

Rome, Dec. 23, 1985

From: Josef Fuchs S.J.

To: Mr. Germain Grisez

Dear Mr. Grisez:

Since several days I have in my room your article "Moral Absolutes. A Critique of the View of Josef Fuchs, S.J.", Anthropos (Roma) 1 (1985) 155-201. Except the first page I have not read this article knowing since many years what you would have to say about it. I would like to send you a few observations of mine.

1. You understand that I do not believe that the original idea to publish right now on Anthropos an almost 50 pages-critique on an article published in 1971, in its version (with a few changes) of 1983, is a totally independent decision of yours.

2. You affirm that "Josef Fuchs, S.J. has rejected moral absolutes and defended the preceding theological opinions", specially in the article under critique. My answer: both affirmations of this phrase of yours are simply wrong.

3. The four theological opinions mentioned by you should, according to me, read as follows. (1) Fuchs stays, against some recent theologians, with the theological thesis of centuries (from Aquinas, I-II 106-108, to Suarez and to Hürth /Abellan and Zalba), that (t)here are no specifically Christian moral norms, added to the norms of common human morality, among which one might find moral absolutes of categorial behaviour in this world. Of course, everyone is bound to make a right fundamental option toward God, but this option is not a particular categorial moral act, for it is made by free choice in other free categorial acts. (2) Received moral teaching of categorial moral norms includes also historically and culturally conditioned elements. Thus, it is not necessarily valid in the changed conditions of today. In this sense the Church - the people of God, moral theology, the magisterium - has decided occasionally through the centuries. (3) When one must choose and any available option will involve bringing about some harm, the right choice is of that action which promises to realize a favorable proportion of good to bad. Never a moral evil - because a negative absolute - can be a justified means to a good end. (4) There are norms which characterise a definite kind of action which are always and everywhere true, therefore not only in regard to

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moral goodnes (always absolutes) but also in regard to acts of categorial behaviour in the human world, though not so many as some theologians affirm. In regard to the question of infallibility Fuchs does not follow the opinion of some recent theologians (v.g. J. Ford and G. Grisez), but holds the declarations and acts of the two Councils of the Vatican.

4. These my corrections you can find in the article under critique and in many other writings. I suppose you will not leave it up to me to correct the affirmations you have published.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. Fuchs S.J.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Josef Fuchs S.J.

15 January 1986

Rev. Josef Fuchs, S.J.
Pontificia Universita Gregoriana
Piazza della Pilotta, 4
00187 Roma, ITALY

Dear Father Fuchs:

I just received your note of 4 January and letter of 23 December 1985. Thank you for writing to me personally. I regret that my publication has caused you some distress, especially around Christmas.

The idea to publish this critique of your article was my own. I was asked to write something for the new journal and proposed to do this critique. My proposal was accepted without discussion. My reasons for doing this are stated in the article. But I can add that I thought when I first read your article that it was extraordinarily important. Later I spent a great deal of time working through it carefully, sentence by sentence, and made over one hundred pages of notes.

This experience greatly stimulated the thinking which led me to undertake the work which was recently published as **THE WAY OF THE LORD JESUS: CHRISTIAN MORAL PRINCIPLES**. Having done that book, I felt able to write a compact critique of your view. Still, I would not have concentrated on this particular article if it did not seem to be something of a classic. You have republished it, and it continues to be influential.

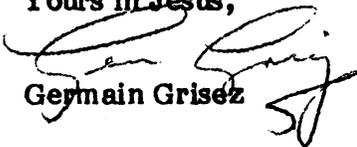
I do not think my report of your view is inaccurate or unfair to you. (I took great pains to be accurate.) The first page of my article must of course be read in context. For example, when I say you reject moral absolutes, the sense should be clear to the reader from the introduction's opening sentence with its two examples.

The rewording of the four theological opinions which you propose would introduce some nonessential and arguable historical theses. You also would like all the distinctions and qualifications to be made explicit at once. But not everything can or has to be said in an introduction. Part II offers a much richer, and I believe completely accurate, summary of your views, with ample quotations and citations, so that readers can check my interpretation for themselves.

I'm distressed that you have not seen fit to read my critique as a whole, on the basis that you knew for many years what I would say. My work during the last twenty years has not been mere repetition. I've taken your work and that of others very seriously and tried to come to grips with it. Don't you think it possible that you in turn might learn something from me?

Still, I know how annoying criticism can be. I wish we were friendly collaborators without aggravation. And I do sincerely wish you well--in this life and the next.

Yours in Jesus,


Germain Grisez

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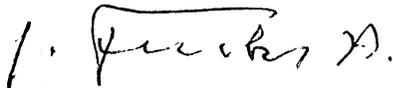
Dear Mr. Grisez:

Thanks for your letter of Jan. 15. I am by no means satisfied with this letter as an ~~answer~~^{answer} to my letter of Dec. 23. So that letter is still valid.

I suppose also you do not believe that I think you have been asked to write something without any addition, also if not precisely in regard to that article of mine.

I did not pretend that you say already everything in the summary of the first page. Saying that I do not hold any absolutes is not only inadequate, but inaccurate and ~~the~~^{the} opposite to my several times published affirmation that I do hold absolutes - of different types. If somebody wanted to denounce me (please allow me this phrasing), ~~he could~~^{he could} very simply quote your resumé of page one.

Sincerely,



Josef Fuchs S.J.