

To Benedict XVI
for re-evangelization of the West

(Draft for editing submitted to publisher on February 28, 2013 – the day of Benedict XVI's resignation from the papacy.)

Preface

The purpose of this preface is to give a very brief statement of what I want to accomplish and to offer guidelines for navigating the book.

I argue that struggling to build moral character which conforms with traditional sexual morality is the cure for the sense of meaninglessness which threatens progressive secularist humanists. The threat comes from the progressive stance that there can be indefinite alteration of what it is to be a proper human being. Secular humanistic progressivism is emerging as the dominant outlook in Western culture. Pope Benedict XVI, *et al.*, have reminded us how secular progressivism undermines our Judeo-Christian heritage. I am defending this heritage as a condition for having a purpose in life. I welcome the invitation from a Christian publisher to present my defense. To avoid question begging, I assume very little of the heritage to defend it. Strictly speaking, then, this is not a Christian book.

What is the relation between my work and Christian philosophy? I am writing to prepare the soil for re-introduction of the Gospel. Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote that philosophy consists of assembling reminders for a particular purpose. This book assembles reminders of our sexual sinfulness for the purpose of appreciating the Gospel.

The Gospel is bad news as well as good. The bad news is that our guilt for human immorality, collectively and individually, is so immense and irreparable that if we received what we deserved our unhappiness would be immense and irreparable – Hell.

The good news is that God endured the immense, irreparable unhappiness we deserve in Jesus' passion, death and descent to the dead. His rising from the dead created a redeemed humanity. Redeemed people no longer deserve the immense and irreparable misery. With God's help we can become worthy of happiness in proportion to the moral character of our lives. We still need God's help because although we no longer bear the burden of guilt for all the sins of ourselves and mankind, we are still the kind of beings who did those horrible deeds. We are fallen.

Acceptance of the Gospel requires acceptance of its bad news first. Making ourselves consciousness of our sinfulness and apparent inability to overcome our sinfulness is preparing the ground for acceptance of the bad news. And what better way of doing that is there than reminding ourselves of our sins of the flesh? In the West we need to be reminded that there are sins of the flesh.

Developing my argument requires seeking a common ground in our heritage with secular outlooks. Pursuit of this common ground involves accepting deep skepticism on many issues. This skepticism leads to examination of fundamental and even elementary philosophical topics. So, this is primarily a philosophy book. The introductory chapter elaborates on the goals and character of the book in much greater detail.

Reading a philosophy book is demanding. I have tried to ease the demands. One way is to reduce scholarship. There is no literature review and distracting quarrels with other academics. Several years ago, when I was still an academic, I began with a hypothesis that the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant could be developed to justify and motivate traditional sexual morality. To advance the hypothesis as an academic I would need to show how my interpretations are found in Kantian texts. justify my interpretation

by setting aside conflicting interpretations of the texts and then show that my interpretation gives the truth about morality and life. The textual exegesis is immensely difficult and uncertain while not addressing the issue of truth. I am not writing as an academic. I turn directly to the issue of truth. I do, though, hold my original hypothesis about Kant's moral philosophy. So, this is a philosophy book strongly influenced by the philosophy of Kant. Nonetheless there is no demand on readers to decide whether or not I have correctly interpreted Kant. The demands on familiarity with Kant are low.

In fact, I suggest that sufficient familiarity with Kant can be attained on-line by a quick check of what one gets with a "Google search" of Kant or some Kantian term I use. In general, I think that it makes for easier reading to keep in mind some term or concept I use about which you want more elaboration than I give. Keep your focus on the main line of the argument. Then when you get the time, look it up on the Internet. Wikipedia is always a good place to start. This looking it up later leads to reconsideration of the argument. And that is a good thing. Nowadays, I read books being prepared to seek further elaboration through electronic resources. I suggest readers do the same. The Internet extension of this book will suggest other books, articles and electronic resources.

Being asked to consult footnotes or endnotes to fill out the line of argument is demanding and distracting. There are many endnotes. *They can be ignored while reading the text.* I worked hard to incorporate all elaborations and digressions I had previously placed in endnotes into the main text where hopefully they are not digressions. The endnotes are only for citing sources. Because sources are cited in the endnotes and on-line research is recommended, there is no separate bibliography. Readers can more readily develop their own research bibliography by doing a web search about a term such

as “nihilism” rather than relying on making a selection from fewer sources in a bibliography I would present.

While proof reading, I became aware of many words and phrases in quotation marks as in the previous sentence. Often they are used to show the difference between using words and talking about the words. Words talked about are put within quotation marks. Philosophic training and use of html to design websites has made me sensitive to displaying the difference. I hope that they are not too distracting.

Philosophy can be dense (hard to understand). Page-after-page of dense (unbroken) text exacerbates the first type of density. As the “Analytic Table of Contents” shows the text is divided into many sections and subsections. I find such breaks very helpful for allowing me to take a break and “collect” my thoughts. Such breaks are extraordinary helpful when a book is being read electronically. They are refreshing like many “water stops” on a marathon. I hope my book is as rewarding as a hard run marathon but not as grueling.

Of even greater importance, the division into many sections facilitates hopes for this book to start an on-going philosophical discussion. Readers will be able to question and challenge the author on-line as well as share thoughts with other readers. Topics can be precisely located by reference to sections and subsections when page numbers are not available for electronic versions. Questions and challenges by email will be published and answered on a website for the book: <http://www.sexualnihilism.org>. There will be further discussion and exchange of views on my blog page for the book: <http://charleskielkopf.com>. Email the author at kielkopf.1@osu.edu or

kielkopf@sexualnihilism.org. I write of my hopes rather than plans because the book comes out during my eightieth year. I can plan only to respond as long as I am able.

End of Preface