

faith

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PROMOTING A NEW SYNTHESIS
OF FAITH AND REASON

Science and Religion: Is Synthesis Possible?

Editorial

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Cormac Burke

The Exploitation of Maternal Mortality

Fiorella Nash

Discerning Ultimate Intelligibility: A Discussion With *John M. Mcdermott*

Also

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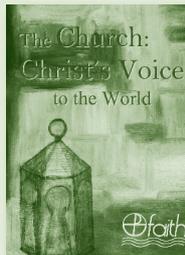
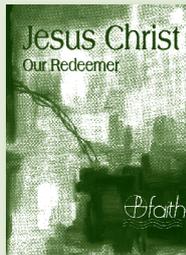
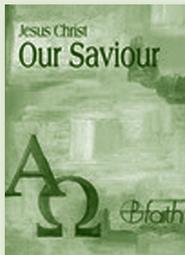
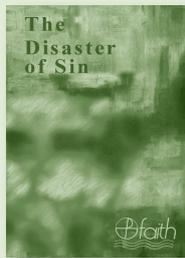
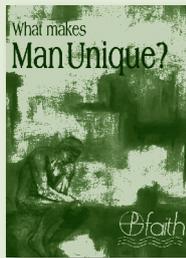
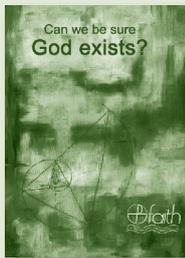
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Catholicism a New Synthesis

by Edward Holloway

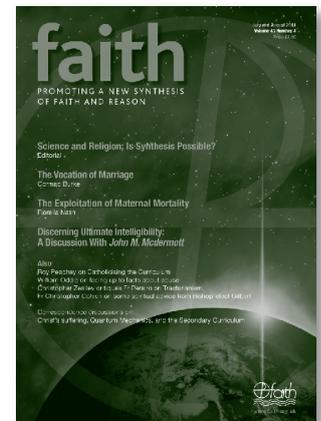
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July and August 2011
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The word synthesis implies something more than harmonious co-existence. Our regular readers would not be flabbergasted to learn that we aim for that something more when we write about science and religion. We do that because we believe in what John Paul II called the “profound and indissoluble unity between the knowledge of reason and the knowledge of faith” (*Fides et Ratio*, 16).

Our editorial argues, among other things, that the object of modern science is not a radically delimited subset of the physical realm, and thus that scientific methodology, properly understood, is just a part of that exercise of human reason which is ultimately in profound synthetic harmony with faith. If one attempts to reduce science to something that, for instance, has no effect upon metaphysics you undermine the dynamic interweaving of the personal actions of faith and reason, which comprise the personal relationship with God in Christ.

This thoroughgoing approach to faith and reason means that, as ever, we publish pieces that reveal what we think are aspects of the effect upon our church and society of the 20th century collapse of an agreed and coherent vision of the faith to hand on to our seminarians and our people.

Fiorella Nash shows how the ungrounded slogans of the anti-life mentality can impact upon the harrowing reality of mothers dying in childbirth. Cormac Burke shows how it is surprising that we, as a culture and even in the Church, need to be reminded of the purposes of marriage concerning procreation and mutual growth in generosity. William Oddie shows how the abuse crisis reveals a Church shamefully embroiled in a particularly decadent strand of our society, and so points to our own need of purification and penance.

Our philosophical discussion with Fr McDermott on whether the universe is ultimately rational shows a mutual, and we hope heartening, search for synthesis. Yet it also shows some of the divergent metaphysical approaches which characterise modern Catholic thought and, in as much as they put a brake upon coherent vision, also slow up the new evangelisation to which we are called. It is a further sign that we must wait upon the Lord with patience and penance.

For as John Paul II expressed it: “This unity of truth, natural and revealed, is embodied in a living and personal way in Christ ... He is the *eternal Word* in whom all things were created, and he is the *incarnate Word* who in his entire person reveals the Father” [*Fides et Ratio*, 34].

“Through Him all things were made”
John 1:3

Defining Terms

The long-running debate over science and religion is frequently hampered by the different ways in which the words “science” and “religion” are used. At the outset of any discussion it is best to pin down as far as possible what we intend by these terms.

What Do We Mean By “Science”?

The word “science” has its roots in the Latin for knowledge or wisdom. At its broadest, it simply refers to any systematic study of reality. This is how the word was used from medieval to early modern times. Natural science referred to the study of the structure and workings of material realities, the wisdom that frames the material order. Theology was considered to be the highest of all sciences because it studied the highest wisdom of all, revealed by God. Theology is the study or contemplation of God as the source of all Wisdom. In the medieval system, the various sciences were held to have their own proper subject and method, but they were not thought of as ultimately separate. In fact theology was called the “Queen of Sciences” because it considered reality in the light of the ultimate Illumination afforded by the Self-revelation of the Divine Mind, the highest point of synthesis.

In the modern world the word “science” is used almost exclusively of the natural or material sciences. Even within that context it has come to have various interrelated but distinct meanings. It refers to the methodology and conduct of particular experiments and research. It also denotes the various theories that unify multiple areas of discovery and insight such as relativity, genetics and evolution. Often it can indicate the understanding of the world around us at the conceptual or philosophical level which has been revealed in a fuller light by scientific research. Examples of such “science” are the Copernican revolution, the atomic and molecular understanding of matter and the periodic table of elements, and the vastly enhanced image of the cosmos afforded by contemporary astrophysics.

What Do We Mean By “Religion”?

The word “religion” can be even more diverse and diffuse in its meanings. It encompasses those aspects of human life and culture that are concerned with the ultimate meaning and destiny of human nature and the relationship of the individual and of society with the supernatural. In our own thinking, the religious instinct is natural to human beings; we are drawn to the Divine in whose image and likeness we are made and in whose environing wisdom and love we find our proper harmony of life and our deepest fulfilment. In Catholic theology this upsurge of the human spirit is itself prompted by the initiative of God’s grace and completed by the revelation that culminates in Jesus Christ who is God manifest in the flesh.

Science and Religion: Is Synthesis Possible?

Editorial

However, in popular parlance the word “religion” encompasses a wide array of phenomena with sometimes overlapping areas of belief and practice, but with many contradictory doctrines and features too. Some religions, like Buddhism for example, do not believe in a personal deity, and some involve little or no definite doctrine at all, being little more than tribal and family ritual traditions with no formal belief structure. Those religions that have sacred writings do not all make direct claim to divine revelation and authority, and many hold mutually exclusive doctrinal and moral teachings. Some religions have historically involved practices, such as ritual prostitution and human sacrifice, that are deeply abhorrent to the Abrahamic faiths. Viewed simply as a human phenomenon, therefore, there is really no such single thing as “religion”. It is not a univocal term.

What Do We Mean By “Synthesis”?

So when we discuss the possibility of a synthesis between science and religion, what do we mean? We do not mean that laboratory research and theological enquiry can be freely intermingled or combined indiscriminately. It remains true that each of the sciences has its own proper subject matter, its own area of competence and its proper methodology. But do they connect in any way? Can their conclusions be brought together within a unified world view?

Today, far from being seen as the queen of sciences, theology has effectively been excluded from any synthetic understanding of the world. The view that everything about reality, including humanity, is built on an exclusively material base has been steadily gaining ground. Religion is increasingly dismissed as at best mythological and at worst wholly irrational or irrelevant.

When we speak of synthesis, what we mean by “science” is the philosophy of science based on the truths uncovered by scientific discoveries. And by religion we mean Christian, specifically Catholic, theology based on the truths revealed by God in Christ and defined by the Church. However, let us note straight away that these are not just academic concerns. For science and theology are concerned not just with theories but with the objects of these studies – the worlds of matter and of spirit.

How, if at all, do material reality and spiritual reality connect and interact? Do they form a unified whole with a single purpose? Can we discern an overarching Wisdom that informs the identity and goal of both as a single, integrated reality?

There are several possible positions on this question:

1. Opposition – Competition
2. Identity – Conflation
3. Separation – Coexistence
4. Synthesis without confusion

Opposition – Competition

In this position, science and religion are thought to make mutually exclusive truth claims. Either science explains everything or religion does. Radical creationists can be found on the religious side of this divide, although not all who are called “creationists” go as far as to dismiss all science as opposed to faith. On the scientific side are the secular materialists who deny *a priori* the existence of anything transcending the material cosmos. As the Oxford University chemist Peter Atkins puts it in his new book *On Being*:

“If absolutely and unreservedly everything is an aspect of the physical, material world, then I do not see how it can be closed to scientific investigation ... The scientific method is the only means of discovering the nature of reality.”

Atkins even argues that “the substrate of existence is nothing at all”, because the total electrical charge of the universe is zero due to the balance of positive and negative particles. “Charge was not created at the creation. Nothing separated into equal and opposite charges”. Since matter is really nothing, he concludes that nothing really matters or even really exists.

Like most atheist scientists he shows himself to be a very poor philosopher. With rather obvious sleight of mind he has made “Nothing” into a Something with cosmic potential. The scholastic mind of the middle ages called this *materia prima* and recognised that it cannot exist except in relation to a principle of form – a principle of organisation and identity. Even if there are only positive and negative charges at the beginning, there is already a system and a context, a meaning that encompasses those mutual definitions. And where there is meaning, there is Mind.

The tendency of most Western scientists is to be reductionist, looking for the key to existence in the lowest common components of matter/energy. Yet in doing so they fail to notice that the most basic concepts of their science depends on matter embodying organised information at every level. To reject reductionism in this way is to be open to the question: What is the Prime Principle of Organisation?

Within the terms of its own reference as an enquiry into material things, experimental science cannot address the question of the ultimate cause of the universe. It is not within its remit. However, in its broader, philosophical sense, scientific thought cannot escape the question of creation because it is about the Cause of all causality. Faced with the ultimate question of where the ordered energies of the universe and ordering laws of science themselves come from, many atheist materialists simply abdicate the search for truth and say that there is no reason.

Others, like Atkins’ fellow Oxford academic, Thomas Nagel, are more honest in admitting that this refusal to face the ultimate question thrown up by scientific enquiry is based on a desire to avoid its conclusion and a positive will to disbelieve:

“...even if in due course science has to throw in the towel and, heaven forbid, concede that the universe was created

Science and Religion: Is Synthesis Possible?

continued

by God, I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that." (*The Last Word* by Thomas Nagel, Oxford University Press, 1997)

The material creation is not merely neutral towards God, it positively points towards its Creator. The science or wisdom we discover within the constitution of matter can and does bring us to recognise that higher Wisdom who creates and sustains it to an end and purpose which is indeed beyond the remit of natural science.

Identity – Conflation

The second possible position with regard to science and religion is to identify them more or less completely by seeing the evolving universe as driven by a single energy which runs through and builds into everything that we call matter and everything that we call spirit. This is explicitly the thought of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin within Christian theology, and also of many variants of New Age thinking. For him all spiritual realities, including the soul of man and indeed Christ Himself, are the product of matter in evolution, because evolution is itself the product of God who immerses Himself in matter; and the "spiritual energy" that is latent in all physical energy crystallises into the presence of the Divine. Such a world view can be found in more subtle and nuanced forms in the thought of other major thinkers in Catholic theology.

The all-embracing sweep of this way of seeing the world has its attractions, but when matter and spirit are identified in this way, it has some serious implications which are not compatible with orthodox Christianity. The process of cosmic evolution becomes the measure of all reality, spiritual as well as physical. The moral law and doctrinal truth are no longer objective, but are ever-changing as human nature itself evolves. Most serious of all, the literal Divinity of Christ is compromised, and the distinction between God and creation is blurred – a mistake that can eventually lead to pantheism.

By the same token, the objectivity of scientific law and scientific enquiry is also compromised by conflating matter and spirit at every level of creation. Matter is determined by laws that can be expressed mathematically. Even the so-called – and much misunderstood – uncertainty principle, and quantum physics as a whole, work according to precise levels of mathematically expressible variability within a defined system. Scientists are rightly suspicious about attributing spirituality to material processes or bringing religious ideas directly into the laboratory.

Separation – Coexistence

For some, this has led to a third option with regard to science and religion: saying that they do not contradict but simply coexist in their separate arenas. They may coincide in persons who are scientists and also believers, or in private encounters between individuals, but there is no possibility of, or need for, a synthesis between our scientific and religious world views.

It was Stephen Jay Gould who first suggested that science and religion represented parallel and non-overlapping *magisteria*, or sources of authority. The chief problem with this world view is that it allows for more than one "truth" about reality, truths which merely coexist in discrete personal and cultural worlds. There are Christian philosophers and theologians who do espouse this sort of post-modernism, but it is quite incompatible with orthodox Catholicism. However, scientists who promote the idea of non-overlapping magisteria are often just dismissing religion as something subjective, leaving science to deal with the realm of the objective.

The problem is that when we say that science and religion can simply coexist in their own worlds we fail to answer the new atheists who are winning over vast numbers in our society. They know that science is highly successful at unlocking the secrets of the physical world; and unless religion can be shown to engage with the new horizons uncovered by the scientific world view, they will remain unconvinced. Our primary mission as Christians is to evangelise the unbelieving world. We cannot do that if we abdicate any claim to truth or wisdom outside our private "religious" world. We must answer the claim that God is made redundant by science. Not only can we do that, we can go much further. We can show that the Wisdom revealed in Christ makes fuller and more rational sense of our world and of our own existence than the secular world view.

We do not say that history and religion merely "co-exist". We say that Christ is "the key, the centre and the purpose of the whole of human history" (Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n.10), as well as unlocking the very meaning of all creation. In Catholic thinking, the history of the universe and the history of salvation are not unrelated events.

Synthesis Without Confusion

Is it possible to make a new synthesis in which the place of theology as queen of all the sciences, including the sciences of matter, is revindicated? Synthesis does not imply confusion, but a clear understanding of how things correlate within a unified perspective. Not only does Scripture affirm and the Magisterium define with certainty that Nature points to God's existence (Vatican I, *Dei Filius* 2, Romans 1:19-20), the Catechism tells us that scientific (CCC 283) and spiritual questions are "inseparable" (282), because "the universe, created in and by the eternal Word ... is destined for and addressed to man ... called to a personal relationship with God. Our human understanding, which shares in the light of the divine intellect, can understand what God tells us by means of his creation" (299). Faith then leads us "beyond the proper domain of the natural sciences" (284) to seek God Himself. So "the revelation of creation is inseparable from the revelation and forging of the covenant of the one God with his People" (288). Finally all orders and all the laws of reality, "visible and invisible", are brought together under Christ as Head (Ephesians 1).

Science studies the world from the point of view of its physical components. Theology studies the same world from the point of view of what it tells us about God, and of what God has told us about creation, about ourselves, and about Himself.

“Science studies the world from the point of view of its physical components. Theology studies the same world from the point of view of what it tells us about God, and what God has told us ...”

Revelation, as the highest Wisdom, synthesises and illuminates all the insights of the lower sciences. So, while scientific enquiry and theology retain their own proper methods, there's only one reality, illuminated by both reason and revelation. If it comes from the Mind of God, synthesis must ultimately be possible. Unless you say there's no such thing as Truth, just different “truths” that “coexist”.

All Things Together Under Christ

We can and we must show people that the laws that control and direct the vast unity of our cosmos point positively to God. Indeed we would go further and say that the whole cosmos was created as a cradle for Christ and we would expect everything in the material universe to bear witness to that fact if we could but understand it properly. The very laws of matter are aligned upon the Incarnation as their ultimate goal. This will not be predictable from studying the laws of matter themselves. The full meaning of entities does not lie in their lowest common denominator, but in their highest goal and principle of unity. All the specificities of matter in development will be found to make their most perfect sense and find their fulfilment in the coming of God in the flesh. Matter itself is written on the principle of prophecy – that is to say that it is a manifestation of a wisdom and order that is fulfilled in the higher gift and event.

We do not want to mix up science and religion indiscriminately as disciplines, but we do urgently need to show how they interrelate within an overarching vision of God's creative wisdom and purpose. We have minds that not only enquire but successfully unlock the secrets of the universe and put them to use in our own new creations of technology. The fact of Man as a spiritual being of mind as well as matter is the ground of both religion and science. And religion as a fact of Nature and a necessity of Nature in human history logically precedes science. The very fact that human beings are scientists derives from the transcendence of humanity over Nature and bears witness to that transcendence. Religion embodies the seeking for the highest wisdom that can direct and fulfil the human spirit.

But, as we have already noted, the question is deeper than science and religion as human activities. We need to know what the relationship is between matter and mind. This is not an academic question, for the two orders of reality meet in our own human nature. The laws that frame our physical world and our own physical bodies, and the higher laws that frame our spiritual identity and destiny are not mutually irrelevant categories. We are one being. It is all the work of the One God.

Edward Holloway wrote:

“The failure to relate body and soul accurately in the processes of evolution is a cardinal misfortune in the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a mistake which vitiates, indirectly, the various other aspects of his synthesis. In fact there is a way in which we can show how man can be one with the process of evolution and its crowning glory, and at the same time a ‘special creation’, without juggling with

words and meanings. Likewise the cosmic equation of energies which is the universe becomes intelligible once we see that it is centred on a truly transcendent Mind which is not identified with the flow of matter-energy itself.

Mind is that which controls and directs substantially and of its nature: Matter-energy is that which is controlled and directed substantially, and of its nature, by Mind.”
(*Catholicism* p. 11)

This is the core principle of what Holloway names “The Law of Control and Direction”.

“The Law of Control and Direction ... is not a *law of matter* in a specific sense. It is not the law of this or that event and effect. It is a Law in Matter that is cosmic and all-inclusive, so that the entire universe is one equation of meaningful development in mutual relativity of part on part at all times and throughout all space.” (*Catholicism* p. 64)

Scientists already intuit that the various laws of matter/energy are really a partial expression of a unified law that makes the universe a single “equational” reality. It is the very thrust of science to connect everything on a mathematical as well as an experimental level. We can go much further and say that the whole cosmos will only make sense, even as a material equation, within a higher Wisdom or “Law” that relates all creatures to the Creator; relates body and soul in Man as one creature without confusion of orders, and Man to God as his true environment; and, finally relates all Creation and the whole of humanity to God Incarnate in Christ as their source and their goal.

Conclusion

Galileo's famous quip that “the Bible was written to show us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go” is, of course, true. Similarly, the stars cannot reveal the depths of God any more than they can redeem us from sin and draw us into the fullness of Divine Intimacy. Yet the heavens do proclaim the glory of God (Ps 19) and the human mind does begin to recognise its Creator through created things. Moreover, Christ sheds light on the meaning of all things and brings them to perfection: even the stars of the night sky find their ultimate purpose as the crowning glory of the vocation of matter through Our Blessed Lady, through whom God becomes Incarnate as Lord of all Time and Space, as we graphically proclaim every Easter on the Paschal candle.

While scientists like Brian Cox give popular and compelling accounts of the wonders of the universe (see his BBC2 TV series of that name), and atheists like Dawkins and Hawkin claim it all disproves God, we need to show how science and religion come from one Wisdom and lead to the One Wisdom Incarnate, Jesus Christ. Science and religion do come together “in persons”, but it needs to be in persons who can give answers to a sceptical world and restore the full Catholic vision of Creation in Christ.

See our first *Road from Regensburg* entry for some relevant Papal comments.

The Vocation of Marriage

by *Cormac Burke*

Mgr Burke shows how some of the fairly self-evident foundations of Christian marriage have become obscured. He is a former Judge of the Roman Rota, the High Court of the Church, and now lectures at Strathmore University, Nairobi, Kenya. His best-known books are *Covenanted Happiness* and *Man and Values*, both published by Scepter Press. His website is: www.cormacburke.or.ke

Marriage is a *vocation*; it is the vocation to which the vast majority of people are called. It has two clear purposes or, as the Catechism says, a “twofold end...: the good of the spouses themselves and the transmission of life” (n. 2363). It is a call both to faithful love and to fruitful love.

1. The **first** purpose is that spouses grow together in goodness, and in that openness to goodness which prepares them for heaven. This means specifically that they are meant to grow in loving God (the first commandment) by means of growing in love for each other throughout their lifetime.

2. The **second** purpose is that they carry on God’s loving work of creation. In other words that, as co-creators with God, they bring children into the world and rear them in the setting of family love, so as to prepare them for a life that can lead to Heaven.

These essentially linked purposes are clearly indicated in the scriptural accounts of the creation of the sexes and of the institution of marriage.

The First Purpose of Marriage

The first purpose of marriage is established in Genesis 2:18: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him”. The “good” that God seeks for husband and wife is that their marriage takes each one out of self-centredness, teaches them to love (for love must be learnt) and so leads them to holiness.¹

Marriage is presented in the Bible as a covenant that shares in the very love of God: “The covenant between the spouses is integrated into God’s covenant with man” (CCC 1639). A covenant is a specially firm expression of faithful love.

Just as God’s covenant of love with his people is unbreakable, so too God has designed the covenanted love of man and woman in marriage to be indissoluble (cf. *Compendium*, 340). So he declared in Matthew 19:5-6: “A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”

It is easy – it should be easy – to understand his reasons. In the first place, so that the spouses learn to love. Marriage is not a haven of love, but a school of love. Indissolubility keeps the spouses at the life-business of learning to love each other – “with their defects”, as St. Josemaria Escrivá constantly put it.

Enduring commitment to what is worthwhile, loyalty to others, generosity in self-forgetfulness, service to some real ideal:

there lies the witness the world needs from Christians today and especially from spouses. Lack of generosity, fear of commitment, lack of faithfulness are the scourges of modern society. Each putting self first, and not ready to be bound by any real ties of commitment to others, however noble. Come out of myself? Commit myself in a definitive fashion? No way! And so each one remains stuck in self, centred on self, imprisoned in self. Such an attitude, if it becomes definitive, is Hell.

“Marriage is not a haven of love, but a school of love, for love must be learnt”

To come out of self-love is not easy, and yet it is essential. If I retreat from the generous dedication demanded by a permanent and worthwhile commitment, I am falling back into that false self-love which always wants to put self – one’s comfort or preference or sterile independence – at the centre of one’s concerns. That is the lot not only of those who divorce but also, even if to a lesser extent, of those spouses who remain together but have given up on the effort to love.

The Second Purpose

The other end of marriage is no less evidently established in Genesis 1:27-28: “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply...”

It was for this purpose also that God created man and woman: to multiply his image in the children born of their marital union. This means that he gave them a mission, an extraordinary and privileged mission, to carry on the work of creation. To be co-creators with Him; for while husband and wife together give rise to the body, each soul has to be created and infused by God.

To be amazed at this human power to procreate is not only supernatural, it is natural. What greater thing can someone do than to create life? We see scientists today, with quasi-divine pretensions, endeavouring to do this artificially. But spouses can already do it in a natural way.

And yet how little this sharing in the divine plan and power is appreciated today. Here there has been a submerging or silencing of some fundamental truths that need urgently to be recalled and reproclaimed. On the one hand, motherhood, along with virginity, is what has most inspired men with respect for women. On the other, women in general have always seen motherhood, despite what it demands of them, as the most fulfilling element of their lives. In the measure in

“marriage should take each one out of self-centredness”

which, over a few decades of radical and ever-more frustrated feminism, many women have lost the sense of the greatness and privilege of motherhood, they have lost the natural respect of men.

Disadvantaged Children

What a pity and impoverishment if parents forget this truly God-given mission and privilege: to endeavour that their children grow in an atmosphere of dedicated and generous love. The lack of experience of this in childhood is surely a significant contributory factor to selfishness and sadness in adulthood.

So many of today's children are disadvantaged, in the lack not so much of material things as of the experience of a family life that could turn them into mature, generous and responsible young persons. Instead of that, what do we see? More and more young people who are turned in on themselves, mean or vain, prone to greed or jealousy, lacking self-control, inconstant. It is particularly in well-off families that one finds such underdeveloped children. The fault in large part lies with the parents; and that in two ways.

“It is not that people expect too much of marriage, they expect the wrong thing”

On the one hand is the fact that the parents are physically absent from the home for so much of the time. Parents can be so absorbed in being a success as professionals that they become a dismal failure as parents; or devoting so much time to earning money, perhaps precisely so that their children can go to good schools, that they have no concern or energy left to create that type of family life which forms children more than any school, however good.

But there is also the absence of other brothers and sisters, not only sufficient in number (three or four or five) but also close enough in age (with a gap of no more than a couple of years down the line), so that they can grow up in the rough and tumble that should be an essential component of family life. Yes (the point needs to be emphasised), some brawling and fighting between the children may be bothersome for the parents (do they marry so as never to be bothered?), but it is an integral part of family education. Without this children will be less likely to learn that it is selfishness to want always to have one's own way, meanness never to wish to share, and fatal to bear grudges (because God will not forgive those who do not learn to forgive). And how otherwise can parents fulfill that indispensable part of their role which, through their presence on the family playing field itself, is to be referees or arbiters of those natural sibling squabbles, gradually preparing their children to grow up into open, fair-minded and responsible members of adult society?

The Family Project

Marriage is approached more and more selfishly today. Far too many people look on it as simply a way that should be satisfying to me and, on balance, should make me happy,

because it will bring me more satisfactions than burdens.

This whole approach is deeply flawed. It is not that people expect too much of marriage; they expect the wrong thing. Such an approach is too small, too self-centred. It looks on marriage for the companionship or security or ease or pleasure it seems to promise, *not for the mission it entails*. It reduces marriage to the comfortable and shared calculations of two people, when it is meant to be an open-ended adventure involving three to begin with: husband and wife and God...; and all that this can lead to.

Two phenomena in particular show how the approach to marriage has become more and more calculating and self-centered over the last century: divorce and contraception. Faithful unity – for as long as it suits me. Fruitful union – to the degree that suits me.

Easy annulments have been described as the ‘Catholic equivalent’ to divorce. However, our purpose here is not to consider divorce but rather to reflect on how the contraceptive mentality has spread also among Catholics. In other words, more and more Catholics have become infected with the mindset that regards children as “optional extras” in marriage, that is, as something that it might be nice to have (one or two, that is) but would be a nuisance or a burden if had in any greater numbers. What is perhaps most significant here is not those Catholics who, in violation of the Church's clear teaching, make use of contraceptives, but the quasi-exaltation of family planning by natural means as if this represented some sort of ideal for Catholic married life, and not, as in fact it is, a recourse that the Church allows, because Nature itself allows it, when a couple have *serious* reasons for depriving themselves – and their present children – of the gift from God of a further child.

Natural Family Planning

In contrast to 50 years ago when Catholics marrying normally planned to have a large family and rejoiced at the prospect, many Catholic couples today regard such a plan with a certain fear, thinking it would hinder their self-fulfilment and bring them burdens rather than joy. Sadly, they seem to have lost the sense of the divine adventure in which they are involved and the privilege, integral to their vocation, of being co-creators with God.

The Church has always taught the greatness of generous family planning. It is a sign of the times – a sign of how much we are influenced by the times – that Natural Family Planning is practically always understood as a way of limiting the size of a family. Is that a truly ‘natural’ approach? Here we seem to have forgotten that the essential reason why Natural Family Planning is termed “natural” is to mark the borderline that distinguishes it from “unnatural” and immoral family planning through the use of contraceptives. In that sense, NFP marks a “moral minimum”, a way of avoiding children without sin – when there are serious reasons to do so. Certainly these grave reasons can exist; but the clear teaching of the magisterium is that NFP is natural only when such reasons

The Vocation of Marriage continued

exist. Without those serious reasons Natural Family Planning would be “unnatural” and morally wrong.²

If this sounds surprising, it is a sign of how the notion of marriage has been reduced and dehumanised. After all, what is natural for a married couple in love is to have children. To avoid having a child, without serious reason, is a sign that their mutual love is marred by calculation and self-centredness; at the same time it implies a rejection or at least a limitation of their divinely given mission. It is to show a lack of trust in God or a failure to respond to the greatness of the trust God wants to place in them.

“more and more Catholics have become infected with the mindset that regards children as ‘optional extras’ ... and by the quasi-exaltation of Natural Family Planning”

[Perhaps one should add that, in some places at least, young people are let down by marriage preparation courses which fail to emphasise, in all its beauty, the call to generous co-creation inherent in the married vocation.]

The Inferiority Complex About Being ‘Just’ a Wife or Mother

Motherhood and home-making are looked down on today. They have little status. This opinion is profoundly un-Christian. It is one which Christians, especially Christian women, need not only to despise but to counter proudly and vigorously with their words and their deeds; i.e. because they have thought things out and are acting according to their own values instead of yielding to peer-pressure.

It is true that many women today (though not so many men) raise their eyebrows when they hear of or meet a married woman with five or six children. How should one interpret this? That they look down on her? Or that, though they don’t admit it, they look up to her? Is it not rather the latter – that they envy her as someone more fulfilled, more generous than they are? That should be the conclusion of the more perceptive mother of a larger family; unless she gives way to the silly embarrassment or the groundless inferiority complex that her critics would like to induce in her. If they pretend to pity her it is because they don’t want to face up to the fact that they are the ones to be pitied, that she is more of a woman and has chosen the better part.

Here I would like to address the Christian working mother directly. When you are tempted to give way to the idea that motherhood has no status in today’s world, ask yourself: what status does it have in God’s eyes? Whose opinion matters most to you? And the same applies to the status of being a home-maker.

On what do people base their idea that running a home is inferior, humanly speaking, to exercising a profession or running an office – or being run about in an office?

Well, in a professional or office job one is more *independent*. Really? In which jobs? At home you are the boss in running things. What percentage of women are bosses in their job or office? What is their position towards their patients or clients: that of bosses or of servants?

But work at home is so *boring* compared with work in my office? Do you really think so? Make a list of the non-boring things, the really exciting things, you experience each day in your office. And reflect that where love is present, boredom disappears. You can put love for God into your professional work, but maybe you don’t feel quite so motivated to put into it love for your boss or your colleagues. But you can, you should, have plenty of motives to put not only love for God, but love for your husband and for each one of your children, into your work at home.

But, for a consumer society, a mother or a homemaker does not *earn* anything, whereas in a job you earn your own money and so have more self-respect and also stand on terms of equality with your husband.

Do you want to be equal with your husband, or be loved by him? A good mother earns nothing?? Think of the respect that she earns from her husband or her children!³ The respect, indeed the envy, she earns from her neighbours – even if they won’t admit it.

But – in terms of money, she earns nothing. So what? You are deprived of what money can buy? Can money buy respect, or God’s good pleasure or the sense of true human fulfilment?

Some take it as evident that motherhood or home-making are inferior jobs simply because they are not paid. Does this argument have much weight with you? If you measure the worth of a job by how much money it earns, if money is your standard of worth, then you do not have a Christian approach. Human work is worth what it is worth before God. Our Lord chose a job that was certainly not well paid. If we let ourselves measure the worth of jobs, or of our ‘quality’ of life, just in financial terms we have a materialistic outlook and not a Christian one. Christians value things differently and teach others, beginning with their children, to do the same. If you are not deeply convinced of that, you will never succeed in your vocation to be a good wife or mother.

“Many Catholic couples today seem to have lost the sense of the divine adventure”

The Career Woman

But surely – another may object – the Church today insists that the world needs to be evangelised by the witness of ordinary Christians in their professional work; and that is what I want to do. Indeed; but your objection seems to imply an opposition between your “professional work outside the home” and *your work in the home*, as if the latter were not work – which is obviously false – but also as if it were not professional – which it certainly is.

“parents have let themselves be brainwashed into thinking that their roles must be equal, not complementary”

Raising a family is a job and a profession as much as any other; one with its challenges, satisfactions, disappointments... It is a profession in the most noble sense, and one that you should be especially proud of. In fact it has a dignity to it that cannot be rivalled by any other human calling. If you don't realise and rejoice in that, something is seriously missing in your human formation and outlook.

In all societies until our own, motherhood, along with virginity, has been considered the special dignity and glory of woman. God wished that dignity to be supremely expressed in his own ideal woman, Mary, Virgin and Mother. Modern radical feminism despises this ideal.⁴ The true feminist is proud of being a woman and seeks to develop a truly feminine identity. Women who are not proud of being women have indeed an identity problem on their hands. They need to ask themselves: Am I glad that I am a woman? Why? How feminine am I? Is the way of fulfilment that I have in mind a feminine way or a masculine way? Do I think of fulfilment or success mainly in terms of being higher on the professional or social ladder? Am I happy to serve or do I want to be the boss?

“For a couple to avoid having a child, without serious reason, is a sign that their mutual love is marred by calculation and self-centredness”

Service, love for the spirit of service, is the key to solving the problems implied here. Only the person – man or woman – whose approach to life is one of service can live an admirable and fulfilled life. This is elementary for a Christian. Mary, the greatest woman and human person ever, is proud to see herself as *ancilla Domini*, handmaid of the Lord. Jesus comes as one who serves and says that if anyone wants to be great, he or she must serve. Most people are far from thinking in these terms today, and so are far from any true greatness and perhaps indeed of salvation. As Christians, service has to be the ideal of our life. If it is not, then we are not following the way of Christ; and whatever hopes we may have for our salvation, sanctity in this life is clearly out of the question for us.

Joint Enterprise Between Husband and Wife

It often happens that two friends decide to set up a joint enterprise because they realise they are well suited to work together in something that interests both of them. That very seldom means that both want to do exactly the same job. On the contrary, usually they realise they somehow complement each other. One can be a good manager or accountant, the other a good advertiser or salesman. And, if they trust one other, I doubt they will squabble too much over what each one gets paid. As long as each enjoys his or her job, as long as they appreciate the result of their joint efforts and remain good friends, money matters will work themselves out.

Suppose it is a husband and wife who set up as partners or managers in a wholesaling or retailing business. Do they first sit down to calculate how much each one will be paid? Or do they not rather think that as a joint venture the profit will accrue to both, even though each will no doubt be assigned different responsibilities? Well, that is exactly what a couple, if they are normal, set about when they marry: to engage together in the joint venture of setting up a family.

The problem today is that in that marvellous shared family venture, parents have let themselves be brainwashed into thinking that their roles must be equal, not complementary, that they can measure each one's performance by the amount of money each earns, that the bread-winner is more important than the home-maker. But this is simply senseless. It shows that they have not thought for themselves or that they do not know what marriage is really about or why, in this case, they have married.

It is no exaggeration to say that the family is the *crisis* area in society. The health of any society depends on the health of the family, and in general today the family is very, very weak. It is the mission of parents to make it strong. It is a God-given task that was never so urgent and that God must bless and reward as never before.

Notes

¹Some writers, especially among canonists, have taken the *bonum* or “good” of the spouses to mean essentially their human fulfilment or a satisfying marital life. This is groundless, both theologically and canonically. “Good” in this expression has much the same meaning as in “common good” or “good of the people”. Taxes or traffic laws are meant to be for the good of the people, including those who find them burdensome.

²Suggestions that Church magisterium no longer teaches that serious reasons are required for practising NFP have no foundation. *Humanae Vitae* says, “those are considered to exercise responsible parenthood who prudently and generously decide to have a large family, or who, for *serious* reasons and with due respect to the moral law, choose to have no more children for the time being or even for an indeterminate period” (no. 10; cf. no. 16). Pope John Paul was emphatic in teaching that “[t]he use of the infertile periods for conjugal union can be an abuse if the couple, for unworthy reasons, seeks in this way to avoid having children, thus lowering the number of births in their family *below the morally correct level*. This morally correct level must be established by taking into account not only the good of one's own family, and even the state of health and the means of the couple themselves, but also the good of the society to which they belong, of the Church, and even of the whole of mankind. *Humanae Vitae* presents responsible parenthood as an expression of a high ethical value. In no way is it exclusively directed to limiting, much less excluding, children. It means also the willingness to accept a larger family” (General Audience, Sept 5, 1984). In his 1995 encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*, he taught: “In its true meaning, responsible procreation requires couples to be obedient to the Lord's call and to act as faithful interpreters of his plan. This happens when the family is *generously* open to new lives, and when couples maintain an attitude of openness and service to life, even if, for *serious* reasons and in respect for the moral law, they choose to avoid a new birth for the time being or indefinitely” (no. 97; emphasis added). *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992) says, “For just reasons, spouses may wish to space the births of their children...” *The Compendium of the Catechism* of 2005, in answer to the question, “When is it moral to regulate births?”, replies: “The regulation of births, which is an aspect of responsible fatherhood and motherhood, is objectively morally acceptable when it is pursued by the spouses without external pressure; when it is practised not out of selfishness but for *serious reasons*; and with methods that conform to the objective criteria of morality, that is, periodic continence and use of the infertile periods” (no. 497).

³Men admire motherhood. More than women do today. Nothing makes a husband look up more to his wife than the fact that she is the mother, the dedicated mother, of his children.

⁴What it proposes instead is in effect a masculinisation of women, who are then left with no feminine identity and are even ashamed of being considered “feminine”. A feminism that despises what is feminine is a contradiction in terms.

The Exploitation of Maternal Mortality

by *Fiorella Nash*

Fiorella Nash argues that, faced with the terrible suffering of some mothers, the pro-abortion lobby can prefer to spin rather than help, and that pro-life people need to try to reverse the emphasis. She highlights a campaign trying to do that. An award-winning novelist, her latest acclaimed book, *Poor Banished Children*, is published by Ignatius Press.

I have admitted to friends on more than one occasion that when an obstetrician strode into the delivery room where I had been in the throes of an obstructed labour all day, I felt as though I were being rescued from a torture chamber. This is not what my most acerbic critic would call my 'fondness for hyperbole'. If anything, it is a ludicrous understatement. The obstetrician in question did not rescue me from a torture chamber, he rescued me – and my baby – from death sentences. Without the emergency intervention that followed, the baby would have suffocated in the birth canal in which he was trapped and I would have bled to death, which would at least have killed me within hours rather than over several excruciatingly painful days in the case of the obstructed labour.

I am acutely aware that I owe my life, and the lives of two out of three of my children, to the intervention of highly skilled doctors, midwives and paediatricians, and the proximity of well-equipped operating theatres and intensive care units. But I am also aware that every year, hundreds of thousands of women and babies experience no such reprieve from the preventable death sentence imposed when labour goes wrong and there is not even the most basic health care available to ease their suffering and save their lives.

In Britain the maternal mortality rate is 8.3 per 100,000 births (and this is by no means the lowest rate in the developed world). In Malawi it is 1140.1 per 100,000. Global figures are difficult to gauge because of poor reporting in some countries and differences in methods of reporting; for example, some countries will classify maternal mortality as the death of a woman within 21 days of birth, others 42 days; some include only direct causes – sepsis, haemorrhage, obstruction – whereas others will include indirect causes such as malaria and anaemia. Estimates therefore vary between 350,000 and 600,000 deaths a year but whatever figure aid agencies quote, statistics alone cannot convey the full horror of young women dying unattended, in terrible fear and agony, leaving behind devastated families and other children whose own survival may well be jeopardised by the loss of a mother.

The greatest tragedy of all, however, is that these deaths are almost entirely preventable.

The Exploitation of Suffering Women

Maternal mortality has been rightly described as 'an international disgrace' but almost as grave a disgrace is the determination by pro-abortion groups to hijack the issue in order to promote abortion around the world. The

abortion lobby has a long history of exploiting the suffering of women while claiming to act in their best interests. This is evident when it comes to the subject of abortion and rape, for example. Abortion is touted as the compassionate response to rape as though being physically invaded by a masked, anonymous male (usually), or given pills that cause bleeding and severe pain are cures for a brutal and traumatic act that will haunt a woman all her life. Every abortion practitioner knows that the overwhelming majority of abortions are carried out on social grounds and the abortion lobby is unapologetic about its belief that abortion should be available 'on demand and without apology', yet it uses rape survivors as an emotive smokescreen to cover its unsavoury agendas and exploits their suffering for political and ideological gain.

The same is increasingly true of maternal mortality. Abortion continues to be touted as a women's health issue, from pro-abortion marches entitled "March for Women's Lives" to the emotive slogan shouted in the direction of many a pro-life demonstration: "Right to life, that's a lie! You don't care if women die!" Marie Stopes International's latest propaganda effort in the field of abortion and contraception promotion comes under the seemingly compassionate label of "Make Women Matter." But abortion has nothing to do with saving women's lives. As far back as 1992, a group of Ireland's top obstetricians and gynaecologists signed a letter in which they wrote:

"We affirm that there are no medical circumstances justifying direct abortion, that is, no circumstances in which the life of a mother may only be saved by directly terminating the life of her unborn child."

Where there sometimes is confusion (and I would venture that the abortion lobby is quite happy to encourage this confusion) is in rare cases where an obstetrician may be forced to intervene to save a pregnant woman's life, at the risk of losing the child. This is true of cases such as ectopic pregnancy, where the embryo becomes stuck in the fallopian tube and part of the tube has to be removed (usually along with the embryo) to prevent the woman from dying or in the case of pre-eclampsia at the other end of pregnancy. However, pre-eclampsia generally occurs after the baby is capable of being born alive and though premature delivery is almost always riskier for a baby than being carried to term, the odds are very much in favour of a baby's survival. Neither of these cases involves the deliberate ending of a baby's life and cannot be labelled abortion. To do so is to fail to understand the principle of double effect.

“The ‘they will do it anyway’ argument is illogical”

Tellingly, countries such as Ireland and Malta where abortion is banned have some of the lowest maternal mortality rates in the world.

Women do, however, die as a result of abortion and it is the “unsafe abortion” argument that is being used most aggressively to promote abortion around the world. Our own Department for International Development uses unsafe abortion as its major line of defence in promoting and funding abortion, claiming that unsafe abortion is a major cause of maternal death. International organisations including the World Health Organisation list ‘unsafe abortion’ as a significant cause of maternal death after haemorrhage and sepsis but the category is misleading for a number of reasons.

“statistics alone cannot convey the full horror of young women dying unattended”

First, this category usually includes deaths as a result of spontaneous abortion, otherwise known as miscarriage, giving a distorted picture of the number of women who are dying as a result of *induced* abortion. Second, it should be noted that it can be extremely difficult even for a trained doctor to determine whether a woman in the first trimester of pregnancy is experiencing life-threatening complications as a result of miscarriage or abortion. The symptoms are so similar that an online abortion group which sells pills to women in pro-life countries instructs women who suffer complications: “If you live in a place where abortion is a crime and you don’t have a doctor you trust, you can still access medical care. You do not have to tell the medical staff that you tried to induce an abortion; you can tell them that you had a spontaneous miscarriage...The symptoms are exactly the same and the doctor will not be able to see or test for any evidence of an abortion.”

Third, we should note the loaded use of “unsafe” here. Any medical procedure which involves the ending of one or both human lives involved is by definition unsafe and it is unsafe whether it occurs in Nairobi or New York. The abortion lobby has been very successful in creating a false association between ‘safe’ and ‘legal’ abortion (a favourite line of pro-abortion politicians is that abortion should be ‘safe, legal and rare’) with the implication being that if abortion were only decriminalised in every country of the world, maternal deaths as a result of abortion would be virtually eliminated. But any medical procedure involves a level of risk and abortion is no different, legal or otherwise. In developed countries (where abortion is most likely to be legal) 8.2% of maternal deaths are the result of abortion complications; in India, where abortion is legal, mortality from abortion accounts for around 16% of all maternal deaths. South Africa, which has had abortion on demand for years has witnessed a fourfold increase in maternal mortality since a UK-funded abortion organisation set up clinics around that country. As SPUC’s Peter Smith commented:

“It is farcical for the government to talk about safe abortions in situations without sterile surgical facilities, safe blood transfusion or emergency back-up. Running abortion clinics in slums, shanty towns and the bush will harm or kill women as well as killing babies.” Women in Britain and women in South Africa have access to legal abortion, but in the end, a woman experiencing abortion complications in Britain can get emergency help within minutes; a woman living in an isolated settlement in South Africa can’t. If the abortion lobby is going to highlight the risks to women of unsafe abortion, the logical response would surely be to campaign against a medically unnecessary procedure and to work instead to offer women the assistance they need when facing a difficult pregnancy?”

The desperate “they will do it anyway” argument is illogical and insulting to women. Some 10% of 15- and 16-year-olds self-harm, the global mortality rate from suicide works out as approximately one death every forty seconds and the rate is rising, but it would be heartless and inhumane to suggest that vulnerable people should be taught how to cut themselves safely or to commit suicide in a way that inconveniences others as little as possible. The key question is, is it good?

A Pro-Life Response

It is not enough simply to condemn the actions of anti-life forces for exploiting the suffering of women to promote the ideology of abortion. The tragedy of maternal mortality needs to be addressed, not exploited, and it requires a courageous and honest response. It is for this reason that SPUC has launched The Mayisha Campaign (Mayisha meaning Life in Swahili) to raise awareness about maternal mortality, dispel the myths put about by abortion groups and lobby the Department for International Development to adopt an ethical foreign policy which respects the lives of both mothers and their babies. Abortion is not the sad necessity nor the empowering procedure it is presented as by groups like Marie Stopes International and International Planned Parenthood Federation it needs to be recognised as part of the problem. Dr Robert Walley, the British-born founder and director of the international organisation of Catholic obstetricians and gynaecologists MaterCare International, puts it succinctly when he says:

“Unfortunately, the international safe motherhood initiative has accepted the current culture of death prevalent in obstetrics and gynaecology, as abortion is included as the solution to maternal health problems. All of this points to a real poverty – the lack of love and compassion.”

The staff and volunteers at MaterCare International (MCI) know something about love and compassion for the forgotten mothers of the developing world. They provide life-saving assistance to mothers in Kenya and Ghana and have been providing emergency help in Haiti since an

The Exploitation of Maternal Mortality continued

earthquake devastated that country in January last year. They are forced to work without state funding and are entirely reliant upon donations from members of the public. MCI's mission statement links their work directly with *Evangelium Vitae* by "improving the lives and health of mothers and babies both born and unborn, through new initiatives of service, training, research, and advocacy designed to reduce the tragic levels of abortion worldwide and maternal and perinatal mortality, morbidity in developing countries."

It was Dr Walley, who has witnessed first-hand the horror of young mothers dying for want of appropriate medical facilities, who suggested that to the Seven Sorrows of Mary an eighth sorrow should be added: the suffering of thousands of women who die giving birth to their babies and the millions who, in despair, turn to abortion.

As Catholics, we know instinctively that maternal mortality is a tragedy and that abortion is not the answer, but I believe that we are under an obligation to turn that knowledge into action and offer hope to mothers around the world who face the prospect of giving birth in fear and trembling rather than with joy. Whenever anyone tells me that a situation in a foreign country is none of their business, I ask how they would feel if their own sister were facing death for want of medical care that they themselves take for granted. This is not just an attempt to make people feel guilty. Feminists talk about the universal sisterhood while being prepared to show a remarkably callous attitude to women who fail to meet the entry requirements. Catholics must speak of sisterhood and show the world we mean it.

For more information about the work of the Mayisha Campaign or MaterCare International, check out:

<http://mayishacampaign.blogspot.com/>
www.spuc.org.uk
<http://matercare.org/>

"science is not the study merely of individual entities"

In our last issue we published a piece by Fr John M. McDermott S.J. concerning the resolution of tensions in the western philosophical tradition, especially in the modern philosophy of science. Here we publish our response and Fr McDermott's response to that. The differences seem to be over whether these tensions can be resolved through our better understanding of nature (our position), or whether they are inherent to created reality and cannot be rationally resolved but only founded upon the ultimate intelligibility of absolute love. Fr McDermott is a faculty member of the Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit. Since 2003 he has served as a member of the International Theological Commission, and since 2008 as a consultant to the US Bishops' Committee on Doctrine.

Reply to Fr John M. McDermott

1. In finding human cognition "paradoxical" Fr McDermott seems unsure whether hylomorphism (the analysis of all entities into unifying form and individuating matter) reflects simply man's inadequate way of knowing, which cannot attain the full structure of reality, or whether this really is the structure of reality. Yet if we can intuit at least that God knows things differently, we can also discern that the structure of reality is actually as God would perceive it. McDermott seems to go on to suggest that humans simply project the subjective inconsistency of our supposed cognition onto reality because we have to posit some correspondence between our minds and reality. We should ask: Is the individual unknowable in itself, or just unknowable in all its relativities by the circumscribed mind of man? If that latter is the case, then we have no business saying that matter is absolutely unknowable and therefore "non being". If the material is truly unknowable as "not being" then not even God can know it! That is to make the mind of man the measure of being, not the Mind of God, whereas we are told by the Word of God Incarnate that "Every hair of your head is counted", "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your heavenly Father knowing".

2. Fr McDermott does go on to affirm that God knows creatures in their individuality, but he seems then to have some sympathy for the Nominalist despair of finding any intrinsic and universal rationality in nature, and even for Sartre's despair of finding meaning in existence at all. His way out of the conundrum of the apparent meaninglessness of existence, viewed by the human mind, depicts Revelation breaking into the closed world of man confirming the ultimate reality of the dialectical dynamic of love. This grounds the intelligibility of paradoxical creation and thus human knowing. It is akin to Barthian fideism in as much as

Discerning Ultimate Intelligibility: A Discussion With *John M. McDermott*

such revelation leaves shrouded in mystery the resolution of apparent fundamental paradox within the immanent dynamic of human knowing and loving.

Rather, we would say that we do know material things within a matrix of universal relationships. We do indeed know differently from God, for God knows the individual in supreme detail and in every aspect and relationship of its universality – its causality, meaning and purpose within the Plan of Salvation to the nth degree. But we are sufficiently aware of this not to be trapped within the cloud of unknowing about matter. Our minds are created in the image of our maker and we do attain at least to the basic meanings of matter with certainty, as is evidenced by our increasingly fruitful and powerful use of those meanings in our technology. To attain to perfect understanding and wise use of these things, or to understanding ourselves and our own place and purpose in creation, we need revelation and the graced elevation of our mind into communion with the Living God.

Yes, it is true that there is a level of provisionality, of “non-being” in the existence of created things because all contingent existence is measured and projected within a causal network of relationships. What something “is”, its “essence”, is defined through relationship to the creating Mind and intention of God who knows and wills its place and its purpose within the equational structure of meanings that is creation. So its own specific existence is always provisional and not the gold standard of its own identity.

3. If universality is “being” and individuality is simply “non-being”, then Sartre would be right to say that to exist as an individual is inextricably entangled in meaninglessness. But if individual existence is always relationally set within a framework of other existentials, the whole of which is referred to the Supreme and Absolute Existential who is God, then we can see that essence and existence do not arise from a cosmic tension between infinite being and infinite non-being. Rather, every unitary reality, including every material entity, is actual and knowable because it is known by God within the dynamic and interlocking framework of other created beings, and they are simultaneously contingent and provisional in so far as they are intrinsically dependent and structured towards meanings beyond themselves within that environmental framework. In short, they are “being” that is therefore knowable by created minds, because they are called into being by the Mind of God, and they are also “not-being” in the sense that they are not God, and therefore not absolute in their individual identity. McDermott writes:

“In the mystery of matter, or corporeal individuality, [human reason] strikes a limit to its knowing. It is then forced in freedom to choose either to postulate a fundamental nothingness or absurdity in existence, thus denying intelligibility and destroying itself, or to transcend itself toward the infinite God of love who has made Himself known through the finite, visible structures of this world.”

Materia for Aquinas is not non-being in the sense of chaos or negation, but the lowest degree of *esse/being*. (2 *Sentences* d.12 art. 4 resp). Aristotle and Aquinas speak rather of polymorphic potential, not an infinite void, which could (erroneously) imply an equal and opposite pole of existence to God’s infinite Being. As we argued in our November 2010 editorial, science is not the study merely of individual entities in the Aristotelian sense, which must condemn it to the realm of the metaphysically unknowable and irrelevant. Science is the study of the created order in its material/formal relationships up to and including the bodily existence of Man. It cannot, therefore, in Christian terms, be an all-sufficient answer to Life, Love and even to the Universe. For material existence relates intrinsically to the higher order of Mind or Spirit.

Matter (in the modern sense of material creatures with their potential/formal identities) not only relates to the Mind of God through which it is framed in meaningful and dynamic order, it is an order that is founded through the living Wisdom of God whose Personal Incarnation is the *very raison d’être* of the physical creation in the first place. If matter were indeed the ultimate unknowable and were meaningless, then Sartre would be right and the turn to a “God of love” would be an attempt to escape the inevitable conclusion that individual existence is indeed intrinsically empty and absurd. And if that were true, then how could God manifest himself through matter or through anything “created” at all?

“God’s infinity does not mean he is the most abstract, but that he is the most absolutely individual and concrete.”

The very fact of the Incarnation sheds light upon the foundations of matter and corporeality, which were gratuitously created for and towards that most meaningful of ends. It tells us that matter is not meaningless and nothing. It is contingent and dependent, only capable of being fully understood within the higher context of the plenary purpose of God’s plan for creation. It is in God, not in matter, that man strikes an absolute limit to his knowing. God’s infinity does not imply that he is the most abstract, but that he is the most absolutely individual and concrete, the most necessary and supremely Existential Being, beyond anything we have the mental or metaphysical capacity to imagine.

4. We deny the concept of absolute and infinite non-being. The concept of non-being is an unconscious hangover from a pagan cosmic dualism which owes more to Plato than to Aristotle and is alien to Thomas Aquinas. There is only God and that which he creates, however minimal its entitative constitution may be. “Non-being” simply IS NOT – by definition, unless we are to posit some infinite and eternal sea of existential emptiness which surrounds and circumscribes the equally infinite Being of God. For if matter is truly “non-being”, except in some comparative and analogical sense, then God does not create it!

Discerning Ultimate Intelligibility: A Discussion With John M. McDermott continued

Were evolution ultimately random, there would be no intelligibility in the universe and all study of it would be doomed to the frustration of post-modern hypothesising. If evolutionists wish to preserve their science as “knowledge,” while they might describe their method as concerned with the collection, comparison, and ordering of apparently coincidental mutations and events, they can never give chaos as the final explanation of the reality studied.

5. We are loved not just individually but within and through the hierarchy of relationships that constitute the Church as the family of salvation. We are all loved in and for the sake of Jesus Christ, then through Our Lady. Similarly we are known to be what we are and called to be what we should become in nature and in grace through the hierarchy of relationships that form the fabric of material causality that is the created cosmos. Matter is not “non-being” and chaos, it is that which is controlled and directed by mind to the glory of the Incarnation, for the Cosmos is framed by Wisdom as fully as it is by Love, and it is the Wisdom of God who is made flesh in the fullness of time and who gives himself for our redemption. It is from this new order of Wisdom restored in Creation that the plenary gift of divinising Love, who is the Holy Spirit, is poured out upon mankind. As Pope Benedict continually points out, if we neglect the priority of Wisdom in revealed religion we risk divorcing faith from reason and religion from science, which does harm to both.

Response by Fr McDermott

I am grateful to the editors of Faith for publishing my article, criticising its insufficiencies, and allowing me a response to clarify some misapprehensions.

The first misapprehension concerns “non-being.” I did not intend an infinite void opposed to God. In the classical tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas prime matter, the principle of individuality conjoined to form, is identified as non-being. For them matter always exists within form. It is unintelligible to the human mind. Thomas writes, “Matter in itself has no being (esse) and cannot be known” (S.T. I, 15, 3, 3). But God created it and knows it thoroughly; He knows singulars individuated by matter (S.T. I, 14, 11c; 15, 3, 4; 44, 2; ScG I, 65; *De Ver.* 2, 5). Thus Thomas explicitly denies that “matter is of itself unknowable” (*De Ver.* 2, 5, 12). What man cannot know God knows. Thomas clearly oscillates between human and divine perspectives. So he paradoxically affirms that prime matter, non-being, participates in goodness and beauty (*De Nom. Div.* 4, 4, 355; S.T. I, 5, 3, 1.2; 5, 4, 3). I refer readers to “The Mystery of Matter” for Thomas’ complex understanding of prime matter and “Matter, Modern Science, and God” for the recurrence of matter’s paradoxes in modern science; both articles are scheduled for proximate publication in *Angelicum*.

Sartre’s philosophy is abhorrent to me because it recognises no norm outside human reason, sees reason as absurd, and makes all value dependent upon arbitrary choice. That spells

the death of reason, freedom, and love. Thus Sartre serves to expose and demolish the pretensions of Enlightenment reason as a faculty apart from faith and love. The finite cannot absolutise itself without committing intellectual suicide. Nonetheless I affirm a structure in reality intelligible to the human mind. It consists of the polar tension between finite and infinite which recurs repeatedly in the conundrums of philosophy and modern science. While reason cannot resolve that tension by dissolving one pole into the other, human experience is wider than pure reason. In the experience of morality we are aware of a claim made upon our consciences to do the good, whatever the cost, even if our lives have to be forfeited. This is an absolute, or unlimited, claim since the moral subject is called to surrender all other values for the sake of the good. The whole universe with all its attractions is relativised. Only God can demand such total dedication. Here reappears the tension between absolute and relative, infinite and finite. But instead of rejecting morality (and ultimately love) with Sartre for its alleged contradiction, we can recognise that, if the moral claim with its polar tension is reality, then the structure of thought reflects the structure of reality. This correspondence of thought and reality (morality) manifests the truth to be affirmed in freedom. “He who does the truth comes to the light” (Jn. 3:21).

“I affirm a structure in reality intelligible to the human mind. It consists of the polar tension between finite and infinite ... While reason cannot resolve that tension ... human experience is wider than pure reason.”

Since all thought presupposes an absolute (infinite), God can be known by thought, even apart from Christian revelation – if man can experience true morality! Such morality involving self-sacrifice for others is ultimately love, grounded in God who is Love. In a fallen world, no man can authoritatively assure others of love’s reality except the One who is identically Love. Moreover, only absolute Love can restore creation’s primordial unity destroyed by sin. Once we can see that meaning is given to us in love, human science surrenders its hubristic claim as judge over all and recognises love as mystery and gift. Then it understands its abstractions as meaningfully approximating God’s mind. This is not Barthian faith, a leap into darkness with an intellect incapable of attaining truth. Rather by acknowledging love, reason finds itself grounded in reality and validated. When confronted by suffering, death, and sin, it does not despair but affirms meaning in Christ crucified, whose resurrection proves that Love is stronger than sin and death.

Notes From Across the Atlantic

by Peter Mitchell, Lincoln, Nebraska



John Paul: Living Witness to the Church

The first of May is not a national holiday on this side of the Atlantic, where we celebrate “Labor Day” on the first Monday of September. Thus the significance of the providential timing of the Beatification of Pope John Paul II may not have been as readily apparent to Americans as it was to the faithful in Great Britain and on the Continent. Yet once again, as occurred on the day of his death (2 April, 2005 was both the First Saturday of April and the vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday), the date chosen by God’s Providence for the raising of Pope John Paul the Great to the altar contained many layers of significance. The unusually late date of Easter this year meant that Divine Mercy Sunday coincided with the first day of the month traditionally dedicated to the Blessed Mother, which is also the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker, the Church’s response to communism’s consecration of 1 May as its “high holy day” for celebrating workers. How fitting that the man who dedicated so much of his life to opposing the lie at the heart of communism’s empty promises should be celebrated and remembered on communism’s very own “feast day.” The man who spent his early life as a worker behind the Iron Curtain became the instrument of the Holy Spirit in teaching the world about the true dignity of man, of human labour, and about the unfathomable power of Divine Mercy to transform evil into good, despair into hope, and oppression into freedom.

The lifelong aspiration of Karol Wojtyła was simply to be a servant of Mary, completely handed over to her Immaculate Heart, as expressed in his motto, “Totus Tuus.” The fact that all of these streams of significance converged in St. Peter’s Square on Divine Mercy Sunday, 1 May, 2011, was because, in the words of Pope Benedict’s homily

at the Mass of Beatification, “this is what was pleasing to the Lord.”

Perhaps the most moving moment of the day came at the very beginning of the Mass, immediately following Pope Benedict’s pronouncement of the formula of beatification, when the tapestry depicting the smiling face of the new Blessed was unveiled on the façade of St. Peter’s Basilica. The crowd erupted with joy at that moment, as if John Paul II was again entering the Square in the Popemobile for a Mass or a Wednesday audience. But this time the shouts of joy contained an even deeper and richer significance: the man who by the witness of his life tirelessly proclaimed Jesus Christ to the whole world was now acknowledged to be in the presence of Christ in heaven, radiant in his holiness among the countless throng of blessed and saints he himself had named over the course of his long pontificate.

Throughout the weekend of the beatification celebrations, Rome once again looked like it was in the midst of one of John Paul’s World Youth Day celebrations. Along the cobblestone streets surrounding the Vatican, thousands of young people camped out in every direction, packed like sardines in the hope of getting into St. Peter’s Square, or at least close by, for the Mass of Beatification. Once more the old familiar cheers of “Giovanni Paolo!” followed by a series of claps resounded through the Square, with an added “Santo Subito!” to boot. As they had for his funeral, the youth of the world came to Rome to give back to their spiritual father, to thank him by their presence for the way he has irrevocably affected their lives by telling them that the Church believes in them and that the Third Millennium desperately needs their courageous, joyful and radical witness to the Gospel.

“It was as if John Paul was back,” said one young seminarian in attendance,

acknowledging the particular charism of hope and enthusiasm which the Holy Spirit is continuing to pour upon the Church through the witness of Karol Wojtyła. Pope Benedict himself acknowledged this charism of vibrant hopefulness in his homily at the Mass of Beatification, saying that Blessed John Paul “directed Christianity once again to the future” and “rightly reclaimed for Christianity that impulse of hope which had in some sense faltered before Marxism and the ideology of progress.”

John Paul “restored to Christianity its true face as a religion of hope,” said Pope Benedict, and that contagious, overflowing hope was again made visible in St. Peter’s Square and the streets of Rome during the celebration of the beatification of the one who was chosen by the Holy Spirit to lead the Church across the threshold of hope that is the dawn of the Third Millennium of Christianity. The cause of that hope is the fulfilment of every human longing in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of Man – the enduring legacy of Blessed John Paul II is nothing else than Jesus Christ.

On a more personal note, the beatification of John Paul II has renewed my faith in and understanding of the communion of saints. I can say proudly that “I knew him when he was Pope!” I have attended World Youth Days with him, I have listened to his homilies, I have read his encyclicals, I entered the seminary at his urging...and now he has made it to the goal of eternal life in the kingdom of heaven. Blessed John Paul II remains my spiritual father, and he continues to guide and bless my life by his witness and intercession. Such confident hope was expressed by Pope Benedict at the conclusion of his homily that joyful morning: “Beloved Pope John Paul II ... continue, we implore you, to sustain from heaven the faith of God’s people. You often blessed us in this Square from the Apostolic Palace: Bless us, Holy Father! Amen.”



Letters to the Editor

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CATHOLICISING THE CURRICULUM

Dear Father Editor,

In response to the excellent article by Roy Peachey I should like to add my own thoughts to this continuing debate that, as Mr Peachey states, stretches further back than our own denouncements of the 'dumbing down' of examinations in general and English Literature in particular. It seems to me that what is needed is not only a reform of literary teaching but a recognition that what Pope Benedict calls the 'Hermeneutic of Continuity' be refocused upon our schools – for if not here, where? This must be our primary focus for passing on our Catholic culture or all shall be lost. We need to develop, or rather, re-appropriate that Catholic culture that seems to be lacking. It is this that stigmatises both Religious Education as a subject and those who take more than a passing interest in it.

Mr Peachey is correct in calling for a broader Catholic curriculum but I would wish to make Catholicism normative within as many subjects as possible. How often do we see Catholic art, or interpretations of it, in our schools? Art from other cultures seems to hold sway in the corridors and it is rare that religious art is seen in lessons. History, Geography, Modern Foreign languages could and should pass on catholic heritage in their own subject-specific ways. What of the achievements of Catholic scientists? We must be more creative in developing our curriculum throughout the school. Naturally, there may be subjects where this is difficult but if we actively approach our shared heritage in this way the benefits for creating a more cohesive community are obvious.

However, there is some good news in English literature. From next year one

examination board will be introducing a choice of Shakespeare for students of differing abilities: those with a higher ability will study King Lear and those with a lower ability, Romeo and Juliet. This in itself is nothing new – the main benefit is that they will have to compare and contrast certain themes within the chosen play with a large and diverse range of other authors. A clever choice by the Head of Department may lead to these plays being read in conjunction with Waugh, Greene, Spark and many other Catholic writers – we must pray that the opportunity will not be wasted in favour of an 'easy' author considered more relevant to the students in question.

A recent *Times Higher Education* Article suggested that a 'bitesize' approach to literature may be the only way forward but to allow this to happen would be a tragedy for both the student and the teacher. By passing on 'bitesize' knowledge the central point of literature, to develop the mind of the reader, is lost. We have a moral duty to ensure this does not happen throughout Catholic Education.

Yours faithfully
Dr. Miles Leeson
University of Portsmouth

NEWMAN ON EVOLUTION

Dear Father Editor,

In the January and February issue there is a quotation from a letter in which Newman explains why he does not fear Darwin's theory. Another of Newman's comments is quoted in Father Dessain's short biography of Newman (third edition, 1980, page 81), in which he says that "Newman found no difficulty in accepting the idea of evolution as long as it was theistic". The quoted passage, which was written in 1863 in Newman's *Philosophical Notebook*, seems to indicate that Newman was attracted by the conceptually simple way in which Darwin's theory accounts for the variety of natural phenomena:

"There is as much want of simplicity in the idea of the creation of distinct species as in that of the creation of

trees in full growth whose seed is in themselves, or rocks with fossils in them. I mean that it is as strange that monkeys should be so like men, with no *historical* connection between them, as that there should be no course of facts by which fossil bones got into rocks."

Yours faithfully
Ian Devaux
Bear Street
Nayland, Suffolk

PHILOSOPHY OF QUANTUM MECHANICS

Dear Father Editor,

Your *Cutting Edge* article in the May/June Faith is very misleading about Quantum Theory.

John Stewart Bell was a Belfast man and a physical scientist, as I am, but seven years older. I know his work on Quantum Theory very well. Bell derived mathematical equations which showed the way to carry out experiments to test aspects of the Bohr-Einstein debate. Bell died in 1990, but before that, and since, many experiments based on his mathematics, known as the Bell Inequality, have shown that Einstein was incorrect about the fundamental nature of Quantum Theory.

Bell derived his mathematics from just two assumptions. First, there exists a reality independent of the observer. This translates into a particle having a well-defined property such as spin before it is measured. Second, locality is preserved. There is no faster-than-light influence, so that what happens here cannot possibly instantaneously affect what happens over there. The results of the experiments showed that in Quantum Theory one of these two assumptions has to be given up. Bell was prepared to give up locality, a cornerstone of classical mechanics. He conceded that the experiments had shown that Einstein's world view is not tenable. Bell's Inequality and the experiments proved conclusively that if locality is relinquished, and non-locality accepted (instantaneous effects), this applies also to hidden variables, such as pilot waves.

“The suffering is not an arbitrary demand of ‘wrath’, but an existential demand of ontological healing.”

However, the understanding of quantum effects is still incomplete. A scientist called Hugh Everett III who died in 1982 produced a quantum theory of mechanics that all quantum possibilities exist and that this leads to the same predictions for the results of experiments as the Copenhagen (Bohr) interpretation. Everett’s rigorous mathematical theory was published in 1957. The theory is known as the “many worlds” interpretation, which is based on an infinite number of co-existing, parallel, alternative realities in which every conceivable outcome of every possible experimental result is realised. His Theory is now taken very seriously by quantum cosmologists such as Stephen Hawking, who are trying to explain what happened in the Big Bang beginning of the universe.

In 1999 at a conference on quantum physics in Cambridge some 90 physicists were asked which interpretation they favour. Only 4 voted for the Copenhagen interpretation but 30 favoured the modern version of Everett’s many worlds theory. Some 50 ticked the box labelled “none of the above or undecided.”

Your Cutting Edge article therefore does an injustice to Bell, and is not of any value to theology and science. You should consult Sir Roger Penrose or Sir Anthony Leggett about the modern understanding of quantum theory and Bell’s fundamental contribution before publishing such a misleading article.

Yours faithfully
Professor John Rooney
Strenmills Road
Belfast

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Our presentation did indeed ignore other interpretations of quantum mechanics, including the popular many-worlds one. Hawking’s preferred Copenhagen interpretation is a key representative of the indeterministic school which proposes that the fundamental laws of physics do not reign supreme. In contrast we suggested that a deterministic representative, namely Bohm’s, has better philosophical credentials.

The many-universes formulation does not, in our opinion, compete philosophically. When we consider the human person, body and unique soul, special problems arise. When the universe splits (zillions of times per second), which version do “I” end up in? Or does my person split into many copies of itself? It would seem to be meaningless to talk about splitting or multiplying a person (or a soul).

THE SUFFERING OF CHRIST AND THE WILL OF THE FATHER

Dear Father Editor,

Your editorial “The Wisdom of the Cross: Developing the Catholic Tradition” in the May-June 2011 issue was very helpful to me in deepening my understanding of this ultimately unfathomable mystery. May I offer a couple of thoughts in contrast to some of the points made?

As regards the aspect of suffering I perceived a strain of thought denying that the pain Jesus suffered was directly intended by the Father: “the terrible personal cost is not something demanded by the Father...” [p. 3], “the death of Jesus was neither desired nor demanded by the Father, otherwise we make an ogre of our God” [p. 5]. The idea of vicarious suffering is eschewed [p. 3].

We seem squeamish about the idea of pain being required for our Redemption. The (by no means negligible!) love the Son exercised in undergoing His Passion is focused upon the near embarrassed concealment of the suffering, as though it was some unintended, spurious byproduct like hydrochloric acid being given off in an experiment in the chemistry lab. It is as though the Father, in requiring the love involved in Christ’s Passion, stands by, helplessly wringing His hands during His Son’s travail, as though His omnipotence has limits. The context in which the statement, “Christ’s sufferings were imposed by the conspiracy of demonic malice and human weakness” [p. 5], is made seems to imply this.

To conclude that the Father is an ogre because He requires suffering is to engage in a reductionism that attempts to judge the Divine by human standards. I do not intend to propound a nominalistic view, but can it be denied that there are times when analogy fails in matters addressing the Divine?

In Sacred Scripture (*RSVCE translation used*) there is clear warrant for the concept of there being no sacrifice without cost, cf. 2 Sam 24: 21f:

And Araunah said, “Why has my lord the king come to his servant?” David said, “To buy the threshing floor of you, in order to build an altar to the LORD, that the plague may be averted from the people.” Then Araunah said to David, “Let my lord the king take and offer up what seems good to him; here are the oxen for the burnt offering, and the threshing sledges and the yokes of the oxen for the wood. All this, O king, Araunah gives to the king.” And Araunah said to the king, “The LORD your God accept you.” But the king said to Araunah, “No, but I will buy it of you for a price; *I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God which cost me nothing.*” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. (*emphasis added*)

To refine the point, blood sacrifice is required for atonement, cf. Lv 17:11: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life.”

As regards vicarious suffering, cf. Is 53:4-6, “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows...But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed...the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” See also Jn 18:11 “...(S)hall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?” This cup of which Jesus speaks is nothing other than God’s wrath, suffering. This imagery is common in the Bible, cf. Ps 75:8; Is 51:17, 22; Jer 25:15; Hab 2:15; Rev 14:10; Rev 19:16.

In 1 Pet 2:21 the first Pope tells us directly “Christ...suffered for you...” We might want to restate this or “interpret” it in a way more consonant with our sensibilities by saying something along the lines of, “Christ exercised love which led to His suffering for you” but this would require engaging in semantical/soteriological gymnastics.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church has citations pointing to the direct willing of suffering:

599 Jesus’ *violent death* was not the result of chance in an unfortunate coincidence of circumstances, but is *part of the mystery of God’s plan*, as St. Peter explains to the Jews of Jerusalem in his first sermon on Pentecost: “This Jesus [was] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.

605 ... Jesus...affirms that he came “to give his life as a ransom for many.”

609...*In suffering and death* His humanity became the free and perfect instrument of his divine love which desires the salvation of men. Indeed, out of love for his Father and for men, whom the Father wants to save, *Jesus freely accepted his Passion and death*.

610 ...“This is my *blood* of the covenant, which *is poured out* for many *for the forgiveness of sins*.” (emphasis added)

On p. 4 the editorial states, “The crucifixion, awful though it was, is not, arguably, the most physically excruciating martyrdom in history.” I think that more than just the physical aspect of Our Lord’s suffering needs to be considered. Our Holy Father recently cast light on the matter:

“First, there is the primordial experience of fear, quaking in the face of the power of death, terror before the abyss of nothingness that makes Him tremble to the point that, in Luke’s account, His sweat falls to the ground like drops of blood (cf 22:44):...emphasises the dark depths of Jesus’ fear... In this way (the Gospel of) John is clearly indicating the primordial fear of created nature in the face of imminent death, and yet there is more: the particular horror felt by Him

Who is Life itself before the abyss of the full power of destruction, evil and enmity with God that is now unleashed upon Him, that He now takes directly into Himself...Because He is the Son He sees with total clarity the whole foul flood of evil, all the power of lies and pride, all the wiles and cruelty of evil that masks itself as life yet constantly serves to destroy, debase and crush life. Because He is the Son, He experiences deeply all the horror, filth and baseness that He must drink from the ‘chalice’ prepared for Him: the vast power of sin and death. All this He must take into Himself, so that it can be disarmed and defeated in Him...Jesus’ fear is far more radical than the fear that everyone experiences in the face of death: it is a collision between light and darkness, between life and death itself – the critical moment of decision in human history. With this understanding, following (Blaise) Pascal, we may see ourselves drawn quite personally into the episode on the Mount of Olives: my own sin was present in that terrifying chalice. ‘Those drops of blood I shed for you,’ Pascal hears the Lord say to him during the agony on the mount of Olives (cf, *Pensées* VII, 553).” [Pope Benedict XVI *Jesus of Nazareth-Holy Week Ignatius Press*, 2011, pp 154, 156]

Yours faithfully
Fr Robert Grabner
South St Paul
Minnesota

EDITORIAL COMMENT

We thank Fr Grabner for his kind words and thoughtful response. In the editorial we were trying to answer the Calvinist excesses of a merely juridical and punitive view of Redemption, which for many people makes Christianity not only unattractive but incoherent. At the same time we tried to capture the Catholic truth of the Scriptural language of vicarious suffering and redemptive sacrifice.

We said: “The Word made flesh alone can restore the lost dignity of Man and make satisfaction to the glory of God in his own humanity for His corrupted brothers and sisters”. Yes we did write

that, “The crucifixion, awful though it was, is not, arguably, the most physically excruciating martyrdom in history”, but we went on to say that the greatest and most incomparable suffering of Christ is found in his spiritual anguish, by which

“...He sets Himself to be a living apology for the blasphemy of our fallen state and medicine for our wounded lives. In this way He makes up the debt or deficit that comes from the corruption of being and the loss of God, which is the objective punishment of sin. ‘By His stripes we have been healed’ (Is 53:5)”.

Of course all of this is foreknown and willed by the Father as the only way for man to be redeemed. Yet we must be careful not to give the impression that the Father flew into a rage at the fall and personally devised crucifixion as a cruel punishment, then laid it on his Son as the condition of our forgiveness. The “price” to be paid for sin is the objective price of derogation from the Divine Being, Goodness and Glory. This is indeed real and terrible, and Christ sets Himself to pay it with full understanding, and at the Father’s behest, because he loves mankind and wants our objective restoration. The suffering is not an arbitrary demand of “wrath”, but an existential demand of ontological healing.

The difficulty of expression here arises from that most challenging paradox of free will and Divine providence. The crucifixion was in one sense an act of great blasphemy and sinfulness and undoubtedly Satanic in inspiration. In that sense it cannot be willed directly by the Father, but the Father positively wills the Son to endure this Passion in atonement for fallen man, drawing the greatest good from the greatest evil. The apparent hour of the triumph of darkness is in fact the hour of the triumph of Charity. That is the sense in which we call that awe-full Friday “Good”.



The Road From Regensburg

Papal-inspired thought in search
of a new apologetic

One Law of Gratuitousness to Save Europe

4 June To Croatian Political and Cultural Leaders.

Extracts from Pope Benedict's hopeful appeal to the Croatian people to stay truly Catholic amidst powerful external pressures to implode. It was a moving summary of Pope Benedict's vision. We have placed in bold some words which dovetail with our current editorial.

... Christ is fully human, and whatever is human finds in him and in his word the fulness of life and meaning.

... Truly, the great achievements of the modern age – the recognition and guarantee of freedom of conscience, of human rights, of the freedom of science and hence of a free society – should be confirmed and developed while keeping reason and freedom open to their transcendent foundation, so as to ensure that these achievements are not undone, as unfortunately happens in not a few cases. ... If, in keeping with the prevailing modern idea, conscience is reduced to the subjective field to which religion and morality have been banished, then the crisis of the West has no remedy and Europe is destined to collapse in on itself. If, on the other hand, conscience is rediscovered as the place in which to listen to truth and good, the place of responsibility before God and before fellow human beings – in other words, the bulwark against all forms of tyranny – then there is hope for the future.

I would like to single out Father Ruder Josip Bošković, a Jesuit born in Dubrovnik three hundred years ago on 18 May 1711. He is a good illustration of the happy symbiosis of faith and scholarship, each stimulating the other through research that is at the same time open, diversified and **capable of synthesis**. His principal work, *Theoria philosophiae naturalis*, which was published in Vienna and later in Venice in the mid-18th century, bears a highly significant sub-title: *redacta ad unicam legem virium in natura existentium*, that is, “according to the **one law of the forces existing in nature**”. In Bošković, there is analysis, there is study of multiple branches of knowledge, but there is also **a passion for unity. This is typical of Catholic culture** ... the experts say that his theory of “continuity”, which holds true both **in the natural sciences** and in geometry, accords well with some of the great discoveries of modern physics.... (he) knows, in the light of truth, how **to engage fully the resources of reason** with which he has been endowed by God himself.

... It is by forming consciences that the Church makes her most specific and valuable contribution to society. ... (teaching) what it means for a community to be built upon gift, not upon economic interests or ideology, but upon love, “the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity” (*Caritas in Veritate*, 1). This logic of gratuitousness, learnt in infancy and adolescence, is then lived out in every area of life ... once it has been assimilated it can be applied to the most complex areas of political and economic life ...

It is here that the *lay faithful* are called to give generously of the formation they have received, guided by the principles of the Church's Social Doctrine, for the sake of authentic secularism, social justice, the defence of life and of the family, freedom of religion and education.

Vocation of Matter

28 February To Pontifical Council for Social Communications.
Again the bold is ours.

... new technologies are ... bringing about a ... new way of learning and thinking ... with unprecedented opportunities for establishing relationships and building fellowship.

I would like to reflect on the fact that thought and relation are always in the modality of language ... The new languages developing in digital communications ... are geared to a different logical organisation of thought and of the relationship with reality ... reflection on the languages developed by the new technologies is urgently necessary.

The starting point is the Revelation which bears witness to us of how, until his full manifestation of self in the Incarnate Son, God communicated his marvels precisely through language and the real experience of human beings, “according to the culture proper to each age” (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 58).

... if we are to be attentive to God's work in the world, we must listen attentively to the language of the people of our time ... It is not only a matter of expressing the Gospel message in contemporary language; it is also necessary to have the courage to think more deeply – as happened in other epochs – about the relationship between faith, the life of the Church and the changes human beings are experiencing.

... “Is not this effort to imbue in mechanical instruments the reflection of spiritual duties, ennobled and uplifted to a service which touches the sacred? **Is it the spirit which is made a prisoner of matter or is it matter, already tamed and obliged to carry out laws of the spirit, which perhaps offers sublime deference to the spirit itself?**” (Paul VI: *Address at the Automation Centre of the Aloisianum*, Gallarate, 19 June 1964). It is possible to discern in these words the profound link with the human spirit to which technology is called by vocation (cf. Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 69).

Religious Freedom

29 April 2011 To Pontifical Academy of Science.

Deeply inscribed in our human nature are a yearning for truth and meaning and an openness to the transcendent; ... Many centuries ago, Tertullian coined the term *libertas religionis* (cf. *Apologeticum*, 24:6). ... Since man enjoys the capacity for a free personal choice in truth ... the right to religious freedom should be viewed as innate to the fundamental dignity of every human person ... all people are “impelled by nature and also bound by our moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth” (Second Vatican Council, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 2) ... let me express my sincere hope that your expertise in the fields of law, political science, sociology and economics will converge in these days to bring about fresh insights on this important question and thus bear much fruit now and into the future.



Comment on the Comments

by William Oddie

Facing up to the Scandal of Abuse in and out of The Church

It may be time to return to the question of clerical child sex abuse, for the subject has moved on. Since I last wrote on this subject, in the period approaching the Pope's triumphant visit (which, like many others, I was very concerned that this issue would be used by the Dawkins/Tatchell coalition to wreck) work has continued within the Church to understand the problem.

In the last week of May, three separate and unconnected documents emerged which in their different ways contributed to this important aim, two from within or actually initiated by the Church, the other an entirely secular report which gives us the general context of the problem. I will proceed by presenting extracts from all three reports, with as little comment from me as I can manage.

I begin with "*Child Maltreatment in the United Kingdom: a Study of the Prevalence of Abuse and Neglect*" published by the NSPCC. This gives the general background of this problem in society at large within the wider question of all maltreatment of children. This is what it has to say (under the heading "Who are the abusers?") about who is most likely to be involved in child sex abuse:

"Numbers of respondents recording sexual activity with relatives which were against their wishes or with a person 5 or more years older, were very small: 3% reported touching or fondling and the same proportion had witnessed relatives exposing themselves. The other categories of oral/penetrative acts or attempts, and voyeurism/pornography were reported by 1%. Much larger numbers had experienced sexual acts by non-relatives, predominantly by people known to them and by age peers: boy or girlfriends, friends of brothers or sisters, fellow pupils or students formed most of those involved. Among older people, neighbours

and parents' friends were the most common. Very few said that the person involved was a professional."

Nowhere does the report refer to the Church or to Catholic priests, who, here at least, are simply not on the NSPCC's radar.

The second document, much more detailed, and specifically focused on the clergy (because that's what the American Catholic bishops asked for), is a report by a research team from the non-Catholic John Jay College, who have a track record in this field. I wrote in the January 2009 issue of this magazine about a previous John Jay report into this subject, their 2004 report *The Nature and Scope of the Problem of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States*, which was carried out in 2004 for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. This was a survey of 90% of the priests and deacons reported to have had allegations of child sexual abuse made against them, from the '70s to the '90s. One conclusion was that "if the yearly ordination totals for diocesan priests accused are compared to the overall number of diocesan priests ordained in that year, the percentages of accused priests range from a maximum of almost 10% in 1970, decreasing to 8% in 1980 and to fewer than 4% in 1990." Four per cent, however, is still a lot of priests, far too many. But as I wrote then, "The John Jay report's most important finding.... had to do not with the number but with the nature of the sexual abuses alleged: The report states that 80% to 90% of priests who sexually abused children over the past 52 years had been involved with adolescent boys – ephebophilia – not prepubescent children – paedophilia."

The scope of the John Jay College's latest report is wider. Its title is identical with one exception: "The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States,

1950-2010". *The New York Times* mostly reported it with more respect than one might have expected from an organ which has in the past exhibited a distinctly anti-Catholic tinge:

"A five-year study commissioned by the nation's Roman Catholic bishops to provide a definitive answer to what caused the church's sexual abuse crisis has concluded that neither the all-male celibate priesthood nor homosexuality were to blame.

"Instead, the report says, the abuse occurred because priests who were poorly prepared and monitored, and were under stress, landed amid the social and sexual turmoil of the 1960s and '70s.

"Known occurrences of sexual abuse of minors by priests rose sharply during those decades, the report found, and the problem grew worse when the church's hierarchy responded by showing more care for the perpetrators than the victims.

"The 'blame Woodstock' explanation [The NY Times showing its true colours?] has been floated by bishops since the church was engulfed by scandal in the United States in 2002 and by Pope Benedict XVI [not much, surely?] after it erupted in Europe in 2010.

"But this study is likely to be regarded as the most authoritative analysis of the scandal in the Catholic Church in America. The study, initiated in 2006, was conducted by a team of researchers at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City at a cost of \$1.8 million. About half was provided by the bishops, with additional money contributed by Catholic organisations and foundations. The National Institute of Justice, the research agency of the United States Department of Justice, supplied about \$280,000."

What *The New York Times* calls the "blame Woodstock" explanation for the

“the Church ought to be an example to society at large rather than a reflection of it”

rise of clerical sex abuse cases in the Seventies, despite the paper’s evident scepticism, cannot be entirely discounted, since as the researchers of the John Jay College (hereafter JJC) pointed out in their latest report, “the sexual abuse of minors is a pervasive problem in society and in organisations that involve close relationships between youth and adults. No exact measure exists for the number of youths who have contact with priests in the Catholic Church in a year.... [but] despite the media focus on child sexual abuse by Catholic priests, it is clear that these abuse acts are a small percentage of all child sexual abuse incidents in the United States.”

What’s interesting is that though both these reports by independent and secular organisations (NSPCC and JJC) either state or imply that child sex abuse is part of a problem in society as a whole and not a particular problem for the Catholic Church, in other words that Catholic priests are no more likely than anyone else to be involved in it, Dr Pravin Thevathasan, the author of the third document on this subject published around the same time, “*The Catholic Church & the Sex Abuse Crisis*”, published by the CTS, is not inclined to deploy this fact to get the Church off the hook.

Nevertheless, there is now a growing willingness – as long as it is made clear that this is no excuse for the existence of this appalling crime within an organisation which ought to be an example to society at large rather than a reflection of it – to think seriously about what that implies for our relationship to a society which, because of our bishops’ gross mishandling of the problem, we now have small hope of influencing in this matter. As Dr Thevathasan concludes (p. 68):

“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. We are called by our Holy Father to enter a period of purification and

repentance. There have been services of repentance and many victims have finally felt that they have been heard by the Church. May they continue to find the healing love of Jesus Christ.”

He also opens his report (which should be widely read and pondered) with the same reflection (p3):

“In this work, no excuses will be offered in order to justify the appalling crime of sexual abuse perpetrated by a small number of Catholic priests – about 2 to 4% credible accusations in the United States and less than this in the United Kingdom in the last forty years – nor for the pastoral negligence of some bishops. To quote Pope Benedict, sexual abuse has ‘profoundly wounded people in their childhood, damaging them for a whole lifetime’.”

But he adds:

“The Pope has also said that the crimes of priests, while reprehensible, should be seen in the context of the times in which these events took place. Citing the rise of child pornography and sexual tourism, he concludes that moral standards in society at large have broken down.”

This is, I suggest, what we should now focus on. Continuing to reflect on our own involvement in this appalling problem, we need to understand that though, as the American researcher Charol Shakeshaft reflected in a report for the US Department of Education, children are, as Dr Thevathasan also points out, “a hundred times more likely to be abused in school than by priests”, and though this “does indicate that the sexual abuse of minors is significantly higher in secular society than in the Church”, we cannot be complacent: “this does not excuse the behaviour of abusive priests”. The Holy Father’s clear guidance is that the Church at large is still called upon “to enter a period of purification and repentance and of prayer for the victims of clerical child abuse”.

All the same, he says, “one of the immense dangers of focussing unduly on clergy abuse is that we might fail to

protect vulnerable children in the wider society”.

And this is indeed a real danger. For, the trouble with scapegoats is that they are set apart as such to make society feel better about itself, and not to cope with the real problem thus shuffled off into the wilderness. Child sex abuse is a problem for society at large which it has barely begun seriously to address. The JJC report has been greeted by howls of fury by atheist bloggers, determined not to be thus cheated of their prime article of indictment against the Catholic Church, their favourite target. Take Miranda Scott Hale, who immediately concluded: “This report isn’t better than nothing. It’s a major setback in the movement towards Church accountability”. By this, of course, she means indelible and above all *exclusive* guilt. She neglected to mention her aggressively atheist agenda, posing as a dispassionate observer. A fellow atheist blogger, however, on his site *The Heathen Hub* (<http://heathen-hub.com/blog.php?b=344>) revealed that she is actually “one of... the atheist movement’s footsoldiers”, and quotes her as saying that she is “really tired of sceptics who are committed to investigating and criticising irrationality unless that irrationality is of the religious sort.... just so that the sceptic in question can avoid offending religious individuals”. Well, she and many others are still out for Catholic scalps: we aren’t just scapegoats for them, we are the ultimate enemy, and against us no tactic is out of bounds. But if *The New York Times* can report that the JJC report “is likely to be regarded as the most authoritative analysis of the scandal in the Catholic Church in America”, maybe, just maybe, the atheists are now on the back foot and we are finally on the way to seeing this all but intractable problem on the way to being successfully confronted and lived through. There may be light at the end of the tunnel; on the other hand, the sour old joke may still come true: it could be an oncoming train.



The Truth Will Set You Free

Catholic Doctrine for the Pastoral Context

SUGGESTIONS FOR CATHOLICISING THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM

by Roy Peachey

In what is a continuation of his March-April 2011 piece “Bringing Catholic Culture back into the Classroom” (see letters page for a response to that) Mr Peachey makes some specific suggestions concerning the teaching of English Literature and Language. He is an English teacher at Woldingham School, Surrey, and maintains a blog – www.catholicenglishteacher.blogspot.com – where some of the books mentioned in this article are discussed in greater depth.

There is a great deal more to the teaching of English in Catholic schools than the teaching of literature written by Catholics. However, there is also clearly an argument that great Catholic authors should not be neglected either. Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education, may have surprised many by repeatedly calling for the teaching in schools of authors such as Chaucer, Dryden and Pope but his suggestion deserves a response from the Catholic community, for each of these great writers was a Catholic and each of them is horribly neglected even in Catholic schools today. Perhaps the recently announced review of the National Curriculum may provide us with the opportunity to give that response.

Practical Suggestions

One way to bring Catholic culture back into the school curriculum is to make more use of the Church’s liturgical year. By definition the great feasts of the Church fall in the school holidays but that clearly does not prevent the Catholic teacher from making use of these feasts in the classroom. Christmas alone provides multiple opportunities: Dickens’ Christmas classics can be supplemented, for example, by Willi Chen’s Caribbean or George Mackay Brown’s Orcadian short stories. Older students could usefully look at Oscar Hijuelos’s *Mr Ives’ Christmas* or Alice Thomas Ellis’s *The Birds of the Air*. Another approach might be to use Christmas carols and poetry to examine language use and language change. Robert Southwell’s ‘The Burning Babe’ could be studied alongside ‘Ding dong merrily on high’ and Christina Rossetti’s ‘In the Bleak Midwinter’, for example. T.S. Eliot’s ‘Journey of the Magi’ is widely studied but placing it alongside Michael Symmons Roberts’ ‘The Gifts’, in which the poet speculates about what Mary and Joseph did with the Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh, adds another dimension to it. The great feasts may fall outside term time but saints’ days may well fall within the term, thereby providing an opportunity for students to look at the work of, for example, St. Thomas More, St. Robert Southwell and now Blessed John Henry Newman.

There is also plenty of good children’s literature written by Catholics such as J.R.R. Tolkien, Rumer Godden, Otfried Preussler and Frank Cottrell Boyce that can be studied in the classroom. There is even teenage high school fiction from a Catholic perspective emerging from the USA, with a group of graduates from the Franciscan University of Steubenville and Christendom College writing under the name of Christian M. Frank. Other work which was not written specifically for children can be read by a wide range of students, the most obvious examples being G.K. Chesterton’s Father Brown stories and George Mackay Brown’s short stories and novels. A further option is to study bestsellers like David Almond’s *Skellig* alongside Antonio Tabucchi’s *The Flying Creatures of Fra Angelico*, or Orwell’s *1984* alongside Thomas More’s *Utopia* to provide an alternative perspective.

“The creative act itself assumes a greater significance than is usually given to it in English curricula”

There is, of course, a good deal more to the study of English than the study of literature. The teaching of non-fiction texts, especially at Key Stage 3 (age 11-14), is often a rather haphazard affair and so, if Catholic teachers are not careful, Catholic perspectives on the world can easily be written out of the curriculum here too. Non-fiction texts are important in their own right but they can also provide useful contextual information for fictional texts. One does not need to believe that Shakespeare was a closet Catholic, for example, to appreciate the need to see him in his Catholic context. Students can only benefit, linguistically and in other ways, by looking at some of the writing in publications like *Early Modern Catholicism: An Anthology of Primary Sources* (Miola 2007). There is also plenty of more recent non-fiction that could happily fit into the Catholic classroom. It is possible to argue with Ian Ker, for example, that Chesterton’s non-fiction outstrips his fiction by some margin, placing him in the same league as “Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, and especially, of course, Newman.” (Ker 2003, 75) Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold and Newman may not be taught much in British schools these days – though the beatification of Newman has provided a clear opportunity to raise his profile – but Chesterton’s prose would seem admirably suited to the classroom. Non-fiction also provides an opportunity for teachers to redress the rather Eurocentric imbalance that can overwhelm English studies. Takashi Nagai’s *The Bells of Nagasaki*, for example, deserves a place on any curriculum for its powerfully restrained description of the bombing of Nagasaki at the end of World War II. Teaching Catholic non-fiction does not mean teaching theology (or hagiography) but that does not mean that great Catholic theologians and priests need be excluded from the curriculum either: there could well be room for extracts from St. Augustine’s *Confessions* or Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan’s *The Road of Hope* when looking at autobiographical writing, for instance.

“There is also plenty of good children’s literature written by Catholics”

We can also bring Catholic culture back into the curriculum by studying the English language itself. The ideas and examples contained in Dennis Freeborn’s *From Old English to Standard English* (Freeborn 1992) and the associated website, for example, can be adapted in an age-appropriate way to show how the English language (including its spelling and punctuation) has changed over time. The great value of Freeborn’s book is that it illustrates its analysis with a wide variety of pre- (and post-) Reformation texts, thereby providing the Catholic teacher with a genuine opportunity to teach the English Catholic literary heritage while also teaching spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Studying the past does not mean neglecting the present. The growth of militant secularism in Britain and the largely one-sided reporting of Catholicism in the secular press in recent times have drawn particular attention to the need for Catholics to be aware of the power of the media in shaping students’ responses to the world. Studying media texts is now an integral part of the school curriculum and teachers are used to drawing attention to the power of manipulative language when looking at advertising. They may also feel no compunction about teaching the calculated use of language by the military to justify “friendly fire incidents” and “collateral damage”. However, the secular status quo has so pervaded even Catholic schools and colleges that these same teachers usually feel reluctant to expose the thinking underlying such loaded terms as “dignity in dying”, “terminations” and “assisted dying”. Catholicism has been forced into the fortress of the Religious Studies classroom but, as Catholic educators, we do our faith no favours by allowing it to be compartmentalised in this way.

“Catholicism has been forced into the fortress of the Religious Studies classroom but we do our faith no favours by allowing it to be compartmentalised in this way.”

Indeed it is striking how rarely we allow our faith to influence our English teaching even when there are opportunities to do so. The Model United Nations movement, for example, has become something of an international phenomenon and yet, despite the Vatican’s presence with permanent observer status at the UN, it is virtually unheard of for students to assume the role of the Vatican at such conferences. A great deal of what we need to do as Catholic educators, in other words, is to redress the balance not by overturning English curricula as currently instituted but by refusing to allow the Catholic voice to be expunged altogether.

A Return to Beauty

However, there is more to the English teacher’s task than simply allowing the Catholic voice to be heard. If each person is created in the image of the creator God then the creative act itself, as Pope John Paul II suggested in his Letter to Artists of 1999, assumes a greater significance than is usually given to it in English curricula. As Tolkien put it:

The heart of Man is not compound of lies,
but draws some wisdom from the only Wise,
and still recalls him. Though now long estranged,
Man is not wholly lost nor wholly changed.
Dis-graced he may be, yet is not dethroned,
and keeps the rags of lordship once he owned,
his world-dominion by creative act:
not his to worship the great Artefact,
Man, Sub-creator, the refracted light
through whom is splintered from a single White
to many hues, and endlessly combined in living shapes that
move from mind to mind. (Tolkien 1989, 98)

If, in writing, we become sub-creators (in Tolkien’s words) or craftsmen mirroring the Creator (in the words of John Paul II) then surely we ought to take children’s creative writing more seriously than we usually do. Creative writing in schools gets very mixed treatment: while it is privileged at key stage 2 and, to a certain extent, at key stage 3, it usually receives less attention at key stage 4 and almost none at key stage 5 (though there are signs of change here with a renewed emphasis on recreative writing as an A Level coursework option). By giving creative writing a much more central place in the curriculum, Catholic educators would be responding to authentic theological analyses of the arts while simultaneously demonstrating that bringing Catholic culture back into the school curriculum does not mean indoctrination or the abandonment of thought and choice.



Book Reviews

Ethos and the Oxford Movement: At the Heart of Tractarianism

James Pereiro, Oxford University Press, 2008; viii, 271pp, hardback £80.00

A detailed look at Tractarian use of the term ethos has been long overdue, and in this very learned book Fr Pereiro contributes a great deal to its elucidation. In the eyes of some commentators the Tractarians' fondness for the word was little more than a display of familiarity with Aristotelian moral philosophy, in which the term could be used simply as shorthand for moral temper or moral disposition. This no doubt accounts for some usage, but Fr Pereiro has brought out specific meanings for the term which, he argues, place the concept of ethos at the 'heart' of what Tractarianism was about. How distinctive to the Movement these meanings turn out to be, and how central the concept was to Tractarianism as a religious rather than an intellectual movement, remain open questions, but Fr Pereiro has undoubtedly written a book that every serious student of the Oxford Movement will have to read.

His starting point is his discovery of the manuscript of a brief early history of the Movement, entitled *Revival of Primitive Doctrine* and written in 1840 by a devout and intelligent lay disciple of Newman's called S.F. Wood (the text is published here in an appendix for the first time). This history has a certain authority because both Newman and Pusey not only suggested that Wood should write it, but generally approved its content. Wood's line of interpretation differs sharply from Newman's own retrospective musings

in his 'The State of Religious Parties' published in *The British Critic* in 1839. There Newman saw Tractarianism as the religious counterpart of the literary romanticism expressed in the works of prominent literary figures, naming in particular Scott, Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth, in the early decades of the 19th century. Wood by contrast singled out the influence of the ethical thought of Aristotle and Joseph Butler in the immediate pre-Tractarian period (1820-30) in Oxford itself. Pereiro suggests Wood was right on the basis that a specifically Tractarian concept of ethos was drawn from the philosophies of these two thinkers.

To summarise briefly, Aristotle believed that progress in virtue depended on the interaction of good affective temper and sound practical judgment. A man who habitually made right moral decisions would develop good moral dispositions, and these dispositions would clarify his vision such that further correct decisions about conduct would be made. The Anglican philosopher-bishop Joseph Butler extended this theory to explain why some men accepted evidence which pointed to the truth of Christianity and others did not. He posited that virtuous habits enabled good men to have not only good moral judgement, but also a clearer perception of the truth of Revelation. This meant that a bad man (one whose passions were least under control) was more likely to reject Christianity, whereas a good man (whose moral virtues showed that reason had trained his affections) would be more receptive to the evidence and open to conversion.

Fr Pereiro shows that the Tractarian leader John Keble took the argument a step further, arguing that the better the character of a Christian, the more able he was to discriminate truth from falsehood *within* Christianity, in dealing with the conflicting claims of the various denominations and church parties. This was the basic ethos theory; but as with Aristotle a reflexive process was also possible. Once true doctrines had been accepted, further progress in holiness became possible, and then in turn a further acceptance

of apostolic doctrine. Pereiro calls this process "an ascending spiral movement", the vision of which lay behind the Tractarian belief that "following the path of holiness would lead to the recovery of Catholic truths lost in previous centuries within the Church of England." The converse of the theory conveniently provided the Tractarians with a summary explanation for the damage done to the English church at the Reformation, just as Butler had found himself a moralistic explanation for the popularity of early 18th century Deism. Newman declared heresy to be "the fruit of an *ethos* marked by worldliness, intellectual pride, or some other deficiency", and even tried to associate different vices with different types of error.

Fr Pereiro's book explores the importance of this Tractarian concept of ethos through a collection of disparate essays more or less closely related to the central theme. The first chapter is a pioneering study of the local impact of the Oxford Movement in London, focusing on a reconstruction of Wood's Tractarian activities. The second surveys recent historiographical debate over the vitality of the Church of England in the pre-Tractarian period. He shows how the Tractarians (and others) in the 1820s and 30s believed the Church to be in a condition of spiritual torpor, whereas after the split within the movement between the so-called Xs and Zs in the wake of Tract 90 and the radical takeover of *The British Critic*, the Zs (Newman's opponents) tried to create a picture of a continuous stream of living High Church belief and devotion linking the 18th century Non-Jurors and Hutchinsonians to their own 'Old High Church' segment of Tractarianism.

The key figure in this rewriting of church history was William Palmer of Worcester College, and his influence on the historiography of the Oxford Movement remains to be worked out in detail. Fr Pereiro is at his most original and revisionist in identifying this Palmerian historiography as a form of propaganda, and in seeking to rehabilitate Newman's view that both

“Christian movements do not have academic abstractions as their central dynamic”

pre-Tractarian High Churchmen (and the Tractarian Zs) on the one side, and the Evangelicals on the other, were spiritually wanting. He is the only historian to date (so far as I am aware) prepared to use Newman's terms for these two groups ('High and Dry' and 'Peculiar') as simply descriptive rather than evaluative terms.

In the third chapter Fr Pereiro shows in a masterly way the intellectual centrality of ethos by demonstrating its connections with other major themes of Tractarian thought, notably their theories of 'realisation' and 'reserve'. This analysis is very interesting, though questions remain about how much in these areas was really common to all the leaders, let alone to followers with less theological expertise. Sometimes Fr Pereiro appears to be forcing the evidence into a neat pattern. For instance some of the Tractarian discussion about making progress in religion involved the theological and not the moral virtues, but ethos theory is simply assumed to incorporate both. As this suggests, the 'spiral' dimension (which embraced a theory of action as well as of knowledge) in particular needs further elucidation. Chapter five usefully chronicles and analyses reaction to the Oxford Movement from the other parties within the Church of England.

To this reviewer it seems that chapter four is more problematic than the others. If I have understood him correctly, Fr Pereiro seems to have two goals. The first is to suggest that Newman's minor disciple S.F. Wood anticipated his mentor in the early 1830s in proposing the theory that doctrinal orthodoxy, and not just heresy, could exhibit a trajectory of development. The second is to demonstrate that Newman himself only came to formulate and accept this theory as late as 1839-40, contradicting Newman's own recollection that he had key elements in his mind by the time he published his first major book, *The Arians of the 4th century*, in 1833.

The arguments for both propositions are not particularly convincing. The case for the first is based on

documentary evidence which doesn't exclude the possibility that Newman had discussed the idea of development with Wood before Wood committed his thoughts to paper. If this had happened it would explain Wood's surprise (noted by Fr Pereiro) at Newman's rejection of much of his sketch of a development theory. Moreover if Wood had in fact anticipated Newman, it would mean that by the time he wrote the *Apologia* in 1864 Newman had forgotten that Wood had influenced him. (It was one of the most important of Newman's aims in the *Apologia* to list the influences on his thought while an Anglican). Such amnesia is highly unlikely given Newman's intense devotion to his friends and their memory.

The main problem with Fr Pereiro's attempts to achieve his second goal, of establishing a late genesis for Newman's theory of development, is that his efforts to explain away Newman's contrary recollections are unduly strained. Fr Pereiro relies heavily on the rather dubious argument that if Newman opposed, in writing and conversation, Wood's and Abbe Jager's theories of development in the early 1830s then he cannot at the same time or earlier have entertained similar ideas himself.

Fr Pereiro's book might have been improved if he had replaced this conjectural chapter with one exploring the nature and importance of the concept of ethos in the ecclesiastical culture preceding and surrounding the Oxford Movement. This would enable him to demonstrate much more securely that the Tractarian theory of ethos was in fact distinctively Tractarian. As it is, some doubts must remain. In passing Fr Pereiro himself admits that the major Evangelical writer Daniel Wilson seemed to hold the basic theory that moral character affects belief; and in chapter five, where Fr Pereiro reviews reactions from non-Tractarians to the spate of conversions to Rome, we find that various hostile Protestant observers ascribed these conversions to bad moral character. He also concedes that the basic theory was found in William Law and the

Cambridge Platonists, which is highly significant since both these sources of Protestant spirituality exerted widespread influence through the 18th century.

The claim (implied by the book's subtitle 'At the Heart of Tractarianism') that ethos can be regarded as central to the phenomenon of the Oxford Movement may also be doubted. Christian religious movements do not usually have as their central dynamic a theory of knowledge, an academic abstraction, but something more personal and affective, typically the example and spiritual guidance of a saint or charismatic leader. Just as, for example, John Wesley attracted disciples and left behind a system of Christian discipline, so the origin and heart of the Oxford Movement can be traced to the holy characters of Keble, Newman and Pusey, and the spiritual practices associated with them. Most notable among these was a renewed attention to the sacraments and corporate worship (as Wood noted in his history), leading ultimately to the introduction, for the first time, of Roman-style Eucharistic devotion into the Church of England.

Fr Pereiro's interest is chiefly, it appears, in the Oxford Movement as an episode in the history of ideas rather than in the history of religion, and as such he seems to see it as culminating, through the growth of Newman's ideas about ethos, in the philosophy of *The Grammar of Assent*, rather than in the conversion of numerous Anglicans to Rome. Indeed in his final paragraph he refuses to endorse the view that the Oxford Movement had a Providential outcome in directing Newman and others to the Catholic Church. If, as Catholics, we think we can detect the workings of God's Providence anywhere in history, surely we have little to do to convince ourselves here. Either God intended the Oxford Movement to benefit the Catholic Church or he did not, and the indications in favour of the former proposition seem to accumulate with every passing year.

Christopher Zealley
Oxford



Book Reviews continued

Living the Mystery: Monastic Markers on the Christian Way

Dom Hugh Gilbert OSB, *Gracewing*, 204pp, £9.99

A bishop (long dead) who fancied himself as something of a historian used to say that it was the religious orders which were the first to capitulate at the time of the Henrician Reformation in England, the Carthusian martyrs being the outstanding exception which proved the rule. Whether that judgment is too harsh, it is certainly true that in the past half century the “zeitgeist” has been embraced enthusiastically, and uncritically, by many of those orders from which one might have expected a greater stability and fidelity. Again there are exceptions which prove the rule and one of these has to be the Subiaco Benedictine community at Pluscarden, under the current leadership of Abbot Hugh Gilbert. Perhaps it has something to do with the particular terrain, tucked away as they are outside Elgin, with the winds blasting in from Iceland, but there is a grittiness about Pluscarden in which the age-old verities are lived out, providing a beacon of light for those of us weaker souls who need encouragement.

The material contained in the latest collection of Dom Hugh’s writings is, as its title “*Monastic Markers on the Christian Way*” suggests, primarily aimed at building up the lives of the monks in his care, but the practical insights into living the Christian life contained here have a wider relevance for all who search for deeper communion with the mystery of God. One chapter in particular, “*The Little Foxes*”, demonstrates how Dom Hugh can identify and articulate the very real temptation faced by all Christians to allow the erosion of prayer by what are seemingly “good” distractions ... “lose prayer and you’ve lost. Stick to it and you’ve won”.

The initial essay, “*The Christ We Know*”, builds on an insight from Blessed John Henry Newman that there is within us already a true “image” or “idea” of who Christ is. It underlines the essential truth that Christianity is Christ and that this involves nothing less than “a real,

concrete, direct, vivid, inner apprehension of the person of Christ, engaging thought, will, action and emotions – that is, the whole of ourselves”. Pluscarden’s Abbot makes the same point as St. Francis de Sales that, though the vocational paths may be different (and unique to each individual), the goal is ever the same: nothing short of knowing “*the love of Christ which is beyond all knowledge*” and being filled “*with the utter fullness of God*” (Ephesians 3:19). There are no short cuts here.

The rich range of sources drawn on is a strong attraction though a call to read Origen might seem pretty daunting to the more general reader! “*Taking the Curve*” ties in the mid-life crisis experienced by many with St. Peter’s part in the Paschal Mystery ... “*the one thing necessary is to follow. The one thing necessary is obedience. It is as simple as that*”, while perhaps the most substantial of the offerings is “*The Spiritual Senses*”, a series of reflections on the nature of interior apprehension which contains a comment on Saint Bonaventure neatly summing up Dom Hugh’s whole approach: “*For him the recovery of the spiritual sense is part of the re-ordering of the human person that comes through the encounter with Christ.*”

This reviewer chose to use “*Living the Mystery*” as a Lenten exercise for a study group within the parish: it was much appreciated and stimulated wide ranging discussion, combining, as it does, an accessible orthodoxy with fresh insight.

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St. Anthony’s Communications DVDs

For the first time we review some apologetic and catechetical DVDs. They are published by St Anthony’s Communications: www.saintant.com Speakers include Frs Marcus Holden, Andrew Pinsent, Nicholas Shofield, Tim Finigan and James and Joanna Bogle.

Confession, The Forgotten Sacrament, Christian Holden, 20 mins., £9.95

The expression “crisis of Confession” is still heard quite frequently – perhaps it has been heard so much that it has lost some of its force. Yet it remains true – this sacrament is very badly neglected, and is the victim of an appalling ignorance, to the great weakening of the Church. This 20-minute DVD is a part of the fight back – to dispel ignorance and therefore help people see the beauty and need for this sacrament. With respect to dispelling ignorance, there is a clear exposition of the origins of Confession, which also serves to deal with the standard objection “Why do I have to confess my sins to a priest; can’t I go direct to God?” Likewise, the definition of sin and its effects in the soul show that it is not simply a question of “breaking a rule” which doesn’t otherwise damage us: a crucial point that many simply do not grasp. There are good analogies to explain the effects of sin, the attitude of God towards the sinner, and the priest, which would do much to reassure the nervous. I would not assume that all viewers are familiar with terms such as “contrition” and “repentance” (such is the level to which we have sunk!). This will be a most useful resource for schools and RCIA classes.

Arise Once More, Reviving Catholic Britain, Christian Holden, 33 mins., £9.95

Not only is a knowledge of Church history fascinating and inspiring, it also helps us to see where we are going by revealing where we have come from. This DVD is not just about the history of the Catholic Church in Britain, but addresses the question “How do we recover what has been lost?” The influence of Catholicism on the development of this country was fundamental, a fact well brought out in the DVDs condensing of 1,500 years of religious history into its first 20 minutes – no mean feat! Catholicism in Britain is looked at under six headings: the arrival of Christianity, the Medieval

“this production should arouse a just pride in our Catholic identity”

Church, the Reformation, the Second Spring, the Modern Crisis and the Revival. There is some good analysis covering these phases. In the Revival, there was a clear call to fidelity to the Church, to holiness for everyone and to renewed catechesis. I would have preferred some more upbeat music to accompany this last phase, a minor point. This production should arouse a just pride in our Catholic identity, confidence in living the Faith and a sense of urgency in our mission to bring our country “home.”

Keys of the Kingdom, Understanding the Papacy, Steve Ray and others, 40 mins., £9.95

Starting with some beautiful shots of St. Peter’s in Rome and stirring music,

this DVD plunges into a coherent presentation of the origins of the institution of the papacy. The use of a narrator in this DVD is an improvement as it makes it ‘flow’ more easily. Perhaps surprisingly for some, the papacy is shown to have Old Testament roots. The apologetic is robust, drawing from the witness of the Scriptures, the Tradition of the early Church and non Christian sources. The speakers are clear and easy to follow. The history of the first Christians in Rome is very inspiring to listen to. The presentation moves through the legalisation of Christianity in the Roman Empire, looking at the positive and negative effects of this, and shows how the Church’s understanding of the role of the papacy has unfolded through time in order to

meet the unique challenges of every age. The notion of the “Magisterium” is introduced and revealed as something that stimulates, rather than stifles, genuine thought. The problem of immoral/weak popes is addressed, as too the question of inerrancy in their teaching. This DVD, at 40 minutes the longest of the three reviewed, helps one to see the Church as she is and as she sees herself, rather than through the eyes of the world, which tries to force her into its own secular models.

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Catholic Chaplaincy
Bradford University

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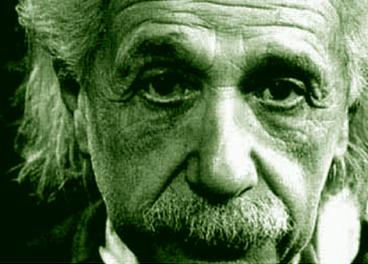
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Cutting Edge

Science and Religion News

New Pontifical Academy President Says he is Agnostic on Natural Theology but that the Pope is not

The new Swiss president of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Werner Arber, won the 1978 Nobel Prize for Medicine. He is the first Protestant to hold the position.

Presumably including the philosophy of science in his general use of the word “science” he says: “Until now science hasn’t been able to prove whether God exists or not – whatever God may be. What might be possible in 100 years, I can’t say. As a scientist, I don’t see any primordial will to create human beings. But ... I as an evolutionary biologist can’t say how the first living organism came into being. ... I’ve been told by those surrounding [the Pope] that the Catholic Church sees ‘permanent creation’ in biological and cosmic evolution.” [source: *swissinfo.ch*]

“Soft” Atheist Wins Templeton Prize

Perhaps the most notable annual event in the science-faith world, at least for the wider public, is the awarding of the Templeton Prize. In April, the 2011 award was made to Professor Martin Rees, the Astronomer Royal and Master of Trinity College Cambridge. He has spent his research career in the fields of astrophysics and cosmology. He is renowned as a non-believer, and yet has adopted a non-aggressive stance towards religion, unlike zealous atheists such as Richard Dawkins. In fact, the latter has openly criticised Rees in the past, labelling him last year a “compliant quisling” for his openness to those of faith ... or, at least, his openness to the Templeton Foundation. One’s first reaction to Rees’s being awarded the 2011 Prize, admittedly, could be one of sympathy with Dawkins’ sarcastic dictum, that “the Templeton Prize [is] a very large sum of money given annually by the Templeton Foundation, usually to a scientist who is prepared to say something nice about religion” (*The God Delusion*, p. 19). Yet, while previous recipients have included

renowned Catholic scientists – including Fr Stanley Jaki (1987), Fr Michael Heller (2008), and Francisco Ayala (2010) – there have also been many others who have tackled Templeton’s so-called ‘big questions’ from angles not so wedded to a faith perspective.

Rees boldly stated, at the time of publicity over Hawking’s *The Grand Design*, “I know Stephen Hawking well enough to know that he has read very little philosophy and even less theology, so I don’t think we should attach any weight to his views on this topic.”

Rees’s eligibility for the prize originates from his looking at the ‘big questions’ of the universe from an astronomer’s stand-point. In particular, the perennial question of the nature and size of the physical universe, while not strictly a spiritual question, is still an awesome question for mankind. And Rees, in his book *Before the Beginning* does strongly affirm the significant fact that the “universe is a unity,” while preferring, for reasons that are not clear, the multiverse hypothesis, arguing, in the manner much discussed in these pages, that this bigger cosmos removes the need for a creator.

Any one of us might agree that looking up at the night sky can bring on a feeling of awe: the size of it, the splendour of it, the questions it poses us. Rees has devoted much of his research career to probing the depths of space, as he stated at the announcement of the award:

“‘Big questions’ are central to the Templeton Foundation’s agenda. None are bigger than those posed by cosmology: How large is physical reality? What is the role of life in the cosmos? How did our complex cosmos emerge, giving rise to conscious beings able to ponder the wonder and mystery of their existence?”

He also drew attention to some of the “gaps” in humanity’s knowledge, even after the great advances of the 20th and early-21st centuries. There are not

just the problems of the very large (cosmology) or the very small (quantum) but also the very complex. As Rees says: “Reductionism is true in a sense. But it’s seldom true in a useful sense.” He is also mindful that the enigma of the beginnings of life remains another great avenue of research, and has emphasised that astronomy has a part to play there as well, especially with the great strides being taken in the investigation of exoplanets (cf. *Cutting Edge* of the March/April 2011 issue).

Yet, it is clear that Rees does not see the uniqueness of the human being on earth, choosing instead to see him just another stage in some ongoing evolutionary process.

Rees claims that

“most people still somehow think we humans are the culmination of the evolutionary tree – and that hardly seems credible to an astronomer. Our Sun formed 4.5 billion years ago, but it’s got 6 billion more before the fuel runs out. According to the best current ultra-long-range forecast, the expanding universe will continue – perhaps until infinity – becoming ever colder, ever emptier. So, even if life were now unique to Earth, there would be abundant scope for posthuman evolution on the Earth or far beyond.”

This would seem one point of departure from the Catholic vision. We affirm rational evidence for the uniquely spiritual dimension of the human person. Our faith in Christ sees the Incarnation of God in human form as securing a definitiveness to the human being; while the human physical make-up is open to a degree of change – such as getting gradually taller – a species able to commune with God in virtue of being made up of body and soul will not mutate into a new one.

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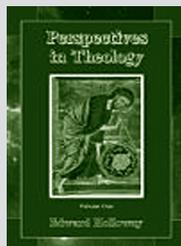
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Our understanding of the role of Mary, the Virgin Mother through whom the Divine Word comes into his own things in the flesh (cf. John 1:10-14), is greatly deepened and enhanced through this perspective. So too the dignity of Man, made male and female 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.

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