relevant problematic feature contained within the book I have just read for review.

In keeping with the solemnity of this occasion, I limit my report here to a principal subject of a special, but relevant character, on which my qualifications are unique, and of special relevance for speaking of the challenge for today represented by that Pope and his immediate predecessors.

As you shall see below, the criticism which I make is on a certain topic within the book I have held in my hands, on the subject of what is called "The Enlightenment"; a view of that Enlightenment's character and performance which I know as being that of a virtual Satan of modern times, and the most important in influence of all of those principal forces arrayed against the intention embodied in the ministry of Jesus Christ and his Apostles.

For all Christians, the Jews, and Muslims, most notably, the axiomatic feature of the Enlightenment dogma is equal to a categorical denial of the existence of man and woman as made equally in the image of the Creator. The consequence of that fraudulent axiomatic assumption of the Enlightenment, as launched by such followers of the empiricist Paolo Sarpi as Thomas Hobbes, René Descartes, John Locke, the circles of Voltaire, and of Kant, is the denial of the knowable existence of those creative powers, in the image of the Creator's, which set the human personality apart from, and above all the beasts.

That distinguishing quality of the human individual, is the foundation of the Socratic and Christian conception of the efficient immortality of the cognitive personality of the person in what some theologians term a "simultaneity of eternity." It is that certain sense of assured immortality, for better or for worse, which is lost to such tragic wretches as the Hamlet and legendary Denmark of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It is this immortality, which some call spirituality, which gave strength to the martyred Christians from the time of Nero through Diocletian, and which links the individuals in the body of Christianity as a force whose intention surpasses the bounds of mortality for the individual Christian. It is the quality which distinguishes the comic-opera, "fundamentalist" "Christian" of otherworld fantasies, from that immortal soul on a mission of good within the domain of mere mortality.

It is what has given me the strength which I have often needed, to do what I have done, for the sake of that which is right, and to be able to carry it forward neither deterred by fear of disapproval, or by sense of the risk or other abuse which I have thus often incurred as the price of conscience.

The unfortunate fact, however, is that only a tiny fraction among even professed Christians has that kind of inner spiritual strength. In consequence of that shortfall in the progress of our fellow man and woman, on that account, the well-being of mankind, the hope for a good outcome of current history of nations and humanity is, generally, the task of those shepherds who are true leadership, such as that U.S. hero, the late Rev. Martin Luther King. The duty of such persons is to supply the knowledge which only such true sense of immortality can provide, as courage, to do that which needs to be done for the future of humanity.

This is as relevant to the internal affairs of the Christian Church as in all other matters in mortal life.

Most people are self-defined by their mental outlook and practice as "little people." They are fearfully bound to their sense of mortality, their sense of pleasure and pain within the bounds of what is for them a brief mortal existence. So, they had fled from the real world of the simultaneity of eternity, into the shadow-world against whose alluring deceptions the Apostle Paul's *1 Corinthians* 13 warns us. Thus, for such little people, the spiritual realm which is, in fact, the real source of power in and over the universe, is, for them, merely an ineffable "other world," a fantasy-world to which they imagine they might be transported at death. It is, for these poor fellows, a fantasy-world where pitiable creatures like themselves imagine that "God will provide the health-care and pay the rent on their house." It is an imagined world of poor fools, a non-existent world concocted by their tortured, futile, imaginations, a world in which that pathetic littleness of their fantasy entraps their passions.

While we may yearn for some better times, where most of our fellow human beings are not such pathetic fools as that, today, in the real world beyond mere sense-perception, the welfare of mankind must be aimed at a future in which such pitiable littleness of soul as theirs is no longer the prevalent reality. On that account, of such moral weakness in the majority of humanity, we require a certain quality of leadership in organized society. So, like the modern nation-state republic, Christianity, too, requires the form of a corporate body in which there is a leadership which has an efficient sense of immortality, a sense sufficient to lead mankind as safely as possible from one generation of folly to the next, hopefully to bring us all to a place in the scheme of things in which all men and women each have an efficient sense of their individual immortality.

In their own time and fashion, three Popes whose impact I have admired—of which John Paul II is most recent—have faced the awful implications of the age of thermonuclear weaponry, and have done so in ways necessary and sufficient to maintain the ministry given to them until now. For me, during the recent decades I have found myself in the role of a statesman, this is a fact which was often presented to me personally without much

forewarning. I have known that these Popes have not run the world, nor should they; but without what they have done, it were more than merely plausible that civilization would not have survived until now. In that light, the emotion which should overtake us as we think of the impending Papal succession which must continue that mission, is awesome.

The greatest danger before us now, is the Classically tragic possibility that humanity might fail to make those choices of sweeping change from current policy, on which the continued existence of a civilized form of human existence depends, a terrible condition which might be continued for an undetermined passage of time yet to come.

Although resurgent fascism launched by powerful financier circles, is a leading menace on this planet, once again, today, the greatest single source of threat to modern humanity, was never fascism as such, nor communism. It was, and is still today, what is often praised as the pervasive influence of that morbid practice of malignant sophistry commonly called "The Enlightenment," that is typified by the denial, by such as the followers of Venice's Paolo Sarpi, of the existence of what the science of the Pythagoreans, Plato, the Fifteenth-Century Renaissance, Kepler, and Leibniz knew as what those ancients and others recognized as the specific form of power which is man's ability to discover, obey, and deploy efficient universal principles of a living Creator's universe. This denial, or agnostic evasion of the subject of the soul, as expressed, axiomatically, by what is called "The Enlightenment," is in fact the greatest source of evil active among the political and related powers of this world today.

The evil which the standpoint of the Enlightenment represents, often assumes the form of a pseudo-Christianity which by denying man's creativity, places man's worship outside the universe where God reigns, into a Gnostic's universe, such as that of the Mont Pelerin Society's Bernard Mandeville and his follower Adam Smith, where vice reigns over the conduct of the human individual.

However, although the Catholic Church has rightly warned against the Enlightenment repeatedly, there are those in religious bodies and related circles today, whose fear of the power represented by the pro-imperialist forces of "preventive nuclear warfare" expressed by the allied, financier-oligarchy-controlled circles of President George W. Bush and of Liberal Imperialist Prime Minister Tony Blair today, is greater than their conscience. Fearful people of these times, with their fear of poverty, their fear of persecution, would have the churches capitulate to the mightily feared authority of a corrupting evil of a "faith-based initiative," or that Liberal dogma which the pro-Satanic spirit of the Enlightenment represents today. This doctrine of capitulation, sometimes described, since 1989–1992 as a utopian "End of History," has made cowards of today's Hamlets in government, and churches, and elsewhere, throughout a great portion of the world today.

Evil will secure no victory for its own pleasure from such cowardly corruption as that. I have the proven expertise to show, that the present world system, on which foundation the power of today's monied evil chiefly depends, is now doomed for rather immediate extinction, in one way or another. We have entered a time when such forms of evil, would, at the least, also destroy themselves.

Therefore, the question before us is, what is the alternative to submission to such fears? There are practical remedies, even at the present, when a general breakdown crisis of the entire world's present monetary-financial system is already onrushing. There are practical solutions, of which I have excellent knowledge; but, the question is, is there the will to adopt those alternatives?

During much of the 1980s, I enjoyed a close collaboration with many circles around the world, including many notable Cardinals and other officials of the Catholic Church. Then, our shared hope was that the Soviet government might choose the wiser course, to have avoided its otherwise already imminent economic self-destruction. This evoked view, encouraged by President Ronald Reagan's March 23, 1983, presentation of a Strategic Defense Initiative, publicly, to the Soviet government, promoted optimism for a peaceful transformation in many leading Church and other circles, especially during the 1982–1985 interval, but also later. Later, the efforts of John Paul II on behalf of a peace among faiths, had a relatively weaker, but nonetheless crucial appeal.

In all these and kindred experiences of my lifetime, and from comparable lessons from earlier history, I know that it is not fear of evil which rescues mankind from a fresh great folly, but, rather, a clear and optimistic view of the relevant, hopeful, and real alternative. It is the duty of true leaders to present that remedy. On this account, the three recent Popes to whom I have referred, were crucial in their time. What, then, shall we do next, now that they, in succession, have been taken from among us?

These, as a great American once said, are times which try men's souls. I would suggest, that the first step is to know one has a soul. On this account, there is a crucial strategic conflict between those who merely have been taught to wish to believe that they might have a soul, and those who are on a knowing, first-name basis with their own soul. From among the latter, we find our capable leaders for times of grave crisis; unfortunately, they are too few, and even among them, few eligible are permitted to attain the posts from which their necessary leadership can be exerted. That fearful question was posed, again, by the saddening news from the Vatican today.

There is a power in the universe, which the creative powers of the individual human mind can know. I have devoted most of my life to discovering such powers, and that with at least sufficient success to prove the point. Those who have the courage to recognize that power,

and employ its instruction, express thus the continuity of the worthy institutions which mortal men and women inhabit. To become such a person within society, is the nature of what Leibniz identified as "the pursuit of happiness," the principle upon which the U.S. republic was founded. When men and women devoted to the work of such leadership pass, the survivors mourn. That mourning of such great men and women of institutions can be, in itself, a creative act by those who must then mourn; let it be so now.