

In the eighth and final chapter, Skillen makes a case for electoral reform. In particular, he urges that the United States abandon its first-past-the-post system (FPTP), which distorts representation in Congress—particularly in the House of Representatives. Because the presidency is the only political institution representing the American people as a whole, members of Congress and other officials, who are elected on a local basis, have no incentive to act in the public interest of the entire country. Instead, they tend to speak primarily for particular interests, often to the detriment of the commons. Once again, this points up the central difficulty in the predominant liberalism that reduces the public and common to the aggregate interests of autonomous individuals. As a remedy, Skillen proposes the adoption of a state-by-state party list form of proportional representation (PR) for House elections and, for the presidency, a two-ballot direct popular vote. This would open up the political process to more principled parties, which are handicapped under the present system. One of these could be a Christian-democratic party that will appeal to Christians properly dissatisfied with the current Democratic and Republican monopoly.

In a fairly short book it is, of course, impossible to touch on every issue that might form part of a Christian-democratic program. However, given that many Christians in the United States voted in the 2004 presidential election based on the stances of the two candidates on a range of moral issues, including abortion and the legal definition of marriage, Skillen might have done well to indicate how a Christian-democratic perspective would treat them. Are they central to such a perspective, or are they peripheral? CPJ's stance on such issues is clear from its Web site, but the fact that they are not addressed in this book may limit its appeal in some circles.

Finally, although one might quibble with Skillen on specifics—for example, on which forms of educational choice or PR to adopt—overall his emphasis on government's role in protecting the commons, as well as the diverse nongovernmental responsibilities properly belonging to God's image-bearers, is one that is sorely needed in a North American society caught between the polarizing approaches of individualism and statism.

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## Roman Catholic Political Philosophy

**James V. Schall, S.J.**

Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2004 (209 pages).

This book represents the most direct and the richest account of the relationship of political philosophy to revelation yet provided by Father James Schall; it is a veritable capstone for a distinguished series of books beginning with *Reason, Revelation, and the Foundations of Political Philosophy* in which he examines the relevance of revealed truth to the questions of political philosophy. Schall offers an essay in political philosophy, not theology. He plies the craft of textual interpretation and dialectical

argumentation with a confident surety and captivating delight befitting his years of reading, teaching, and writing. The reader must be prepared to hunt down that key passage in Aristotle or Plato and be ready to become better acquainted with the writings of Leo Strauss or Josef Pieper. This book is first of all an apology for political philosophy in its relationship to the city, and it takes a fresh look at the surprising need for political philosophy constantly to cast its net of questions beyond the range of reason into the deep of revealed truth.

Political philosophy is threatened with twin failures—the failure of the politician to appreciate the benefits of the philosophic quest for the city and the failure of the philosopher to acknowledge the beckoning light of revealed truth. Both failures converge in the modern era, giving rise to the closed-minded impositions of ideology and the immoderate schemes of the intellectuals. Nothing less than political philosophy and its openness to higher truth, truths of faith and reason, will save modernity from the besetting sins of ideology and fanaticism.

Readers of this journal will appreciate a quote deftly used by Schall to amplify his thesis: Lord Acton said that Saint Thomas Aquinas “helped to emancipate political philosophy from despotic theories and to confirm it in the ways of freedom.” Aquinas did so in part by his recovery of Aristotle, and in part by wresting political philosophy from the rationalists within and from the monistic empires to the east. Schall thinks that Jaffa sees but part of the role of Aquinas in the development of political philosophy (the restoration of Aristotle). In a more profound way, Thomas Aquinas saved political philosophy because he saved politics from “thinking itself an adequate explanation of reality.” By receiving the truth of faith, Aquinas was able to complete Aristotle and decisively withstand the temptations of sophistry and ideology. Aristotle himself saw the need for a principle higher than justice—friendship—for the good of the city itself.

While firmly appreciating the essence of justice and its role as one of the cardinal virtues, Aquinas soars beyond justice and the order of nature to understand the divine ground of charity, mercy, and forgiveness. Schall says that the great lesson to learn from Aquinas is that “to understand politics it is not sufficient to study politics.” One must have some grasp of the structure of the whole, and this whole is not entirely accessible to reason. Schall pairs the humility of Socratic ignorance and the silence of St. Thomas’s apophatic theology. These he contrasts with the characteristic sin of modernity—a closing in of self-sufficient reason. In a chapter entitled, “From Curiosity to Pride: On the Experience of Our Own Existence,” Schall shows how modern philosophy tends simply to refuse the call of what transcends its methodological impositions. For this very reason, in a surprising upending of a liberal shibboleth, political fanaticism accompanies not religious belief but the deliberate refusal even to consider it. Only when there is “a point within the world where men contemplate and worship God” can the city “find its proper dimensions” (146).

Schall’s account is no mere broadside upon modern ideology. It is a careful, indeed a loving, trace of the form of the political in its essential aspects and its beauty. It thus serves as a gentle warning to those “friends of the forms” who are interested in the

revival of classical political philosophy and yet maintain their own studied distance from revelation. He is at pains to show how Plato and Aristotle push the philosophic quest to the limit of the city and reason, opening themselves to what is greater than both the city and man; they did not neglect the gods. Schall interprets the *Myth of Er* to press this point, and he refers to the end of the *Ethics* wherein Aristotle urges us not to heed those who warn us to stick to the human but rather to strain every nerve to embrace what is greater than man and nature; and he also says, if man were the highest being, then political science would be the highest science.

Schall also carefully draws upon the thought of Leo Strauss, who celebrated Jerusalem as the “city of righteousness” and reminded us that every city looks up to the gods. Political philosophy, for its part, transcends the actual city in favor of the city in speech, a pattern laid up in heaven for the proper ordering of the soul. Yet, Strauss remarked that, in our day, philosophy’s role as “queen of the social sciences” must take precedence over its role as “handmaiden to theology.” These dual aspects of philosophy evidently must be balanced according to the confusions of the day. With the collapse of socialism, Schall wonders whether the role of handmaiden now needs to be emphasized as liberal ideology draws its strictures around public discourse, choking off man’s aspiration for what is higher to the detriment of the city itself. The modern democratic ideology slides smoothly from easy tolerance to radical relativism and sets itself as the sole arbiter of truth and discourse. Along with Lord Acton, Schall is right to point to Thomas Aquinas as one who would help emancipate political philosophy, precisely because he emancipates the full eros for being and truth. Aquinas, along with Schall and other disciples of St. Thomas such as Ernest Fortin, propel us into metaphysics and theology from the vantage point of the city and man.

Schall applies the wise counsel of Pope John Paul II to see faith and reason as the “two wings upon which we mount to contemplation of truth.” The chapter titled, “Roman Catholic Political Philosophy” is a discourse upon the pope’s encyclical *Fides et ratio* as it pertains to the study of political philosophy. He notes that it is uncanny how the pope “addresses the very theoretical issues urged by philosophers like Strauss and Voegelin.” Again, his concern is specifically for those thinkers who remain open to classical political philosophy but are curiously closed to revelation. This refusal to consider revelation betrays philosophy’s very claim to be open to all that is. What Schall asks of his readers is not an “artificial faith” from an unbeliever, but instead “an intelligent understanding of what is proposed in revelation, if nothing else as an intellectual consideration that has some relation to issues not found satisfactorily answered in reason.”

Schall’s account reaches its peak in a chapter entitled, “Worship and Political Philosophy.” He draws upon the work of Catherine Pickstock and Josef Pieper to argue that worship completes the work of political philosophy itself. It was Plato after all who suggested that we spend our lives “singing, dancing, sacrificing” (*Laws*, 803e). To bolster Schall’s case, I would make reference to Aristotle’s citation of Homer at the end of the *Politics*, VIII.3. The high point of our life together, the right use of leisure, arrives

when we assemble at the banquet to listen to the bard. The bard sings the stories of the gods and heroes because virtue is renewed by a love of what is enduring and worthy of praise. Where is the bard to be found? Where the stories of gods and heroes? We are loathe to admit, Schall says, that the “neglect, corruption, and unknownness” of an authentic tradition of worship of God has consequences in the political order because “the restless souls of men [are] unable or unwilling to find a proper object of their striving” (146).

Thus, Schall modestly proposes the Roman Catholic tradition because it offers “a locale” for worship. It also offers parables of the Incarnate God and a cloud of witnesses, both salutary for the city and the soul. The influence of Catholicism upon political order is not direct, but indirect. It provides no direct teaching on tax policy, foreign policy, or economics, but it clarifies “what it is that we exist for, what the world is about, what is our end and our happiness.” This puts the political in its proper perspective and thereby “emancipates political philosophy from despotic theories.”

The reader of this book will learn much and enjoy its range and resources; we must agree with Father Schall that “however esoteric or strange it may sound, the consideration of Roman Catholicism and political philosophy together, keeping proper distinctions, is itself a worthy endeavor that betrays the deepest cultural and intellectual purposes” (159).

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## Performing the Faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence

**Stanley Hauerwas**

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2004 (252 pages)

Stanley Hauerwas is the Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke Divinity School. He is perhaps best known for his advocacy of Christian pacifism, and in this collection of essays he explores some of the implications of an ethic of nonviolence.

The book is poorly named, as the subtitle, *Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence*, would lead the unsuspecting reader to conclude that this work focuses on Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s affinities for and interest in pacifism. Instead, the book can be viewed as made up of two parts: the first part (*Bonhoeffer*) consisting of chapters 1 and 2, in which Hauerwas deals with his interest in Bonhoeffer, and the second part (*and the Practice of Nonviolence*) consisting of the remainder of the book, in which Bonhoeffer elicits nary a mention. It is difficult to argue even for an implicit influence by Bonhoeffer on the second portion of the book, given the thin and unconvincing methods by which Hauerwas asserts Bonhoeffer to have been a pacifist.