

JOHN CUTHBERT FORD S J

“No matter how bad things seem, when I go to bed at the end of the day, I know I am in God’s arms and am sure everything will be all right.”

This is a reproduction in Word format of the short biography by Dr Germain Grisez of Fr John C Ford SJ published on Grisez’s website, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, at <http://www.twotlj.org/Ford.html>

Fr Ford is one of many priest theologians who suffered for upholding the truth. He saw clearly what thousands did not—indeed, *still* do not—the shortcomings of the views of John Courtney Murray SJ. His comment on the *relatio* Murray drafted which resulted in the *Declaration on Religious Freedom* of the Second Vatican Council is the best short criticism ever offered of that document, and of *Dignitatis Humanae* itself—“I do not consider it theologically legitimate, or even decent and honest, to contradict a doctrine and then disguise the contradiction under the rubric: growth and evolution.”¹

The biography provides valuable background to the workings of the *Commission on Population, Family, and Birth Rate* established by Pope Paul VI, as well as insights into its members. Fr Ford famously remarked that if Pope Paul VI had decided the issue in *Humanae Vitae* otherwise than in conformity with what the Catholic Church had constantly taught, he, Fr Ford, would have had to leave the Catholic Church.

John Cuthbert Ford, S.J., was born on December 20, 1902, at 151 Stanwood Street, in the Massachusetts town of Dorchester. His grandparents were Irish immigrants. His parents, Michael Ford and Hanna Cuthbert, married in St. Joseph’s Church, Lynn, Massachusetts, in 1900. They had three children. John, their second child and only son, was baptized on June 4, 1903. The family soon moved to a nicer neighborhood in Brookline, Massachusetts, where the boy’s parents sent him to a public grade school. While in grade school, he became an altar boy at his parish, and eventually head altar boy. His pastor recommended that John enroll in a college preparatory program at the Jesuits’ Boston College High School.

Impressed by the piety and character of his Jesuit teachers, John awakened one morning during his final year at BC High with the clear conviction: “I am going to be a Jesuit!” Confident that this was God’s call, he at once committed himself and never looked back. On August 14, 1920, he entered a two-year novitiate and began his formation as a member of the Society of Jesus.

During the first year, especially as he finished a thirty-day retreat according to St. Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises*, Ford joyfully felt that all was well. But in 1921 he contracted tuberculosis and was laid up much of the time. In July 1922, he was sent for treatment at a Jesuit nursing unit in Monroe, New York. In October he was told he might be dismissed from the Society. He recovered sufficiently, however, to be allowed to make his first vows on February 8, 1923. That fall, Ford began his first two years of college at Shadowbrook in Lenox, Massachusetts.

¹ Quoted in Paul Blanshard, *Paul Blanshard on Vatican II*, Boston, 1967, p. 88. Reproduced by Michael Davies in *The Second Vatican Council and Religious Liberty*, Collegeville, Minnesota (The Liturgical Press), 1979, at p. 210

During 1925–28, he studied philosophy and other college-level courses at Weston College in Weston, Massachusetts. He received his A.B. in 1927 and Ph.L. in 1928.

In the fall of 1928 Ford began what normally was a three-year “regency,” a period of service—in his case teaching Latin to freshmen at Boston College. Around the end of the first year, however, he suffered a recurrence of tuberculosis. His superiors curtailed his regency and, in the fall of 1929, sent him back to Weston to study theology. Though recovering only gradually from his illness, he did well in his studies, was ordained to the priesthood on June 20, 1932, completed his seminary work, and received the S.T.L. in 1933.

To compensate for his abbreviated regency, Ford was assigned to teach philosophical psychology at Weston College in 1933–34. In 1934–35, he completed his formal Jesuit formation by doing tertianship (a year of study and prayer rounding out the spiritual formation begun in the novitiate). In the fall of 1935, Ford’s superiors sent him for two more years of intellectual formation, this time in moral theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He received his S.T.D. in 1937. His doctoral dissertation was: *The Validity of Virginal Marriage*. The topic pertained to canon law and sacramental theology as well as to moral theology.

Returning to the United States, Ford made final profession on August 15, 1937. With that, the thirty-four-year-old John Cuthbert Ford, S.J., S.T.D., was ready to begin his career as a moral theologian. In Rome, Ford had studied with two leading moralists of the time: Arthur Vermeersch, S.J., a Belgian, who died in the summer of 1936; and Franz Hürth, S.J., a German, under whom Ford completed his dissertation. Ford greatly admired Vermeersch’s creativity, rejection of moral minimalism, and tough-mindedness. The Belgian Jesuit had broken fresh ground, not least with a book on tolerance. As the framework of his systematic moral theology, Vermeersch used the virtues rather than the Ten Commandments, and not only catalogued sins to be avoided but dealt with the positive side of Christian life. He was careful not to use weak philosophical arguments and scriptural texts taken out of context to support the Church’s moral teachings.

Reflecting on Vermeersch’s approach, Ford asked himself: “How do we know that the Church’s moral teachings are true?” His conclusion: Because Jesus commissioned the Church to teach the baptized all that he commanded, she teaches in the name of Christ. Thus we can be sure that all the moral norms the Catholic Church has taught constantly and firmly are true. That she has taught them *as she has* makes it clear that they must be grounded in divine revelation itself, even if no Scripture text mentions them. Throughout his career, therefore, Ford regarded as unquestionable all the moral norms that the Church had constantly and firmly taught as binding on the consciences of the faithful. At the same time, he seldom offered scriptural or philosophical arguments for any of them, urged care in applying them, and was open-minded about matters regarding which the Church had not yet taught at all or had not taught constantly and firmly.

From 1937–45 Ford was Professor of Moral Theology at his alma mater, Weston College. During the early years, he also studied law at Boston College Law School, where he received his LL.B. in 1941. In 1940 a group of Jesuit scholars, including Ford, founded the journal *Theological Studies*. The plan called for an annual survey of current developments in Catholic theology. Initially, Ford contributed a section on moral theology, but beginning in 1942 he (and later others) made “Notes on Moral Theology” a regular and distinctive feature of the journal.

During those years a topic Ford worked on made him famous: In 1944 he published a forty-nine page article cogently arguing that the rights of the innocent were being violated by the obliteration bombing which the United States and the United Kingdom were even then conducting. In 1945, having mentioned in "Notes on Moral Theology" the atrocities committed by the Soviets, Nazis, and Japanese, Ford spoke bluntly of "the greatest and most extensive single atrocity in the history of all this period, our atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

Musically talented and gregarious, Ford enjoyed playing the piano and partying with his fellow Jesuits. In the early 1940s, his drinking got out of hand. Realizing this, he obtained treatment from Dr. William Silkwood at Towns Hospital in New York, regained his sobriety, and became friendly with one of A.A.'s co-founders, Bill Wilson. Finding that A.A. was more effective than previous organizations at helping alcoholics remain sober, Ford subsequently sought to ensure that A.A. would not be problematic to Catholics and would be recommended to Catholic alcoholics by their pastors. In 1948 he participated in a summer program of Alcohol Studies at Yale University; he then served as a regular lecturer in that program for many years. He also personally helped many fellow alcoholics, especially after he retired from teaching in 1969.

The experience of alcoholism nurtured Ford's previous interest in the psychological aspects of moral life and in people's complex, psycho-moral problems. Through the 1950s and '60s he continued reading in psychology, conferring with professionals in the field, and addressing psycho-moral issues in his writings. Catholic professionals and pastors, including bishops, as well as many lay people with problems increasingly sought his advice and help not only with alcoholism but with other addictive behaviors, sexual problems, scrupulosity, and so on. Competent, compassionate, and generous with his time, Ford by his confidential pastoral work provided great though little-noticed service to the Church.

From 1945–59 his superiors also used him to meet various urgent needs. In 1945 he was called to Rome to serve as Professor of Moral Theology at the Gregorian University. In 1947–48 he was back at Weston, but from 1948–51 he taught ethics and religion at Boston College. Then, while continuing at Weston from 1951–59, he spent several semesters at Jesuit theologates in West Baden, Indiana, and St. Mary's, Kansas.

When Ford went to Rome in 1945, he gladly handed over the task of doing "Notes on Moral Theology" to Gerald Kelly, S.J., Professor of Moral Theology at St. Mary's College in Kansas, and a friend since their years together as graduate students in Rome; Kelly continued the annual survey through 1954. Over the years, their friendship grew closer. The two shared the view that moral theology needed a renewal that would be both thoroughgoing and faithful to Tradition—that is, to the moral truths the Church had received and handed down.

Ford liked to analyze issues and formulate reasoned judgments on them, but he disliked research work, which Kelly enjoyed and was good at. In the early 1950s, the two men decided to collaborate on a series of volumes developing and systematizing their work on matters that they, and others after 1954, had dealt with in "Notes." The general title of the volumes would be *Contemporary Moral Theology*.

The first, *Questions in Fundamental Moral Theology*, was published in 1958 and was reprinted five times in six years. The second volume, *Marriage Questions*, appeared in 1963. Well received initially, it was reprinted the following year. In it, Ford and Kelly clearly explained and confidently defended relevant constant and firm teachings of the Church, including that

on contraception, while exercising their usual care to promote sound and gentle pastoral practices, and not to overstate moral responsibilities.

Meanwhile, important changes were occurring. Pius XII died in 1958 and Cardinal Angelo Roncalli became Pope John XXIII. On January 25, 1959, he announced that he had decided to convoke Vatican II. In the fall of that year, Ford began seven years as Professor of Moral Theology at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., looking forward with enthusiasm to both the new pontificate and his new assignment.

Though Ford never publicly criticized Pius XII or the Roman Curia, he shared the dissatisfaction then common among theologians with the overly cautious attitude of the Holy See toward innovations of any sort. He also thought Pius XII had attempted to settle some difficult moral questions without adequate study and reflection. Thus, Ford was pleased by the more open approach of the new pontificate and looked forward to the coming Council in the hope that it would pave the way for needed renewal in the Church, not least in moral theology.

The last months of 1962 were good neither for the Church nor for Ford. The first session of Vatican II ended with much less accomplished than Pope John had hoped, and the Pope himself was mortally ill. Ford had been working too hard and became exhausted. There was no recurrence of tuberculosis, but the disease had weakened him, and he now became diabetic. Hospitalized in January 1963, he obtained a semester's leave-of-absence and spent much of the following eight months regaining his health.

While Ford was recuperating, John XXIII created on April 27, 1963 (thirty-seven days before his death), a Pontifical Commission on Population, Family, and Birth-rate. Its specific purpose was to prepare for the Holy See's participation in a coming conference sponsored by the United Nations and the World Health Organization. For that reason, the Rev. Henri de Riedmatten, O.P., who worked in the Holy See's Secretariat of State, was named the Commission's Secretary General, and de Riedmatten single-handedly managed the Commission's work even after Cardinal Ottaviani, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, was named its President in February of 1966.

Pope John died on June 3, 1963. Cardinal Giovanni Montini, a man more inclined to entertain possibilities for doctrinal development than his three immediate predecessors, began his pontificate as Paul VI on June 21.

Until then, hardly any Catholics publicly defended contraception. By the end of that year, however, three European theologians had published articles challenging the received teaching. Others, who had been added to Pope John's Pontifical Commission, urged Paul VI to expand that body's mandate to consider the questions being raised about contraception, including whether using the birth control pill might be morally acceptable. Soon many other Catholics spoke up, including the Dutch and English bishops, who disagreed with one another.

Early in 1964, at Paul VI's direction, a confidential inquiry was carried out among the bishops around the world about developments on these matters in their territories, and about their own views. Cardinal Patrick A. O'Boyle of Washington, D.C., then head of the U.S. bishops' conference, asked Ford to help prepare the report for the United States. On June 6 Ford had the first of several private audiences with Paul VI on what was becoming a challenging problem. Confident of the truth of the Church's teaching on contraception that Pope Pius XI

had reaffirmed in his encyclical, *Casti Connubii*, and reassured by the reports he was receiving from bishops around the world, Pope Paul had nevertheless been persuaded that use of the birth control pill might not be contraception. He therefore believed that a thorough study was needed to ensure that the Church would not ask more of faithful Catholic married couples than God did.

Because of the complexity and delicacy of the matter, Paul VI thought that the Council was not the suitable place to consider it. So, he decided to expand the Commission again and announce its work, which he did on June 23, 1964. In doing so, he did not spell out his mandate to the expanded Commission, but indicated it by mentioning, not the teaching of Pius XI (who had taught that contraception is always gravely wrong) but that of Pius XII (who had rejected a forerunner of the pill).

That same spring, Grisez had written his first book, *Contraception and the Natural Law*. Having read *Marriage Questions*, he asked Father Ford to review the manuscript before submitting it to a publisher. Amidst a great deal of other work that summer, Ford read it, made helpful suggestions, and strongly encouraged publication.

On August 2, 1964, Gerald Kelly, Ford's collaborator and his close friend of almost thirty years, died.

In October, Paul VI appointed Ford to the Pontifical Commission on Population, Family, and Birth-rate. Grisez congratulated him, and over the following months the two occasionally had telephone conversations about developments, although Ford, respecting the confidentiality of the Commission's proceedings, said little about what he was doing. Thus, while mentioning his participation in a meeting in the spring of 1965, Ford told Grisez nothing about what had happened and shared none of its documents with him.

However, Dr. John R. Cavanagh, a Washington, D.C., psychiatrist who had also been appointed to the Commission, was less concerned about confidentiality. That summer, he discussed the meeting at length with Grisez and others, and having received the official English translation of the *Report on the Fourth Session of the Commission Set Up by the Holy See to Study the Problems of Population, Family, and Birth-rate*, he shared it with Grisez. After studying it, Grisez called Ford, and the two then freely discussed the Commission's work. It was clear that de Riedmatten, the Commission's Secretary General, had skilfully managed the session.

Philosopher and lawyer John T. Noonan, Jr., was about to publish a book about the Church's doctrine on contraception that was in effect a massive brief for the view that the teaching could change, and de Riedmatten had arranged for Noonan to summarize his case in a two-hour plenary meeting that *opened the session's discussions*. Then, instead of focusing on the question of the birth control pill or even on the truth of the Church's constant and very firm teaching, de Riedmatten focused on the question of whether, as he put it, the teaching was "reformable" or "irreformable." Twelve of the nineteen members of the theological section thought that the teaching was reformable—that it could be changed.

Although aware that Paul VI was willing to have the expanded Commission examine every aspect of the matter and make as good a case as possible for any view that might be true, Ford was surprised to find the theologians so predisposed to change. Significantly, the other members of the Commission—physicians, demographers and sociologists, married couples, and pastoral workers—sat in on almost all the discussions of the theological section. As

Grisez was told by Dr. Cavanagh, he and other non-theologians began to think, for the first time in their lives, that using contraceptives might be accepted by the Church.

Having heard beforehand about Noonan's work, Ford had hoped it would be helpful. Now he was severely disappointed. In discussing the book with Grisez, Ford raised many questions about its historical accuracy, and Grisez researched some of them. Impressed with the results, Ford tried but failed to get Grisez appointed to the Pontifical Commission. From then on, however, he regarded Grisez as a junior colleague, and in the fall of 1965 the two often talked as Ford prepared to see Pope Paul again. By then Ford had resigned from his position at the Catholic University of America effective in 1966, and had already stopped working there. But he was still living in the Jesuit residence near the University, and Grisez often visited him there.

Early in November Ford requested an audience with the Pope and was soon called to Rome. The section on marriage in Vatican II's almost-finished document, *The Church in the Modern World*, was unclear about contraception, and wanting the Council to reaffirm the teaching of *Casti Connubii*, Pope Paul put Bishop Carlo Colombo, his personal theological advisor, to work drafting amendments. On Monday, November 22, the Pope, having called Ford in for an hour-long private audience, enlisted him to work with Colombo and told him to return the next day with the draft amendments.

When Ford returned, Paul VI told him not to leave Rome as he had planned. Ford and some of the other theologians from the Commission were sent as theological advisors to the conciliar subcommission that would deal with the amendments. However, the subcommission did not welcome the Pope's initiative. Wishing to avoid open conflict as the Council drew to a close, Paul VI allowed the subcommission to revise the amendments. The result was that the Council left "certain issues" about the morality of contraception to be resolved after the Commission on Population, Family, and Birth-rate completed its work.

That outcome greatly increased both the importance and the urgency of the Commission's work. Ford and Grisez thought Paul VI should more clearly define the questions to be addressed and should direct the Commission to deliver to him, as soon as possible, the strongest cases that could be made both for and against the propositions on which its members disagreed. Ford tried to convey that idea to Paul VI and also urged de Riedmatten to organize the Commission's work in that way, though Ford had little hope that the Secretary General would do so without a direct order from Paul VI.

Ford's plan was not adopted, but the Pope did reorganize the Commission, so that all its previous members became expert advisors to sixteen cardinals and other bishops, newly named to constitute the Commission. Once again, de Riedmatten organized everything. The experts were to meet in Rome, beginning with the theologians April 19–29, 1966, continuing with various groups including a second session of the theologians May 23–28, and wrapping up with a plenary session of the experts June 5–8. The members—the sixteen prelates—were then to consider the disputed matters June 20–25, and to deliver their findings and advice to the Pope.

Easily fatigued and never entirely well, Ford found the Commission meetings tedious and disheartening. Two of the seven members of the theological section who had held the previous year that the Church's teaching on contraception could not change were no longer meeting with the experts and one other had switched sides. So Ford now found himself a member of a minority of four.

His three colleagues were good company, however. Marcelino Zalba, S.J., and Jan Visser, C.Ss.R., were leading Catholic moral theologians who had published updated versions of multivolume manuals of the moral theology that until then was typical of their religious institutes. Stanislas de Lestapis, S.J., was not only a sociologist who had published a book, *Family Planning and Modern Problems*, but a truly compassionate pastor, who foresaw that Catholics who were abandoning the Church's teachings on marriage, sex, and innocent life would experience the disastrous consequences already experienced by many non-Catholics who had embraced a secularist ethics.

Almost all the laypeople now supported change. Patrick Crowley, a Chicago lawyer, and his wife, Patricia, who had founded the Catholic Family Movement, were given ample opportunity to present anecdotal data about birth regulation gathered by methodologically questionable surveys. At one point, de Riedmatten himself invoked certain responses Paul VI had received to questions he put in 1964 to the bishops of the world; when Ford challenged the Secretary General to produce the documentation, de Riedmatten refused—and offered the excuse that it was confidential.

One of the Commission's most able experts was Josef Fuchs, S.J., Professor of Moral Theology at the Gregorian University and a scholar whose earlier work Ford knew and respected. The previous spring Fuchs had declared that the Church had not taught on contraception in a way that precluded change. But although proponents of change had cast about for an argument that would win his support, he had not then been willing to say that the teaching was mistaken. Now, however, Fuchs had found a satisfying rationale for the moral acceptability of using contraceptives, and was prepared to say that the Church should change her teaching. The Commission's other proponents of change, most of them not moral theologians, gladly embraced Fuchs's new rationale.

Delighted with the emergence of what he called "substantial consensus"—fifteen members of the theological section denied that using contraceptives is in itself morally bad, while only four still held that position—de Riedmatten quickly recorded their votes (April 28). The Secretary General later put the tallies near the beginning of his *Rapport Final* (see pp. 8–10) and made them one of its central features.

For the experts of the theological section, the May sessions were an anticlimax. However, a proposal was made to facilitate the work of the Commission's members—the prelates who would meet in June—by preparing papers summarizing the opposing cases on the question: Is using contraceptives always gravely wrong? Convinced that the case for the Church's teaching is far stronger than the case its opponents had cobbled together, Ford and his colleagues enthusiastically accepted the proposal. The other side also agreed, and a date was set for delivering the two papers.

Ford drafted the principal parts of the paper for his group; to most of his draft, his three colleagues offered only minor amendments. However, although all four favored giving an account of the other side's underlying theory, they lacked time to work out an account they could entirely agree upon. So, the others accepted Ford's draft with an indication that not everyone agreed with everything in that section. Fr. de Lestapis also prepared a pastoral supplement, which his three colleagues gladly included.

On the agreed day, Ford delivered the completed paper, which was in Latin: *Status Quaestionis: Doctrina Ecclesiae Eiusque Status*. Those on the other side gave an excuse for

lateness and delivered their paper, also in Latin, a few days later: *Documentum Syntheticum de Moralitate Regulationis Nativitatum*. When later telling Grisez what had happened, Ford wryly observed that the document's drafters had made good use of the extra time.

During those spring sessions, Ford had sent Grisez occasional letters, briefly reporting developments and asking him to research a few things. Contrary to later reports, however, Grisez was not at all involved in the preparation of *Status Quaestionis*. He first learned of it and of *Documentum Syntheticum* when both documents arrived in his mail at Georgetown with Ford's request for comments. Just finishing the spring semester at the time, Grisez set to work and soon sent many pages of comments: *Grisez's Critique of the Two Papers*.

Ford received the first batch of comments just as the final session of the experts (June 5–8) was about to begin. Most of the experts would leave after that session, but some, including ten of the theologians—seven from the majority and Visser, Zalba, and Ford from the minority—would remain to sit in on the session of the members (June 20–25). With little time and much to do to prepare for that session, Ford telephoned Grisez and asked him to fly to Rome to lend a hand.

Grisez arrived in Rome on June 8, and was helped by Francis Furlong, S.J., Rector of the Collegio Bellarmino, to settle in a room near Ford's. That evening, Ford took Grisez out to dinner and sightseeing. The next morning, the two began what would be a daily routine: Mass, a quick breakfast, and work. Ford explained that the prospects for the coming session were not bright. Karol Wojtyła, Archbishop of Kraków, would have been an able defender of the Church's teaching, but the word was that harassment by the Polish authorities would keep him from coming. No doubt he would in due course make his contribution directly to Pope Paul.

Five of the fifteen members who *were* coming—Cardinals Suenens, Döpfner, and Joseph Lefebvre (not to be confused with Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre); Archbishop Dearden; and Bishop Reuss—were known proponents of change on contraception. Cardinal Shehan and Bishop Dupuy of Albi probably shared their view. Cardinal Gracias from India, Archbishop Zoa from Cameroon, Archbishop Palido-Méndez from Venezuela, and Archbishop Morris from Ireland were unknown quantities.

In 1964 Cardinal Heenan had led the British bishops in countering the Dutch bishops' support of the pill, but lately he seemed more hesitant. Only Cardinal Ottaviani, Archbishop Binz, and Bishop Colombo were certainly opposed to change, and Colombo still thought the pill was somehow different from the contraceptives that had always been condemned. Plainly, Ford observed, when Pope Paul reorganized the Commission, he hardly tried to load it against change; rather, he wanted to give the proponents of change every opportunity to make their case.

Ford wanted to meet, if possible, with Cardinal Heenan, Archbishop Morris, and other prelates when they arrived in Rome and before their session was to begin—in just eleven days. They would have already received *Status Quaestionis*, but he wanted something else to give them: a presentation of the case against change such as a skillful debater would make. He hoped it would not only firm up their thinking on the issue but make its way into de Riedmatten's report, thus providing Pope Paul with a more rounded case than Ford had been able to present in *Status Quaestionis*.

Grisez proposed making the case by formulating a series of questions and treating each in just one page. Ford at once accepted the idea. The two formulated thirteen questions and outlined the answers, and Grisez set to work drafting. As he completed each page, Ford worked on it. Then they revised the entire draft, and Grisez typed what they expected to be the final version, which they titled: *The Church and Contraception*.

Ford and Grisez were able to meet with, and deliver the document to, Cardinals Heenan and Gracias and Archbishop Morris. Cardinal Heenan was noncommittal, and Archbishop Morris was anguished and considered himself unable to judge what Pope Paul should say about contraception. Cardinal Gracias, surprisingly, welcomed what Ford and Grisez had prepared, and at once began skimming it. In the event, Cardinal Gracias used a few of their pages during the members' session, but de Riedmatten did not mention them in his report.

Ford had heard that some of the theologians promoting change were working on a schema—that is, a draft—of a possible papal document promulgating what they expected to be the Church's new doctrine. While nothing had been said about such a schema during the sessions of experts, the plan seemed to be to put something before the fifteen prelates at their upcoming session. Ford did not know what he would do if that happened, but he thought he should have an alternative schema ready in case it was needed. So, the two developed an outline, and Grisez produced a draft. After fifteen minutes of generous praise, Ford offered many "suggestions" to "improve" it. Accepting Ford's devastating critique, Grisez scrapped most of the draft and wrote another. This one was close to what Ford had in mind, and the two worked together in correcting and polishing it. Pleased with the result, Ford translated it into Latin: *Schema Quoddam Declarationis Pontificiae circa Anticonceptionem*. During the whole of their stay in Rome, however, Ford never found an appropriate moment to make use of their alternative schema.

On Monday morning, June 20, Ford was among the theological experts sitting in as de Riedmatten began the session of the Commission's members—the fifteen cardinals and bishops who were present—with a lengthy summary of the work of the Commission, from its foundation by John XXIII until the end of the recent experts' sessions. This was De Riedmatten's *Relatio Generalis*.

The Commission had been asked in June of 1964 to examine the precise problem of the pill; in their most recent session all the theologians but one or two had agreed that it presented no special problem. However, de Riedmatten focused in his presentation almost entirely on whether contraception is intrinsically evil. He framed his summary of the Commission's work in quasi-factual observations suggesting that the widespread use of contraception made pastoral acceptance of it virtually inevitable. While inadequately summarizing the arguments set out by Ford and his colleagues in *Status Quaestionis*, he presented those in *Documentum Syntheticum* at length and sympathetically.

Each of the prelates—except Cardinal Ottaviani and Archbishop Binz, who remained silent—presented his more or less prepared intervention. There was little discussion, and no minds were changed. Some of the prelates put questions to the experts, and a few of the non-theological experts were allowed to have their say in favor of change. Before noon Wednesday, there was nothing more to say, and the prelates could have gone home. But their formal vote was not scheduled until Friday. It was proposed that a schema be prepared for a document to be issued by the Holy Father announcing the Church's new doctrine. The members discussed the idea and accepted it. The theologians supporting change readily agreed to deliver a draft the next morning—that is, Thursday.

Obviously prepared in advance, the draft—*Schema Documenti de Responsabili Paternitate* (*Schema of a Document on Responsible Parenthood*)—was discussed that day and part of the next, and some amendments were offered. Bishop Dupuy also produced a document he had brought with him entitled *Pastoral Indications*, which was well received by the other prelates who shared his position. With time running out on the members' session, they left it to the theologians present who supported change and to de Riedmatten to complete the revision of the schema for delivery to Pope Paul along with the rest of the Commission's documents.

On Friday, the prelates voted on three questions.

(1) "Whether it is the case that every contraceptive intervention—abortion and irreversible contraceptive sterilization excluded—is intrinsically illicit?" Nine voted no; three voted yes; and three abstained.

(2) "Do the members hold that the licitness of a contraceptive intervention— in the terms described by the majority of the Commission's theological experts—can be affirmed in continuity with the Church's tradition and the supreme Magisterium's declarations about the goods of matrimony?" Nine voted yes; five voted no; and one abstained.

(3) "Should the supreme Magisterium speak quite soon?" Fourteen voted yes, and one abstained.

The nine votes firmly favoring change were those of Cardinals Suenens, Döpfner, Lefebvre, and Shehan; Archbishops Dearden, Zoa, and Palido-Méndez; and Bishops Reuss and Dupuy. The three votes that firmly rejected change were those of Cardinals Gracias and Ottaviani and Archbishop Binz.

Cardinal Heenan thought that a simple reaffirmation of the received teaching would not solve the existing problem, but he was not convinced that a new teaching along the lines supported by the majority of the theologians was possible. Archbishop Morris was the one persistent abstainer. In a written explanation, he said neither side's arguments convinced him; he suggested that the issue be submitted to the bishops around the world. That proposal was supported by Cardinal Ottaviani, but opposed by others. Put to a vote, it was rejected eleven to four.

None of those prelates' views surprised Ford, but the view of Paul VI's personal theologian, Bishop Carlo Colombo, did. Colombo held that there were methods of contraception that the Church had always condemned, but he left open the possibility that the condemnation admitted exceptions in some cases. Although he thought the view of the majority theologians was at odds with the past teachings requiring respect for the "integrity of the conjugal act," he also thought there might be contraceptive methods, presumably including the pill, compatible with it.

Bishop Colombo's views surely contributed to Paul VI's conviction that a thorough study of contraception was necessary. In rejecting Colombo's peculiar view, as Paul VI ultimately did, the Pope—on the issue that had mainly concerned him—acted *in accord with* the nearly unanimous advice of the Commission's experts and members.

Although Cardinal Ottaviani was the President of the Commission and realized that de Riedmatten's final report to Pope Paul would be biased in favor of change, Ottaviani made no attempt to influence the Secretary General. Even before the members' session ended, however, the Cardinal called Ford aside and asked him to stay in Rome for another week or

two, to prepare a response to de Riedmatten's report. Ford told Ottaviani about Grisez, and the Cardinal agreed that he should help.

On Saturday, June 25, the members left Rome. Six of the theologians who supported change and de Riedmatten put the finishing touches on their *Schema Documenti de Responsabili Paternitate*, which was to be the final part of the Secretary General's *Rapport Final*, and he put the finishing touches on the *Rapport* as a whole.

After delivering the document to Paul VI on Monday afternoon, June 27, de Riedmatten was to deliver a copy of it to Cardinal Ottaviani. The Cardinal asked Ford and Grisez to meet with him immediately after that. So they spent the weekend beginning to plan the response they would put together for the Cardinal.

Meanwhile, Grisez had been thinking about the poor options the Holy Father now faced, and drafted a short paper on that matter to give Ottaviani on Monday. He finished it on Saturday, and an Italian friend had a translation ready on Monday: *Quali Sono le Alternative che Rimangono Aperte per il S. Padre?*

Ushered to a corridor on the top floor of Palazzo del S. Uffizio late Monday afternoon, Ford and Grisez watched de Riedmatten cross the courtyard below as he arrived and, a short time later, departed. Less than a half hour after that, the door at the end of the corridor opened, and Cardinal Ottaviani, who was alone, warmly welcomed them into his private apartment, sat down with them at a low table, exchanged pleasantries, gave them a copy of the *Rapport Final*, and began a remarkably frank and collegial discussion of the job he wanted them to do. He was unhurried, and waited patiently as Ford translated for Grisez.

Regarding the response Ford and Grisez were to prepare, Ottaviani specified only two things. First, he wanted it in a week or ten days, if possible, for he wished to deliver it to Pope Paul soon. Second, he wanted it to answer a question he was sure the Holy Father would ask: *How could all these good men have come to this conclusion?* The Cardinal thought it would be very difficult for the Pope to disagree with the proponents of change unless he had a satisfying answer to that question. Ottaviani did not suggest an answer; perhaps the question puzzled him too.

Ford described the thirteen questions and answers he and Grisez had written, and proposed to include them in the response. He also proposed to make a few important points about the *Rapport Final* rather than undertake a systematic critique. Ottaviani readily agreed to both proposals, and discussed the second with Ford in some detail. When their conversation drew to an end, Grisez presented the memorandum about options he had drawn up, and the Cardinal, apparently sincerely interested, graciously thanked him.

Skimming de Riedmatten's final report, Ford and Grisez were appalled but not surprised by how biased it was. Toward the end, the Secretary General even rationalized its one-sidedness on the ground that those favoring change had, after all, prevailed. The two men spent many hours discussing how to answer the question Ottaviani had raised. The section of *Status Quaestionis* with which Ford's colleagues had not completely agreed touched on the question. Grisez proposed additional ideas; Ford questioned and developed them. Grisez took notes, and they soon had an outline.

During the next week, Grisez spent almost all his time drafting and redrafting that single document, while Ford spent almost all his time drafting general and specific observations on

the *Rapport Final* and on the *Schema Documenti*—which, by putting it at the *Rapport's* very end, de Riedmatten made out to be the consummation of the Commission's entire work.

On Monday, July 4, Grisez completed his assignment, and Ford completed his general observations. Ford sent Ottaviani those two parts along with a third consisting of the thirteen questions and answers, while promising delivery of a fourth part, consisting of specific observations, two days later. Ford wrote a covering letter but did not give the packet of materials a single title. It may be called Materials Prepared by Ford and Grisez at the Request of Cardinal Ottaviani.

On Wednesday, Ford completed his work on part four, and the Italian friend who had translated for him and Grisez treated them to a fine farewell dinner. Thursday, July 7, Ford and Grisez flew together to New York, and there parted. Grisez headed home for a needed week's vacation with his family, and Ford went for health care and prepared to return to Rome to participate, from September 8 to November 17, in the second session of the thirty-first General Congregation of the Society of Jesus.

Ford never said much about that Congregation's affairs—just enough so that Grisez realized that there, too, Ford was in a minority on many matters and that he found that work as burdensome as his work on the Commission.

During the whole stretch he worked with Ford, however, Grisez never saw him depressed or gravely anxious about how things would turn out. The key to Ford's inner peace and unwavering hope was his childlike faith in providence. He used to say: "No matter how bad things seem, when I go to bed at the end of the day, I know I am in God's arms and am sure everything will be all right."

That fall, while Ford was still in Rome, there was publicity in the U.S. about a public conference to be held in Washington, D.C., involving the former Commission experts, other than Ford, from the U.S. De Riedmatten was scheduled to give the keynote address. The word was that the organizers planned to publicize the outcome of the Commission's work so as to prepare people for a coming papal statement along the lines of the *Schema Documenti*.

Apparently hearing of the plan, the Pope took action. Addressing the Italian Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology on October 29, 1966, just 124 days after de Riedmatten had delivered his *Rapport Final*, Paul VI said that the Commission's conclusions, "it seems to me, cannot be considered definitive, because they have serious implications with respect to not a few weighty questions—questions of a doctrinal, pastoral and social order—which cannot be isolated and put to the side, but require a logical consideration in the context of the issues under study."

Reading the address in *L'Osservatore Romano*, Ford airmailed that page of the paper to Grisez with a jubilant note. The day he received it, Grisez showed it to a priest-theologian who, though pro-contraception, respected Grisez's book on the subject and remained his friend. He had come to Washington to hear de Riedmatten and the others. On reading the passage, his face went white. In the event, De Riedmatten's presentation at the public conference was so reserved it received hardly any coverage.

About six months later, in the spring of 1967, translations of four Commission documents were leaked and published in English and French, obviously to put pressure on Pope Paul. The *Schema Documenti de Responsabili Paternitate*, which de Riedmatten had included at the

end of his *Rapport Final*, was labeled *The Majority Report* and misleadingly presented as the counterpart of *Status Quaestionis: Doctrina Ecclesiae Eiusque Status*, which was labeled *The Minority Report*. The latter document's true counterpart, *Documentum Syntheticum de Moralitate Regulationis Nativitatum* was labeled *The Majority Rebuttal*.

Finally returning in January 1967 to Weston College, the place he regarded as home, Ford found that many confrères who had been friendly were so no longer, and at best treated him with cool politeness. Boston College and other Jesuit schools in the U.S were about to hire non-Catholics to teach undergraduate theology courses, and the opposition to doing so—in which Ford wholeheartedly joined—was a losing cause. Plans were being made to move the entire Weston theology program to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to be near Harvard University. Ford expected nothing good from that move, but opposing it was another unpopular and losing cause.

Amidst the abject surrender of academic authorities to the student rebellion of the late 1960s, many of the young Jesuits whom Ford strove to teach in 1967–68 treated him without respect, and some with manifest contempt. Empathetic and friendly, Ford suffered terribly from the unfriendly, even hostile, attitude of those men. Given a sabbatical for the following year, Ford offered to retire from teaching as of January 6, 1969, and his resignation was readily accepted. His plan was to continue serving as well as he could, especially by carrying on the unobtrusive pastoral work he loved so much.

Meanwhile, Paul VI finally concluded his conscientious study of birth regulation. He issued *Humanae vitae* on July 25, 1968, but released it for publication only on Monday, July 29. The central teaching seemed to Ford entirely sound, precisely formulated, and complete. The explanation of it, however, seemed unclear and incomplete. (John Paul II would set out one theological explanation at great length in what is called his “theology of the body.”)

In preparation ever since Paul VI's statement of October 29, 1966, a tide of straightforward dissent by many Catholic academics and more or less guarded dissent by a substantial minority of bishops, including some conferences of bishops, began. It crested only after about three months. Ford was dismayed but not surprised.

One of the few bishops who strongly and steadfastly opposed dissent in his diocese was Cardinal Patrick A. O'Boyle, Archbishop of Washington, D.C. Some theologians and other clerics teaching at The Catholic University of America, who provided little or no pastoral service in the diocese, issued a statement on Tuesday morning, July 30, initiating so-called theological dissent throughout the U.S. Their proximity to and relationships with certain disaffected priests serving the diocese encouraged some of the Washington priests to subscribe to a statement of pastoral dissent, which was issued Tuesday evening, July 30. (The number of signers varied, as priests added or removed their names; it peaked at fifty-four and ended with thirty-nine.)

Archbishop O'Boyle (as he preferred to be addressed) at once called on Ford for help. Ford, along with the staff members closest to the Cardinal, quickly helped him work out the policy he adopted and held to. Dissent from the teaching of the encyclical by those engaged in pastoral ministry in the diocese would not be tolerated; yet those dissenting would not, strictly speaking, be punished for doing so. Rather, their faculties—that is, the Archbishop's official authorizations, required by Church law—to hear confessions, to preach, and/or to teach would be withdrawn unless the priests agreed not to apply their dissenting opinion when using those faculties. The rationale for this policy was that the Archbishop could not in

good conscience authorize priests assisting him to do what he believed it would be wrong to do himself—wrong because potentially disastrous to souls entrusted to his care.

O'Boyle also wanted Ford to draft a pastoral letter and in other ways help deal with the dissent. On August 1, Ford called Grisez, who the evening of July 30 had been one of the few to speak out against dissent at the mass meeting at Catholic University in which the leaders of academic dissent publicized their view. Late in the afternoon of August 2, Ford and Grisez delivered their draft to the Archbishop and his inner circle. With a few amendments, he was satisfied with it, and said it would be read at all the Masses in the diocese on Sunday, August 11.

Grisez at once argued strongly and bluntly that a week's delay was pastorally unacceptable. Startled, O'Boyle said nothing for nearly a minute. Then he asked key staff members if they could get the pastoral out that same weekend. They quickly devised a plan for doing that and began to implement it.

That evening, O'Boyle and his closest associate dined with Ford and Grisez, and the four men discussed three possible projects—a substantial pastoral booklet, clearly and briefly answering the questions the faithful were actually asking; a letter for the Archbishop to send his dissenting priests, examining the position they had taken, explaining his own, and asking them to retract; and a critique of claims made by the academic dissenters together with proposals for dealing with them. The Cardinal asked Ford and Grisez to begin work at once on the pastoral booklet; within a week they were working on the other two projects as well.

O'Boyle had provided a two-bedroom suite in an apartment hotel near his own office for Ford. He and Grisez worked there during most of August; Grisez often staying overnight. This time, they were full partners. The two also enjoyed each other's company, and became closer friends.

The forty-eight page pastoral booklet, *Sex in Marriage: Love-Giving, Life-Giving*, was distributed to every family in the diocese on September 8, and subsequently reprinted by many other bishops and Catholic organizations. Eventually, more than one million copies became available in the English-speaking world. The letter to the dissenting priests became ten pages; O'Boyle completed work on it on August 10, and it was mailed out August 14. It was a factor in reducing the size of the group subscribing to the dissenting pastoral statement. The critique of claims by the academic dissenters was soon supplied to the Archbishop, but that group was dealt with by all the bishops on the board of Catholic University, and the majority, on the advice of the University's lawyers, chose to tolerate the faculty members' dissent.

Around the end of August, Ford returned to Weston. Although he occasionally provided helpful advice during the following months, Grisez alone continued to work full time for O'Boyle during the academic year 1968–69. (The Cardinal obtained a leave of absence for Grisez from Georgetown shortly before classes were to begin.) At Weston, Ford found himself unable to concentrate on paperwork. He immersed himself in pastoral service, and ignored the troubling things happening in the Church and the Society of Jesus. From time to time during the following years, Grisez, usually accompanied by his wife, Jeannette, visited Ford, who always arranged a guest room for them and often took them out for sightseeing and a great meal.

For many years, Ford said Mass at a home for the elderly where he befriended the residents and served as their pastor. He also regularly visited disabled people in other institutions. Some were bitter about their sufferings, and Ford strove to promote their faith and hope—to get them to forgive God. He also spent many hours on an alcohol hot line, listening patiently to fellow alcoholics. The Grisezs always found him vivacious and happy with his work.

In 1976, in connection with a catechism project, Grisez for the first time carefully studied some of the documents of Vatican II. He realized that a passage in the Council's document on the Church (*Lumen gentium*, 25) provided the basis for a powerful argument that the Church had infallibly proposed her teaching on contraception long before *Humanae vitae*. Ford had thought and argued that in 1966, but without reference to the conciliar teaching.

Grisez proposed to Ford that they publish an article together making the case. At first, Ford flatly refused. But Grisez went to work on a draft, eventually got Ford to read and criticize it, and finally persuaded him to study it sentence by sentence. The two worked together until Ford was satisfied with every sentence of the final draft, which they sent to *Theological Studies*, with Ford's name first. The journal reluctantly accepted the article— "Contraception and the Infallibility of the Ordinary Magisterium" —and published it on the tenth anniversary of *Humanae vitae*.

During their work together over the years, Ford taught Grisez a great deal of what he knew of the classical moral theology and its methodology. In that way, Ford was Grisez's theological mentor. That theological formation greatly helped Grisez when he undertook to write *The Way of the Lord Jesus*.

For the next ten years, Ford continued his pastoral work. His mind remained clear and sharp, but he gradually became less and less able to get about. He joked that they no longer made spare parts for a 1902 Ford.

On September 24, 1988, the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars gave Ford its *Cardinal O'Boyle* Award for Defense of the Faith. The meeting was in Boston. Friends brought Ford from the Jesuit residence at Weston to receive the award in person. Grisez read the citation (in the opposite column on this page, after the publications list). Ford, plainly delighted, responded appropriately.

There was little opportunity that evening for the Grisezs to chat with Father Ford, and they never saw him again. He died less than four months later, on January 14, 1989. He was eighty-seven years old and had celebrated the sixty-eighth anniversary of entering the Jesuits the previous August.
