As I understood the nature of a sabbatical leave as I was making my application, and what I had proposed as my course of study during my sabbatical leave, I, in fact, spent the Fall Semester of 2006 in an intensive study of the philosophical ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas. I did this by means of a focus on his theories of metaphysics, natural law, just war theory and his theory of virtue/ethics. My study was facilitated by the generosity of the Collin Library at the Spring Creek Campus in ordering various texts for the collection that were of tremendous value to my research as well as the opportunity that was afforded me by Professor James Lehrberger, Ph. D. at the University of Dallas who graciously allowed me to sit in his class, titled “Philosophy and God” which devoted over half of the semester to the study of Thomas Aquinas, primarily on his metaphysical theories. Likewise, Professor Lehrberger willingly spent many hours throughout the course of the semester discussing with me, one-on-one, various issues raised in the class as well as other concerns that I had from the various readings that I did, and his insights and observations were of great help. Professor Lehrberger served also as a valuable and ready resource on Aquinas by providing me with a significant body of secondary source materials, essays and books, in which to supplement my studies. Without question, I have the materials which will provide me with many years of study. In addition to this intensive study of Aquinas, and my class-participation at the University of Dallas, I invested in some time studying and “relearning” the Latin language. There are multiple purposes for this study. Not only does a reading and working knowledge of Latin allow me to do more thorough research and study of Medieval thought or Scholastic Philosophy in general and Aquinas in particular, it will also strengthen my understanding of other Romance languages as well. The knowledge of Latin is a valuable tool that sadly has been ignored by the “public” academy over the last 30 or 40 years. I know that I will be able to make use of this knowledge in the classroom and hopefully inspire a new generation of students who will actively seek to learn this language for their own intellectual pursuits.

What follows is a detailed listing of the works studied in the class I attended, and the works which consumed my time during my leave.

**Course Readings – “Philosophy of God” at the University of Dallas – Prof. Lehrberger**

Plato. “The Euthyphro”
Nietzsche. *On the Genealogy of Morals*
Otto. *The Idea of the Holy*
Flew and Miethe. *Does God Exist? A Believer and an Atheist Debate*
Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae, Prima Pars, QQ I – XXV*
Sabbatical Reading List:


Gilson, Etienne. Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages, New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1938.


Torrell, Jean-Pierre. *Thomas Aquinas: Vol I The Person and His Works*

Torrel, Jean-Pierre. *Thomas Aquinas: Vol II Spiritual Master*

Bobik, Joseph. *Aquinas on Being and Essence: A Translation and Interpretation*

Weisheipl, James. *Friar Thomas D’Aquino: His Life, Thought and Works*


While the list above appears presumptuous, I read, referred to, or consulted all of the works above over the course of my sabbatical studies. In addition, I continued in my studies of the writings of G. K. Chesterton as one of the projects I am pursuing is a paper for presentation at this June’s Annual Chesterton Conference to be held at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. The topic of this discussion will be “Aquinas, Chesterton and Just War Theory.” You will find excerpts of a rough draft for this talk attached to this summary report.
This entire course of study, all that I was able to learn and the implications of such learning, will undeniably aid me in becoming a more accomplished thinker, scholar and teacher. No doubt with any such study, I have just begun the process of trying to assimilate all that I have managed to learn to date. It is a lifetime project, one that I expect will keep me busy for the remainder of my career. Unquestioningly I must thank the college for its support of my project and the time it provided me to do this research. It provided me with a wonderful start. The task now is to continue this research with the hope of producing several more works that may see the light of publishing day.

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As I sat to write this paper, the United States with its allies have been in armed conflict or at war in one place or another for four plus years now. Her adversary, at least in Iraq (I think the situation in Afghanistan to be significantly different in most of its implications) is no declared nation state, it is no particular or noticeable people or group (you might say it is against al-Qaeda, but who exactly are they?); rather the US is in conflict with an ideology that clearly is held by an unknown number of people, in no one particular nation state, nor are our adversaries readily identifiable in most cases until after some horrific and deadly event has taken place. [One might also contend that the US is in the midst of trying to police a civil war – all the more problematic in the eyes of many.] Clearly it has been stated that the US is at war with terrorism and terrorists – an ideological and conceptual notion – and this is no criticism. This is not to say that the US has never been at war against an idea or ideas (perhaps all wars are in some fundamental way about ideas). Yet in this unique case, as indicated previously, it is remarkably unclear and uncertain who the combatants are who can be called terrorists and so advocates of terrorism – again I view this not as a criticism but perhaps as the crux of the entire problem of this current state of affairs. [Again, in Afghanistan the situation is a bit different – in this case, the Taliban seems to embody an identifiable group of people who can legitimately be targeted militarily and ideologically in the more traditional sense of
things.] This makes the times we live in most unique in the history of warfare and consequently in terms of theories of just war.

Likewise, depending on who you read, listen to, or otherwise adhere to in the media (in which an entirely different essay could be written in a Chestertonian fashion), there can be quite some ambiguity amongst these various entities regarding what “terrorism” is or what it means for one to be a “terrorist.” You could say that this ambiguity is merely apparent due to academic quibbling, but perhaps not. Yet I would expect all of us present might readily come to an agreement as to what constitutes terrorism, but that in itself, sadly, would not be thought of as a definitive statement in the popular public forum as undoubtedly our view is “tainted” by Catholicism (the rejection of the accepted view of this audience being a product no doubt of the relativizing of morality in a post-Enlightenment, post-Modern world where no one culture takes precedence or is seen as better than any other culture, and because likewise it is still publicly acceptable to utter extremely biased and prejudicial remarks against Catholics and find praise for it).

So what is one to do in this world of ambiguity where nothing seems to be certain (or the “brightest” minds tell us that nothing is certain) and all things, all ideas, can be made justifiable if one simply tries hard enough to rationalize things? Should one, like most modern westerners, press forward and simply hope (a hope seemingly without ground, by the way) that things will “work out all correctly?” Or should one appeal to tradition, Chesterton’s “democracy of the dead” to see what one can see, to discover important lessons for how to deal with current affairs? The timidity of the modern age in being unwilling to “stand its ground” is profound – reluctantly I feel it myself at times
(but I know this to be a moral failing on my part). To this extent, the sense of timidity to stand one’s ground – reflects the success of public education to teach that “all cultures” are to be valued equally. One is taught never to say that certain peoples, certain institution, perhaps certain beliefs that fall within the “protected classes or categories” are morally wrong – morally wrong in and of themselves and morally wrong in general. Here is where Chesterton is of value; if Chesterton is correct in his insistence in taking stock of the tradition as of immanent value, then it is time now for the modern age to overcome its timidity and state without equivocation its ground of belief and to actually believe in it. One must regain the firm foothold of truth that lies in and can be found in the tradition of the west. Of course, this may raise serious questions about the nature of faith (even the terrorists seem to have faith). And the problem here may well be that such an education regarding the nature of faith having been dismissed from the public realm is so lacking that it is no wonder many people and especially those in the highest political offices are unable to understand much less to speak clearly regarding religious faith that they seemingly cannot offer intelligent responses to the claims of the nations adversaries. Chesterton knew, read, thought and felt the tradition in all that he wrote, and hee clearly understood the faith in all its implications. And most importantly, the tradition he spoke to was the Catholic Christian tradition. So given our current state of affairs, our being at war against terrorism, etc., it does us well to hear and think about Chesterton’s views on war for they are not one-sided views and one should find in them their justification. And this justification will be grounded in the truth that is at the heart of the western tradition in general and the Catholic Church in particular.
[What is this thinking? What is the heart of this thought? What do Chesterton and others think or how is it that they think this ground which becomes the basis for living in this world? And more importantly, what is the thinking that develops and substantiates a theory of just war? How, Christianly speaking, can one justify actions that seemingly speak against the very teaching of Christ in (quote scripture here)? Until the Church became institutionalized and recognized as a valid, legitimate religious body under the Roman Emperor Constantine, it may well have been that no such theory of just war could be compatible with the teaching of Christ as the early Church fathers understood this. (look up passages to see if this is in anyway an accurate claim) By the time of St. Augustine (354 – 430 A.D.) and the establishment of the Church as an officially recognized body by the state, thinking had changed…….what follows is an excursion into Augustine’s thought from Ch XIX of City of God.]

Discuss St. Thomas’ protracted theory of just war.

Chesterton – argument against the South African War/Boer War 1899 – 1902 – essentially British Imperialism

Arguments for WWI and his prediction for WWII – the problem of Prussianism, the nature of an armistice, Prussianism again (or Hitlerism)

A Chestertonian response to current policies
Conclusion – Duck and Cover!