Rev. Stanley J. Parry (1918-1972), a priest of the Congregation of Holy Cross, taught undergraduate political theory at the University of Notre Dame in the 1950s. He wrote no scholarly books and thus spared himself the neglect their writers often suffer. He would have found this “good fortune” amusing. Between 1954 and 1961 Father Parry published a few articles that present a sequence of ideas and a pattern of thought distinctively his. I intend to sketch it by reviewing three of the articles. This will also help to indicate the thematic content of his classroom presentations. 1

While Father Parry was a warm supporter of the conservative movement in American public life and sometimes brought men like Willmoore Kendall to the campus for the edification of his students and colleagues, 2 he was not as self-consciously Conservative as his closest faculty colleague, Gerhart Niemeyer. 3 As a “theorist,” Father Parry regarded the “live” transmission of classical and Christian wisdom as his primary educational mission. He encouraged hundreds of young men to become conversant with that tradition, to heed its implications, and to pass it along. Not a few of them earned higher degrees and attained positions of responsibility in academic life and public service.

Although he served for a number of years as Head of the Political Science Department—a title he thought more congenial than “Chair”—Father Parry took no interest in “bureaucracy,” modest as it was in those days. He simply
allowed memoranda to go unread and unanswered, reasoning that “someone will call” if a matter needed attention. Term papers, too, accumulated on the large desk in Father Parry’s study; they had served their purpose. But if a student should inquire, Father Parry would patiently look for the paper and spend as much time as it took to read it aloud in the student’s presence, adding critical comments and observations. Those spontaneous tutorials meant a good deal to students who sought him out.

Father Parry thought an undergraduate education in political theory consisted more in reading than in writing. A memorandum addressed to the department faculty by graduate assistant, J. H. Hennessy on Jan. 13, 1962, appealed for a reduction of “the amount of material which must be covered.” But the heavy demand was surely meant to set a high level of expectation toward which future teachers, at least, would reach. It did not matter so much if less-motivated students read (and memorized) just enough, as Mr. Hennessy feared, to make the “facile generalizations” needed to pass the course without achieving much understanding.

I

During his tenure as department head, Father Parry published a richly documented study of the nineteenth-century American Catholic publicist, Orestes A. Brownson. Beginning with the secondary literature of the 1940s and ’50s, Father Parry made use of the corpus of Brownson’s works, housed in the University library, with the intention of providing further evidence of his metaphysics and deepening the interpretation of his political thought. It is evident that Father Parry understood himself, too, as a political “theorist” who “attempt[s] to interpret man’s relation to man in civil society” in the larger perspective “of man’s relation to the universe and to God.” Inevitably, “the theorist’s world view [would be] spelled out in his view of the state.” The choice of Brownson may be taken to indicate that Father Parry shared the same premises and welcomed an opportunity to set them forth in a careful and well-
reasoned exposition. The result is a sympathetic and persuasive presentation of the “distinctive metaphysic” upon which Brownson “elaborate[d] his political theory” and went on to seek a “theological solution...to the ultimate problem raised by that theory”—the problem of the best regime. 6

Brownson’s “metaphysic” was worked out in polemic with American Transcendentalists, who rejected the idea of an objective ontological order and tried to derive moral and political norms from “a conscience which [is] a projection of self” upon the real order of things. 7 Father Parry summarized Brownson’s opposing view in six propositions, all discoverable by reason: 1) “God alone can create.” 2) “Anything existing in nature must be the product of Divine causality.” 3) “Nature” is potency needing actualization in the course of historical development. 4) The original creative act is continued in this development. 5) History is “the unfolding of nature under the guiding causality of Divine Providence.” 6) Having a nature in common, men exercise a secondary causality as they seek to discover and implement the purposes of God in nature and in history. 8

Although the essay proceeds from metaphysics to politics to theology, it seems more logical to begin with the decisive influence on Brownson’s political thought of Christian revelation and the doctrine derived from it by the Catholic Church before taking up his political-juridical “solution.” The whole of Brownson’s thought bears the imprint of his pilgrimage toward the Catholic Faith in a long and complex conversion process which is, perhaps, unique in American intellectual history.

Central to Brownson’s political theology is his distinction between civil society and the state—between a nation’s “generative” Constitution (which he always capitalized) and its conventional constitution. The former provides a society’s substantial, organic structure and the authority naturally latent within it, while the constitutional framework for the society’s government is the product of accidental, evolutionary developments. Thus the organic Constitution may be said to proceed from God and so to provide the fixed standard for whatever written constitution is freely elaborated by God’s human
instruments. Brownson explains the origin of society in terms of divine creation and Providence, not human agreement. It must therefore be considered sacred, well suited to these particular people, and legitimate. 9

Brownson devoted considerable energy to a critique of the opposing liberal-democratic or individualist theory, which roots social existence and authority in an act of the human will, individual or collective. The attribution of primary causality and creative power to man necessarily eventuates in anarchy or despotism, he argued. Orderly political life is possible only when it corresponds to the order of the universe. 10 This difference is explained in terms of the four Aristotelian causes: “the social bond...has as its efficient cause Divine Providence, and so its “formal cause...pre-exists in the mind of God.” The final cause is the same as every human institution: manifesting God’s glory and securing man’s salvation. Given the contrary views against which Brownson contended in oral and written debate, he found it necessary to devote most of his attention to “the nature and limitations of human causality.” Only the “material cause resides in human actions.” 11

Father Parry elaborated this instrumental role (and its difference from free deliberation), by pointing out that “human causality functions rightly only when it brings the intentions of God to completion in the area of human liberty” by giving civil society a suitable political constitution. Human actions are cooperative, not creative. “The basic problem” the legislator faces “is to discover the form of government inherently required by the society” he governs. 12 The “good regime,” then, would be any form of government which “is the product of secondary causality operating [in] harmony with the primary effects of Providence” in a particular social context. 13 If that harmony is absent, the regime must be a “bad” one. Father Parry devoted some attention to a comparison of this conclusion with the organic theories of Plato and Rousseau and pointed out how Brownson’s theory surpassed Burke’s, which admits the possibility of an “immanent unfolding of a naturally existing form or idea.” 14 Perhaps because The American Republic was not yet available in paperback,
Father Parry assigned to his classes Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* as the foil to Rousseau’s *Social Contract*.

Most of Father Parry’s essay is devoted to the political theory Brownson built in the American context upon the universal metaphysical premises and the Catholic theological integration of those premises with the resulting theory. Although the premises were different, Father Parry found Brownson’s political theory similar to the one Burke had earlier worked out in polemic with radical contractarians of the Enlightenment. It has three simply-stated subordinate elements: “an organismic theory of the origin of civil society;” “a consent theory of the origin of government;” “a natural law theory of the norm of just law.”

Father Parry found this to be “a striking integration” of permanence and change that respected the prerogatives of the divine Sovereign and the noble operation of human causality. In accord with Brownson (and Aristotle), he asserted that man’s highest calling is to act so as to bring “the [perfect] mind of God, discoverable in the nature of things, [and the imperfect] historical order...into agreement.”

Analysis of Brownson’s political theory concluded with the practical problem of resolving conflicts that are bound to arise even in good regimes between the authority of law and the authority of personal conscience when these two propose different conceptions of justice. “The ordinary norm of just law will always be the values inherent in the existing order”—i.e., in tradition—which develop within “the limitations reality imposes on human choice.”

But in the complexities of actual political life, another norm of justice is also relevant: the personal norm of moral action called conscience.

At the end, Brownson thought that the conflicting norms could be resolved “securely and in principle” only in a Catholic society, for only there can be found a universally acceptable and infallible source of judgment—the authority of the Church as interpreter of God’s will. If the Catholic Church has received “an authority divine in both its origin and exercise,” she alone has the right to guide consciences to conclusions which may be opposed to the
ordinary norm of just law. In a secular order such conflicts must be insoluble because historical contingencies can provide no final normative arbiter. Father Parry observed that “this solution is profoundly indicative of the intensity with which Brownson struggled against the individualism and subjectivism of the transcendentalist theory” 20—not unlike Father Parry’s opposition to the collectivist attempt of Marxism-Leninism to produce the absolute norm of a pseudo-religious totalitarian regime.

Here, then, is his bedrock agreement with Brownson: “ultimately, the solution to the problem raised in political theory is reached in the supernatural order”—i.e., in the acceptance of divine revelation as normative for the contingencies of human history. 21 “The problem of freedom and order [is] solved in principle” only when there is “consensus on fundamental principles,” only “when all citizens are [effectively] Catholic,” in mind and in practice. 22 Presumably this would be the best regime, a kind of analogue to the ideal republic of Plato. For a time, Brownson thought such an eventuality possible in America, given the fortunate convergence, in his view, of our constitution with our Constitution. It is interesting to recall that Alexis de Tocqueville also thought Catholicism was America’s destiny. But as Brownson grew older, that hope all but dissolved in the rising anti-Catholic sentiment occasioned by increased immigration from the old Catholic countries of Europe. Nevertheless, Father Parry surely thought it could serve at least as a paradigmatic idea to entertain “in theory” as he confronted the intractable dilemmas of political life in the post-war years.

II

For many conscientious Americans, conflict between law and conscience came to a critical juncture in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and ‘60s. This permitted Father Parry to call upon some lessons of Brownson and Burke along with his own reasoning and experience. An opportunity to enter the debates occasioned by minority grievances and government attempts to
alleviate them came in January, 1958 when Parry and Gerhart Niemeyer drafted a memorandum and refined it in discussion with faculty colleagues before sending it to Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh. The Notre Dame President was then beginning his service with the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, created by the Eisenhower administration on September 9, 1957. Such an opportunity for political theorists to influence political practice was approached, one may suppose, with dubious expectations, and yet it was not to be missed.

The memorandum, published in the Notre Dame student newsmagazine, *The Scholastic*, 23 is more illuminating than it could have been at the time in light of subsequent disruptions of public order which the authors predicted would follow direct government interference with long-standing cultural practices in the name of abstract principle: When government tries to decide “on the basis of substantive moral right” between “mutually exclusive concepts of justice, each based on sincere conviction even though on faulty thinking,” Parry and Niemeyer argue, the effect must be a deepening of the rift between those hostile positions. One is led to wonder whether the rift might have been less turbulent had the Civil Rights Commission been guided by this assessment of the situation:

...there falls to the government the moral task of setting up and maintaining a constitutional structure that includes some official recognition of each of the contending groups but avoids identifying public authority exclusively with any one of the clashing convictions. A constitutional structure assigning this kind of role to the government becomes in itself an all-embracing order of justice and constitutes a concept of the common good acceptable to groups with conflicting notions of justice. In other words, where people hold different and unreconciled ideas about justice, a limited function of the state is a moral duty. The state acts as an instrument of virtue precisely by refraining from acting as an instrument of salvation. It makes possible
a peaceful and just community by confining itself to the peacemaking
tasks of a reconciling constitutional structure. 24

In brief, “an attempt on the part of government to throw its weight behind one
of these conflicting concepts must destroy the existing chances of mutual
forbearance and so the moral quality of American life.” 25

That the six members of the Civil Rights Commission—serving their
country as practitioners, not theorists—did not heed this counsel is evident in
an article Father Hesburgh published in 1972 after serving on the Commission
for fourteen years. Ironically, the article, based on his testimony before Sen.
Edward M. Kennedy’s hearings in 1971, appeared only a few months after
Father Parry’s death on Feb. 18, 1972. It may thus serve as a kind of
memorial to the ineffectiveness of theoretical argument in councils of state at
critical junctures. 26 The Notre Dame President admitted the Commission’s
frustrations at having failed to end racial inequities after laboring so hard “and
in good faith.” By 1971 “no major recommendation of the Commission—not
one—had been adopted,” even after the outbreak of violence. The civil rights
laws of the 1960s “were not working very well,” and public agencies the
Commission had sought to instruct were “performing badly.” 27 That is, the
“instrument of salvation” had failed and was not even serving as an
“instrument of virtue.”

Nevertheless, the Commission would adhere to its strategic goal: to
induce federal agencies to carry out official policies in the face of “enormous
resistance to any change, particularly a change so drastic as that involved in
civil-rights enforcement.... The time...will come,” however, when superior
enlightenment will prevail. 28 That is, governmental action has not prevailed,
but it must eventually prevail because “it is the right thing to do.” 29

Apparently, the well-intentioned political practitioners were unable to free
themselves from the assumption that their cause was the right one. There
could be no question of revising it on the basis of deeper reflection. When
Father Hesburgh asserts that the Commission “has taken a broad view of
political reality,” he is referring to the “political winds” of transient partisan interests and agendas—something other than the substantive reality addressed by the theorist. What is correct in theory is often not politically correct. 30

To the extent that it is seen to be theoretically correct, the Parry-Niemeyer memorandum is still capable of instructing us—with respect to racial dilemmas and other moral issues of public import. Father Hesburgh indicated that his Commission was restricted to “facts” as “our tool and our weapon”—finding, certifying, reporting, documenting, explaining, and publicizing facts. 31 The memorandum, however, stated why “the moral question” in such issues must extend beyond the facts of unjust discrimination “to the methods and instruments of politics” employed to sift and to deal with them.

As Aristotle observed in the first systematic political treatise, every community includes “groups holding mutually exclusive concepts of justice.” Thus with “the civil rights issue in contemporary America...the problem is not one of citizens violating standards on which all are agreed, but rather one of sharply divided convictions on the question of justice.” 32 The basic reality is that our society is not at one on the issue of race relations, that there are sizeable groups of Americans who profoundly disagree with each other. Until that conflict is resolved, Parry and Niemeyer assert, there are two “specific criteria of right and wrong” which government officials must take into account in making practical decisions:

1) It is wrong for a government to “consider itself an instrument for the moral elevation or correction of groups of citizens;” it is right for a government to “take authoritative action to protect the order of justice,” the constitutional balances which bear upon the issue. This action includes using laws to educate people “to practice forbearance...in spite of disagreeing convictions, and to subordinate partial interests to the common good.”

2) It is wrong for a government to adopt “abstractly formulated principles of morality” because in practice this is likely to occasion unjust and unwise rule;
it is right for a government to “look for guidance to the historical traditions [which] embody the composite judgments of most Americans through many generations. They represent an enduring consensus [which represents] the best of virtue and wisdom that is available to the community’s laws”—as “imperfect” as they may be. 33

The memorandum concluded with a summary of “the moral question”: Is it right to combat one injustice (government-sponsored discrimination against a large class of citizens) with another (government-sponsored compulsion of another large group of citizens to end that discrimination)? “The answer to this question depends [on] which of the two injustices is more injurious to the constitutional structure and historical traditions of American public life”—a matter to be decided case by case and open to a variety of opinions which need to be heard in public discourse. In general, more people are likely to be adversely affected by government compulsion, the memorandum argued, because it upsets both constitutional structure and tradition. Ultimately “the state cannot make people freer than their own ideas allow them to be. Creating some sense of common good and justice in the midst of divergent convictions is a great moral achievement. Beyond this, ultimate moral growth can be expected from Grace alone.” 34

Salvation, indeed, is not to be expected to result from any governmental action; on the contrary, when the State takes over—as in modern totalitarianism—by “suppressing divergent convictions” it is accepting no limitation on its power to translate the “true” or “right” solution “into legal command.” 35 One presupposition of a democratic community is that “no one part of the population is assumed to have virtue or wisdom to such an eminent degree as to impose an obligation on the other parts to submit to its rule.” As Aristotle taught, the government of a mixed regime “can assume a substantive right to action only with respect to the areas of general agreement” about justice. The government of a democracy should aim primarily at “making possible a common life under order and justice” by promoting “a spirit of
friendship and trust and a common willingness to abide by the law while unavoidable tensions of social life are gradually eased.” 36 This interpretation—rarely stated so eloquently—ought to have a place in public discussion of today’s burning issues.

Another clue to Father Parry’s thought on matters of obligatory action is provided by his Introduction to the Regnery paperback edition of St. Thomas Aquinas’ Treatise on Law. 37 There he observes that St. Thomas is “almost exclusively” concerned with “the roots of obligation” which lie “in the divine conception of order proper to the universe,” and not as Hobbes taught, in human will. Thus “no political authority...can impose an obligation...where it is not already latent in the nature of things;...it [obligation] originates in the mind of God and terminates in the mind of man.” 38

Those who advocate government intervention to end racial discrimination might reasonably argue that the imposition of obligation is justified because such discrimination is manifestly contrary to “the nature of things” human, and thus to the order of the universe. But Father Parry might have countered that if intervention becomes necessary for order to be preserved, we must wait for it to come from the state and local governments after they have succeeded in “creating some sense of the common good and justice” within their jurisdictions, mindful of age-old customs. History instructs us over and over that premature coercive action is invariably counterproductive. As Father Parry put it, the over-riding political problem is “to work out a system of government that will realize in fact the theoretical harmony between law and freedom,” adding that a willingness to sacrifice freedom for the sake of order is a surrender to utilitarianism. 39

III

Informing Father Parry’s intervention in the thorny political issue of civil rights is a theory of tradition that resulted from his excursion into in political pathology (the study of disorder, or breakdown). 40 His next article may be read—like most of his work—as an effort to interpret the years of foreboding
which followed World War II in terms of the conceptual apparatus Eric Voegelin’s works were now providing. Here Father Parry expresses his “pervasive” indebtedness to *The New Science of Politics* (1952) and the first three volumes of *Order and History* (1956-57). (Voegelin began regular visits to Notre Dame at the department’s invitation during Father Parry’s tenure.) Other thinkers he cites in this article are Plato, Burke, Newman, Ortega y Gasset, Simone Weil, Jacques Maritain, Josef Pieper, Romano Guardini, David Riesman, and Richard Weaver.

Father Parry begins by stating as a “position” that “the tradition of a society can be restored only by a creative and even radical reconstruction of the tradition itself.” Contrary to the popular misconception of tradition as an unvarying sameness which is antithetical to all changes in thought and institutions, “the truth is that tradition itself changes” or “unfolds” in response to the impact of contemporary life upon its inner convictions. Thus tradition “can be brought back to life,” if “bad” change has eviscerated it, “by vigorous and even radical ‘good’ change.” Tradition is what Voegelin calls “paradigmatic” or spiritual history, as distinguished from “pragmatic” or chronological history. In Voegelinian terms, this “progressive unfolding” preserves “the integrity of the original compact experience of truth whose differentiation constitutes the stages of its history.” As the “form” of a community, tradition serves as “experience of the truth through time” by uniting the members through the structures of common action and providing a stable “sense of communion.” The passing of time uncovers “ever new dimensions” of that basic truth in the course of social development. 41

One can find in this article a good deal of relevance for current efforts to understand the causes and consequences of the “cultural revolution” of the late ’60s and early ’70s, which Father Parry would have regarded as the attempt of a rebellious minority to impose a “bad” change—the radical alteration of “the very structure of the community’s experience of truth in history.” Already in 1961 he could see that “large segments of previously held truth [were] falling out of the area of [common] experience....” Voegelin had written of
“civilizational crisis” when “not men but ideas compete for existence.” Father Parry’s study of political theory enabled him to see this as no mere alteration of partisan affiliations, policy positions, or predominant interests, but as part of a passage “from order and truth to disorder and negation” and the consequent “threat of social disintegration.” 42 In this essay, and in his classroom lectures, he was already aware of “the ontological weakness of the fading form,” i.e., the erosion of our public culture by routine, apathy, and neglect.

In a note (2, p. 138), Father Parry asserted that so profound a disruption in the life of a community “has occurred not more than four and most probably three times in Western history:” the collapse of the Greek polis, the end of the Roman republic, and the Reformation. Such crises occur when a community’s experience of truth becomes “confused and incoherent….Relativism and equality [egalitarianism] are its characteristic diseases,” and “the process of disruption rapidly reaches a point of no return.” 43 This, in his view, is the larger context of “the liberal-conservative split” that derives from a basic difference over the existential standard of human life; here is how he summarized the situation:

When we consider the tenuous hold tradition has on existence, any weakening of that hold constitutes a crisis of existence. The retention of a tradition confronted with such a crisis necessitates the introduction of new spiritual forces into that situation [as a kind of new awakening; but] crisis occurs precisely as a weakening of spiritual forces. It would seem, therefore, that in a civilizational crisis man cannot save himself. The emergence of the crisis itself would seem to constitute a warranty for the victory of disorder. 44

The bulk of the essay is devoted to three possible responses to the disruption of tradition in a civilizational crisis:
First, “unanalyzed responses” (pp. 130-32): When a “quiet but deep transformation” is under way, most people are unaware of what is causing their “sense of [spiritual] dislocation” (anxiety and insecurity). Father Parry referred to the opposed responses of reactionaries and progressivists (longing for the past vs. expectation of a bright future) as “the blind attempt of an eroding society to pull itself together.” The second response is the more dangerous because it is likely to result in “coercive repression” by government agencies under the control of progressivist attempts to enforce “model ideas.”

Second, “analyzed partial responses” (pp. 133-35): As against the threat of “collectivism” in the above response, here we have two forms of individualism—economic and spiritual—which proceed from “a conscious and thoughtful analysis” of the situation without yet being aware of “the central problem of civilizational crisis.” Economic individualism springs from “a radical call for the liberation of individual energy.” It “gravely misinterprets the problem...of paradigmatic crisis,” for that crisis is not about freedom, but about order. Liberty has no meaning or direction when the basis of all meaning “threatens to drain out of human life entirely.” Furthermore, liberty is only the mode of action, not its substance. Spiritual individualism, on the other hand, “neglects the problem of right social order”—the central problem in civilizational crisis—when it denounces “the objectification of society” as inimical to subjective freedom. One is tempted to say that he may have had the U.S. Civil Rights Commission in mind.

Third, “the prophetic response” (pp. 136-137): This “true response to the civilizational crisis” attempts to “evoke a common awareness of a truth that has been lost.” This response “has not yet been elaborated” and calls for identification of “the substantive elements in a restoration of tradition”—a work which “has only just begun,” primarily by Voegelin.
Perhaps the principal teaching in this essay is that a “contemporary crisis” (n. 2, p. 138) cannot be resolved by political means (policy programs, institutional reforms), for “totalitarian rule inevitably follows when a disrupted society attempts to reconstruct itself” that way. The correct (“prophetic”) response is “meta-political”—i.e., educational, cultural, and religious attempts to recover the “substantive meaning” of our political community in the tradition that expresses our “experience of truth.” 45

Father Parry’s role as priest, teacher, and theorist is analogous to that of Plato, Augustine, and Burke: By studying “previous crises and responses” he thinks we can “discover the nature and form of both crisis and response.” 46 This assumption seems to be responsible for the selection of authors chosen for the political theory course he team-taught with Gerhart Niemeyer: Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Hobbes, Locke, and Burke. As “an exercise of memory,” the course was part of a restorative effort inspired mainly by Voegelin. Dozens of young teachers came out of that classroom in O'Shaughnessy Hall to enlist their energies in this labor, often against the resistance of cultural revolutionaries and their popular but superficial programs.

At Notre Dame, Parry and Niemeyer saw themselves as mentors engaged in restoring tradition “to its ontological status as the form of society.” They strove to “re-experience” that tradition in the company of young minds, apprentices who would one day have disciples of their own. In their souls would survive “in a critically purified manner...the order of society.” 47 The classroom was already a “re-constructed community” discovering how to “experience truth” and how to induce the same experience in others with full respect for the freedom of their minds and wills.

But Father Parry’s purpose went beyond mere exposure to those classical writers: “Truth once lost can only be regained in a new and more sophisticated version.” Reconstruction always requires a careful assessment of the unique circumstances accompanying a breakdown. The first step had to be a critique of the unanalyzed and partial responses in order to understand why they were “unacceptable.” Then the critique could pass on to “the distorted society itself
in its condition of decay.” This more profound critique must try to identify such a condition’s underlying principle “without rejecting the rest of the tradition. For the principle in which dissolution originates is itself part of the tradition...: [every society] has the seeds of destruction planted in its way of life.” In other words, the proper response cannot be utopian; it must acknowledge and respect the inherent imperfection of every existing order.

This task is daunting, for the meta-political critic is confronted with “a completely dismantled tradition,” and in seeking to heal it by means of “critical purification” rather than by ideological “creative innovation,” he risks causing “a further theoretical disturbance” while excising the cancerous tissue. If the operation is successful, “the old truths may once again come together to give a coherent and persuasive account of the order proper to man.” The precise inter-relation between old and new must determine “the strategy of reconstruction.” It begins with an appeal to truths still accessible and recognizable as superior to their distortions. For “good” change occurs “within a continuum of historical experience.” The breakdown cannot be corrected unless this is experienced as a recovery, or “enlightenment;” the break in paradigmatic history thus “becomes part of a larger pattern of purpose.”

Father Parry realized that “the goods” we pursue in the temporal order are limited and imperfect. They point to “the good” that transcends this life, the “ultimate good...not yet” ours in which to “rest.” But as his final note indicates (13, p. 138), his purpose was “restricted” to the “world immanent aspects” of the problem of human order. The “other aspects [are] equally important,” but their analysis would go beyond political theory to religious experience, and Father Parry (unlike Plato and Augustine, it may be observed) seemed careful not to venture that far—at least in the classroom and in his published work. Yet the essay does close with an eloquent allusion to “man’s desperate need to achieve significance through union,” that he “empty himself” in order to achieve it, and the human capacity to “perceive new and more brilliant facets of that good which is the good for man.” For such an experience the teacher-prophet can provide an indispensable propaedeutic.
1. Psci 32 (Introduction to Political Theory) closed my undergraduate career at Notre Dame, 1955-56. The final essay exam asked how Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau had contributed “to my recognition of truth concerning the nature of political theory.” Constant reference to truth oriented Father Parry’s teaching, along with habitual good humor and a positive outlook.

2. Father Parry had prepared Kendall and received him into the Catholic faith. At the time of his death at age 58 in 1967, Kendall was chair of Economics and Politics at the University of Dallas.


4. In the fall semester the readings I assigned to Commerce College students consisted of books I, II, VIII-X of Nichomachean Ethics, the eight books of Politics, books XI, XII, XIX of The City of God, and parts 1 and 2 of Leviathan. Of twenty supplementary books on reserve in the library, each student was to choose six. The spring list included Locke’s Second Treatise, Rousseau’s Social Contract, and Burke’s Reflections.


6. 194.
7. 204.
8. 194 f.
9. 195.
10. 195 f.
11. 197 ff.
12. 201 f.
13. 200.
15. 198.
16. 195.
17. 204 f.
18. 204.
19. 206-211.
20. 209.
21. 211.
24. 12; emphasis added.
25. 13.
27. 296, 301.
29. 298, 301 f.
30. 300.
31. 299.
32. *Scholastic*, 12.
33. 13.
34. 13, 21; emphasis added.
35. 12.
36. 13.
38. v-vii.
39. x.
41. 125 f., 129. Cf. the similar view of a contemporary of Father Parry at the University of Illinois, Francis G. Wilson, who is the subject of a study in Modern Age, XLI, 1 (Winter 1999) 58. E. Robert Statham, Jr. quotes Father Parry’s notion of tradition (from p. 126) as the prologue to chapter 6 of The Constitution of Public Philosophy (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1998).
42. 127 f.
43. 128.
44. 129.
45. 135.
46. 135.
47. 135 f.
48. 136.
49. 136 f.
50. I am unaware of any private, more meditative or “esoteric” sessions to which Father Parry may have invited a closer circle of students for the purpose of exploring those “other aspects.” Nor do I recall ever assisting at his Mass or hearing him preach a homily.
51. 137.

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