This is an inspiring and well reasoned collection of essays. It is highly recommended for physicians, medical students, ethicists, moral theologians,

and any one interested in the ethics of medicine.

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Church, State, and Society: An Introduction to Catholic Social Doctrine

by J. Brian Benestad

Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010. 500 pp.

A comprehensive review of Catholic social doctrine should be a welcome addition to any thoughtful Catholic's library, or perhaps even more so, as a reference volume for college-level students. However, the accomplishment of organizing and writing such a work would seem to be a very daunting task. Neither left nor right, the work is in essence Catholic. J. Brian Benestad has thoroughly accomplished that task in his intellectually provocative work *Church, State, and Society: An Introduction to Catholic Social Doctrine*. The author provides the fundamental magisterial underpinnings to most of the Church's teachings on social doctrine and develops his own personal contribution to a more robust understanding of the meaning of human dignity. He describes well both the intrinsic dignity of human persons and the dignity to be achieved by consistently living virtuously with the help of God's grace.

The opening chapter supports most of the remaining work. Benestad lays out a Christian anthropology based on the intrinsic dignity and worth of the human person. He articulates the Catholic understanding of human rights, an understanding that is not rooted in a liberal concept of freedom, but rather in the fact that man is formed in God's image (*imago Dei*). Without directly appealing to divine revelation, Benestad argues for a moral philosophy that can stand on the firm feet of the natural law, and he does so by referring to the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, Martin

Luther King Jr., and Blessed John Paul II. He makes a very strong case for the natural law that is both commonsensical and intellectually convincing.

Benestad includes another foundational chapter on the meaning of the common good. He points out the *Catechism of the Catholic Church's* definition of the common good as containing three elements—promotion and protection of the fundamental rights of persons, the development of the spiritual and temporal good of society, and the peace and security of the group and its members. Relying heavily upon the writings of Vatican Council II, he reflects upon the areas of human action in the world, the dignity of marriage and family, and life in the political community. Benestad stresses that “Catholics are always bound by the ideal of Christian perfection and would rely on the family, church, educational institutions and other voluntary associations, and the law to promote perfection as they understand it” (109). In the current political climate marked by vigorous debate on conscience protection, it is important to live lives that attract others because they are rooted in virtue and ultimately lead to joy. The firm hope is that as society is transformed by Christian witness there will be a transformation of law.

The book has a wonderful chapter on virtue and grace—a chapter that can stand alone as a separate essay on the longing of all human hearts. Using narratives from classic literature, the author fully describes

the conflict between man's lower nature attracted to vice and his higher nature prompted to ascend to the good, the true, and the beautiful. Benestad clearly makes the case that human happiness is found in a life of virtue. He states "self-inflicted unhappiness necessarily results from the absence of virtue" (128). It is truly refreshing to hear about the connection between the common good and personal sanctity at a time when the Catholic left and right cannot find a common language to express their shared goals. Hence, an appeal to the ancient virtues (prudence, temperance, fortitude, etc.) would be an excellent starting point in dialogue.

For those in the health professions, the chapter titled "Seeking the Common Good through Law and Public Policy" is especially noteworthy. By linking same-sex marriage, the life questions, and biotechnology, Benestad adeptly explains and defends the Catholic response to these hot points in the culture war by a defense of natural law. He reveals the negative consequences for society if poor choices are made in these critical areas of human life. There is also a thorough review of the true basis of human rights and its profound diminishment in modern public discourse that uses "rights" arguments to promote same-sex marriage, abortion, and euthanasia. The author affirms that "another reason for the denial of rights in practice is an individualistic understanding of freedom divorced from truth and solidarity with others" (186). An "all about me" society is destined to morph into a totalitarian state of relativistic oppression of the true good of man. As I write this review, the U.S. is media-saturated with arguments for and against mandated insurance coverage for contraception. Unfortunately, rather than seeing how separating fertility from the loving conjugal union leads to a lessened human dignity, it always seems to be warped into an almost ubiquitous argument for so-called "women's rights." There is a complete ignorance of how contraception can objectify women and either consciously or subconsciously allows them to be used as a "means to an end." It may only seem obvious to those minds and hearts open to a

true and uncompromising view of women's dignity to see the "disconnect." This argument has not been articulated adequately by either MSNBC or FOX News, to name just two media sources.

One of the most engaging parts of the book is the wonderful treatment of the family. Utilizing papal writings, personal stories, and Scripture, the author reminds the reader in a scholarly manner of the supreme importance and functional beauty of a loving family. Again concerning contraception, he speaks heart to heart by stating that "the union obtained through authentic conjugal intercourse confirms the spouses' affection for each other and has a healing effect on their hearts and souls often wounded by so many enemies of love in the world" (269). I wish such articulations and penetrating words would be added to the nightly cable news, yet, so many of us are satisfied with superficial sound bites. This book serves as an antidote to those tendencies. This should be recommended reading for couples who are entering into the sacrament of marriage and need to gravitate to first principles that will guide them through their entire life of marital union.

The final section of the book includes an excellent treatment and review of environmental issues and "just war" principles. As someone who focuses mainly on the life issues, I especially appreciated the author's ability to present a balanced view of these topics. The chapter on war teaches us that in limited circumstances a warring party can be seen as acting in charity. Conscientious objectors are also given a fair hearing, and Benestad stresses the critical need to protect conscience rights. Yet in the balance, a conscientious objector may still have a duty to support his country if their cause is just. Benestad's treatment of controversial topics, such as the use of nuclear weapons at the end of World War II and the carpet bombing of Dresden, was particularly well done. It is indeed enlightening to hear terms such as prudence and double effect in these fundamental questions of state action. The book ends in an insightful essay on the tension between Catholic social doctrine and the proponents of religion as a private affair. He adeptly counters the

idea of moral relativism and its corollary of trying to marginalize religion and keep it out of the public square. As a bonus, an appendix includes a fine review of Pope Benedict XVI's third encyclical *Caritas in veritate*.

In summary, Dr. Benestad has provided a thinking readership with a superlative work on all the aspects of Catholic social doctrine. More than an academic work, it is also an exhortation to live lives of virtue in relation to others—lives that are always right-ordered, not “rights-ordered.” It is not often that I have found a college or graduate textbook to be a source of in-

spiration. Brian Benestad is able to achieve that goal by making Catholic social doctrine accessible to the lay Catholic. Although the work can be a bit dense, mainly due to its weighty subject matter, I remain highly grateful for the book on two levels—the mind and the heart. In conclusion, this book receives my highest recommendation and should have a prominent place in Catholic libraries.

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Sudden Infant Death or Infanticide: An Unresolved Mystery

by Eugene F. Diamond, M.D.

Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2012. 56 pp.

Dr. Eugene Diamond is a prolific writer on medical-ethical themes. His short book *Sudden Infant Death or Infanticide? An Unresolved Mystery* is one of his better efforts. It covers the whole syndrome of sudden infant death (SIDS) but focuses on a single example of six infants that occurred in a single family with whom he was personally involved.

The author became involved with the family when he was summoned to an emergency room to respond to the presentation of an infant who arrived in a moribund state, which is ultimately confirmed as “dead on arrival.” The baby's history and physical condition are typical of a classic presentation of SIDS. The infant proved to be the product of the mother's fourth pregnancy. All of the children of those four pregnancies, including the infant brought in dead on arrival on this date, proved after detailed and searching evaluation also to have had presentations consistent with SIDS. Autopsies in each instance were consistent with the pattern of sudden unanticipated death with no pathological explanation on post-mortem evaluation.

Now chosen by the family to be involved in the care of the mother's subsequent pregnancies, the author was alarmed by the mother's notification that she is pregnant for the fifth time. Elaborate preparations were made with the obstetrician to transfer the newborn without delay to Children's Memorial Hospital where one of the nation's leading experts of neonatal sleep disturbances, which are implicated in SIDS, could do an emergency sonogram. There were some slight but significant abnormalities in the sleep pattern, and the baby was placed on a sleep monitor to detect any slowing or irregularity of sleep. Several abnormalities were recorded after the infant was discharged, and he was started on theophylline as a respiratory stimulant.

The child continued to thrive for almost two years and became a robust infant with no serious sleep disturbances even after being removed from the monitor and theophylline. Then, totally unexpectedly the baby was found dead in his crib without warning. The death was typical of SIDS in every way, in particular, the age of death.