

# faith

July and August 2012  
Volume 44 Number 4  
Price £4.50

PROMOTING A NEW SYNTHESIS  
OF FAITH AND REASON

## **Pell versus Dawkins: The Answers We Would Give**

Editorial

## **The Theology of the Body and the Healing of Concupiscence**

Cormac Burke

## **The Struggle for Meaning and an Uncertain Church**

Niall Gooch

## **Magisterial Development Concerning the Incarnation**

Luiz Ruscillo

### **Reflections upon**

Attacking Cardinal Brady by William Oddie

US sisters' keynote speaker by David Mills

CTS on abuse crisis by Dylan James

Simon Conway-Morris on Evolution by Greg Farrelly

Jack Mahoney SJ on Evolution by Pia Mathews

### **Also**

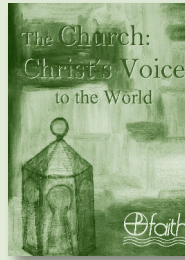
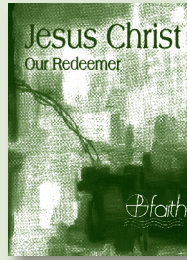
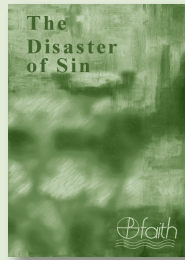
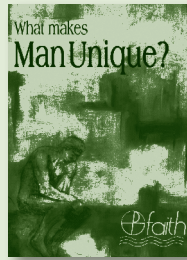
Explaining Transubstantiation; Pope Benedict using *Gaudium et Spes*

and much more



[www.faith.org.uk](http://www.faith.org.uk)

## A special series of pamphlets from *Faith Movement*



## REASONS FOR BELIEVING

Straightforward, up to date and well argued pamphlets on basic issues of Catholic belief, this new series will build into a single, coherent apologetic vision of the Christian Mystery. They bring out the inner coherence of Christian doctrine and show how God's revelation makes sense of our own nature and of our world. Five excellent pamphlets in the series are now in print.

**Can we be sure God exists?**

**What makes Man unique?**

**The Disaster of Sin**

**Jesus Christ Our Saviour**

**Jesus Christ Our Redeemer**

**The Church:**

**Christ's Voice to the World**

To order please write to Sr Roseann Reddy, Faith-Keyway Trust Publications Office,  
104 Albert Road, Glasgow G42 8DR or go to [www.faith.org.uk](http://www.faith.org.uk)



## faith summer conference

**30th July-3rd August 2012  
at Woldingham School**

**Five days of lectures for 16-35 year olds.**

Discussion and seminars around a particular theme, in a relaxed holiday environment, with daily Mass and prayer.

**Closing date:** July 16th

**Cost:** Full £145 Student £120

Contact: **Ann McCallion** Tel: 0141 945 0393

Email: [mccallionfaith@aol.com](mailto:mccallionfaith@aol.com)

Full details: [www.faith.org.uk](http://www.faith.org.uk)

# Catholicism a New Synthesis

by Edward Holloway

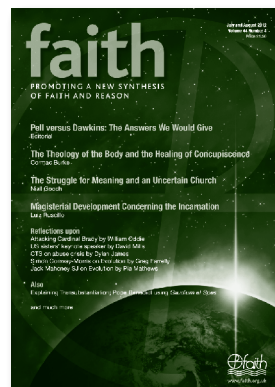
Pope John Paul II gave the blueprint for catechetical renewal with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Catholicism: A New Synthesis seeks to show why such teaching makes perfect sense in a world which has come of age in scientific understanding. It offers a way out of the current intellectual crisis, a way which is both modern and orthodox.

**£14.00** 503pp

Sr Roseann Reddy, Faith-Keyway Trust Publications  
Office, 104 Albert Road, Glasgow G42 8DR

# Contents

- 03 Pell versus Dawkins: The Answers We Would Give**  
Editorial
- 08 The Theology of the Body and the Healing of Concupiscence**  
Mgr Cormac Burke
- 12 The Struggle for Meaning and an Uncertain Church**  
Niall Gooch
- 16 Magisterial Development Concerning the Incarnation**  
Canon Luiz Ruscillo



## Regular Columns

- 18 The Truth Will Set You Free**  
The Body of Jesus: Attempting a non-academic description of the Resurrection and Transubstantiation.
- 20 Letters**  
On animal suffering, psychology as a science and gay marriage.
- 21 The Road From Regensburg**  
Pope uses Vatican II to encourage development.
- 22 Comment on the Comments**  
William Oddie reflects upon some prejudice in action concerning abuse.
- 24 Book Reviews**  
Pia Matthews finds serious deficiencies in Jack Mahoney's book on evolution.  
Fr Dylan James praises an honest, well-researched analysis of the sex abuse crisis.  
Fr Ian Vane extols some timeless Benedictine wisdom for families.  
Fr James Tolhurst discovers a fascinating insight into one of the key players of the Protestant Reformation.
- 27 Cutting Edge**  
Greg Farrelly draws out fertile insights from a recent overview of Professor Simon Conway-Morris's thought.
- 28 Notes From Across the Atlantic**  
On the viability of the Leadership Council for Women Religious.

**Editor** Hugh MacKenzie, The Parish House, Moorhouse Road, Bayswater, London W2 5DJ, editor@faith.org.uk

**Deputy Editor** Kevin Douglas.

**Editorial Board** David Barrett, Stephen Brown, Timothy Finigan, Andrea Fraile, Roger Nesbitt, Christina Read, Dominic Rolls, Luiz Ruscillo.

**Book Reviews** Stephen Brown, Catholic Chaplaincy, 1 Ashgrove, Bradford BD7 1BN. Tel: 01274 721 636.  
Email: Catholic-Chaplaincy@Bradford.ac.uk

**Advertising Manager** Scott Deeley, c/o Holy Cross, 11 Bangholm Loan, Edinburgh EH5 3AH,  
advertising@faith.org.uk

**Subscriptions and Faith-Keyway Trust Publications Office** Sr Roseann Reddy, 104 Albert Road,  
Glasgow G42 8DR, subscriptions@faith.org.uk

UK £25/year, Europe (inc. Eire) £29/€37/year.

Surface Mail overseas £28/\$56/€36/year.

Air Mail overseas £33/\$66/€42/year.

Student rate £17/\$34/€22/year.

Single copies £5 inc. p&p. Bulk orders £3.50 plus p&p.

Published by the Faith-Keyway Trust, registered charity No. 278314.

Printed by Tudor Printing 01772 633098, ISSN 1356-126X.

# faith

July and August 2012  
Volume 44 Number 4

In his column in this issue **William Oddie** presents a strong case for the objective injustice of the widely supported call for Cardinal Brady of Ireland to resign in the wake of the BBC's accusatory *This World* documentary. Interestingly, in a recent *Tablet* article, Paddy Agnew, the *Irish Times* Rome correspondent, does not directly gainsay this injustice, nor the "defensive Holy See line" that "the BBC had not played fair" and that therefore the Cardinal should not resign (12 May, "An ever-widening gap"). Rather he proposes that there is a worrying "chasm" between this "instinctive" "line" and the "shock-waves" of "public anger in Ireland". *The Tablet's* editorial ("A relationship in need of repair") elucidates for us. Whether Cardinal Brady is "personally guilty ... is not the issue for many in Ireland. The point is the upholding of a system of authority that allowed abuse to flourish."

We would not gainsay the breadth or justification of the anger that exists in Ireland. We would simply question the proposal that perpetrating further injustice, in this case against the Cardinal, for a different agenda – in this case undermining the Church's "system of authority" – can in any way heal the deep wounds in Ireland, let alone help the victims of the terrible crimes of clerical abuse. The means do not justify the end. For opinion-formers to suggest so is, as **William Oddie** brings out, to add insult to injury.

Which brings us to **Canon Luiz Ruscillo's** discussion, in this issue, of Pope Benedict's "upholding" of the Church's ability to "preach" revelation, which, according to the solemn doctrine of the Church, "gives rise to faith, whereby we give our heartfelt assent to truth" (*Verbum Domini*, n.25). An absence of this virtue of faith would seem to be illustrated by another recent *Tablet* editorial (14 April, "Listen to the People") which affirms: "Disobedience, in theory, includes a rejection of the arguments ... against the ordination of women. Lay Catholic attitudes to homosexuality have changed remarkably over a generation. *There is no method of re-evangelisation that will turn this tide*" (our emphasis).

The "disobedience" referred to is, primarily, that publicly advocated by the Austrian Priests Initiative, and publicly rejected by the successor of St Peter in his unprecedented Chrism Mass sermon to priests. Their "summons to disobedience", Pope Benedict preached, went "even to the point of disregarding definitive decisions of the Church's Magisterium, such as the question of women's ordination ... Do we sense here anything of that configuration to Christ which is the precondition for all true renewal, or do we merely sense a desperate push to do something to change the Church in accordance with one's own preferences and ideas?"

This was nine days before *The Tablet's* explicit proclamation of the impossibility of true renewal in the face of such disregard of definitive teaching. It was a month before *The Tablet's* cover screamed out from the backs of British cathedrals and parish churches in complaint at "the wrath of Rome ... [towards] the nuns of America". To get an idea of the US Leadership Council for Women Religious, the organisation of which the Holy See is making demands, and of some very different American nuns, see our **Notes from Across the Atlantic** column.

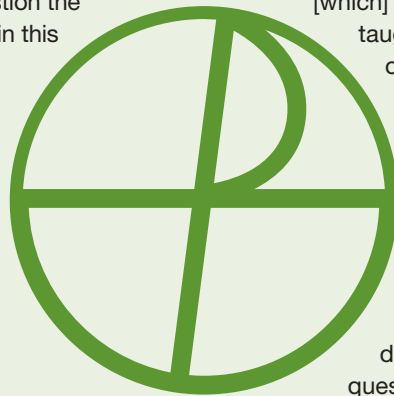
A more faith-filled *cri de coeur* was contained in Piers Paul Read's "Charterhouse" column in the 27 April edition of *The Catholic Herald* ("Purity baffles the young"). In a moving story concerning his own children's unanimous affirmation of the moral legitimacy of "same-sex sex" he harked back with nostalgia to his "religious instruction ... in the 1950s [which] was hardly rigorous, but at least I was taught to memorise the questions and answers of the Penny Catechism."

In this magazine we argue that a key problem behind all this has been downplaying the need to update the answers given to catechetical questions at all levels. In this issue **Niall Gooch** analyses the resulting ecclesial uncertainty and, inspired by a seminal vision handed down to us, we respond to some pressing questions relating to doctrine, belief and catechesis (cf. our **Truth Will Set You Free** column, our lead **letter** and especially our **editorial**).

We fully support the necessary intellectual development pleaded for by Vatican II and recent popes (cf. our **Road from Regensburg** column). We do so theologically through the contributions of **Mgr Cormac Burke** and **Canon Ruscillo** and, in the area of philosophy of science, through our **Cutting Edge** column, Pia Matthews' **review** and our response to our lead **letter**.

FAITH movement, along with numerous other Catholic communities, know from experience that there *is* an evangelisation approach that *can* counter the Brave New World fostered by the liberal consensus and its coalition of publications. Its heart is the obedience of faith, including, as affirmed in word and deed by the saints, an obedience to the Church.

Indeed the purity of our reception of divine revelation, as well as a deepening of our interpretation of our world, are clearly key to that new synthesis of faith and reason that can enable the New Evangelisation to be truly culture-transforming.



# Pell versus Dawkins: The Answers We Would Give *Editorial*

## “New wine is for fresh skins” (Mark 2:22)

Staged debates between prominent secular and religious figures have become a fashionable format in the worldwide media. Like all debates they have a certain unsatisfactory, knockabout air which does not lend itself to a sincere dialogue in search of truth. The constraints of the TV format can reduce deep issues to sound bites, and “reality show”-style viewer voting often serves to confirm existing prejudices, which are largely secularist at the moment. Nonetheless they can have influence well beyond their initial broadcast because usually they are quickly posted on the global video forum YouTube.

Cardinal Pell recently found himself pitted against Professor Richards Dawkins on Australia’s ABC channel as part of its Q&A series (9 April 2012) to debate questions of science and belief. What follows are the questions submitted from audience and home viewers, with our own transcription of the gist of Dawkins’ answers, plus a summary and paraphrase of contextual exchanges (the original is available in video segments starting at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNj-kumWlhc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNj-kumWlhc)). We then give our own answers and commentary to the points raised.

In doing so we do not wish to imply criticism of the Cardinal, who scored some effective points and gave impressive witness by his willingness as a Prince of the Church to engage seriously with Dawkins on live TV. However, given the questions raised, we feel we have a particular contribution to make, especially as these are issues that deserve longer and more considered responses than a live event allows.

### **Q: Is it possible for an atheist to be a peace loving, socially responsible person?**

**Dawkins:** “Yes.” Christianity has “adopted the best values of humanity, but they don’t belong to Christianity or indeed to any other religion. It would be very sad if it were true that you could only be good if you were religious. ... That would mean you got your values from the Bible or the Koran only because you were frightened of God.” ... The Bible has “an occasional good verse” but the fundamental idea of the New Testament is that “we are born into sin and the only way we can be redeemed is through the death of Jesus”.

**FAITH:** Of course there are people who sincerely profess to be atheists who also sincerely profess to be peace loving and socially responsible, but the real question is whether atheism gives us a sufficient and coherent basis for social and personal peace. Professor Dawkins says that Christianity has “adopted the best values of humanity”. But what is his account of that human identity and meaning from which these values arise? He seems to presume there is an inbuilt and self-evident set of values that derive from human nature.

Catholic moral thinking is based on the rational idea of the Natural Law, which affirms that the fabric of our being is built

according to principles of order and harmony, meanings, values and purposes. Ultimately this derives from our relationship to God through creation, and it is only in relationship with God that we fully understand ourselves. In God, too, we find that harmonic order of relationship, which we call grace, that enables us to live as we are intended. God is for us as the environment is to the animals – the source of life, health, happiness and growth to fulfilment. As far as morality goes, the unfolding revelation presented to us in the Bible confirms and clarifies the law that is within us, underlining it with the personal authority of God’s infinite Wisdom in a fallen and confused world.

When Dawkins says that Christianity has adopted “the best” human values, he is implying that he has some independent standard for judging what it is to be human. It would be interesting to know the source of his infallibility. We would argue that, like most secular humanists, he is cherry-picking whatever he finds personally comfortable from the heritage of Judaeo-Christianity while leaving aside whatever doesn’t suit the tastes and fashions of the times. Whether such a subjective philosophy makes for peace and social responsibility in the long run is a matter of debate. Even those Christian values he wishes to uphold can only last and pass between the generations if they are grounded in a convincing and objective account of human nature. After just a few decades the fruits of the secularist social experiment leave a great deal to be desired.

*Professor Dawkins was then allowed to answer two related questions in a row. His responses were revealing.*

### **Q: If your scientific understanding of why we are here is just for survival, why should we bother?**

**Dawkins:** “We do not have a scientific understanding of why we are here, and we therefore have to make up our own meaning to life. We have to find our own purposes in life, which are not derived directly from our scientific history ... As atheists ... we face up to the fact that ... we must make the most of our short time on this planet and ... make this planet as good as we possibly can and try to leave it a better place than we found it”.

### **Q: Without religion, what is the basis of our values? Will we revert to Darwin’s idea of survival of the fittest?**

**Dawkins:** “I very much hope we don’t revert to the idea of survival of the fittest in planning our policies and our politics and our way of life. I am a passionate Darwinian in explaining why we exist, ... but if we lived our lives in a Darwinian way, that would be a very unpleasant society in which to live ... One of the reasons for learning about Darwinian evolution is as an object lesson in how not to set up our values and our social lives”.

## Pell versus Dawkins: The Answers We Would Give continued

**FAITH:** Well, Professor Dawkins has just confirmed what we said in our first response. His position is undermined by a fascinating self-contradiction. On the one hand he insists that there is nothing other than matter-energy, with patterns of life evolving according to the survival of the fittest. On the other he says we must be above and beyond all that. What, then, is the principle is at work in human nature that sets us apart from the entire heritage of material evolution?

He says there is no meaning or purpose to life, so we simply have to invent one for ourselves, and yet he says we *ought* to “make the most” of our time here – our city centres on a Friday and Saturday night are evidence that many people are doing precisely that! – and make the world a “good” place to be. We might ask where that obligation comes from? What law within our being commands us to seek what is good and do what is better? And what gold standard of “goodness” is he appealing to when he makes these ethical assertions?

In philosophical terms he denies any notion of the Transcendent – because he rejects what he sees as a flawed system of thought about the meaning of life, although in truth it seems he hardly understands it – only to appeal covertly to transcendent moral ideals in order to construct some new theory of his own, which cannot stand up to scrutiny. He might argue that it should be obvious what is good; unfortunately for the human race, that does not appear to be so. But what meaning can “goodness” and “better” have if nothing transcends the passing moment and the ultimately meaningless flow of material events?

What is most interesting is that he cannot help but implicitly affirm that there is something about human beings that is beyond the patterns of purely material laws. Indeed there is. We are spirit as well as matter, and as St Paul said when he was talking to the best minds of the ancient Greek world in Athens, it is in God that “we live and move and have our being”, and in communion with God through Jesus Christ lies our personal and social destiny.

*In his answer Cardinal Pell pointed out that science tells us **how** things happen, but not **why** we are here, and that to question things is a part of human nature that distinguishes us from animals. Dawkins reaction was as follows:*

**Dawkins:** “... Science is working on the antecedent factors that lead to our existence ... ‘Why is there a sense of purpose?’ is, in my opinion, not a meaningful [question]... what you can ask is ‘What are the causal factors that lead to the existence of mountains ... life ... the universe?’ ... You have said it is part of human nature to ask the question ‘why?’ in the sense of purpose. It may very well be part of human nature, but that does not make it a valid question ... ‘Why?’ is a silly question! ... ‘What is the purpose of the universe?’ is a silly question. It has no meaning.”

**FAITH:** Frankly, that is a very silly answer! It may be true that

the question “why?” is sometimes beyond the strict remit of scientific inquiry, and so is not a valid question for laboratory research, but it is highly relevant to and valid for human existence. Dismissing it out of hand doesn’t make the question go away. Asking “why?” is a question that arises from all human observation and is thus inherent to all science, so why should we stop when we come to the ultimate question of why we exist at all? To claim that this question has no meaning is to deny the core of human reasoning.

In fact, once again, the ability to ask “why?” about our own existence and the meaning of the whole existential order is a symptom of the transcendent in man. If we are capable of thinking about the universe as a whole and pondering the context of it all, there must be something about our own minds that is greater than the material cosmos because we can encompass it with our minds and question it. The question does take us beyond the scientific method, which may make someone like Dawkins uncomfortable because human beings cannot answer it from our own mental powers. But that does not make it invalid. It just means that our own minds are not the final measure of everything that is.

There is, in fact, a Mind that is greater than the whole and that defines every meaningful pattern and “causal factor” in creation, including our own identity and destiny. Our own minds can take us to the very boundaries of the universe, but science cannot answer every question. As Shakespeare might have put it: “There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Richard.”

### **Q: What proof [of God’s existence] would change your mind?**

*Dawkins began to answer saying: “That’s a very difficult and interesting question ...”. When Cardinal Pell interjected that the problem for Dawkins is that he only accepts sense experience as proof, the presenter let Dawkins off the hook and turned the question on the Cardinal, asking: “Why would God randomly decide to provide proof of his existence to a small group of Jews 2,000 years ago and not subsequently provide any proof after that?”*

**FAITH:** What happened 2,000 years ago was not God providing proof of his existence: what he gave was proof of his wisdom and love – in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

With regard to God’s existence, Catholic teaching is that we can know about God by the light of natural reason from the evidence of creation all around us. In fact we would say that the whole of science, and the whole scientific order of the universe, points to the Mind of God.

When we speak of “evidence” we must look for the kind of evidence that is appropriate to the issue in question. Scientific research looks for physical, “test tube” evidence. Yet it would be absurd to demand that kind of evidence as proof that

## “At any and every stage of development, even the simplest matter-energy will always be an ordered system”

someone loves you. Love cannot be proved in a test tube. Does that mean that love is unreal? Of course not. We look for evidences of a different order when it comes to personal relationships and decisions.

Material things are relatively easy for our minds to understand. With time and effort, through empirical tests and the insights of clever minds, we can unravel the secrets of material laws. Matter is subject to mind from its very constitution. It is because it is organised by a principle of Mind, Intelligence or Wisdom that it is open to investigation by our own rather more circumscribed minds. But when it comes to people, who exist on an equal level as spiritual persons, we find each other much harder to understand – harder but more fulfilling. Human relationships cannot be reduced to mathematics, but they are no less real for that, and even more vital for our well-being. So when it comes to seeking the ultimate Mind, the first and final cause of everything, we cannot expect simply to fit the answer inside our heads and grasp ultimate Reality with natural human reasoning, let alone within purely material categories of understanding.

We can know by reason that God is real, but to know God in a personal relationship we must rely on God's initiative, on God revealing himself to us and inviting us to know and love him. We believe that throughout history God has invited human beings into friendship and communion with himself, culminating in Jesus Christ, who is God revealed in the flesh.

His coming was specifically prepared for through the Hebrew prophets and the Jewish religion, although with hindsight we see that his coming was planned from before the beginning of the world (cf. Ephesians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:20, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Proverbs 8:23). He is the Word of Wisdom in whom creation is conceived, and he is the goal and fulfilment of every aspect of the unfolding cosmos – matter as well as spirit. Everything is aligned upon him like the keystone in a classical arch.

The primary purpose of his Incarnation is that we “might have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10) and that his own joy may be in us (cf. John 15:11). At the same time, in view of the damage and destruction wreaked by human sin, he bore the awful cost of restoring and reconciling all things in his own body and soul. It is through union with him in the Church that we find our true identity, forgiveness for our sins, and the only way to true blessedness in God. This is the true perspective of New Testament Christianity.

### **Q: If the Big Bang is true, how can something come from nothing?**

**Dawkins:** “Obviously you are not a physicist and nor am I... Of course it's counter-intuitive to say that you can get something from nothing ... My colleague Laurence Kraus ... has written a book about how you can get something from nothing ... something pretty mysterious had to give rise to the origins of

the universe ... If you want to replace a physical explanation with an Intelligent God, that's an even worse explanation... It is very mysterious”. The presenter then commented that Thomas Aquinas had said “something can't come from nothing”. Dawkins replied: “Something can come from nothing ... Matter and antimatter react together to produce nothing. It can work in reverse ... It is not solved by postulating a creative intelligence.”

*Cardinal Pell then made his best hit of the debate by saying: “Dawkins dumbs down God and soups up Nothing. He continually talks as if God were some sort of upmarket figure in space and time. God is outside space and time; God is necessary, self-sufficient, uncaused... What Kraus ... describes as ‘nothing’ ... [has] forces working upon it”.*

**Dawkins:** “You can dispute exactly what is meant by ‘nothing’ ... What a sophisticated physicist means by nothing is ... much, much simpler than a creative intelligence [something very complicated and very improbable]. We are all struggling ... to explain how we get the fantastic order and complexity of the universe out something very simple ... Krauss calls the substrate of his explanation ‘nothing’ ... whatever it is, it is very, very simple and therefore is a worthy premise for an explanation, whereas a God, a creative Intelligence, is not a worthy substrate for an explanation because it is already something very complicated ...”

*No comeback to this was invited from the Cardinal.*

**FAITH:** Of course Dawkins misses the fundamental point here. We would put it this way:

“The laws of physics, in whatever mathematical formulation we come to express them, do not suddenly start up randomly out of absolute emptiness and then bring in stability and directionality everywhere ... At all times in the history of the universe we are in the presence of an equational harmony of being, and of mutual control and direction within that ‘Equation’ by which the developing cosmos is held in stable order. In all fields, and in all relationships, from the ecologies of life in field, air, and ocean, to the poising and movements of the galaxies, there is a unity of control and direction. ... This unity of control and direction that harmonises all things at all stages of evolution and in all relationships of being within the whole universe [is what] in *Catholicism: A New Synthesis* we call ‘The Unity-Law of the Universe’. To what is this ordered purpose and mutual control of one aspect of being upon another, one form of life upon another, orientated? Just to one purpose and to one peak.” [Edward Holloway, Editorial, *Faith*, May 1984, published in *Perspectives In Theology*, [www.faith.org.uk/shop/PersTheoDownload.htm](http://www.faith.org.uk/shop/PersTheoDownload.htm)]

Dawkins is so steeped in the modern Western mindset of reductionism that he thinks that by searching for the simplest substrate to matter he will find the ultimate cause of its

## Pell versus Dawkins: The Answers We Would Give continued

existence. What he misses is that at every stage of development, even the simplest matter-energy will always be an ordered system. It is this meaningful and developmental order as a unified system that shows its fundamental relationship to Transcendent Intelligence as its abiding cause and context. In fact, matter at its most basic and generic could simply be called “organised information”, which is why Einstein said that the universe is “made of mind stuff”. This definition of matter could also be expressed as “matter is that which is controlled and directed by mind”.

Dawkins also shows a profound misunderstanding of what “intelligence” means, most probably because of his presumption that consciousness and “mind” are epiphenomena of complex organic structures such as the brain. His image of God seems to be that of a highly developed alien wandering the interstellar spaces like something out of *Star Trek* or *Dr Who*.

**Q: As a young Catholic scientist, I'd like to ask the Cardinal to clarify the Roman Catholic Church's position on evolution and comment on whether the dichotomy between science and religion is in fact real.**

*Cardinal Pell began to answer, saying that evolution cannot explain everything, when the presenter interrupted with the question, “Do you accept that we are descended from apes?” When the Cardinal indicated that he had no problem with physical descent from non-human ancestors, the presenter asked: “At what point in this evolutionary scale was a soul imparted to humans from God?” When the Cardinal pointed out that “Adam” and “Eve” are strictly speaking mythological (or symbolic) names, Dawkins seemed to show genuine curiosity:*

**Dawkins:** “I am curious to know, if Adam and Eve never existed, where did original sin come from? ... Successive popes have tried to suggest that the soul did indeed get added, rather like gin into tonic, at some point during evolution ... Now, we have rather a good fossil record from Africa ... at what point does the soul get injected? ...”

**FAITH:** In 1952 Pius XII did indeed write in *Humanae Generis* that the Church is not closed to “the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter”, but that it “obliges us to hold that souls are immediately created by God”.

And the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms clearly: “The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God – it is not ‘produced’ by the parents – and also that it is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death, and it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection.” (CCC 366)

For a philosophical approach which successfully underpins the Catholic position as well as contemporary insight, we turn again to the 1984 editorial already quoted:

“However wonderfully versatile it may be, the order of purely material life is programmed, controlled and directed through the interplay of the brain with the environment around, within which the brain of any living thing finds the law of its own specific life, its round, its times and its seasons, and responds accordingly, each according to its kind. The answer to the question ‘what is Man?’ is much more wonderful, and yet so simple in principle, as the things of God always are. In the brain of man there occurs a mutation for power, energy, and ‘form’ of life which cannot be programmed to the material environment around, because the energy begotten is so totally in excess of the power of that static, deterministic environment to provide a law. For all that ‘nature’ around can determine is a life bounded by food, procreation, mating and lair building, holding of territory, evading predators, etc. The brain that is to become a constituent of man would be a diseased sport within nature, an energy without a ‘form’ within the universe to which it was directed, and without a life cycle within the environment around to which it could be programmed for its law of life. Because however versatile the animal brain, however much it mocks the ‘intelligence’ of true man, it is actually always within the order of the programmed and controlled; it is instinctual and repetitive. It cannot do any ‘programming’, it is made to be programmed, just as much as any computer is.

“The miracle of man is that the material mutation which is born within nature to be this new form, with this super power of energy in the brain, is by its very nature as physical directed to the order of the spiritual principle, to the soul, made in the likeness of God, and which only God can give. There is no question of God ‘deciding’ to give this animal a soul. That would be an arbitrary action ... The two principles of being that make man – the material, the body, and the soul – must be mutually made for each other. The physical ‘formula’ that is the brain of man was ordered in the beginning as the unique and peak achievement of that ‘Unity-Law’ which framed the universe in exactitude in the moment of the ‘Big Bang’. It is the final and utter achievement of that Law of harmonic ascent of being, and in its very physical reality man’s body calls for, and is intelligible only in relationship to that personal ‘soul’ which God alone can create. This ‘soul’ God must give, under the very Law of His own wisdom in creating, within the womb at the moment of Man. In this way, ‘Man’ is at once a product of the evolution of the material creation, and is also a special creation, through the soul.”

As far as original sin is concerned Dawkins is right to say that if we simply ditch “Adam and Eve” then we cannot credibly maintain the traditional doctrine of original sin as a wound introduced by a historical individual and passed on to all further generations by inheritance. The Magisterium addressed this question too in *Humanae Generis*. We are not obliged to hold that Adam and Eve are the personal names of identifiable individuals known to history, but we must hold that the first



## “Dawkins is not being answered in a way that shows the credibility of Catholic belief in a scientific age”

human couple sinned and fell from grace, thereby damaging the integrity and the destiny of human nature itself, a wound which we all inherit.

**Q: You [Cardinal Pell] demand a high standard of evidence for global warming. Why do you not demand the same standard of evidence for the existence of God?**

*In the course of his answer, the Cardinal said that most scientists reject “random selection” as an explanation of evolution. Dawkins intervened:*

**Dawkins:** “I strongly deny that evolution is random selection. Evolution is non-random selection ... It’s my life work. There is random genetic variation and non-random survival and non-random reproduction, which is why across the generations animals get better at doing what they do – which is quintessentially non-random. This does not mean that there is a purpose, in the sense of a human “purpose”, a guiding principle which is thought up in advance ... there is a pseudo-purpose”.

**FAITH:** Again this assumes the vast stability of the “non-random” structures of selection for survival and well-being and their meaningful interplay across the whole developmental order of the universe from the beginning, of which the biology of life on our planet forms but one facet. Atheists are so often guilty of smuggling meaning and purpose in by the back door, because it is undeniable on the evidence of nature, while denying that anything really means anything or has any purpose in the first place. It is atheism that is irrational, not belief.

It is incoherent and intellectually dishonest to insist on random mutation and then introduce the idea of “non-random” stability at the environmental level, enabling the purpose of survival. Dawkins is admitting a constructive balance, though for him it is one that comes out of nowhere, being measured against no value system whatever, and grounded in no wider meaning or context.

There is increasing evidence that the language of the genetic code is not arbitrary, nor is it random in its shifting patterns. This should not surprise us. The genetic material is formed out of and is itself part of the massive structure of stability and meaningful data that is the fabric of matter-energy in the space-time continuum. All mutations occur at the level of a syntax derived from that atomic-molecular-biochemical order. Genes are not closed off from and independent of the environment in which they operate. There is now considerable evidence of feedback mechanisms from the environment to the chromosomes. The French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829) may have expressed things crudely and inaccurately in his ideas of evolutionary change, but it is emerging that he was not wholly wrong.

However, we do not look for proofs of God’s intervention in this or that ordered pattern or creative venture within the system.

That is what the supporters of the Intelligent Design school do and we think it a mistake. Rather we see the whole universe as dynamically poised for coherence and developmental order from the very start. Genes are just part of the bigger picture of chemical elements and physical wave-particles framed according to mathematical principles that we are only just beginning to understand. Professor Dawkins says he is looking for the simplest underlying cause to everything. If he keeps looking he may find that it is possible to reduce everything to mathematics from a certain point of view, but what is that except a language of the mind? Ultimately we would have to say “in the beginning was the Mind”, or to put that in the Greek idiom “In the beginning was the Word”!

**Q: I am an atheist. What do you think will happen when I die? How do you know?**

*As the Cardinal began to answer about the importance of searching for truth, following a good conscience and not doing evil acts, the presenter interrupted asking, “Is atheism an evil act?”*

**FAITH:** A conscious decision to reject God as an act of self-assertion against what you know or suspect to be true but find inconvenient or morally challenging would indeed be sinful. But that is a different matter from having genuine perplexity and lack of belief. We all have questions, things we don’t fully understand, although a question is different from a doubt, which is a positive will to disbelief.

Quite often atheism is based on misunderstandings about what it is we are being asked to believe. To many atheists one might say: “I don’t believe in the God you don’t believe in.” Professor Dawkins’ intellectual vision of Christianity seems based on post-Victorian Anglicanism and American Evangelicalism. His notion of God and Christian faith is often based on deep ignorance as well as prejudice. Sometimes Christian believers themselves are responsible for giving a false impression or deficient account of their faith, and indeed they may give scandal to others that create barriers to belief. We are taught that God sees and takes account of all.

*The presenter asked: “Can an atheist go to heaven?”*

We do not know and cannot judge the consciences of individuals as to why they may be atheists. But God is in fact the supreme Reality, in whom we “live and move and have our being”, so to live without that relationship is to be like a plant cut off from the sunshine. Fortunately for all of us, God can still get through the clouds of our ignorance and wilfulness, and if we sincerely search for truth and goodness then we will find what we are looking for.

In the end there is only one Truth and one source of Life in its fullness and that is Jesus Christ, but there may be many and sometimes tortuous routes that people take to find him. He may well have mercy on us as individuals, especially if others

## Pell versus Dawkins: The Answers We Would Give continued

have put a block in our path to him, but if we ourselves put up barriers to shut God out, we are undoubtedly harming our spirits and risking our eternal souls.

### Conclusion

Other questions arose which space does not allow us to explore here. At one point the discussion led to an exchange about the meaning of the resurrection of the body and Catholic teaching about the Holy Eucharist. We offer some lines of thought on that part of the debate in our **Truth Will Set You Free** column.

What is very clear from this debate is that the likes of Dawkins can be answered, but for the most part he is not being answered in a way that shows the credibility of Catholic belief

in a scientific age. Like so many of his fellow fashionable atheists he bases his attack on Christianity on a very partial understanding of Christian belief.

Simply reasserting Catholic orthodoxy in the language of traditional catechesis is not going to be enough to re-evangelise our culture. We need a new development of Catholic theology and philosophy which is true to the defined teaching of the Church and which can also answer the valid and sincere questions which have far-reaching implications for Christian faith. We hope we have been able to show that we already have at least the outlines of such a new development, not from our own cleverness to be sure, but received as a gift and legacy from others – ultimately, we would claim, from the prompting of God for the needs of our times.

# The Theology of the Body and the Healing of Concupiscence *By Cormac Burke*

Mgr Burke continues to throw much needed light upon the 20th century's fine tuning of our understanding of the ends of marriage. Here he draws out how marriage can be a "yes" to the healing of concupiscence without the latter being an intrinsic "end" of the sacramental union. As such his reflections would seem to help the vigorous Theology of the Body debate described in our May 2010 issue.

This piece is a developed extract of a much longer paper published in *The Thomist* six years ago (Issue 70, 481-536). Mgr Burke lectures at Strathmore University, Nairobi, Kenya.

### Rediscovering Conjugal Love as it was 'In the Beginning'

The constant reference point for married life and vocation which Pope John Paul presented throughout his 1979-1984 catechesis was "marriage constituted in the beginning, in the state of original innocence, in the context of the sacrament of creation" (*Theology of the Body*, 338). That original human state was marked by a perfect harmony, within each one, of body and spirit. "This harmony, that is precisely purity of heart, enabled man and woman in the state of original innocence to experience simply... the uniting power of their bodies, which was, so to speak, the unsuspected substratum of their personal union or *communio personarum*" (ib. 204).

That original harmony was short-lived, however; man sinned and it was broken. With the sin of Adam and Eve concupiscence or lust made appearance. It became present in

their marriage (and is present in every subsequent marriage), posing a threat to married love and happiness.

In his catechesis, John Paul II examined the discordant impact of lust in spousal relations (ib. 111-168). Its fundamental effect is a loss or a limitation of the full freedom of love. "Concupiscence entails the loss of the interior freedom of the gift. The nuptial meaning of the human body is connected precisely with this freedom. Man can become a gift – that is, the man and the woman can exist in the relationship of mutual self-giving – if each of them controls himself. Manifested as a 'coercion *sui generis* of the body', concupiscence reduces self-control and places an interior limit on it. For that reason, it makes the interior freedom of giving in a certain sense impossible... By itself, it does not unite, but appropriates. The relationship of the gift is changed into the relationship of appropriation" (ib. 127).

## “A particularly striking part of John Paul II’s analysis is the place he gives to sexual shame in the work of recovering our lost harmony”

Insatiable desire, appropriation instead of communion, taking instead of giving, possessive self-love overshadowing donative love toward the other... all are major disruptions which concupiscence now inflicts on the lost harmony of the marital sexual relationship.

Is it possible for men and women to return to that original harmony and respect, or are they lost for ever? They are not irreparably lost, for they can be recovered – in hope and struggle. In the human person there always remains, however unconsciously, a longing for the respect inherent in a pure love – also because of what John Paul II terms “the continuity and unity between the hereditary state of man’s sin and his original innocence”, which remains a key to “the redemption of the body” (ib. 34-35). But the recovery and maintenance of what can be repossessed of that original harmony is possible only through constant effort and with the help of prayer and grace.

### Sexual Shame

A particularly striking part of John Paul II’s analysis is the place he gives to *sexual shame* in the work of recovering that harmony. He places shame among the “fundamental anthropological experiences” (cf. *TB*, 52). In the present human condition, a certain instinct of shame acts as a guarantor of the mutual respect that is a *sine qua non* condition of true love between the sexes. The deeper and truer the love between a man and a woman, and especially between husband and wife, the more they will be prompted to pay heed to shame, and to seek to understand it and respond adequately to it. The consequence is a naturally modest behaviour between them.

In this sense each married couple should turn to the Bible seeking the lessons of the divine narrative: not just imagining how the relationship of Adam and Eve must have been before the Fall, but learning from their reactions afterwards – reactions that show a desire to preserve, in new and troublesome circumstances, the purity of that original attraction which they alone had experienced and which they could still recall.

Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed. As John Paul puts it, “the man of original innocence, male and female, did not even feel that discord in the body” (ib. 204). After the Fall is when shame appeared as a response to lust, as a sort of protection against the threat which lust now offered to the simple joy and appreciation they had experienced in each other’s sexuality “in the beginning”. The importance of this sense of shame is powerfully brought out in the papal catechesis.

On the one hand, “if the man and the woman cease to be a disinterested gift for each other, as they were in the mystery of creation, then they recognise that ‘they are naked’ (cf. Gn 3). Then the shame of that nakedness, which they had not felt in the state of original innocence, will spring up in their hearts... Only the nakedness that makes woman an object for man, or vice versa, is a source of shame. The fact that they were not ashamed means that the woman was not an “object” for the

man nor he for her” (*TB* 74-75). The reaction of shame before the other, of wife before husband or vice versa, betrays an awareness that the urge to bodily intercourse is not of the same human quality as the desire for the communion of persons, and cannot give this desire full effect.

On the other hand, while shame “reveals the moment of lust, at the same time it can protect from [its] consequences... It can even be said that man and woman, through shame, almost remain in the state of original innocence. They continually become aware of the nuptial meaning of the body and aim at preserving it from lust” (ib. 122).

The desire to preserve respect for the loved one is inherent in every genuine love. So in John Paul’s analysis, the sense of shame becomes not only a guardian of mutual respect between husband and wife, but also a starting point for the *recreation* of a new spousal harmony between body and soul, between desire and respect, achieved on the basis of united purpose aided by prayer and grace. The Pope does not suggest that this “re-creation” is in any way easy; it obviously is not. But his message for married people is that it should be attempted; their mutual love should see its need: and the sacramental graces of their marriage along with their personal prayer are the powerful means they have to achieve it.

### The Purification of Conjugal Love: Self-control and Gratitude Versus Excessive Sensuality

This is the proper sense of chastity in marriage: the redirecting and the refinement of sensual appetite so that it is at the service of love and expresses it, and the refusal to take advantage of the married relationship just for egoistic satisfaction. In a real sense, the task facing married couples is purification of sensual appetite, so that its satisfaction is sought not mainly for concupiscent self-centeredness but as an accompaniment to the donation of self that must underlie every true conjugal union. One can say that this task engages them in a constant *humanising* of their marital love, facilitating the growth of mutual appreciation of each other as persons.

True conjugal love is evidently characterised more by caring for and giving to the other than by wanting and taking for oneself. It is the classical distinction between *amor amicitiae* and *amor concupiscentiae*. Where the love of concupiscence dominates, the lover has not really come out of himself or overcome self-centredness, and so gives himself at most only in part: “in the love of concupiscence, the lover, in wanting the good he desires, properly speaking loves himself” (Aquinas, I-II, q. 27, a. 3). The dominance of pleasure-seeking in marital intercourse means that there is too much taking of the body and not enough giving to the person; and to the extent of that imbalance the true conjugal communion of persons is not realised.

In an age like ours, the difference between lust, sexual desire and conjugal love has become progressively obscured. If, in consequence, many married couples do not understand or recognise the dangers of concupiscence, and so do not

# The Theology of the Body and the Healing of Concupiscence

## continued

endeavour to contain or purify it, it can dominate their relationship, undermining mutual respect and their very capacity to see marriage essentially as giving and not just as possessing, much less as simply enjoying, appropriating and exploiting.

There is an inescapable task here facing all married couples who in some way wish to maintain or restore the loving harmony of noble spousal relationship. We spoke above of how abstinence or renunciation, as a governing principle of religious life, was often presented also to married couples wishing to grow spiritually, with the implicit or explicit invitation to apply it to their conjugal intercourse.

We must add here that while renunciation is certainly a main gospel theme, it is not the only or even the dominant one. *Purification*, above all of one's inner intention and heart, is even more fundamental to the achievement of the ultimate Christian goal: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8); "we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure" (1 Jn 3: 2-3). These verses are of universal application.

“This is the proper sense of chastity in marriage: the redirecting and the refinement of sensual appetite so that it is at the service of love and expresses it”

Marital intercourse is purified when the urge for self-satisfaction plays a lesser part in it, intercourse being rather sought, lived, and felt as participation and particularly as other-centred donative love. Possession and pleasure will then be the *consequence* of generous self-giving. As John Paul II says, "a noble gratification, for example, is one thing, while sexual desire is another. When sexual desire is linked with a noble gratification, it differs from desire pure and simple... It is precisely at the price of self-control that man reaches that deeper and more mature spontaneity with which his heart, mastering his instincts, rediscovers the spiritual beauty of the sign constituted by the human body in its masculinity and femininity" (TB, 173).

One could note in passing that if pleasure is received with gratitude – to God, to one's spouse – this is already a significant step towards purifying it of self-centredness, for gratitude is always a coming out of self and an affirmation of the other. On the other hand, if the seeking of pleasure is mainly self-centred, it may give momentary satisfaction but not real peace, the peace that arises from the experience of true donative union.

Sensitive married couples who sincerely love each other are readily aware of this self-absorbed drive which takes from the perfection of their physical conjugal union. They sense the need to temper or purify the force drawing them together, so that they can be united in true mutual giving – not in mere

simultaneous taking. Their heart calls for this; insofar as they are mainly yielding to lust, a sense of cheating and of being cheated will always remain. John Paul II captures this situation well: "I would say that lust is a deception of the human heart in the perennial call of man and woman to communion by means of mutual giving" (TB, 148).

### Chastity Gives Freedom to Conjugal Love

"You were called to freedom, brethren. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another" (Gal 5:13). John Paul comments on this passage of St Paul: "Anyone who lives in this way according to the flesh, that is, who submits... to the three forms of lust, especially to the lust of the flesh, ceases to be capable of that freedom for which 'Christ set us free'. He also ceases to be suitable for the real gift of himself, which is the fruit and expression of this freedom. Moreover, he ceases to be capable of that gift which is organically connected with the nuptial meaning of the human body" (TB, 197-198).

St Augustine too invokes Gal 5:17, particularly in relation to chastity: "Listen well to these words, all you faithful who are fighting. I speak to those who struggle. Only those who struggle will understand the truth of what I say. I will not be understood by whoever does not struggle... What does the chaste person wish? That no force should arise in his body resisting chastity. He would like to experience peace, but does not have it yet" (*Sermo* 128).

Augustine's words are directed to the married as much as to the unmarried. Both, he is convinced, will understand the truth he expresses if they are prepared to fight the constant warfare of Christian life. The Church has not changed her doctrine about this fight. The Second Vatican Council teaches: "A monumental struggle against the powers of darkness pervades the whole history of man. The battle was joined from the very origins of the world and will continue until the last day, as the Lord has attested. Caught in this conflict, man is obliged to wrestle constantly if he is to cling to what is good, nor can he achieve his own integrity without great efforts and the help of God's grace" (*Gaudium et spes* 37).

### The "Remedy" of Concupiscence: Chastity

"The problem for [sexual] ethics is how to use sex without treating the person as an object for use" (Karol Wojtyła: *Love and Responsibility*, 1993, p. 60). This is a perceptive observation which brings a properly human focus to bear on the question of the pleasure of marital intercourse. Pleasure should not be sought just for its own sake, since self-seeking (and "other-using") will then tend to dominate. But pleasure can and should come, as an important concomitant of the union achieved.

This, in the truest sense, is what is implied in the *remedying of concupiscence*. It is a challenge to love and a work of chastity. Concupiscence is an effect of original sin. What stems from sin can only be remedied by virtue. So it is not

## “So it is not marriage itself but marital chastity that remedies concupiscence”

marriage itself but marital chastity that remedies concupiscence.

The goal cannot be not to feel pleasure or not to be drawn by it (both pertain to the instinct of conjugality), but *not to be dominated* by its quest (which is the very instinct of lust). St Augustine points out the alternatives: “Whoever does not want to serve lust must necessarily fight against it; whoever neglects to fight it, must necessarily serve it. One of these alternatives is burdensome but praiseworthy, the other is debasing and miserable” (*Contra Julianum*, 5:62).

“Those who love readily understand the human value and attraction of pure, chaste and disinterested love”

Marital intercourse is indeed a unique way of giving physical expression to married love, but it is not the only way. There are moments in married life (sickness, for instance, or periods just before and after childbirth) when love will not seek intercourse but will still express itself in many other ways, also on the physical level. It is commonplace among marriage counsellors or psychologists to assign as much or even more importance to these “lesser” physical expressions of affection and love as may be attached to the frequency of marital intercourse itself. Pope John Paul does not pass over this point.

With finely drawn distinctions, he differentiates “sexual excitement” from “sexual emotion” in man-woman relationships, and comments: “Excitement seeks above all to be expressed in the form of sensual and corporeal pleasure. That is, it tends toward the conjugal act... On the other hand, emotion ... even if in its emotive content it is conditioned by the femininity or masculinity of the ‘other’, does not *per se* tend toward the conjugal act. But it limits itself to other manifestations of affection, which express the spousal meaning of the body, and which nevertheless do not include its (potentially) procreative meaning” (*TB*, 413).

Men and women, married or single, who wish to grow in mutual love, cannot adapt themselves passively to the prevalent modern lifestyle which, especially as reflected in the media, is permeated with “sexual excitement” and forms a constant stimulus to it. Purity of heart, sight and thought is essential if they are to keep sexual excitement within limits where it is at the service of sexual emotion and of genuine inter-sexual love. Their own intimate consciousness of the real nature of love will be the best incentive to help them keep firmly clear of all those external stimuli which necessarily subject a person more and more to the absorbing power of lust, and so lessen his or her capacity for a true, freely given and faithful love.

### **Chastity is for the Strong; as is Growth in Love**

Among the deceptions of marriage is the experience that what should so uniquely unite can separate; it can be filled with tensions and disappointment rather than harmony and peace.

The tensions come from the divisive force of concupiscence which can only be overcome and purified through a love that is truly donative rather than possessive. “It is often thought that continence causes inner tensions which man must free himself from. [But rather] continence, understood integrally, is the only way to free man from such tensions” (*TB*, 411). In fact, the chastity proper to marriage unites, reduces tensions, increases respect and deepens spousal love, so leading this love to its human perfection and preparing the spouses themselves for a love that is infinite and eternal. “The way to attain this goal”, Pope Benedict XVI insists, “is not simply by submitting to instinct. Purification and growth in maturity are called for; and these also pass through the path of renunciation. Far from rejecting or ‘poisoning’ eros, they heal it and restore its true grandeur” (*Deus Caritas est*, 5).

“True conjugal love... is also a difficult love” (*TB*, 290). Of course: for love of another is always a battle against self-love. That division of the heart between self and spouse must be overcome: conjugal love gives unity to each heart and unites the two hearts in one love. Carnal concupiscence is not the only expression of self-love; but, since it so pervasively affects the most significant bodily expression of conjugal love, its tendency to dominate must be specially resisted; otherwise love may not survive this battle. “The heart has become a battlefield between love and lust. The more lust dominates the heart, the less the heart experiences the nuptial meaning of the body. It becomes less sensitive to the gift of the person, which expresses that meaning in the mutual relations of man and woman” (*TB* 126).

John Paul II is sure of the fundamental optimism and attraction of the understanding of married sexuality he outlines. His anthropological analysis becomes moral teaching that is imbued with human appeal. “Does not man feel, at the same time as lust, a deep need to preserve the dignity of the mutual relations, which find their expression in the body, thanks to his masculinity and femininity? Does he not feel the need to impregnate them with everything that is noble and beautiful? Does he not feel the need to confer on them the supreme value which is love?” (ib. 167-168).

Those who love readily understand the human value and attraction of pure, chaste and disinterested love. But to feel the human attraction is not enough. In the Christian view, chastity remains a gift of God, one that is only achieved through prayer. “Since I knew I could not otherwise be continent unless God granted it to me (and this too was a point of wisdom, to know whose the gift is), I went to the Lord and besought him” (Wis 8:21, Vulgate). St Augustine insists that this virtue is a gift of God; an idea that he stresses elsewhere with special reference to marriage: “The very fact that conjugal chastity has such power shows that it is a great gift of God” (*Contra Julianum*, 3:43). It is indeed a gift of God; but a gift he gives when asked for it.

# The Struggle for Meaning and an Uncertain Church *by Niall Gooch*

Niall Gooch reflects on the challenge of getting to grips with the relativism that Dawkins displays in some of the quotations given in our editorial. Such relativism seems at times to be evangelising the Church, rather than the other way around. Mr Gooch, research and education officer at the charity Life, is writing in a personal capacity.

Some years ago, I was in a Catholic school whose RE department was plastered with posters posing questions about various hot-button controversies: “Why does God allow suffering?” “Why can’t women be priests?” “Why can’t two people of the same sex marry one another?” All good questions. All questions that it is natural for a curious young Catholic to ask. And all questions to which the Catholic Church has an answer. Not that you would realise that from these displays.

For the posters did not answer the questions. Nor did they say: “This is a complicated question, but there is an answer in the Catechism. Or perhaps Fr X could explain for you.” They did not even refer pupils to a textbook, or reassure them that the question would be addressed in RE. All the questions were left hanging, unanswered, which to me risks giving the impression that key teachings of the Church are essentially irrational.

Perhaps I am freighting an insignificant phenomenon with unwarranted significance. It’s entirely possible that all the above questions are addressed with depth and subtlety in actual RE lessons, and that the school’s pupils can talk knowledgeably about the nature of the priesthood, the goods of marriage, the purpose of sex, and the many and varied Christian responses to the “problem of pain”. Experience, I must say, suggests otherwise, but it is possible.

What this really highlights to me is a wider problem with how Christians approach the scientific, moral and epistemic challenges laid down by modernity. In general, Christian responses to these challenges during the last century and a half have fallen into three categories:

- retreat – taking refuge in some form of fideism, an unthinking rejection of scientific knowledge or new ethical theories, and an implicit withdrawal from the field of effective apologetics;
- surrender – the wholesale abandonment of central doctrines, compromise with secularising and atheist trends, and passivity or even hostility towards the idea of evangelisation; and
- engagement – the attempt to analyse new ideas and discoveries critically in the light of the faith, without compromising on essentials.

On the whole, retreat is better than surrender, particularly where it involves faithfulness to Church teaching. However unwise and frustrating and unnecessary I think it may be for

Christians to deny evolution by natural selection, or to assert against all evidence that the earth is 10,000 years old rather than four and a half billion years, I cannot imagine anyone being counted among the goats at the Last Judgment because when faced with what they sincerely believed to be a choice between God and Darwin, they chose God. But engagement is eminently preferable to either. Both surrender and retreat, to my mind, ultimately suggest a lack of real confidence in Christian truth, or at least a lack of understanding.

The Catholic Church has done better than most Christian denominations in sticking to the path of engagement. Not perfectly, of course, but as Catholics we can look back with some satisfaction over a long history of following St Peter’s injunction to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3: 15). At its best, the Catholic tradition has been a tradition of curiosity, of openness, of reason, of looking difficult questions squarely in the face, confident in the knowledge that the truth of science not only cannot contradict the truth of Catholic Christianity, but will actually beautifully complement the Christian revelation.

*“At its best, the Catholic tradition has been a tradition of curiosity, of openness, of reason, of looking difficult questions squarely in the face”*

At the very beginning of the church, the apostles had to distinguish which parts of Jewish law and tradition, if any, ought to become part of Christianity. Paul, whose Pharisaical training would presumably have made him a fearsome debater, took on all comers at the Areopagus in Athens. The early church faced a bewildering array of philosophical challenges and competitors, from Neo-Platonism and Manichaeism to the Roman mystery cults, with many of the great saints, martyrs and apologists of that age being converts from other belief systems. In post-Roman Europe, men like Augustine of Canterbury, Boniface and Cuthbert helped to make sense of Christianity for cultures that had once been defiantly pagan. In the heyday of scholasticism, Aquinas largely succeeded in “baptising” Aristotle, and of course he was not alone among his contemporaries in his commitment to reasonable faith.

In the early modern era, the Council of Trent was a thorough and rigorous response to the developing Protestant critique of the Church, and the Renaissance was driven in part by

## “The perception that Christians are running scared from hard questions is widespread among non-believers ”

Catholic humanists moderating the sometimes dry and legalistic scholasticism of the middle ages. Later still, the Christian response to 19th-century rationalism and the Enlightenment found a champion in Blessed John Henry Newman, who thought broadly, incisively and generously about Victorian culture. In the 20th century, Chesterton was one of the first Catholic apologists to get to grips with some of the worst modern intellectual trends: positivism, nihilism, relativism, sexual individualism, hatred of Christianity. Coming closer to our own times, the Second Vatican Council – whatever our view of its fruits – was intended to start a dialogue with the modern world. And the whole foundation of the *Faith* movement, of course, is an attempt to integrate modern rationality, not least as inspired by the discoveries of modern science, with the timeless truths of the Faith.

Now questions are vital. One of the worst things Christians can do when faced with the natural curiosity of the young is to give the impression that questions are off-limits. The perception that Christians are running scared from hard questions is widespread among non-believers – the genuinely confused and doubtful as much as the professionally scornful and hostile. But we must always remember that questions are means, not ends. The object of having an open mind is to close it again on something solid, as Chesterton said. There is no need to deify or celebrate doubt, any more than there is a need to regard it as inherently sinful or deeply dangerous.

I once read an interview with a musician who had faced ridicule after converting to Christianity. In the entertainment industry, he said, “it’s very cool to be asking questions, but it’s very uncool to find answers”. What is true of the entertainment industry is equally true of society as a whole. As so very often, we have picked a virtue (or quasi-virtue) that we like the sound of – in this case open-mindedness – and placed it on an artificial pedestal, abstracted from any context that might help us come to a considered judgment about its merits in individual circumstances. We have stripped virtues of their “telos”, their purpose. For the Christian, and indeed for anyone who believes in objective truth, open-mindedness is something to be aimed at not for its own good, but because it can help us to orient ourselves towards truth.

So engagement is and was and always should be the best way. But it must be real engagement, which brings us to the problem of *surrender disguised as engagement*, by which I mean the surrender of the theological revisionist. This is the man who no longer really believes in Christianity, or at least has relativised it to the extent that he will not argue for its key truth claims, but can’t or won’t honestly repudiate it. Quietly he pulls back from defending its central propositions, using the fog of vacuous platitudes and pseudo-profundity to encourage the perception that he is still defending it.

We’ve all encountered it. Surely you don’t believe in all that stuff about miracles and resurrection, says an interviewer to a

vicar. *Well*, says the reverend, smiling indulgently to symbolise his empathy with the poor benighted fools who actually believe such fairy stories, while making quite clear that he, of course, is not one of those simple people, *the important thing isn’t that it actually happened. The important thing is that it shows that Jesus loves us, and that we can transform this world.* My personal touchstone for this kind of ultimately meaningless flimflam was written by a liberal Anglican a few years ago: “I’m not even all that comfortable saying I believe in God...I would rather say that I affirm the rhetorical tradition in which God is the most basic reality.”

Intellectually speaking, the idea that religious truth claims aren’t real truth claims is rather disreputable. It’s often a way of avoiding a real debate, or indeed a way of rigging a debate in your favour. In terms of Christian apologetics, it is also highly counter-productive, since it does a great deal of the atheist’s conceptual heavy-lifting for him.

“One of the worst things Christians can do when faced with the natural curiosity of the young is to give the impression that questions are off-limits”

One high-profile Christian who sometimes gives the impression of disguised surrender – I do not judge his intentions, but simply report on the impression given – is the soon to be ex-Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. I honestly hesitate to criticise him, not least because he appears to be a personally devout, good and humble man, and a highly accomplished scholar, who will no doubt be enjoying the Beatific Vision while I am still trudging around the lower levels of Mount Purgatory. But as a public defender of and advocate for the faith, he often falls into the trap of resisting attacks on Christianity by removing anything that might be attacked.

The image that comes to mind is of a boxer who never blocks a punch or throws one, but is forever ducking and weaving and hoping that his opponent gets bored or tired. Several years ago I heard him interviewed on the radio, in the week before Christmas. It was a popular programme on a popular network, with a friendly and sympathetic host and a discursive and relaxed format, at one of the few times of year when people are a little more open to reflection on the things of God. In short, the kind of opportunity for which many Christian evangelists would give their right arm. But Rowan fluffed it. The impression he gave was the same impression that senior Anglican clerics nearly always give in public: well-meaning, verbose, irrelevant, and unable to answer the big questions.

Then there is Karen Armstrong. She is a media favourite (understandably: there is more joy in the BBC over one dissenting Catholic who has seen the modernist light and

## The Struggle for Meaning and an Uncertain Church continued

dropped all that terrible baggage about sin, than over ninety-nine BBC editors who never believed in sin in the first place). One of her pet themes, to which she returns time and again, is that the modern Christian focus on orthodoxy is mistaken and anti-historical, because historically it has been ritual and practice that have been at the heart of the Christian community, not doctrine. The suggestion, seemingly, is that Catholics should stop worrying about truth or metaphysics or revelation, and just feel the love and fellowship and shared experience.

As ever with bad ideas, there is a kernel of truth here. Christianity is not simply a collection of ideas, or a moral system, as I tried to explain recently to a friend who, riding a certain contemporary wave among the bien-pensant, had raised the question of whether the faith might not be more popular if all that embarrassing supernatural stuff were stripped away.

“Encouraging someone to believe that we don’t really know what God thinks about sexuality ... is as serious an error as telling them that God hates them because they have homosexual feelings”

Nevertheless, the bulk of Armstrong’s claim doesn’t seem to stand up. Apart from anything else, its historicity is highly disputed. Catholicism is not merely a propositional faith – but that does not mean that it is not a propositional faith at all. The Catechism, Tradition and Scripture all make it clear that authentic Christianity does involve believing that certain things are objectively true. And even if it were the case that in the past we spent less time defending and discussing specific dogmas, there seems to me to be a much more plausible explanation than “no one really used to care about dogma”, which is this: it’s not that we didn’t care about dogma, but rather that the truths of faith have come under unprecedented scrutiny and attack in the modern period, not least from dissenters within the Church, so it has become essential that we do talk about what we actually believe.

Take the example of a parish. It’s easy to say that ritual and liturgy are the heart of that community if almost everyone believes the truths of the faith. Less so if at every parish gathering there are people questioning the nature of God or challenging the understanding of the Eucharist.

A perhaps more surprising example of the flight from meaning comes from the so-called Emergent Church (EC). The EC is perhaps best understood as a postmodern current within non-denominational US Evangelicalism, although it is gaining a foothold in the UK too. It shares many of US Evangelicalism’s most recognisable features – megachurches, pre-service lattes, worship bands, big screens and so on. It has a particular focus on young,

educated urbanites whose cultural milieu has left them unable or unwilling to involve themselves in traditional Christian churches. And, to be fair, many of those within the movement are unapologetic Nicene Christians. Mark Driscoll, for instance, founder of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, preaches in jeans and T-shirt accompanied by a rock band, but he believes – really, truly believes – in the transforming power of grace, in the imperative of repentance, in the reality of judgment, and the necessity of evangelisation. He upholds Christian marriage and the sanctity of life. He understands that the church that is married to the spirit of this age will be a widow in the next.

An increasing number of Emergents, however, are highly reluctant to commit themselves publicly and unambiguously to the faith once delivered to the saints. There are many examples of how some of the key figures in this movement, such as Bruce McLaren, have strayed far from the bounds of traditional Christian faith and morals. But perhaps the example that most clearly shows the problem is the *Love Wins* controversy. *Love Wins* was a 2011 book by Emergent leader Rob Bell, in which he makes an argument for a form of universalism. Bell’s work is not without interest; for instance at times he seems to be groping towards belief in something like Purgatory. But his defence of his book against a storm of criticism, and the support offered to him by other Emergent Church leaders, was striking for one thing in particular – the refusal to give clear answers to clear questions, to let their yes be yes and their no be no. Bell’s books and videos tend to have a fragmented style, posing big theological questions and raising objections to traditional Christian beliefs in a scattershot way without ever properly engaging with them. It is ultimately rather frustrating, and dangerous for those with wavering or confused faith and weak wills.

It reminds me a little of the superficial and hackneyed rhetoric of the teenage atheist who thinks he’s the first person in the world to discover the problem of evil, or the New Atheist saloon-bar bore: “Church is boring...Christians are bigots and hypocrites...science has disproved religion...The Bible contradicts itself...why can’t we just love Jesus and reject religion?” A further problem is Bell’s implication that no intelligent Christians can provide good answers to the difficulties he raises (in which respect he rather resembles the RE department in which I saw the posters). Either he is deliberately not mentioning the best attempts to wrestle with objections to Christianity – particularly regarding the Last Things – which means he is being dishonest and pastorally reckless, or he has made no attempt to research the subject, which means he is irresponsibly poorly-informed.

This approach – *look at me, honestly wrestling with doubt and modernity, unlike the rest of you unquestioning drones who just believe what The Man tells you* – is hardly new, and the desire to be seen as a brave, innovative rebel rather than a staid, boring upholder of orthodoxy, is a strong one and has doubtless been the root of many a heresy. In the last century,



**“Open-mindedness is something to be aimed at not for its own good, but because it can help us to orient ourselves towards truth”**

one thinks of the notoriously heretical *Honest To God*, by the Anglican John Robinson, or more recently *Godless Morality*, by the ex-Bishop of Edinburgh Richard Holloway. Both books are essentially arguing that because (a) Christian living is quite difficult, and (b) lots of people have rejected the faith, we should get with the existentialist fashion and jettison the bits which people say they find too inconvenient. This is precisely the wrong way around. We ought to be saying to people, “let’s find out what you feel are the barriers to belief, and talk them through and explain them”, not “let’s find out what you feel are the barriers to belief, so we can ignore them, or fudge the issue, or pretend they’re not important”.

None of which means that the Church shouldn’t be sensitive to genuine seekers, or to wounded or confused or angry people. Truth must be delivered with charity, respect and sensitivity. But the first four words of that sentence are as important as the last four. Seen *sub specie aeternitatis*, encouraging someone to believe that we don’t really know what God thinks about sexuality, and that each of us must work it out for ourselves, and anyway it doesn’t matter much as long as we do our recycling and volunteer at a homeless shelter, is as serious an error as telling them that God hates them because they have homosexual feelings.

“Christianity only really matters if the specific claims it makes about reality are correct, as St Paul reminds us”

Perhaps those who prefer to play down the “difficult parts” of Christian life in their outreach to a dechristianised culture are reasoning that, just as the worst thing you can do to a man who has severe hypothermia is to warm him up too fast, it is counter-productive to do too much, too soon in evangelisation. However, this analogy does not justify watering down the faith; it’s not the case that the once-freezing man can never again have a hot bath. The man whose sin and folly and ignorance have taken him far from God may be more likely to be repelled than reconciled by crude moralism; but eventually he must come to see the need to accept God’s grace and turn away from sin. Christ came, after all, so that we might have life, and have it abundantly. Not that we might feel good about ourselves.

Christianity only really matters if the specific claims it makes about reality are correct. As St Paul reminds us: “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is without substance, and so is your faith...if Christ has not been raised, your faith is pointless and you have not, after all, been released from your sins” (1 Cor 15: 14-17). Our Lord himself makes it clear that what we believe matters, not least because what we believe shapes what we do, and what we do shapes our eternal destiny.

Of course, the postmodern world of “my truth” and “your truth” and “deconstruction” and “narratives” is a problem for

evangelisation. Men have always erected intricate and powerful mental boundaries against belief in Christianity, and postmodernism is particularly dangerous in this regard, since it represents not an argument against Christianity, but rather a denial that there is really anything to argue about. Systems of belief and their supporting arguments are not taken at face value, but instead analysed as rationalisations for oppression and existing power structures, or as manifestations of psychological impulses. Consider the pro-abortion slogan “if men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament”, which takes for granted that Catholic teaching on abortion is simply a reflection of male social dominance rather than a point of principle. Or consider the explanations for religious belief proposed by evolutionary psychologists, now recognised by most philosophers of biology as involving more theoretical assumptions than empirical evidence.

But the only response that will be effective, and faithful to Christ’s commands, in the long term is to meet this challenge head-on, as, in the final analysis, the Church always has. What absolutely will not work is constantly highlighting the difficulties and tensions and failures among Christians, and suggesting or implying that the faith is inherently unreliable as a guide to conduct and belief because its adherents are fallible human beings or because many parts of it are hard work. The notion that Christianity is somehow untenable because its followers and institutions aren’t perfect, or because its principles can be complex and difficult to apply in the real world, is a classic instance of the elementary logical error of mistaking a part for the whole.

We see this error in all sorts of areas. The entirely orthodox and scriptural truth that there are mysteries within Christianity and we cannot know God in full in this life (“For now, we see through a glass, darkly”) becomes the half-truth that we cannot understand God’s will or nature in any meaningful way, and we don’t really know how God wishes us to behave. Our Lord’s command not to judge the state of others’ souls is subtly distorted into the frankly anti-Christian idea that we ought not to discriminate between right and wrong acts. The correct acknowledgement that there is more to the full Catholic life than intellectual assent to certain propositions is twisted into the heresy that right belief is irrelevant.

There seems to be some deep temptation in human nature to avoid nuance in reform, and to swing wildly to another extreme. Sadly, this often manifests itself in the Church. Problems with clericalism? Downgrade the role of priests! Celibacy being poorly handled by a few priests? Get rid of it! Teaching of the faith to children too rigid? So long, Catechism! Aristotle, with his love of the Golden Mean, would have shuddered at such hysterical overreaction to one excess, and so should we. As the old axiom has it, *abusus non tollit usum*: abuse is no argument against proper use. The response to bad Christianity is not less Christianity, or vaguer and more incoherent Christianity, but better and more faithful Christianity.

# Magisterial Development Concerning the Incarnation *By Canon Luiz Ruscillo*

Canon Luiz Ruscillo, director of education in Lancaster diocese and parish priest of Hornby and Kirby Lonsdale, shows how Pope Benedict, in *Verbum Domini*, has continued the development of magisterial scriptural theology. The Pope outlines areas for “further thought” and development. As part of such a desired discussion Fr Ruscillo offers some insights from Edward Holloway’s book *A New Synthesis*. This is an extract of the first part of a talk given to the Faith Theological Symposium 2012. We hope to publish the rest in the near future.

*Verbum Domini*<sup>1</sup> is the 2010 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI following the 12th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops of October 2008. This synod had as its theme “The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church”. The Synod Fathers asked the Holy Father to make known to the People of God “the rich fruits which emerged from the synodal sessions and the recommendations which result from our common endeavour”.<sup>2</sup> As a result, in parts the document strains under the effort of trying to do justice to everything that was said by the many bishops present at the Synod. However, the theology at the heart of the treatise comes from Benedict’s own vision of the meaning of the Word of God in the Church and in the Scriptures. By making constant reference to the Prologue of John’s Gospel, the Pope shows that the Bible is not simply a word from the past, but a living and timely word. As a result this vision touches on the meaning of the Word of God for all times and throughout creation.

This approach by Benedict follows in the line of significant decisive steps forward in Catholic biblical scholarship from the end of the 19th century throughout the 20th century: *Providentissimus Deus*, Leo XIII, 1893; *Spiritus Paraclitus*, Benedict XV, 1920; *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, Pius XII, 1943; *Dei Verbum*, 1965. In *Verbum Domini*, Benedict describes this process as “a crescendo of interventions aimed at an increased awareness of the importance of the word of God and the study of the Bible in the life of the Church”.<sup>3</sup> Since the Second Vatican Council this “crescendo” has continued with, among others, the Pontifical Biblical Commission documents *De Sacra Scriptura et Christologia*, 1984; *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 1993; and *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, 2001.

The clearest and simplest exposition of Benedict’s approach to biblical interpretation is given in the Foreword to his first volume of *Jesus of Nazareth*.<sup>4</sup> The point around which he constructs his work is to see “Jesus in the light of his communion with the Father, which is the true centre of his personality; without it, we cannot understand him at all, and it is from this centre that he makes himself present to us still today.”<sup>5</sup> This is the vision at the heart of *Verbum Domini*.

## The Logos

In the Introduction and the Conclusion we find the usual thanks and exhortations. Significantly, in them we also read that the Pope takes the Prologue of John’s Gospel as the “synthesising principle” for the work of the Synod. In the Introduction he expresses his intention to “present and develop the labours

of the Synod by making constant reference to the Prologue”.<sup>6</sup> The evangelist, says Pope Benedict, “came to a deep certainty: Jesus is the Wisdom of God incarnate, he is his eternal Word who became a mortal man.”<sup>7</sup> Again, in the Conclusion, the Pope reminds us: “The Prologue of John’s Gospel leads us to ponder the fact that everything that exists is under the sign of the Word. The Word goes forth from the Father, comes to dwell in our midst and then returns to the Father in order to bring with him the whole of creation which was made in him and for him.”<sup>8</sup>

Since it is the Logos, as expressed in John’s Prologue, which guides Pope Benedict’s thought throughout *Verbum Domini*, it is important to look at the meaning of the term as used in John. It is often suggested that John drew on the writings of Philo (an Alexandrian Jewish Philosopher, 25BC-AD50) to develop the concept of Logos as used in the Prologue. In this way some scholars would wish to define the Logos of John in terms of Greek philosophical categories. This opinion has been largely rejected by modern biblical scholars. The vocabulary and imagery of the Prologue are clearly seen to be influenced by Old Testament wisdom literature and not Hellenistic philosophy.

## Wisdom Personified

Raymond Brown suggests that the author of John “capitalised and developed”<sup>9</sup> the primitive New Testament tradition of the identification of Jesus with personified Wisdom as found in the Old Testament. Brown has identified how almost every line of the Prologue has a parallel in wisdom literature referring to the personification of Wisdom.<sup>10</sup>

It is conceivable that John was also influenced by a number of other Old Testament or rabbinical traditions; namely the semitic understanding of the term “word”, *dabar*, and the identification of Wisdom with the *Torah*.

## Dabar

The term *Dabar* is much more than the “spoken word”. It has a wide range of active meanings including “thing”, “affair”, “event” and “action”. *Dabar* has power to create, to heal, to challenge and even to judge. Hebrew thought did not personify the *Dabar* as it did Wisdom, but still it considered that once spoken it had a quasi-substantial existence.

This is the sense of the word as spoken in Is 55: 18 and indeed of the word spoken in Gen 1: 1, at the beginning of creation. Jn 1: 3 easily fits into this vision. This active, powerful, revealing and creating “word” can possibly be identified with the Son in Heb 1: 1-4. It gives deeper meaning to the

## “Our whole existence becomes a dialogue with God” – Pope Benedict

contrast between speaking “in the past to the fathers” but now speaking in “one who is Son”. Wisdom literature also identifies personified Wisdom with the “word of God” (Pr 9: 1-9).

### **Torah**

In later rabbinical writings the *Torah* is considered to be created before all things and used as a pattern on which God created the world. As the *Torah* becomes increasingly idealised, wisdom literature begins to identify personified Wisdom with the *Torah* (Sir 24: 23 and Bar 4: 1), much as it does with the *Dabar* of God. Furthermore, the *Torah* and the “word of the Lord” become interchangeable as in Is 22: 3; “Out of Zion shall go forth the Law and out of Jerusalem the word of the Lord.” It is not surprising, given this late development in Jewish theology, that we should find parallels between this idealised concept of the Law and the Logos in the Prologue. The *Torah* is “the light” in Pr 6: 23. It is also described as the great example of “grace and truth” by the Rabbis, using exactly the words referred to the Logos made flesh in Jn 1: 14.

The first Christian theologians saw clearly the linear development of personified, creating Wisdom to the reality they encountered in the incarnate Word. The universalist outlook of the sages, with their reverence for the Wisdom of God’s creative, revealing and continuing providential activity in the world, furnishes Christians with the perfect vocabulary and categories to describe the new reality of Christ, the divine Mind of God. While their experience of Christ is radically original, still they recognised that His advent had been prepared and expected culturally, theologically and in literature.

“In the mind of the theologian of the Prologue the creative word of God, the word of the Lord that came to the prophets, has become personal in Jesus who is the embodiment of divine revelation. Jesus is divine wisdom, pre-existent, but now come among men to teach them and give them life”<sup>11</sup>

Old Testament wisdom literature gives John his vocabulary and theological categories. But the Incarnation gives John the inspiration and licence to take personification much further than anything in the Old Testament. New Testament Christology is firmly rooted in the Old Testament and the Old is brought to its completion in the New.

Yet it seems not enough to say that John has taken the personification of Wisdom to a greater intensity than seen before. Clearly, Logos is “with God” and “is God”. No passage of the Old Testament can even hint at this identification. Furthermore, the understanding of John’s Logos does not find its roots in personified Wisdom alone. The Logos is architect of creation; the Logos is also the Light (Jn 1: 3) and the fulfilment of the Law (Jn 1: 17). As Light he shines among men. In other words, Logos is revealing God (Jn 1: 18); Logos is the “word” of revelation. Finally, Logos completes the Law when the Law, which is the foundation of the Covenant, comes in “grace and truth”. The fullest understanding of the Logos of the Prologue is as the One who is Wisdom-Word.

### **Dialogue of God and Man<sup>12</sup>**

By far the most interesting and useful passages of *Verbum Domini* are found in the first section of Part I, “Verbum Dei: The God who Speaks”. In this section the Pope develops his theme that God, through a dialogue which he desires to have with man, becomes known to him. The purpose of this dialogue is to “invite and take [men and women] into fellowship with himself.”<sup>13</sup> Yet the Prologue, says Pope Benedict,<sup>14</sup> is not sufficiently understood if we stop at the fact that God enters into loving communion with us. The Prologue makes us realise that the Logos is truly eternal; “God was never without his Logos.”<sup>15</sup> The Father eternally utters his Word in the Holy Spirit. The Word exists before creation. The Word reveals God in the dialogue of love between the divine persons, and invites us to share in that love. As a consequence, we can only understand ourselves, made in the image of God, in accepting the Word.

Understanding Revelation as the beginning of dialogue, in which man is invited to respond, finds parallels in Holloway’s understanding of God as Envioner of man. “That is why in man, and through man, the Law of Control and Direction... passes to a new order, in the unity of the one principle of finalism, the order in which God in person is the Principle of the law, the centre of the determination to fulfilment; God takes up the law into himself, becoming to man the environment, or better, the Envioner.”<sup>16</sup> Pope Benedict writes, “...our whole existence becomes a dialogue with the God who speaks and listens, who calls us and gives direction to our lives. Here the word of God reveals that our entire life is under divine call.”<sup>17</sup>

“Pope Benedict encourages more study of sacramentality of God’s word as beneficial to the life of the Church”

In another part the Pope says that biblical revelation leads us to see the eternal Word as the “foundation of all reality”. “Scripture tells us that everything that exists does not exist by chance but is willed by God and part of his plan, at the centre of which is the invitation to partake, in Christ, in the divine life.”<sup>18</sup>

The correspondence of this idea with what we find in *Catholicism* seems very close: “In the prologue we are told that all men are made in and through the Word, who is with God and who is God, and whose being is the light of men...he came into *his own things*, his own inheritance, and his own received him not. The Greek makes it clear from the use of the neuter case, that it is his own inheritance, or estate, that he came into; the unjust husbandmen are echoed here also, and in that inheritance, his own, who should have expected him and welcomed him, neither knew him nor rallied to him. This makes no sense unless the Christ is by right of coming, not by fact of sin, the Heir of the Ages.”<sup>19</sup>

Since the Logos as expressed in John’s Prologue is the constant reference point, and one which Benedict understands as offering a synthesis of the entire Christian faith,<sup>20</sup> it is

## Magisterial Development Concerning the Incarnation continued

perhaps inevitable that the primacy of Christ, the word incarnate, should be affirmed. Since creation is through the Logos, the dialogue of revelation begins at once; man is the one called and equipped to respond. We cannot understand ourselves, we are not intelligible, except in this dialogue. Is it not necessary, in this plan, that the Logos take flesh? It is not explicitly affirmed in these terms in *Verbum Domini*.

Another passage could be understood as suggesting that revelation “demands” incarnation. We find this in the section “The Sacramentality of the Word”, where we read:

“Here it may help to recall that Pope John Paul II had made reference to the ‘sacramental character of revelation’ and in particular to ‘the sign of the Eucharist in which the indissoluble unity between the signifier and the signified makes it possible to grasp the depths of the mystery’.<sup>21</sup> We come to see that at the heart of the sacramentality of the word of God is the mystery of the incarnation itself: ‘the Word became flesh’ (Jn 1: 14), the reality of the revealed mystery is offered to us in the ‘flesh’ of the Son...The sacramental character of revelation points in turn to the history of salvation, to the way that the word of God enters time and space, and speaks to men and women, who are called to accept his gift in faith.”<sup>22</sup>

The sacramental character of the word is prefigured in type in the Old Testament understanding of the *Dabar* as an event, an action of God. Interestingly, Pope Benedict encourages more study of this as beneficial to the life of the Church: “A deeper

understanding of the sacramentality of God’s word can thus lead us to a more unified understanding of the mystery of revelation, which takes place through ‘deeds and words intimately connected’;<sup>23</sup> an appreciation of this can only benefit the spiritual life of the faithful and the Church’s pastoral activity.”<sup>24</sup>

*To be continued*

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, Vatican, 30 September 2010.

<sup>2</sup>*Verbum Domini*, 1.

<sup>3</sup>*Verbum Domini*, 3.

<sup>4</sup>J Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, London, 2007.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, pxiv.

<sup>6</sup>*Verbum Domini*, 5.

<sup>7</sup>*Verbum Domini*, 5.

<sup>8</sup>*Verbum Domini*, 121.

<sup>9</sup>R E Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, Vol.1, Appendix 2, London, 1965.

<sup>10</sup>R E Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, Vol.1, Appendix 2, pp521-523, London, 1965.

<sup>11</sup>R E Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, Vol.1, Appendix 2, p524, London, 1965.

<sup>12</sup>I have called this section The Dialogue of God and Man, because it adequately describes what the Pope expresses. Edward Holloway uses this title in *Catholicism* chapter 10, 1.

<sup>13</sup>*Dei Verbum*, 2.

<sup>14</sup>*Verbum Domini*, 6.

<sup>15</sup>*Verbum Domini*, 6.

<sup>16</sup>E Holloway, *Catholicism: A New Synthesis*, 1970, p107.

<sup>17</sup>*Verbum Domini*, 24.

<sup>18</sup>*Verbum Domini*, 8.

<sup>19</sup>*Catholicism*, p140.

<sup>20</sup>*Verbum Domini*, 5.

<sup>21</sup>Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 13, 1998.

<sup>22</sup>*Verbum Domini*, 56.

<sup>23</sup>*Dei Verbum*, 2. Cf. David Barrett’s articles in our September 2007 and May 2008 issues.

<sup>24</sup>*Verbum Domini*, 56.

## The Truth Will Set You Free Catholic Doctrine in the Pastoral Context

### THE BODY OF CHRIST

During the Q&A debate on Australian TV between Cardinal Pell and Richard Dawkins (see editorial article) the Cardinal mentioned the resurrection of the body. Just like St Paul’s listeners at the Acropolis, Dawkins responded with surprise and seemingly genuine curiosity.

**Dawkins:** “I’m intrigued by the Cardinal saying that Christians believe you are going to be resurrected in the body. That’s an astonishing idea. I don’t believe you really mean that, just as I don’t believe you really mean that the wafer turns into the Body of Christ. You must mean ‘body’ in some rather special sense. ... Other denominations accept it as metaphorical. Catholics take it as literal ... The body is certainly not

resurrected in terms of the cell, the protoplasm, the DNA ... that certainly doesn’t happen any more than the wafer turns into [the literal body of Christ]... in the sense in which any normal use of the English language would understand. You must mean it in some other sense than plain English.”

*How would we respond to this?*

### Resurrection of the Body

There are many things discovered by science which seem counterintuitive in “plain English”. All we really mean by that expression is that we tend to see the world according to the limits of our current understanding. Professor Dawkins speaks of “cells” and “protoplasm”, but that is not how the ordinary person thinks of their body in “plain English”. That is already a

## “It is the very purpose of his Body to be the life-giving vehicle of our communion”

scientific, biological level understanding that goes well beyond ordinary sense perception. There are other ways of analysing the body too, even on the level of science. From a chemical point of view a body is a network of biochemical processes; to a physicist it is a complex of energy quanta. It could probably be expressed as an enormously complicated mathematical algorithm. These points of view do not contradict each other.

There are other viewpoints too. If we shift our analysis to a higher synthesis than cellular biology, we can see a body as a living function within the environment, an organic unit within the whole ecosystem of the planet; indeed within the whole cosmos, not least because every particle of matter seems to be entangled with every other at the quantum level. The body is also a unit of meaning, a vector of functionality, a node of relationality within the mutually interactive skein of data that we call physical reality. And we haven't yet spoken of the body on the human, personal, psychological and spiritual levels. We would also want to add the unique purpose and final context of the human body within the plan of God centred on the Incarnation; that is the highest viewpoint or level of synthesis, but that would be way beyond Professor Dawkins' comprehension just now.

But to bring things back to “plain English”, or at least to Dawkins' language of cells and protoplasm, we know that the organic components of a body are constantly changing. Cells die and are replaced daily. The atoms and molecules of my body are continually being replaced as life goes on. Yet my body retains a specific identity as this body and my body. So it is not the cells and protoplasm alone that constitute the body, it is the unique patterning of elements and the unique place and meaning of that pattern within the universe that makes it what it is.

When we speak of the resurrection of the body, there is much that we cannot yet know, but we do not have to envisage the same cells and molecules as currently compose our bodies coming together again. What is recalled into being will be identifiably mine, the same unique configuration of my material identity within creation, animated and informed by my spiritual soul, yet brought to its final expression and glory (God willing) in the Divine plan. The risen body will be human, but as different in form as the flower is from the seed that is planted in the ground.

### The Holy Eucharist

As a matter of faith we simply take Jesus at his word when he said “This is My Body” (as Cardinal Pell said during his own response). When asking why and how this can be, we speak with caution and reverence as we further explore the nature of reality and the meaning of the body.

We may perhaps think of a body as the head, torso, feet and hands etc located in one place and time. Yet we have already seen there are more levels on which to view it. From the point of view of an electron there are light years of space between

one atom in my body and the next. Likewise, seen at the atomic level the boundary between my body and the surrounding environment would look very fuzzy. What relates all the components as one body is the common reference to the organic function that is my physical presence in the universe, and its inherence within my spiritual personality. Even on a macro, “common sense” level, if I accidentally cut off my finger, for example, and take it to hospital to be reattached, while it lives it is mine, part of me. Its matter-energy relativities and organic functions remain part of my identity and the unity that is “me”. So the unity of a body is not so much a matter of space/time continuity as one of substantial identity within creation.

In the philosophy of Catholic tradition, “substance” makes something what it is no matter what variable properties it displays. Substance should not be thought of as an extra, invisible component – *a deus ex machina*, or ghost in the machine – but as the thing itself in its most formal and objective identification within the universe, and also therefore within the Mind and plan of God.

The properties of a thing (the “accidents” in Aristotelian terms), its appearance and even its component parts can be highly variable within limits without destroying that identity. Bodies change and grow, acquiring whole new forms in some cases (caterpillars to butterflies, for example) yet remaining one identity, one type of thing, one substance.

So what of the Body of Jesus? We believe it is the very purpose and vocation of his Body to be the life-giving vehicle of our communion with the Godhead. So it does not go against the conceptual or existential limits of the meaning of “body” for him – and him alone – to extend himself physically as well as spiritually to all his fellow human beings throughout time and space. At the last supper he did give himself to us through communion with his Body by making the bread that he took one thing with himself, objectively and substantially, not just symbolically or intentionally.

So the bread that we bless in obedience to his command becomes one reality and substance with his risen and glorified human nature. Whatever the material properties it presents, which remain that which we ordinarily experience as bread and wine, this object now has the same objective identity as the humanity of Christ – his Body, Blood and Soul, which are inseparable from his Divine Person.

On our altars after the consecration and in the tabernacles of our Churches he is fully and completely present to us – in every respect, human and divine, except that of sense perception. Just as I am fully present in every part of my living body, so each wafer and each particle of the Holy Eucharist is the whole of him, a true communion that gives life and healing and increase of grace to those who receive worthily. What we see, what we touch, what we receive in Holy Communion is Jesus Christ – and we mean that in plain English!



# Letters to the Editor

The Editor, The Parish House, Moorhouse Road,  
Bayswater, London W2 5DJ, editor@faith.org.uk

## ANIMAL SUFFERING

Dear Father Editor,

Both the comments in your May issue on Father Jack Mahoney's recent book, *Christianity in Evolution: An Exploration*, in your Cutting Edge column, and Father Bryan Storey's letter, accept the constitutive role of death in evolution. You go even further and describe death as the driving force of evolution. In neither comment is there any clean admission that suffering – on a massive scale, and massively prolonged – is the real engine room of evolution. Death is merely the result of this suffering.

I have two questions to ask of the *Faith* movement. First, does this undeniably grisly scenario, which undermines the evolution hypothesis, give any glory to God? Secondly, how can one love – let alone worship – a god who is either powerless to create without suffering and death; or, worse still, who deliberately has recourse to such a process? I have not come across any evidence that the *Faith* movement has ever truly faced up to these two questions.

Your Cutting Edge comment on Father Jack Mahoney seems to run counter to St Paul's exegesis of the Book of Genesis: "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death, and no death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned." (Rom 5: 12) So, Father Mahoney is entirely right in saying that the Christian view of bodily death is that it is entirely due to the disobedience of Adam. (He does add "and Eve": but it was Adam's sin that was decisive, not Eve's).

I – and my family – would be most grateful if you could answer the points I have raised.

Yours faithfully,

Tim Williams, Madison Terrace, Hayle,  
Cornwall

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

We thank Mr Williams for his important and challenging query. Just to clarify at the outset that for us, *human* death comes from sin, not animal death, which is one inherent aspect of evolution.

Animals give glory to God by their life, and, yes, by their passing away. The fact that Jesus was not a vegetarian would seem to witness to this. They are a good, but purely relative, value in the wonderful, constructive interplay of nature – which does indeed include the harmonic of prey and predator. Their fight or flight mechanisms, and one might add their "fright" reactions, which we now know are built into their very DNA, do indeed seem to imply that a certain degree and type of suffering seems also to be built in. This is notwithstanding the fact that ultimately we don't know to what degree this was present and in what manner it is experienced.

Because they do not possess spiritual souls, and for the reasons Mr Williams mentions, one would surmise that their suffering, while real, does not have the same existentially, self-consciously traumatic quality as that of humans. Animal suffering, as we perceive it today, is an aspect of our fallen world, and therefore worse than originally designed. That caused by sin in the world, especially that of cruelty, is most certainly unjust. Though, like ours when linked to Christ, it is part of that "groaning in travail" of which St Paul speaks, which is part of the redemptive process.

In our response to Jack Mahoney ("Cutting Edge", May 2012) we were trying to bring out, in terms of modern knowledge, the fact that physical death is not inherent to human nature, but is a result of sin. We wrote:

"... death makes possible the onward progress of life on earth. But Man is that goal. In us, matter is brought into direct synthesis with spiritual mind ... [it] is subsumed and transformed into a more perfect state by direct union with the Godhead ... It is this destiny and this environmental harmony that is lost by sin in the first generation ... this threatens

the eternal frustration of human nature – spiritual as well as physical death."

## PSYCHOLOGY

Dear Father Editor,

*Faith* magazine is much appreciated as filling an important gap in Catholic apologetics, yet I can't help feeling that its approach is a little one-sided. The emphasis is heavily on the physical and biological sciences but it bypasses psychology as a science, and the product of rational thought.

As defined by the British Psychological Society, "psychology" is not just the vague term used in popular discussion, and it has nothing to do with Freud or Jung, who would be classified as psychoanalysts. Psychology as a "young" science aims to be as strictly scientific as possible. It aims at the objective study and recording of human behaviour. Research reports are published and laid open to the scrutiny of others, who may challenge the original analysis and conclusions.

It is a key aspect of the study of human development from the moment of conception. Might I recommend to readers as a helpful introduction *Developmental Psychology – a Student's Handbook* by M Harris and G Butterworth (Psychology Press, 2002).

One of the interesting aspects which seems to me especially important in the debate about abortion is the pre-natal learning of the child in the womb as a subject of ongoing research. The unborn child certainly learns. Can one say he "thinks"? This seems to involve an argument about terminology rather than observed fact.

There is much interest today in pre-verbal thought, and the relation between thought and language. Infants, children and young people (and their elders) may find it hard to analyse their thinking and fit it into the language available to them. This was explored long ago by Lev Vygotsky (trans. 1962, MIT Press). It is still an area of vigorous debate and research.

## “can we expect similar policing of state schools concerning Catholic arguments?”

I do hope you will be able to follow this up in *Faith Magazine*.

Yours faithfully,  
Hilary Shaw, Port Navas, Cornwall

### CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Dear Father Editor,  
Your May-June editorial, “Catholic Education and Playing Devil’s Advocate”, highlights all that is wrong with modern Catholic education. As a former school governor who chaired the admissions committee I echo the editorial’s

recollection of the plight of parish priests who have to certify the catholicity of a family. In the aftermath of the abolition of interviews, the governing body can no longer gauge this will-o’-the-wisp, notwithstanding the claim that objective catholicity is nothing but appearing at Sunday Mass.

Recently the Welsh government requested Catholic schools to give equal “air time” to same-sex marriages under the Education Act 1996. This Act requires “political views” to receive balanced reporting in schools. So can we expect similar policing of state schools

concerning the fact that marriage has been defined in virtually all societies as involving a male and a female and that international law does not provide for same sex marriage? Will they be taught the best Catholic arguments explaining why marriage is essentially a place to bring children into the world and provide a safe nurturing environment? It seems not. The rights of the child are being sacrificed on the altar of political correctness.

Yours faithfully,  
Christopher Keeffe, West Harrow, Middlesex



## The Road From Regensburg Papal Words in Search of a New Apologetic

### AD LIMINA ADDRESS TO US BISHOPS, 18 MAY

I would repeat the heartfelt plea that I made to America’s Catholics during my Pastoral Visit: We can only move forward if we turn our gaze together to Christ and thus embrace that true spiritual renewal desired by the Council ...

Dear Brother Bishops, it is my hope that the Year of Faith which will open on 12 October this year, the 50th anniversary of the convening of the Second Vatican Council, will awaken a desire on the part of the entire Catholic community in America to reappropriate with joy and gratitude the priceless treasure of our faith. With the progressive weakening of traditional Christian values, and the threat of a season in which our fidelity to the Gospel may cost us dearly, the truth of Christ needs not only to be understood, articulated and defended, but to be proposed joyfully and confidently as the key to authentic human fulfilment and to the welfare of society as a whole.

### AD LIMINA ADDRESS TO US BISHOPS, 17 JAN

... the Church in the United States is called, in season and out of season, to proclaim a Gospel which not only proposes unchanging moral truths but proposes them precisely as the key to human happiness and social prospering (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 10). To the extent that some current cultural trends contain elements that would curtail the proclamation of these truths, whether constricting it within the limits of a merely scientific rationality, or suppressing it in the name of political power or majority rule, they represent a threat not just to Christian faith, but also to humanity itself ...

The Church’s defence of a moral reasoning based on the natural law is grounded on her conviction that this law is not a threat to our freedom, but rather a “language” which enables us to understand ourselves and the truth of our being, and so to shape a more just and humane world. ...

The Church’s witness, then, is of its nature public: she seeks to convince by proposing rational arguments in the public square. ... it is imperative that the entire Catholic community in the United States come to realise the grave threats to the Church’s public moral witness presented by a radical secularism which finds increasing expression ...

... [the development of] an engaged, articulate and well-formed Catholic laity endowed with a strong critical sense vis-à-vis the dominant culture ... and the presentation of a convincing articulation of the Christian vision of man and society remain a primary task of the Church in your country; as essential components of the new evangelization, these concerns must shape the vision and goals of catechetical programmes at every level.

... As the Council noted, and I wished to reiterate during my Pastoral Visit, respect for the just autonomy of the secular sphere must also take into consideration the truth that there is no realm of worldly affairs which can be withdrawn from the Creator and his dominion (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 36).

There can be no doubt that a more consistent witness on the part of America’s Catholics to their deepest convictions would make a major contribution to the renewal of society as a whole.



# Comment on the Comments

by William Oddie

## Towards Justice

Two recent and contemporaneous news stories, though from different worlds, nevertheless ought, I suggest, to have been considered together. In both cases, the story was about religion and the sexual exploitation of children. The stories were, however, reported very differently. I refer, first, to the media obloquy heaped on the head of the Irish primate Cardinal Seán Brady for not reporting a Catholic priest for paedophile offences 40 years ago even though it was not his responsibility to do so; and, secondly, to the sentencing to varying terms of imprisonment of nine Muslims for the gross sexual exploitation of a group of wretched, helpless, underage girls.

Cardinal Brady first. Consider an article by Jenny McCartney in *The Sunday Telegraph*. I choose her piece from many others, first because she is normally a fair-minded and well-informed commentator; secondly because she conveyed well enough the general tenor of the obloquy which for a time rained down on Cardinal Brady's head.

"It has become", she wrote, "a painfully self-evident truth – surely, even to the silent onlookers at the Vatican – that the longer Cardinal Seán Brady stays in place as Primate of All Ireland, the greater the damage inflicted on the reputation of the Catholic Church in Ireland and beyond. This is not simply because his presence has become a reminder of the cover-up of paedophile abuse by priests, but also because it illustrates a continuing problem: that, after all this time, Cardinal Brady just doesn't get it. By 'get it' I mean that he still seems to believe that he personally behaved appropriately in the circumstances by which the late Father Brendan Smyth, a rapacious paedophile of almost unimaginable moral corruption, was tacitly permitted by the Church to continue brutally abusing children for 40 years, long after the ecclesiastical authorities knew what he was up to."

I wonder, I really do wonder, if anyone in the media really thought through the implications of all this. What we had here, it seems to me, was very evidently nearer to the phenomenon we call today a "witch-hunt" than to a common understanding based on an equitable analysis of the reality of the situation. The mass psychology of these affairs is rarely based on reason or justice; and such, I suggest, was the case here.

Father Vincent Twomey, the eminent retired professor of moral theology at Maynooth, said, with some justice: "There is a sense of a Greek tragedy in all of this. In the Greek tragedy, people do things intending to do the good thing but instead some awful, dreadful things happen as a result of their actions and they have to pay for it.... I think for the good of the church, I'm afraid I am of the opinion that he should resign...."

But even that perpetuated the notion that it was because of something the young Fr Brady actually did, or failed to do, that Brendan Smyth carried on abusing children, as though Fr Brady had episcopal responsibility even then. But he wasn't the bishop, he was the bishop's secretary: I wonder how many of those calling for his resignation had read the statement he issued following the BBC programme which triggered off this furore. As he put it, surely entirely reasonably: "I had absolutely no authority over Brendan Smyth. Even my Bishop had limited authority over him. The only people who had authority within the Church to stop Brendan Smyth from having contact with children were his Abbot in the Monastery in Kilnacrott and his Religious Superiors in the Norbertine Order. As Monsignor Charles Scicluna, Promoter of Justice at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, confirmed in an interview with RTÉ ... it was Brendan Smyth's superiors in the Norbertine Order who bear primary responsibility for failing to take the appropriate action when presented with

the weight of evidence I had faithfully recorded and that Bishop McKiernan subsequently presented to them...."

The documentation of the interview with the first child to be identified as a victim of Fr Smyth identifies the then Fr Brady simply as the "notary" or "note taker" of the proceedings. He did not formulate the questions asked in the inquiry process. He did not put the questions. He simply recorded the answers.

Even within the more stringent state requirements existing today in Ireland, he would not have been what is now called the "designated person" whose role would now be to report allegations of child abuse to the civil authorities. There was no such defined role, of course in the Seventies, when all this happened; and it is worth remembering that that wasn't the only thing that was utterly different then. It seems incredible to think of it now, but in this country, quite respectable people (some of whom later became senior politicians) campaigned for "paedophile rights". This was the decade in which organisations such as Paedophile Information Exchange and Paedophile Action for Liberation became affiliated to the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL, today known as Liberty). NCCL itself campaigned to reduce the age of consent in the United Kingdom and argued that court cases could do more damage than the acts themselves, arguing that "childhood sexual experiences, willingly engaged in, with an adult result in no identifiable damage".

There is much more that could be said in defence of Cardinal Brady: but who would listen? It seems to me, nevertheless, that he suffered, at the hands of the BBC *This World* programme in particular, and the media in general, a profound injustice, and that this injustice was made possible only because it fed into a narrative which Catholics have endured over recent



## “This was the decade in which quite respectable people (some of whom later became senior politicians) campaigned for ‘paedophile rights’”

years for the most part without protest, so great has been their numb horror at the seemingly endless procession of abusive clergy who have been dragged from the shadows by police and media. This narrative says not that a tiny number of clergy, shamefully, have had their share in the paedophile guilt of society at large (though if anything, judging by the figures for the general male population, a somewhat lesser share) but that there is some essential connection between paedophilia and the Catholic priesthood.

The fact that this is a general problem of our times and our society is of course no excuse. As Dr Pravin Thevathasan wrote in his book *The Catholic Church and the Sex Abuse Crisis* (CTS): “It is true that the abuse of minors is rife within society. But we claim, by the grace of God, to be members of the one Church founded by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and we are therefore called to a higher standard than that found in society at large.” But that doesn’t mean that this is a problem that can be seriously addressed by mounting witch-hunts against senior clergy for what they did or failed to do 40 years ago – particularly when it is absolutely clear that they had no direct responsibility for making decisions in the particular case concerned.

Cardinal Brady endured, as I say, a witch-hunt of a kind Catholics have had to get used to and others have not. This was dramatically illustrated by the other major sex abuse story involving religion which was obsessing the media at about the same time. In the case of Cardinal Brady, the media made the most of the anti-Catholic hysteria it stoked up; in the other, they scarcely dared mention the religion of those accused, only – and for a very particular reason – their race. The oblique mention of race here offered the perfect opportunity to avoid discussing the very sensitive issue of the religious dimension of these offences. The accused were “Asian”, if you like: never “Muslim”.

What became very evident as the trial

unfolded was the absurdity that the well-known attitude of some Muslims (particularly some Muslim men) towards some non-Muslim women – a centrally important consideration in the whole affair – was consistently and with deliberation brushed under the carpet. When the Muslim journalist Yasmin Alibhai Brown tried to describe this attitude from her own experience, recalling, during a radio discussion, many conversations among ordinary Muslims about white women and their alleged promiscuity, she was shouted down by another Muslim participant, the otherwise admirable Mohammed Shafiq. Shafiq, chief executive of the moderate Muslim organisation the Ramadhan Foundation, had actually received death threats for accepting that sexual abuse of vulnerable underage white girls was a phenomenon of particular concern to the “Asian” community: “In the early days”, he says, “the Asian community thought the exploitation was all made up, just BNP propaganda. Then they realised that it was actually going on and they found it abhorrent.”

He even pointed out that the offenders were predominantly Pakistani men. Such offenders “have a respectable life in the community and then they have their night life. Asian girls are not available to them and so they look to Western girls. They think they’re easy. They see them as tarts who are there to be used.” All true, and almost exclusively a *Muslim* attitude. I make no judgment here concerning the extent to which these attitudes result from their faith, western decadence and other influences, but just affirm that avoiding rational discussion on the issue is a dangerous game.

We need to get back to the use of the term “race” and its misuse as a pseudonym for “religion”: deny it has anything to do with race, and you deny by implication that it’s a Muslim problem. This confusion of race and religion, however, has itself undoubtedly been part of the problem. As the former MP for Keighley, the admirable Ann Cryer (who has been courageously

campaigning on the issue for many years) said of the failure by police to act before now: “This is an absolute scandal. They were petrified of being called racist and so reverted to the default of political correctness. They had a greater fear of being perceived in that light than of dealing with the issues in front of them.”

One girl told police that she had been raped and provided DNA evidence from her attacker. But the CPS twice decided not to prosecute him. The 15-year-old’s abuse continued and at its height she was being driven to flats and houses to be raped by up to five men a night, four or five days a week. She was, says Mrs Cryer, singled out because she was white, vulnerable and underage.

And, it also has to be said, because she was non-Muslim and therefore, in the eyes of the perpetrators, not worthy of care or respect. As the judge told the nine men while handing down exemplary sentences, they had contempt for these children because “they were not of your community or religion.” As Brendan O’Neill said in his *Telegraph* blog:

“The fact is that in a secular-humanist, and often anti-religious civilisation, religious targets have to be carefully chosen. In a specifically anti-Catholic (or in the case of modern Ireland simply anti-clerical) culture, the Catholic clergy are the perfect target. Muslims are a little frightening, even dangerous; avoid mentioning their religion if at all possible, even when it is directly relevant: that’s the rule.”

What can Catholics do about all this? Probably it just has to be endured. But we also have to carry on plugging away at the truth: which is that in a society in which child sex abuse is a major problem, our clergy have collectively become scapegoats. And where there are scapegoats, the real problem isn’t being addressed.

We need to worry, too, about all those children who are being abused but not by the clergy: who cares about them?



# Book Reviews

## Christianity in Evolution: an Exploration

by Jack Mahoney, Georgetown University Press, 2011, 192pp.

In *Christianity in Evolution* Jack Mahoney, Jesuit priest and professor of moral and social theology, considers the consequences for Christian theology of “accepting the truth of human biological evolution” (p14). Mahoney quotes Pope John Paul II to demonstrate that the late Pontiff called for such an investigation and even anticipated a possible development of doctrine.

At first glance Mahoney’s enterprise seems laudable. As Pope John Paul pointed out, the Church is keen to foster dialogue and openness between science and religion; moreover evolutionism, as a “serious hypothesis”, is “worthy of investigation and in depth study” (To Pontifical Academy of Science, PAS, 25 Jun 1982, n.4). The Pope recommended taking scientific insights and evolutionary questions seriously so that theology can understand them and “test their value” (Letter to George Coyne, 1 Jun 1988). However, Mahoney’s method is the reverse: he applies the “doctrine” and “truth” of evolution to “aspects of some traditional Christian beliefs” and “where necessary” puts traditional Christian beliefs “aside” in order to “make room for his own more contemporary evolutionary theology” (p14). Not perhaps what Pope John Paul had in mind as development of doctrine.

Unfortunately, Mahoney does not explicitly detail his version of the “truth” of evolution. As Pope John Paul explained, there are several “theories of

evolution”, some of which are entirely compatible with a Creator and Sustainer God; some of which are reductionist, atheistic and materialistic – particularly in their denial of a personal Creator and the rejection of the immortality of the soul (To PAS, *ibid*). It is up to the reader to piece together Mahoney’s “truth”.

Nevertheless, Mahoney is clear about beliefs he considers to be “unnecessary and cumbersome theological baggage” (p160) that we can “just get rid of” (p163), though he situates these beliefs in a rather reductive version of theology. According to the “truth” of evolution, death is simply “a fact of evolutionary life that affects all living things” (p xi). With death “demythologised” there is no original sin, because death is no longer a punishment for disobedience, and no Fall and hence no need for redemption or for a sacrificial and atoning interpretation of Jesus’ death. These are merely part of the “etiological myth” to account for death produced by a traditional Christianity influenced by Jewish and Greek cultural concerns, by scholasticism, by the “personal preoccupations” of Augustine (and Luther), and continued by Anselm, Aquinas and the Council of Trent (p88).

The Mass as a sacrifice can go; the Eucharist can be seen in its “evolutionary role” as “fostering our future life and happiness together in union with the risen Christ” (pp131-139); the Incarnation and Christology can be reconfigured since Christ did not come to redeem or restore human beings. Instead God became man to teach human beings to move out of selfishness and imitate the altruism of God and also to save the human species from the inevitable fate of extinction (p143). Mary was not preserved from original sin because there was none (p146). The distinction between nature and grace ceases to exist (p145). While the sacrament of Penance remains necessary for personal sin, other sacraments need to be rethought. So the washing clean of original sin in Baptism is irrelevant and Sacred Orders need not exclude women since the priest no longer acts in the

person of Christ as an atoning sacrifice (p147). We do not need a belief in hell (p148); those not associated with Jesus’ altruistic death simply cease to exist once they die (p114). Ethics can be modified since the idea of nature changes, so human sexuality can be thought of more in terms of interpersonal relationships (p149). Souls immediately created by God are out, since the idea that human beings are embodied souls is not easy to maintain “in the light of evolutionary thinking” (p114), though Mahoney seems to mistake Christian anthropology with the anthropology of the fourth-century heretic Apollinarius (pp116-117). At least Mahoney says the “central belief” in the existence and nature of God as Trinity of divine Persons is “essentially unaffected” (p144).

Mahoney dwells on divine personhood as “concurrently individual and communitarian” and attributes the “social understanding” of God to John of Damascus (p21, though he omits the earlier work of Basil, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, who introduced the idea of *perichoresis*, and moreover were clear that the Divine Persons are not individuals: there are not three Gods). Nevertheless, one of the difficulties for evolutionary theories is how to account for altruism. To oblige, Mahoney rather aridly describes the inner life of the Trinity as “divine altruism” (p152) and humanity as “created to image God as supremely and essentially altruistic” (p43). The death of Jesus conducts the human species beyond individual mortality and introduces “it” to the final stage of everlasting fulfilment (p65) so that Christ can now be seen as “most fully the agent of human evolution” (p153).

Mahoney wishes to present a faith that “enlightens much more than contradicts modern human experience” (p167). His starting point is that there is an “urgent need for the church to get its teaching right” (p165). Certainly he declares some “unease” at “pursuing the implications that accepting biological evolution entails for Christian beliefs and doctrines” (p ix). However, Mahoney

## “The lack of respect for canon law led bishops to fail properly to discipline deviant priests”

does not dwell for long on his disquiet and he stretches the views of Newman and Rahner on continuity and development in the tradition beyond breaking point. In essence his very repetitive book is an attempt to rework Christian theology into the “truth of human biological evolution” (p14).

**Pia Matthews** Wonersh

**Editorial Comment:** For our comment upon Mahoney’s above-mentioned points see our last Cutting Edge column, [www.faith.org.uk/Publications/Magazines/May12/May12CuttingEdge.html#mahony](http://www.faith.org.uk/Publications/Magazines/May12/May12CuttingEdge.html#mahony), and see current letters page.

### The Catholic Church and the Sex Abuse Crisis

*by Dr Pravin Thevathasan (Catholic Truth Society, London, ‘CTS Explanations’, 2011, £1.95)*

Few issues are as continually being put before us as the tragic clerical sex abuse crisis that has ravaged the Catholic Church in recent decades. As a consequence there is no need to explain either the importance or relevance of the topic of this CTS booklet. What does need to be commented on, however, is the impressive ability of this booklet to do justice to this topic in just 70 small pages. What is even more remarkable is the ability of Dr Thevathasan to do this in a manner that shows his professional competence as a psychiatrist, while still being accessible to the general reader. The booklet covers all of the key points that one would hope to be addressed in an analysis of this issue, but let me attempt to summarise a few of them.

The booklet starts by acknowledging the failure of Church leaders either to protect potential victims of abuse, or to respond adequately when cases of abuse occurred. The book notes that it offers “no excuses” (p3) and repeatedly quotes from various apologies made by Pope Benedict and other Church leaders (pp3, 65-7). The book is also not

sparing in identifying where the responsibility lay: with the bishops (p21). It was the bishops who were responsible for selecting and forming the priests who proceeded to abuse. It was similarly the bishops who were responsible for failing to discipline the priests when their deviant behaviour was brought to their attention. It was the bishops who covered up and re-assigned abusers (pp25-9).

More generally, it was the bishops who neglected to use their canonical power to create effective procedures to develop a climate and practice in the Church where such things could be more effectively prevented and identified. But if bishops have been at fault for the abuse crisis, what of the responsibility of Pope Benedict himself? On this point the book indicates that far from there being a need to offer an excuse for his behaviour, Pope Benedict deserves credit for having been directly involved in seeking to remove what he has called this “filth” (p55) from the Church. Three attempts by the media to impugn the then Cardinal Ratzinger with personal responsibility for individual cases are shown to be unsubstantiated (pp55-61).

If no “excuses” are offered by the book, it does nonetheless offer a convincing explanation of the disastrous coincidence of a number of factors that combined to produce this tragedy. First, the book cites Pope Benedict in noting the context of the general moral breakdown in modern society (p4). It then summarises some psychological theories that mistakenly led many to think that paedophilia was not truly a problem (pp5-10, 38). Other bad psychology was used in the seminaries, such that they became “houses of malformation” (p42) where future priests either failed to learn the importance of “self-denial” (p42) to restrain deviant tendencies, or may even have been formed so as to foster such tendencies. Similarly, the seminaries’ theological dissent from Church teaching led to an ethical relativism that likewise formed priests who saw no need to restrain any perverse impulses. At the same time,

the lack of respect for canon law that dominated after the 1960s led bishops to fail properly to discipline deviant priests (p39). Thus, factors both internal and external to the Church combined to produce the crisis.

That said, the book cites numerous reports and statistics to indicate that abuse of minors is not a problem unique either to priests, or to the Catholic Church. Rates of abuse are the same in ministers of other denominations and religions (pp35ff). Further, the rates of abuse by priests are lower than those in men in other fields of life (pp14-5, 35-6). More specifically, the book offers an important argument showing why celibacy is in no way connected to abuse (pp44, 47). Of further interest is the book’s comments on the “strong link” (pp44-46, cf. pp27-29) between homosexuality and the abuse of minors, even though it notes that these are not necessarily connected.

On a more positive note the book describes the various procedures that have been implemented in the Church, both to prevent such abuse in the future and to respond adequately to abuse when it does occur. It notes a series of new procedures adopted both locally in the UK (pp62ff) and in the universal Church (pp64ff) and notes that it can be credibly claimed that no other institution is doing more than the Catholic Church in this regard (p68), even if such steps have been late coming. The book also notes that, perhaps because of such procedures, new cases of clerical abuse “have virtually disappeared in recent times” (p28).

In short, this brief book does exactly what you would hope for in a book on this topic. It summarises the Church’s apologies for the sins and failures of its members, explains their context in such a way that makes sense of them, and also gives solid reasons to think that important lessons have been learnt from this tragedy, lessons that mean that we can reasonably expect that such a tragedy will not be repeated in our time.

**Fr Dylan James** Shaftesbury



### The Rule of St Benedict for Family Life Today

---

by Don Massimo Laponi OSB,  
translated by Liam Kelly, St Paul  
Publishing, 2010, 103pp, £9.95.

As the title of the book suggests, the author wishes to present the Christian family in the modern world with a structure of daily living based upon the Rule of St Benedict, the Father of Western Monasticism (c480-550). The ideas presented might strike one as radical if not impossible, but on page 35 he well makes the case for trying, given the dramatic ways in which family life can be changed through failure. It is really on this premise, of the need for radical life change in the face of real threats, that the author makes the case for a family life which is Christian, wholesome and holy.

Having made observations about the fabric of our society, of the lack of a supportive culture and the threats which these pose to family life, we are presented on page 42 with a recipe for building family life based on the Rule, concerning external and internal dispositions of mind and heart. These dispositions are then elaborated and there follow very practical ways of creating the necessary structure, environment and timetable to arrive at a Benedictine way of life.

The first half of the book presents a series of Benedictine “Documents”. These might seem to assume a familiarity with the great spiritual classics; however, there is no need to be disconcerted by this, as the later text navigates one through various of their suggestions and the Rule upon which they are based. Perhaps one of the most enlightening things is that the author gives a clear and succinct understanding of the Benedictine phrase *ora et labora* (prayer and work) and the context by which both can be lived out and flow one in to the other.

Given the secular climate of our age, the aspirations of this little book seem like the highest and steepest mountain to

climb, yet for a young person setting out on life and seeking to understand more fully their own vocation, this is definitely a book to be read, to be treasured and to be used as a reference. A little gem which opens horizons to the wealth of spirituality we find in the Church Universal. For the not so young, for those who already have an established way of life, the book is still likely to reveal some very useful ways in which patterns of family life and behaviour might be addressed, with a view to all members of the family attaining to sanctity of life and eternity with God.

Fr Ian Vane Horley

### Thomas Cromwell: the Rise and Fall of Henry VIII's Most Notorious Minister

---

by Robert Hutchinson, published by  
Phoenix, 2009, 368pp, £9.99.

Stalin had Beria, Hitler had Heinrich Himmler and Henry VIII had Thomas Cromwell. He was the original Prince of Darkness. Thanks to the anniversary of Bluff King Hal's birth in 2009, we have had a forest of books about the Tudors, and of Cromwell in particular. He appears in C J Sansom's excellent series, but as background to the hunchback lawyer Matthew Shardlake. And in *Wolfbane* Hilary Mantel tries to redress the negative publicity enjoyed by the minister and gilds the lily somewhat.

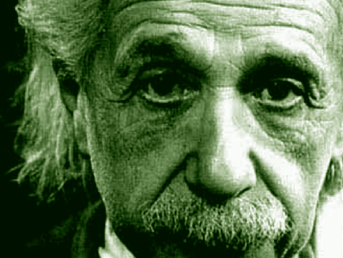
Robert Hutchinson presents a meticulous study of Cromwell, having delved into the public records and quarried all the biographies. He also provides a detailed index. As a book, it does not show much sympathy for those who end up on the gallows, whether Catholic priests or Anabaptists. He retails Foxe's gossip about three priests on their way to Tyburn arguing which one of them was truly facing a martyr's death. In fact one of the three was the Archdeacon of Brecon and another was chaplain to Queen Catherine of Aragon; they were all beatified by Leo XIII.

Hutchinson also reveals how Cromwell pandered to Henry's imperial desires – the Pope was branded by the king “a usurpator of all princes” – arguing that the protection of the “body politic” justified extreme measures, including the innocent-sounding Statute of Proclamations which, in cases of necessity, did away with the need to consult Parliament at all. The author notes that “any measure that amends primary legislation by ministerial order without parliamentary measures is (nowadays) referred to as ‘Henry VIII powers’.”

Cromwell was an example of overreaching greed. He paid the modern equivalent of £750,000 for a piece of jewellery. John Stow, a typographer, writing 60 years later – with the memory of how the minister had cheated his ancestors out of some of their property – would say rather charitably: “The sudden rising of some men causes them to forget themselves.”

Cromwell would maintain that he forged a modern kingdom; but it was at the expense of individual freedoms. The Church, throughout its long history, has managed to provide a powerful reminder to those in power that their authority comes from above. Henry, assisted by Cromwell, laid the basis for an English regard for authority which governments have not been slow to exploit. It reminds us that we must not blindly assume that everything is in our interest because authority tells us so; especially when it goes against the law of God.

Fr James Tolhurst Chislehurst



# Cutting Edge

## Science and Religion News

### Convergence and Mind

Simon Conway Morris, professor of evolutionary palaeobiology in the Department of Earth Sciences at Cambridge is featured in the Cambridge alumni magazine for Lent 2012. A Christian, he has been interested in the science and religion debate, arguing against the Intelligent Design school on the one hand and materialism on the other. He believes that evolution may be compatible with belief in the existence of a creator God.

Convergent evolution is the acquisition of the same biological trait in unrelated evolutionary lineages, for example the wing. Flying insects, birds, and bats have all evolved the capacity of flight independently; they have thus “converged” on this useful trait. Most biologists agree that convergence is a common occurrence; but Conway Morris goes further, believing that evolution converges on the best possible solution, rather than on the best random solution. Complex structures are at least to some extent constructed from pre-existing molecular building blocks. It seems that the same environmental function can be fulfilled by unrelated building blocks, meeting the same evolutionary need.

Conway Morris argues that convergence is a dominant force in evolution, related to an “optimum” body plan towards which life will inevitably evolve. In this view, evolution was bound eventually to stumble upon animal “intelligence”. Indeed, the requirement for very precise initial conditions necessary to produce a habitable universe implies that the emergence of intelligence was inevitable, involving a far greater degree of determinism in evolution than had previously been thought. According to this view, evolution is not a random process. If one were able to rewind time and run it again, intelligent life would result. Second, it suggests that there may be another biological principle at work, in addition to those invoked to explain natural variation and selection. Third, it suggests that alien life is both probable, and likely to be surprisingly familiar.

Conway Morris proposes that there is an orientation towards the evolution of certain structures, such as the “camera eye”, resulting in a greater likelihood of such structures being developed in unrelated branches of the evolutionary tree. He states: “A good part of organic systems rely on self-organisation...that things click together...yet there is no general theory to explain how that happens.”

This view of convergence as something non-random and non-reductionist would seem to be consistent with a hierarchical view of natural being. It lends itself to a philosophical affirmation of the *analogy of being* in which “higher” forms of complex life are more real, more a unity-in-being, precisely because of their specific dynamic relationships to their environment. This is in opposition to the often strident, dogmatic pronouncements against any possibility of true purpose or direction in evolution made by many evolutionary biologists. Conway Morris is part of an increasingly prominent school in the philosophy of biology which offers a refreshingly new stance, one in which the biological universe is not merely an inert petri dish in which purely random genetic diversity and mutation have resulted by Darwinian “survival of the fittest”.

This writer would suggest that this must be precisely because the universe is that sort of environment in which there is a dynamic and purposeful relationship of being. It is at the heart of the philosophy and theology of the *Faith* movement that there is a directing, controlling force in nature such that “higher” being educes and evokes “lower” being as part of the very fabric of the universe itself. In this view, pure “self-organisation” is impossible since all material reality is a unity-in-relationship, the relationships with other existing objects being an essential part of that object’s definition and meaning.

It is certainly the case that any view of evolution which recognises the emergence of intelligence as a sort of destiny, written in the script of nature, is welcome. The somewhat tired arguments

in which evolution, and our place within it, is seen as purely random need to be challenged. Conway Morris points out that we don’t actually know what life is at all; although we can study and describe it in detail, we don’t really understand how it coheres. He writes: “I do sense that biology in particular is running into something of an impasse, especially when it comes to consciousness. We have a whole set of explanations, and I don’t think any of them work at all. Which may mean that these things are beyond our comprehension. I have a sort of sneaking sense that this is not true, and that means that the world around us is organised in a rather interesting fashion.”

His comments on “scientific” views of consciousness are also timely because populist evolutionary biologists and “physicalist” philosophers of mind often portray the conscious mind, indeed the “self”, as nothing other than the sum total of the chemical and biological parts of the brain and central nervous system. The theological dogma of the human soul being a spiritual creation of God is often ridiculed as a concept that has been rendered unnecessary by science. However, human intelligence surely outstrips purely material, evolutionary requirements. This begs the question: how could human intelligence evolve to its present form by purely material evolutionary forces alone?

In the synthesis of philosophy and science presented by *Faith*, the evolution of the human brain at a critical juncture, the first *homo sapiens*, requires an *external* principle of control, one not determined by material forces, but controlling and directing them. This is the spiritual soul, the seat of true human intelligence and free will. As Holloway states: “The real distinction between matter and spirit ... is a key concept to the right understanding of the evolution of forms and of their history.”

As to whether intelligent alien life exists, certainly Holloway found that idea “thrilling” but there is already more than enough to consider concerning terrestrial life, its evolution and the nature of the human self to warrant its discussion here.

# Notes From Across the Atlantic

by David Mills

## THE FUTURE OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS

Two views of the Vatican's correction of the Leadership Council for Women Religious, rather different.

Writing on the weblog of the *New York Review of Books*, Garry Wills: "Archbishop Peter Sartain of Seattle has taken control of the Conference, writing new laws for it, supplanting its leadership, and banning 'political' activity (which is what Rome calls social work). Women are not capable, in the Vatican's mind, of governing others or even themselves. Is it any wonder so many nuns have left the orders or avoided joining them? Who wants to be bullied?"

Writing on the website of *National Review*, George Weigel: The congregations are "dying. The years immediately following the Second Vatican Council saw a mass exodus from American convents; and in the four and a half decades since the Council concluded, American Catholic women's religious life in the LCWR congregations has suffered various forms of theological, spiritual, and behavioural meltdown." This being the case, he continues,

"young Catholic women have quite sensibly decided that, if they wish to do good works or be political activists while dressing like middle-class professionals and living in apartments, there is little reason to bind themselves, even in an attenuated way, to the classic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience – each of which has undergone a radical reinterpretation in the LCWR congregations. So the LCWR orders are becoming greyer and greyer, to the point where their demise is, from a demographic point of view, merely a matter of time: perhaps a few decades down the road, absent truly radical renewal. (Meanwhile, the congregations of religious women that have retained

the habit, a regular prayer life, and a commitment to Catholic orthodoxy are growing.)"

## EVOLUTION AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS

When the Vatican announced the expected results of its investigation of women's religious orders in the United States, the sisters of the LCWR and their supporters (Garry Wills clearly among them) reacted with shock – shock that anyone would think the sisters and the conference had any problems at all. It was all the Vatican's imagination.

We would like to think they were right, having as much affection and respect for nuns as anyone, but this set of nuns gives us reason to wonder. Their annual assembly, for example.

This year's, scheduled for August, and titled "Mystery Unfolding: Leading in the Evolutionary Now", features as the keynote speaker a Barbara Marx Hubbard. As unknown to you as she was to us, Hubbard runs the Foundation for Conscious Evolution and offers courses for those who want to be "Agents of Conscious Evolution". Her website features a poster of "the sacred story of creation", in which man moves from human life as it now is through "the wheel of co-creation" in which we "enter the cosmic mystery together" to something called "universal humanity" and on from there to "infinite potential."

What exactly this means is, as so often with such enterprises, a little vague, though breathlessly described. And admittedly, the long description of "conscious evolution" on her website invokes Jesus and St Paul in its defence.

This will give you an idea: "Although we may never know what really happened, we do know that the story told in the Gospels is that Jesus' resurrection was a

first demonstration of what I call the post-human universal person." The story tells us Jesus didn't die.

He made his transition, released his animal body, and reappeared in a new body at the next level of physicality to tell all of us that we would do what he did. The new person that he became had continuity of consciousness with his life as Jesus of Nazareth, an earthly life in which he had become fully human and fully divine. Jesus' life stands as a model of the transition from *Homo sapiens* to *Homo universalis*.

One feels, reading this kind of cosmic dingbatter, that rather than evolving with these people one would rather hang out with the unevolving Yankees fans at the pub. (And I say that as a Red Sox fan.)

Anyway, this is the person our supposedly faithful Catholic nuns who only, according to Garry Wills, want to do good things like caring for the poor, if only that bullying, brutish, bad ol' Vatican would let them, have invited to lead them in their annual meeting.

*David Mills is Executive Editor of First Things magazine. We thank them for this syndicated piece.*

# PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

EDWARD HOLLOWAY

**Volume 1:**  
A Critique of an Abstract Scholasticism  
and Principles Towards Replacement

**Volume 2:**  
Rethinking the Existential

**Volume 3:**  
Noumenon and Phenomenon:  
Rethinking the Greeks in the  
Age of Science

Price per volume: **£5.00** +p&p

Available from:

Sr Roseann Reddy, Faith-Keyway Trust Publications Office, 104 Albert Road, Glasgow G42 8DR



## PERSPECTIVES IN THEOLOGY

Vol. One  
Christ the Sacrament of Creation  
*Edward Holloway*

The first volume of collected writings by Fr Edward Holloway seeks to present his contributions to Faith magazine to a wider readership. A champion of Catholic orthodoxy, Fr Holloway sought to bring about a new reconciliation between science and religion. In this way he anticipated and also participated in Pope John Paul II's programme of intellectual renewal in the Church. In this volume you will find stimulating writing on the key themes of his synthetic perspective, including the existence of God; the development of Scripture; Christ as Son of Man; Mary Immaculate; the nature of the Church, and much more.

160 pages **£8.95**

ISBN 1-871217-50-4

Available from:

**Sr Roseann Reddy**  
104 Albert Road, Glasgow G42 8DR

## ST PHILIP'S BOOKS

Rare and secondhand Catholic books  
bought and sold. Distributor for  
Newman's Letters and Diaries.

**Proprietor: Christopher Zealley**

82 St Aldgates, Oxford OX1 1RA

Tel: 01865 202 182 • Fax: 01865 202 184

Quarterly catalogues free on request.

We travel to buy collections of Catholic books.

Shop in central Oxford, near Catholic Chaplaincy.  
Over 9,000 books on view, new and secondhand.

**Visitors welcome**

Monday-Saturday 10am-5pm.

15 minutes walk from railway station or

5 minutes from Westgate car park.

[sales@stphilipsbooks.co.uk](mailto:sales@stphilipsbooks.co.uk)

[www.stphilipsbooks.co.uk](http://www.stphilipsbooks.co.uk)

# faith

## From the Aims and Ideals of Faith Movement

Faith Movement offers a perspective upon the unity of the cosmos by which we can show clearly the transcendent existence of God and the essential distinction between matter and spirit. We offer a vision of God as the true Environment of men in whom “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28), and of his unfolding purpose in the relationship of word and grace through the prophets which is brought to its true head in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, Lord of Creation, centre of history and fulfilment of our humanity. Our redemption through the death and resurrection of the Lord, following the tragedy of original sin, is also thereby seen in its crucial and central focus. Our life in his Holy Spirit through the Church and the Sacraments and the necessity of an infallible Magisterium likewise flow naturally from this presentation of Christ and his work through the ages.

Our understanding of the role of Mary, the Virgin Mother through whom the Divine Word comes into his own things in the flesh (cf. John 1:10-14), is greatly deepened and enhanced through this perspective. So too the dignity of Man, made male and female as the sacrament of Christ and his Church (cf. Ephesians 5:32), is strikingly reaffirmed, and from this many of the Church’s moral and social teachings can be beautifully explained and underlined.

[www.faith.org.uk](http://www.faith.org.uk)

