

faith

January and February 2010
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The Problem of Evil

Editorial

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Kevin Douglas

The De-humanisation of Marital Sex

Cormac Burke

Science and Religion: Towards a Constructive Dialogue

Alister McGrath

Also

Peter Mitchell on the beauty of the Ordinary Form

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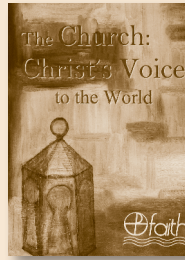
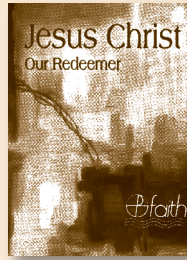
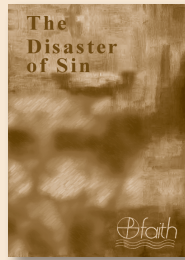
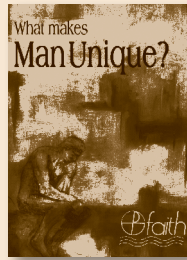
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by Edward Holloway

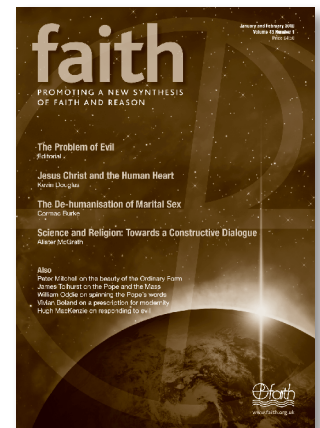
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On November 27 2010 a publicly staged debate on the motion: “*That religion is a force for good in the world*” took place in Toronto and was shown on Canadian TV. Tony Blair spoke for the motion and Christopher Hitchens against. Hitchens, who won the vote among the 2,700 capacity audience by a factor of 2:1, characterised religion as “a cruel experiment whereby we are created sick and ordered to be well” creating a “celestial dictatorship” which was “greedy for praise from dawn to dusk.”

We might well observe that a trained theologian or a well-catechised Catholic would probably have been able to answer this caricature, but, with respect, Tony Blair is neither. Actually not all religions, nor even all Christian sects, believe in Original Sin. However, Hitchens’ slick parody captures an all-too-common view of Christian teaching.

In this fortieth anniversary year of *Faith* magazine, we republish the editorial article from May/June 1989 by Edward Holloway, chiefly because it is still so relevant to this controversy. As he predicts in the conclusion, it was in fact one of his last editorials before he retired from the editorship through ill health.

The piece contains a wealth of illuminating insights into the problem of evil and the goodness of God. It beautifully manifests a theology that is also deeply pastoral, and a philosophy that flows from lived experience.

He shows how Original Sin makes sense when we understand the profound communion and mutual ministry of all creation in Christ, in whom we were constituted in original holiness, upon whom the impact of evil was greatest, and in whom is found healing and purification from sin. In him too, the ultimate victory of real goodness and charity is assured. ■

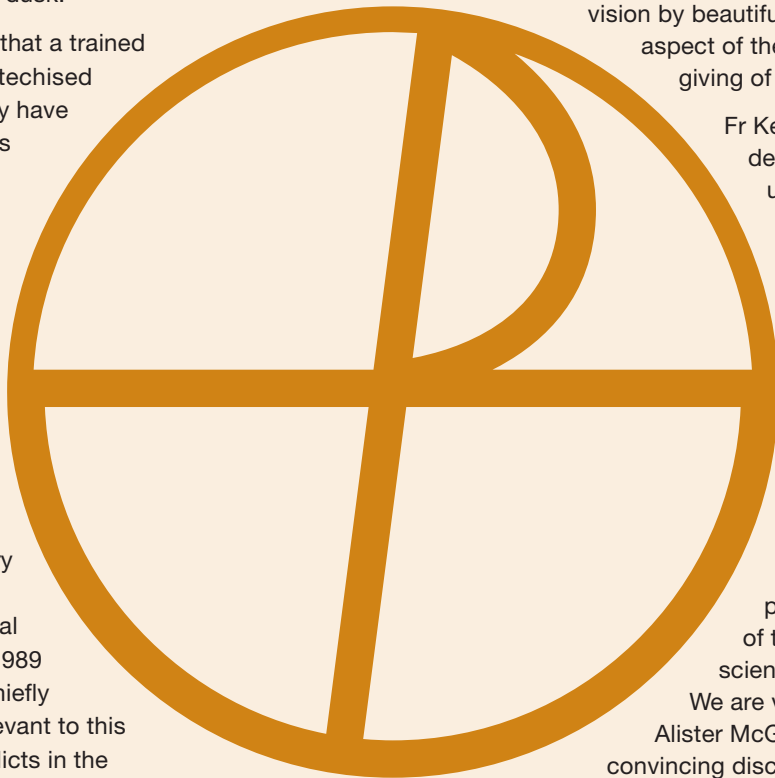
The Pope’s comments on condoms in his interview with Peter Seewald, *Light of the Word*, have sparked an online debate between Professor Luke Gormally and Fr Martin Rhonheimer over the definition of the “marital act”. Both are agreed that, as it is a personal act, spiritual intentionality is crucial. However, Rhonheimer relegates the traditionally emphasised relationship of this intention to the physical dimension of giving and receiving the male seed. Cormac Burke’s piece in this issue offers a helpful development of the traditional vision by beautifully linking the unitive aspect of the marital act with the giving of the “seed of oneself”.

Fr Kevin Douglas convincingly defends and develops our understanding of the relationship between physical body and spiritual soul. The main entry in our Cutting Edge column shows how this relationship, contrary to the apparent monism not to say fideism of Professor Ayala the 2010 Templeton Prize winner, is related to a proper understanding of the relationship between science and the spiritual.

We are very honoured to have Alister McGrath’s hopeful and convincing discernment of a general move in this direction. Yet, like Professor Ayala, he invokes Gould’s theory of the “non-overlapping magisteria” of science and religion to suggest that theistic and atheistic philosophy of science are “both entirely reasonable”.

Our last editorial discussed this radical separation of science and metaphysics which is so widespread amongst Christian thinkers. We argued that it flows from doggedly maintaining, in the analysis of human knowing, the Greek vision of formality as something static, which emphasis modern science itself has rightly undermined. Our next editorial will consider the effect of all this upon moral debates such as the one mentioned above.

As ever, we will emphasise that our physical bodies have a profound meaning which is rooted in the flesh of Christ, which flesh is our “real food indeed”. As Tertullian said, in what regular readers will know is a favourite phrase of ours, “The flesh is the hinge of salvation.” ■



The Problem of Evil

Editorial

“The Lord is not slow about his promise . . . but is patient towards you” 2 Peter 3:9

Part One:

How is Evil Possible?

It is said that the only real and intelligent objection to belief in the existence of God, is the problem of evil. Many will be inclined to agree. Certainly any discussion of the goodness of God and the power of God among younger teenagers will eventually drift to the demand “if there is a God, why does He let it all happen?” If, on the plane of moral evil rather than physical or “natural” evil, one replies that with the real freedom of the free will goes the real power of personal sanctifying grace to sweeten and transform our personalities if we will allow Him, the rejoinder comes, “well, yes, but if He is *almighty* why does He not stop me from sinning and going to hell?”

One has heard of a certain seminary professor who teaches his students that “God cannot be called *almighty* because of the problem posed by evil, but *unsurpassable*, yes, certainly”. I hope the good God feels flattered at being so put at the top of the class, even if not quite in a class of His own. One is not surprised to learn that the same honest man is unsure of any real distinction between matter and spirit, or between God and his creation. It would follow.

In a mere article we will ponder what perhaps we may understand and can answer concerning the problem of evil, without losing pages on what we cannot. We will do better to keep to the old categories of *almighty* God and *eternal* God, because, as God is utterly and totally *Being*, “pure act”, and the transcendental source of all dependent reality, these ancient categories of natural theology are going to be true. Failure to penetrate mystery is not due to incompetence in God’s being, but in ours.

The Spiritual Creature is Necessarily Free

At the root of the so-called “problem of evil” is one great, *necessary* lack of determination on which this writer at least suspects all else hinges. It is that God cannot will us, or our being, or our finality (which is the same thing as our fulfillment) with an intrinsic, metaphysical necessity. God cannot will the angel either, with an intrinsic necessity. God can only will Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with a necessity which is absolute, because God alone, in his own essence, is the unique and only Reality which is “necessary”. If God shall decree to know, will, and want anything other than Himself – the spiritual creature made to His, to God’s own spiritual image and substantial likeness – then that creating and the communion of that calling unto God must be an offer, a gift, in God. And in the creature it must be a desiring in the order of the intrinsically unconstrained.

Matter is constrained and predetermined of its nature, it has no one lasting “ego” and fulfillment as men and angels

have. It cannot commune with God, even as it cannot offend Him. The spiritual creature, angel or man, shares as spiritual in God’s own self-recognition, self-love, and in that self-determination which we call “freedom”. Its fulfillment will lie in its cooperation with God, as God seeks it and desires its love. There will be God’s one Truth, not any truth, God’s one order of Goodness, not anything the creature likes. The creature is not its own happiness. It will discover its happiness only in God in a recognition that is free from the fundamentals of its being. It will not find God without the seeking and prompting of God; yet its own response is known as “free” from the root of its dignity as spiritual. The spiritual creature does not *have* to obey from very nature and definition as matter does. It can adore and will itself to its own destruction. Yet, come to think of it, do we have any evidence, from the pages of the Gospels, that in any confrontation with Christ, the “unclean spirit” ever asked for its own annihilation?

Community at the Heart of all Existence

If God creates within an order, a ministry, of being, then spiritual creatures must be expected to act upon one another in a community of knowledge, love, and influence. This presumption must apply to the angels as well. But upon that latter order of being so little is known to us in detail that we will not linger. The proposition certainly applies to human kind - from the first dependency of our being conceived, to the last grace ministered to us at the hand of another in Christ’s name, the last prayer whispered in our ear by loved ones as we die.

Thus we are at all times a society of friends gathered around the Person of God. If we are capable of refusing the relationship which defines our “righteousness” within the very being of God, it is inconceivable that our life-ministry upon others should always be for good and never for evil! The alternative is to say that to be “good” God must always create an order in which it was morally if not metaphysically impossible to reject Him at all. Such a concept is opaque, for it does not cohere with any exercise of “freedom” as we know it on earth, nor with that inner sense of joy in obedience to God as “loved Person” which we sense when we obey the voice of conscience. It does not fit in with that sense of saying “no” with “darkness all around” which we experience in the deliberate refusal of God’s known will.

The Mass: The Pledge of Communion Restored

We really do not know when we talk of it being in the power of God to create a spiritual order in which truly and freely no creature would ever sin, whether we are talking about an order which is possible at all, or again, an order in which all the other characteristics which bind together our ministry of love, service, action, and communion would be really and

The Problem of Evil

continued

freely manifested to the glory of God. What we must require of God, if God decrees to create an order and communion, a society of friends between Himself and mutually to one another, is that the order so created should mirror to the fullest degree we can conceive, and beyond the fullest we can conceive, all the attributes of God, including most essentially the mercy, comprehension, understanding and forgiveness in love, of God. Such an order we do know and experience in the Incarnation of the transcendent God, and the redemption of mankind, in the *whole* gamut of His work.

“The intercommunion of creation at all levels and in all three orders, helps us to understand better the problem of evil and our personal identification with Christ.”

Sometimes we forget that the redemption is a work done and still doing in the Person of Jesus, God and man. As a work it is manifest in Christ's resurrection, teaching us that our fallen flesh is membered to a victorious personality and a glorious and immortal body. Whatever through the pressure of sin, evil communion from others, pain and ignorance cannot be repaired or even healed a little in this time, is still covered by that living, personal, continuing redemption which consummates beyond the grave what could not be operated here. Of this, through time but into eternity, the Mass – in which not a man but Jesus re-presents Himself among his people as One ever offered and ever offering – is the most moving of signs. One thinks of it every time one raises the consecrated Host to the people. Then, borne to the hands of God, by the Angel who ministers the gifts of men to the Father (Eucharistic Prayer I), He who is our peace with God is given back to us as the pledge of peace, and our peace with each other. Then, in Him and of Him we eat the Bread of Life at the common table of Our Father, and grow in wisdom, age and grace personally and as a People before God and men.

The Total Ministry of Christ

Of such an order of creation – dignified in the first moments of its spawning by the decree of the Incarnation, redeemed not by one act but by the living communing of the same Son of God and of man – I am not willing to say that God could have done more, God could have done better. What we can see is that all good, even to our personal reception into the bosom of God at the moment of our death, is a work and a communing. From the moment of the ‘Big Bang’ through to the intercession for us of Christ and his saints, we are in the presence of one continuous ministry, in which we create or destroy in the order of being – of reality – for ourselves and upon our brothers and sisters.

Part Two:

The Tragic Effects Of Sin

Christians, including Catholics, have forgotten the doctrine of Original Sin. Within that doctrine, intelligently and coherently understood, is the actual answer to the problem of evil within the order of creation and within the actual order of our lives as a ministry one to another as God has constituted that universal relationship. That order includes, or better, is founded upon the Incarnation of The Word as the source and life-principle of the angelic order, and of the life of our own order as Son of God and Son of Man. (cf. Col. 1,16-17).

Hence the reluctance to speculate about an infinity of better orders of being which God could have made but did not. There is no conceivable crowning of the universe that betters the making and fulfilling of Angels and of Men in Christ, the Sacrament of All Creation. The order within which such a Gift is decreed must be supremely worthy of the unique majesty of the Gift.

Sin Ruptures The Unity-Law of Creation

Concerning man's life and order, the doctrine of Original Holiness teaches that all human life and being is a communion and a ministry of one upon another. Before the advent of man, this community of the inflowing of being by one thing to another, (which is the best definition of causality) was true of that ‘community’ which is the entire material cosmos. In the theology which inspires *Faith*, it is often called “the Unity-Law of Control and Direction”. Yet this law of ascent in one ministry of development, truth and goodness is manifest in matter only as the foil which sets off greater jewels embedded. The first jewel is the nature of man, and his creation in original holiness.

In man this Unity-Law continues unbroken in a higher, but now free and spiritual order for the perfecting of the sons and daughters of God. A jewel beyond compare crowns the making of man: the Incarnation of God as the Christ, the Holy One who is the summit of the Unity-Law in person, in the continuity of one unbroken, coherent economy of creation. The Incarnation of God in Christ is not simply an event, but also an activity: the summit of the creative Law through which God makes all things, maintains all things, and brings all things in balance to their perfection. We human beings too are always a living and a *causal* part of that one “creation in community” for better or worse, for good or for degradation. (cf Col 1, 16-26. Eph. 4,1-13. Heb 2,7-16).

Original Sin then – that overlooked but vital doctrine of the reality of our state, and the introduction into the material universe for the first time of ‘the problem of evil’ – teaches the rupturing of that living, holy communion of good by which, from the first pair, men were to minister life and fulfillment to one another through Christ. It is not some abstract order of good which is ruptured. These free and spiritual creatures themselves are appallingly wounded in

“It is not some abstract order of good which is ruptured.”

the depths of their beings. They cannot, and even within God’s order of redemption they do not respond to God with the fullness and fairness of beauty and good as they should. The good we minister is never perfect, and in many the ministry of their lives as a work and impact upon others is a ministry of evil, of destruction of peace and order. In the economy of God in which we actually live, this is the whole answer to ‘the problem of evil’.

The Damage to Human Nature

Every institution of human society is wounded and lessened by the disharmony and greeds of sin – that “law within my members” that contradicts the Unity-Law, “the law of God”, which being a Law of Life and working only to the fulfillment of life, “delights me according to my inward man” (Rom. 7,22-24). At the time of a certain British air disaster caused by the wickedness of men, we heard a lot about God’s permission of this sort of thing destroying people’s faith in his existence at all. One understands the grief and the disorientation of loss, the numbing pain of horrible, unexpected sorrow. But yet in itself, how small and unconsciously selfish the complaint. We seek that the providence of God should always work to spare our little, local utopia of happiness, when the burdens and *the same causality* which caused the evil, fell upon the only-begotten Son of God’s delight, who was not spared, but tasted death for all, and gave Himself rising again as the certainty of our renewal and lasting joy (cf. Col. 1,24).

What about the earthquakes and the famines, and the unmentionable things done by men to each other “in the name of God” from the dawn of history? What of all the wars, horrors, cruelties beyond conceiving, the degradations and exploitations, and corruption of society, and the corruption of love and marriage and the ministry of sexual love?

No power in human nature has been so deformed and distorted by the consequences of Original Sin as the sexual power and its pleasure within human nature. No one can measure the known and unknown tragedies that have grown out of its defilement in our stock, nor the repercussions upon the human community at large from all the trauma so caused. ... There are many greeds and lusts of the flesh created by the power of the free soul upon the unfree flesh of mankind. The sexual one, however, is fundamental, the most basic, and in all its consequences over history, probably the worst ...

Does Sin Have an Ecological Impact?

We make now another point which follows on from the real, the *actual* impact upon the creation, of the sin of man, and the rejection of God and his Christ. The effects of sin in man will directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously affect the order of the very laws of Nature, and what we now call the “ecological balance” of Nature.

It stands to reason this way: before the Fall, all material and deterministic creations were membered one to another in a great economy or ‘equation’ of causality for truth and for good. Man inherited that “good” order, and in him in one continuity, the Law was swept up in God and his Christ into the order of the divine life to be co-sharers of the divine nature of God. Man is part of that very order of Nature and the material creation he now crowns. He is physically and organically part of the Law and its mechanism as it operates now towards the summit of its meaning, in what St. Paul, speaking in much the same context, calls “these, the last days” (1 Cor 10,11) – days when the Lord of History consummates through his own activity the Unity-Law He poised in the first flash of its genesis.

“Creation is dignified in the first moments of its spawning by the decree of the Incarnation, redeemed by the living communing of the same Son of God”

There is nothing we do, conceive or plan, nothing we desire within our very being, which does not produce its own material ‘wave’ or impact upon the environment around, even as the same influence linked to the soul impacts and influences our brethren for good or for evil. In either order, if the ‘wave’ of our being is anarchic, incompatible in its own self with the pulse and frequency, so to speak, of God’s Unity-Law - his providence for good – then that impact is part of the principle and problem of evil, an influence for disintegration.

We know now on how fine a balance the world and the universe that supports it is poised. We have become aware of ecological damage and the disintegration caused in an obvious manner by human folly, human greed, and human heedlessness. We are that sort of people, most of us, unconsciously heedless and greedy quite apart from deliberate wickedness. We would have been wiser, humbler, cleaner in every sense of clean, if as a race, cleaving to God in grace, we had grown in holiness from the beginning. Holiness is the theological perspective of that which is *whole*, that which has the integrity of its nature and its working; ministering in beauty the Unity-Law of God.

Garden of Eden: More Than a Myth

It is to be anticipated that absent sin, disparate nationalisms, contradictory religions, selfish grabbing of the resources of the earth we would have had a world which worked as one commonwealth for the life of mankind. As men multiplied and their artefacts interacted with the environment of the planet – just as their minds and bodies interact – there would be changes, ‘greenhouse effects’ maybe. However, with their bodies, souls, and artefacts ordered within a much more beautiful and wise economy of

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continued

life, we can anticipate that such an effect would profitably and wholesomely have increased the resources of the world for the numbers of mankind. It is science itself today which is showing us that the first three chapters of Genesis are not just mythological. For the Earth is a garden, and man is set to tend and cultivate it fruitfully. Everything we do and are is part of that impact for good or for desolation.

We have to take much more literally too the 'mythological' curse on the earth because of sin: "*cursed be the earth in thy work, thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee: in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread, till thou return to the dust, from which thou wast taken*". (Gen. 3:18-19). The curse is not arbitrary, we suggest, just the result of 'natural' law. Man is part of the causal order of nature on his planet. Everything we do affects the brother or sister in soul and body. Everything we do as a 'mixed' entity of matter and spirit affects also other material being around in its own order. God made the harmony of nature equational from the beginning, and we are the master-value of the equation.

Part Three: Christ the Healer

Already the exigencies of space are squeezing harshly the development of an idea, so points have now to be summarised. If from the natural "radiation" of body, soul, and both as "personality", sin in us is a principle of dissolution, even in the material environment, then grace likewise, especially the grace of Christ, the summit of God's Unity-Law in creation, is also a principle of life, restoration and healing. We do not know how far the ramifications and interaction of this principle may go. We do know that the redemptive work of Christ was made an agony of stress and rejection, because God in Christ is the supreme Environment in whom we "live and move and have our being" (Acts 17,28).

The rejection, agony and crucifixion of God made man is the supreme manifestation of the resistance to God which is the very "problem of evil" itself. The prayer in the Garden: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me; nevertheless, if it may not pass except I drink it, Thy will be done..." (Matt 26,30) does not seem to me to be merely human grief. I suspect it is the manifestation that God himself, the Father cannot change the order established upon man's freewill and the consequences, including the manner of our redemption, which must follow. Jesus – in all that He is – was then and is now, *as living and acting*, more than just the summit of God's gift to us. He was and is the peak of God's whole Law of creation and of governance for the universe itself. Through grace and through nature (for God has made them one economy and one identity in the humanity of Christ) Christ (whether passible on earth or impassible but living in His Church, His Sacraments, and His People) is an 'ecological' influence if you like, which reaches, especially through us men, into every aspect of creation.

Human Suffering and Divine Consolation

We do right therefore to thank God, and especially to thank *Jesus*, for all the good we have – all the blessings, all the security and family joy, all the friendships, all the good health, all that goes well. They come from Him and are maintained in so many complex ways by Him and through Him. Yet the consequences of sin also remain, are very active, and in our affluent, arrogant, and sensual days much on the increase. The consequences of this disintegrating power can hit us at any time. Jesus did not promise his friends immunity, quite the opposite: "if they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you also; if they have listened to My word, they will accept yours also (John 15,20) ...

We have to take up our cross every day, and walk behind Him. He is the source and creator of our joy in every happiness we have. Those who love Him – holy parents, good and dear friends, faithful and loving wife or husband, children that are a joy, and priests who are spiritual and true, and over all the Eucharist and the Church – all of this spiritual 'ecology' may give us years and years of almost unbroken happiness. It is not guaranteed, it cannot be guaranteed. The power of sin can, and may break in on us, as Judas broke in on the 'happy band' of the Eleven.

He who is the giver of the joy when all goes well is also the giver of strength and consolation when we drink of the chalice that He had to drink. We will all find it so. We do find it so. One speaks not from faith but from experience. In unclouded joy, and in sheer sorrow, there remains always, as an experience, the presence and support of Christ – communally in the Church, personally in the individual life: "my peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you: not as the world gives, do I give to you". (John 14:27).

Evil is Not the Will of God

To continue to summarise: as priests we need to explain to the little ones of God that God has *not* "done this to me" nor "sent this to me" in any direct, personal sense at all. Nor is it true to say of some great loss or horror – say the rape of a child – "we have to accept the will of God", except in the same sense and with the same solidarity as Christ accepted the bitter chalice sin had brewed for him. The roots of the wheat and the darnel are inextricably interwoven until the harvest, but "an enemy has done this," not the work or will of God.

If God were to try to stop me sinning, how many thoughts, impulses, initiatives, which seem to us good, innocent, harmless pleasures etc., would have to be forbidden in their first movements by a 'good angel' who would know the ultimate consequences. We would – the vast, vast majority of us – soon wish him "get off my shoulder!" God can only influence us totally when completely, in all that we have and are, we are attuned in a manner which actually is deeply contemplative, to the wisdom and will of the Trinity who

“God has not ‘done this to me’ nor ‘sent this to me’ in any direct, personal sense at all.”

dwells within us. As I understand it, this is the highest degree of inner communion with God in the “unitive way” as St. John of the Cross describes it.

“He who is the giver of the joy when all goes well is also the giver of strength and consolation when we drink of the chalice that He had to drink”

We do not know how many natural disasters may be due to the sin of man, perhaps cumulatively over centuries. We cannot be sure that The Flood had no relationship to all flesh around that area having “corrupted its way” ... The very protection of mankind from natural disasters that were inevitable from the contingent, limited perfection of the planet Earth as a habitat, *might well* have been mediated to human communities by great prophetic souls, even as Christ prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem as a consequence of his rejection, and because “in the day of your visitation, you did not know the things that were to your peace”. (Luke 19:44)

The Healing Power of Holiness

Certainly many of the saints helped individuals, both by warnings of danger and by encouragement in a prophetic manner, to respond more perfectly to God. The saints were great healers. Physical healing was not, and is not now, the primary work of Christ to the world. We all have to wane and die. Yet in the Gospels healing is a great sign of the power of God in Christ. Healing, not only physical, but ‘pardon and peace’ brought to the brethren in the radiation and peace of beautiful personality, has always been the mark of the saint in the life of the Church.

Truly holy mothers and fathers bring this radiation to the formation of the minds and hearts of their children. For the priest or the nun, (and here one admits to speak from knowledge), the first great joy of life as we get older is the humble joy of the love of God as an experience. The second is like to this: the sheer happiness of seeing in the lives and personalities of good men and women, especially the younger ones, a deepening beauty, closeness to God, willing and prayerful service, and not infrequently the giving of their own whole lives as a total vocation to God in the closer, apostolic service of religion.

Christ Needs our Mutual Ministry to Complete His Own

There is a parallel here of course with Christ’s own answer concerning the “two great commandments of the law” and their interdependence. It is God who gives the gift and the power and the grace always. But He needs flesh and blood as the channel of His own flesh now ascended. The beauty of human holiness, the radiance of nobility in men and women, needs to be ministered. It needs the disciple. This alone, once realised, should prompt many and generous vocations.

The personal loves and joys that grow out of this life of ‘vocation’ last till the end. It is the fulfillment of Christ’s own promise that those who, apparently, give up all to follow Him, receive back in love from *persons* “one hundred fold”, even in this present time (Mark 10, 30).

Conclusion: Creation is One Communion for Blessing or Curse

What we often call *The Unity-Law of Control and Direction* is more than the unity of the ascent of material being, through an evolution ordered from God back to God. It is also a ministry of life and well-being of thing unto thing. It passes into the creation of man, when matter of its own law and formula, at its unique peak, requires the soul as co-principle of being, and a new creation - spiritual and material in synthesis - now lives in direct communion with God as its law of life and being. The Law, still a continuity and one economy in a higher order of being, is still a *mutual ministry* of man to the Earth he inherits, and men to each other with God. The “Law”, the one communion of ministry and finality consummates in Jesus Christ. His is the work to redeem the damage, the disintegration, the blighting of the beautiful work of God.

For evil has its own ministry, individual and social, even to this day. This is the Mystery of Iniquity, which at the end of time will greatly abound, and of its very nature call forth the Second Coming of Christ (Dan 7, 26; Rev 20,7-9). Christ’s own work, guaranteed by his resurrection from sin-inflicted death, is to redeem and sweeten, to gather “a little flock”, but through few to leaven many, and to redeem fully in the condition of purgation what cannot be made beautiful here.

It is part of Christ’s work in the Eucharist, and it is why that Sacrifice is efficacious for the living *and for the dead*. It is a work of *ministry*, of the making of people, not just the institution of the Church and her Sacraments. It is always a personal work, and we are called to share in this, *The Mystery of the Kingdom*. To think this way and realise the intercommunion of creation at all levels and in all three orders, helps us, one suggests, to understand better the problem of evil - its inevitability, and our personal identification with Christ.

There must be much more to develop, yet more to ponder. It is unlikely to be the stint in the garden of the world and the Church of this writer. He is very grateful for all the prayers and love that supported him in his recent grave illness. However, the prognosis for severe myocardial disease is not generous. The Lord has most sweetly and gratuitously given notice of termination of lease upon “this our earthly tent” (cf 2 Cor 5:1). Time, as so often when camping, to brush out, fold, roll, and wait at the roadside for pick-up. The task is passed to the young.

Jesus Christ and the Human Heart

by Kevin Douglas

Fr Kevin Douglas is assistant priest in Livingston. Here he convincingly defends the existence of the human soul – a task strangely neglected by most Catholic thinkers today, yet in such urgent need of updating. Fr Douglas develops the approach used by *Faith* movement.

Jesus Christ is the answer to the deepest yearnings of the human heart. This is a bold claim. We find it articulated on the lips of Christ himself: *“I am the way, the truth and the life.”* (Jn 14:6) Yet, can we still in the post modern, scientific culture in which we live really assent to this truth. Is it not at least archaic, if not hopelessly irrational, to hold that one person, Jesus of Nazareth, born in obscurity two thousand years ago is, as the Second Vatican Council teaches *“the goal of human history, he is that point in which the desires of history and civilisation converge. He is the centre of the human race, the joy of every heart and the fullness of all our hopes.”* (GS 45)

In a short article one can only scratch the surface of such a subject. In order to make the best use the space allotted it is necessary to define the limits of our enquiry. Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be the Christ: he claimed to be God incarnate and the Church has reflected upon and refined its understanding of Jesus’ identity and teaches that the one person of Jesus is true God and true man. In what follows I wish to take the truth of that claim and the Church’s teaching as a given. I shall concentrate on how Jesus, true God and true man can be the fulfillment of humanity’s deepest yearnings. This is a pivotal issue for our society. To establish that there is a deep complementarity between our nature, our very being, and that of God made Man is a profoundly important task because it vindicates afresh the relevance of Christ to our skeptical and secular society.

Science and Spirit Complimentary

As far back as Copernicus, but especially from the 17th Century enlightenment onwards, the discoveries made by the scientific method about the nature of our universe seem to have chipped away at the Christian world view.¹ Our world is not at the centre of the universe; history starts fifteen thousand million years ago with the Big Bang, we human beings are the result of an evolutionary process, and we share a common ancestor with the other primates. In 1953 with the discovery of the double helix of the DNA molecule, which led to the eventual decoding of our genes, we now have access to what would seem to be the basic mechanism through which evolution occurs. Science has discovered all of this and it seems that the human species has been thrown up by the developmental forces at work in the universe, without there being any design at work. Can we then still claim of the Christ child in Bethlehem, as the carol goes, *“the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight”?*

Fittingly, we catch the first glimpse of an answer to our question at the very heart of the scientific project. Perhaps the most conspicuous of science’s many achievements was to have put a man on the moon in 1969. So much of the technology we have today and so much of what we have learned about the universe we inhabit is a product of the space race. Neil Armstrong’s achievement was made all the more remarkable because it was predicted and planned almost a decade before by President Kennedy. On 12th September, 1962, at Rice university in Houston Texas. Kennedy made one of his finest speeches:

We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organise and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win,

Kennedy was, of course, uncannily prescient but I draw your attention to the fact that, right at that moment which galvanised scientific endeavor for a generation, embedded in Kennedy’s words are a fundamental truth. *We choose to go to the moon*, that is we human beings freely select and will a goal that is manifestly beyond the material conditions in which we live. The condition of possibility for such a consciously planned course of action is that we human beings are not wholly encompassed by our material environment. We are not simply another part of the material world which science studies. We are more than matter. Let us show this carefully and its implications for our need of Jesus Christ.

Science Hints at Spirit

First we need to examine the presuppositions that are held by many in the scientific community and which have influenced much of contemporary society. These presuppositions are materialistic, that is there is nothing more to reality than matter, and they are nihilistic, that is everything that exists is a product of chance and is ultimately meaningless. The philosopher Bertrand Russell summed up this worldview when he said *“There is darkness without and when I die there will be darkness within. There is no splendor, no vastness anywhere, only triviality for a moment then nothing.”*² This worldview purports to be rational and scientific. It is not, it is a prejudice because actually the new knowledge yielded by the scientific method itself points towards a meaningful and law-governed universe. Moreover the scientific method reveals mankind to be unique and anomalous among the life forms discovered on Earth.

“The new factor which is proper to us human beings allows us to transcend the process of material causality.”

Increasingly science reveals that our universe is one single inter-related cosmos that is not random but law-governed. Physics discovers the constants that obtain in the material world and we formulate these constants into the laws. Biology again concerns the laws that govern living beings and so forth. The dynamic universe that the scientific method has revealed is moving in a meaningful direction from greater to less complexity. Even the theory of evolution is not random: it presupposes an ordered relationship between the life-form and its environment. It is precisely this interaction of the life-form with its environment that constitutes the mechanism of natural selection, or “survival of the fittest” to work. But it therefore follows that natural selection is not random because it presupposes an *ordered* relationship. Moreover natural selection moves from life forms possessed of lesser complexity to those of greater. From single cells right up to the complexity of the primates. Neither cosmic evolution nor the evolution of life on Earth are random: evolution presupposes constant laws, ordered relationships and the process is goal-directed.

An important distinction to note here: we are not claiming, as those do who adhere to the “Intelligent Design” school of thought in the USA, that the universe is essentially a mixture of mechanism and chance but occasionally God miraculously intervenes and “nudges” the process in the right direction. We claim that the whole of science reveals one unified process and that process is moving towards a goal. The whole process from beginning to end is established and governed by God.

Evolution’s goal is an organ at the very limit of the complexity which matter can achieve: the human brain. The scientific method has uncovered a universe that is perfectly poised to bring forth us. We recognise that we share so much in common with the material universe around us. We, like inanimate matter, have mass and volume and are subject to the laws of gravity. We, like the plants feed ourselves, we grow and reproduce. And the parallels between us and the animals are so manifest as to require no elaboration. One statistic suffices: humans and chimpanzees our nearest primate relatives share 96% of the same DNA.

Yet there is something extra-ordinary about us. One can give many examples of characteristically human behavior. We use symbols, language, write music, we make artifacts. There are, however, analogies to these activities in the animal kingdom. Birds sing, the dance of the bee seems to be a kind of symbolic language, beavers build dams. One could reasonably contend that these are not true analogies (and I think one would be right) but the net effect of these apparent analogies is to raise the question: is the dividing line between humans and animals is one of kind or of degree?

Clinching the Distinction of Matter and Spirit

There is a definitive distinction. If we return to Kennedy’s speech:

We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organise and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win,

We hear in Kennedy’s words a human being choosing a goal. That in itself is extra-ordinary because no animal chooses its own goals. Animals are conditioned by their environmental niche. They draw their life pattern from the environment in which they live. The more complex the animal the more flexible is their life pattern, but nonetheless the pattern is determined. Though an animal may have a variety of possibilities as to the means it might use to achieve its goal, classically fight or flight, an animal does not set its own goals. These are given to it by its environmental context. We hear in Kennedy’s words something different. A human being who does not receive a purpose and pattern of life from the material factors that make up his environmental niche, rather he sets before himself a goal of his own choosing.

Moreover, it is a goal that entails us going beyond our environmental niche. Human beings are adapted to the material circumstances of many of the locations on our planet; we cannot survive unsupported in outer space. We human beings can surpass any local environmental limits and we choose to do so.

Two implications flow from this. First, although we have much in common with the animals we are clearly distinct from them. Secondly, the scientific method has revealed that animals are a product of natural selection. Natural selection presupposes the ordered relationship between animal and its environmental niche. It would go directly against this balance if the process were to throw up an animal that is greater, that escapes the determinism of its environment. Yet we human beings do precisely this.

Natural selection is a process of material causality. The material factors of the environment act upon and influence the life-form. This purely material process cannot account for an animal that transcends its material environment and therefore stands over the process of material causality. Yet we human beings do just that. Therefore we must posit a new factor in our make up as human beings. *The distinction between us and the animals is not of degree of complexity but of kind.* The new factor which is proper to us human beings allows us to transcend the process of material causality: it means that we are not determined by our material environment. We choose a life pattern that

Jesus Christ and the Human Heart

continued

transcends our material environment. Because this new factor in our make up allows us to transcend material causality, we must conclude this factor itself transcends matter. In the Catholic tradition we call this new factor the spiritual soul.

In general terms we can draw this distinction between matter and a spiritual mind. Matter is that which is controlled and directed. Mind is that which controls and directs. We can see that the animal kingdom is material. The animals are controlled and directed: they draw their life pattern from their material environment. We human beings to some extent are controlled and directed by our material environment. We can't fly, we need food and warmth and so on. But as Kennedy's speech show we can also choose to go beyond the limits of our natural material environment, even, it would seem, to the extremes of the universe and the extremes of of matter-energy manipulation and configuration. Hence we are not completely controlled and directed by our material environment. We transcend our environment. This is because we are a unity of both material body and spiritual soul. This truth that we are body and soul, that as matter we are controlled and directed but as mind we control and direct is not some esoteric philosophical doctrine; it is embedded in every decision we make. I choose to lift this coffee cup because I know that as a material object it can be controlled, and my decision to act shows an implicit awareness that I can control and direct. This basic duality is intimate and basic to human self-consciousness: that is the distinction between matter and mind, between deterministic things with limited life cycles and goals, and my ability to manipulate these things beyond these limitations for my own goals.

Our Hearts Will Not Rest

It is in the light of this distinction between freedom and determinism that we can reassess the above examples of characteristically human and characteristically animal behavior to determine whether animals have these two orders of being within their individual identities. One would submit that bird-song and bee-dance fit with the natural, physical purposes of those species, whereas human language and artifacts which have sophisticated goals and meanings within human culture do not.

Holy Scripture presents the truth of the human condition in poetic terms. It talks of Adam being fashioned from the dust of the earth, that is matter, but then receiving the breath of God, that is the spiritual soul.

Because we transcend our material environment we yearn for a fulfillment that this environment cannot provide. We can see right back at the origins of humanity, which archaeology dates to about 350,000BC, we humans have buried our dead, because we yearn for something beyond the material conditions that mark this life.

This something is a new environment that will, like all environments, complete us and provide us with a life pattern. Ultimately this new environment is God. It is because we have a spiritual soul that we yearn for a spiritual fulfillment that can only be found in God. The great saints like Augustine bear witness to this. In his Confessions he wrote: *Fecisti nos ad te et cor nostrum inquietum est donec requiescat in te*. You have made us unto Yourself and our heart is restless until it shall rest in You.

However as we have noted above we are both spirit and matter. This entails that we encounter our new spiritual environment in a way that is material and corporeal because that is an inalienable dimension of our human nature. If we can paraphrase St. Augustine: O Lord you have made us unto yourself *incarnate and truly present in the material universe*, and therefore our hearts will not rest until they rest in *Christ*.

The scientific method has revealed a dynamic universe that moves towards the human body which requires a new type of environment. We require a material encounter with our spiritual environment. We require the Incarnation. The findings of the scientific method do not settle the truth claims as to whether Jesus Christ is the Messiah but it does point us toward an unified vision of the cosmos which has the incarnate God at its heart. It is reasonable in our post-modern scientific culture to hope for some definitive revelation of God as the fulfillment of mankind.

The poet and satirist Alexander Pope once described humanity as "The glory, jest and *riddle* of the world." All that science has revealed to us about the universe and ourselves throws that riddle into sharp relief, Jesus Christ born for us in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago claimed to be the answer to that riddle. It is the faith of the Church and the mystery proposed to us by the Christmas season that Jesus Christ is in fact the answer to that riddle. It is our sure and certain belief that we are right to sing of Christ "*the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight*"

Notes

¹In what follows I am indebted to James Le Fanu's account of the ascendancy of modern science in *Why Us? How Science Rediscovered the Mystery of Ourselves*. (London 2010) Though I wouldn't necessarily share all of his conclusions.

²Quoted in James Le Fanu *Ibid*, p. 234.

The De-humanisation of Marital Sex

by Mgr Cormac Burke

In a timely piece following upon Pope Benedict's recent remarks concerning condom use outside marriage, Mgr Cormac Burke convincingly brings out the serious spiritual consequences of contracepting the marital act, especially concerning the act's unitive dimension. Mgr Burke is a former Judge of the Roman Rota, and now lectures at Strathmore University, Nairobi, Kenya. His best known books are *Covenanted Happiness* and *Man and Values*, both published by Scepter Press.

1. *Humanae Vitae* initiated a new analysis of the conjugal act

Humanae Vitae, Paul VI's 1968 Encyclical is principally recalled as reiterating the Church's perennial condemnation of artificial birth-control. But it is much more than that. It opened up the way for a deeper human understanding of, what in sexual intercourse between husband and wife, justifies its being termed *the* conjugal act.

Certainly *Humanae Vitae* condemned contraception in unambiguous terms. "The Church... teaches that each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life" (no. 11). It is correct to say that there is nothing new here. But then, in pivotal words, Paul VI gives the root reason for this teaching: "This particular doctrine... is based on the *inseparable connection ... between the unitive significance and the procreative significance* which are *both inherent to the marriage act*" (no. 12). Now here indeed (and this is all-important to our present theme) we do have something new. Here in fact a new principle is enunciated which permits a much deeper anthropological and theological analysis of the conjugal act: the principle that its unitive significance and its procreative significance are inherent to it, *in inseparable connection*.

This insight of Paul VI is now firmly established in magisterial doctrine. The *Compendium* of the Catechism of the Catholic Church says: "The conjugal act has a twofold meaning: unitive (the mutual self-giving of the spouses) and procreative (an openness to the transmission of life). No one may break the inseparable connection which God has established between these two meanings of the conjugal act by excluding one or the other of them" (no. 96). Paul VI stated the principle without submitting it to further analysis. Over the intervening 40 years, however, this analysis has been carried on in papal magisterium, notably in John Paul II's catechesis on the "theology of the body". Here, in John Paul's footsteps, we will try to pursue this analysis further, following an anthropological more than a theological line of reasoning.

2. What gives distinctive meaning to the conjugal act?

The conjugal act is meant to be an act of union, expressing and reaffirming the singular "oneness" of the spouses. But what is there in the marriage act that can be said to make the spouses "one"? What is it about the act that unites them in a distinctively conjugal way?

The unitive significance of the act cannot be reduced to the pleasure that normally accompanies it. After all, that pleasure

is not always experienced by both spouses, or in the same measure. If the distinctiveness of the conjugal act consisted simply or essentially in the pleasure it procures, then an act between the spouses that gives no pleasure to one would be a failed conjugal act and would, at least for that person, signify nothing.

It is not the pleasure but something else that gives significance to the conjugal act. The conjugal act may or may not be accompanied by pleasure, pleasure that is always transient. But the *significance* of the act is not transient; it lasts. And it is shown by what *happens* in that marital encounter, which is not just a touch, not a mere sensation, however intense, but a *communication*, an offer and acceptance, an exchange of something that uniquely represents the gift of oneself and the union of two selves.

Here, of course, it should not be forgotten that while two persons in love want to give themselves to one another, to be united to one another, this desire of theirs remains humanly speaking on a purely volitional level. They can *bind* themselves to one another, but they cannot literally give themselves on the physical level and become one organism. The greatest expression of a person's desire to give one's self¹ is to give the *seed* of one's self. Giving one's seed is much more significant, and in particular is much more real, than giving one's heart. "I am yours, I give you my heart; here, take it", remains mere poetry, to which no physical gesture can give true body. But, "I am yours; I give you my seed; here, take it", is not poetry, it is love. It is conjugal love embodied in a unique and privileged physical action whereby intimacy is expressed – "I give you what I give no one" – and union is achieved: "Take what I have to give. This will be a new me. United to you, to what you have to give – to your seed – this takes on the character of a new "*you-and-me*", fruit of our mutual knowledge and love". In human terms, this is the closest one can come to giving one's self conjugally and to accepting the conjugal self-gift of another, and so achieving spousal union.

In this consists the singular quality of intercourse. Other physical expressions of affection do not go beyond the level of a mere gesture; they remain a symbol of the union desired. But the conjugal act is not a mere symbol. In true marital intercourse, something *real* has been exchanged, with a full gift and acceptance of conjugal masculinity and femininity. And there remains, as witness to their conjugal relationship and the intimacy of their conjugal union, the husband's seed in the wife's body².

The De-humanisation of Marital Sex continued

3. 'Knowing' one another

"Adam *knew* Eve his wife" (Gn 4:1-2). This is how the Bible first describes conjugal intercourse; and it can further help our understanding. John Paul II observes:

"it is significant that the situation in which husband and wife unite so closely as to become one flesh has been defined as knowledge. In this way..., through the term knowledge used in Genesis 4:1-2 and often in the Bible, the conjugal relationship of man and woman – that they become, through the duality of sex, "one flesh" – was raised and introduced into the specific dimension of persons" (*General Audience*, March 5, 1980).

"In speaking here of knowledge, the Bible indicates the deepest essence of the reality of married life... Becoming 'one flesh', the man and the woman experience in a particular way the meaning of their body. In this way, together they become almost the one subject of that act and that experience, while remaining, in this unity, two really different subjects. In a way, this authorises the statement that 'the husband knows his wife' or that both 'know' each other. Then they reveal themselves to each other, with that specific depth of their own human self. Precisely this self is revealed also by means of their sex, their masculinity and femininity. Then, in a unique way, the woman 'is given' to the man to be known, and he to her" (*ibid.*).

It would be a parody to reduce this biblical mutual "knowledge" to a mere sharing of sensation. This in effect is what the proponents of contraception do. In contraceptive sex, the spouses do not "reveal themselves to each other" (and this should be especially evident in the case of the use of condoms). They do not "know" each other or possess each other³. For they have not actually given that which physically encapsulates the gift of themselves. By excluding the mutual gift of their procreative potential they cannot become the one unified subject of the act. They are not thereby united; rather they are "using" each other. Their sexual act will hinder, not foster respect for one another and actually becomes a force for division rather than union. Neither the sense of possessing the other, nor that of surrendering oneself to the other, can be present; only the experience of an appetite satisfied – but in a way that effects no union, that is empty and non-communicative, marked by one-sided appropriation rather than conjugal sharing.

4. To be unitive, the conjugal act must be performed in a 'truly human' way

Vatican II affirmed the noble function of marital intercourse inasmuch as it expresses and fosters the conjugal union of the spouses. "The actions within marriage by which the couple are intimately and chastely united are noble and honorable" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 9). It adds however an important rider: "The *truly human performance* of these acts fosters the self-giving they signify" (*ib.*). Intercourse between spouses, if performed in a way that is not 'truly human', does

not signify or foster the self-giving love proper to matrimony. It is not noble; nor is it moral. Forced intercourse, imposed by one spouse on the other, would evidently not be human in this sense⁴. Even though in such a case, the physical nature of intercourse – the union of the genital organs and the passing of the semen – remains intact, its spiritual and personalist nature is negated. Such an act effects no full self-gift or true sexual union⁵.

By their use of contraceptives the spouses' physical act – of apparent self-donation – is turned into a lie⁶. Contraceptive intercourse is not true sexual intercourse at all, and neither expresses nor effects any conjugal union. It is not an act of mutual love; it has been dehumanised⁷.

There are many forms of bodily contact which can express different degrees of affection or love. Holding hands is perhaps the most elementary form. A simple hug would seem to express more; and a kiss even more. The marital embrace is the greatest physical expression of mutual spousal belonging and union. But the spouses, or one of them, can deliberately denaturalise this act in such a way that it no longer unites them or expresses their love.

Intercourse always consists in mutual communication. Human intercourse can be effected by looks or gestures, and particularly by means of words. But the words must be human, must make sense, and must be heard and received by the other person. Loving intercourse by means of the word is not real intercourse unless the word is accepted and reciprocated. If in an apparent attempt at conversation two people were to speak words at each other, but deliberately interposed an impenetrable sound panel between them, it could constitute some ridiculous sort of pantomime but would be a denial of any real desire for communication. If this is not the language of human communication, less still is it that of married love or union.

Intercourse implies that something is exchanged and accepted – be it verbal interchange of a word proffered and taken in, or sexual interchange of seed transmitted and received. It should be clear that contraceptives of whatever type dehumanise sexual intercourse, destroying *both* the procreative meaning and the unitive aspects of the conjugal act; the "inseparable" connection between the two aspects of the act is broken; its intimate structure is gone. It is so *denaturalised* as to no longer be *the* conjugal act; hence its unitive – no less than its procreative – purpose and meaning are also nullified.

This is true of all contraceptives (IUDs, pills, etc.), but is especially evident in the use of condoms (even if contraception were not the direct purpose of their use). Condomised intercourse is simply not human intercourse; in fact it is not sexual intercourse at all. In some way there may be the sensation of intercourse, but in no way the reality. Neither the objective sense of possessing the other nor of surrendering oneself to the other is present; only the feeling of a tension released – but in an ultimately empty, non-communicative, non-unitive, way.

“together they become almost the one subject of that act”

5. The two narratives of Genesis

The interdependence and inseparability of the unitive and procreative aspects of the conjugal act emerge from this anthropological analysis; an analysis which encounters strong confirmation in the biblical account of the divine institution of marriage, i.e. of marriage ‘as it was in the beginning’.

It is striking that we have not one but two narrations of the institution of marriage in Genesis (1:27-28; 2:18-24). The only logical conclusion to be drawn from this is that, in one and the same institution, God assigned two complementary purposes to marriage; but wished, in separate narratives, to stress first one end and then the other, so that we could better understand the synthesis, harmony and interdependence of these two ends.

The first narrative is clearly procreative in emphasis, and presents the power of procreation as a divine blessing: “So 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” (Gn 1:27-28). The second narrative emphasises rather the unitive aspect of marriage: “‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him’... [So God fashioned the woman and brought him to the man]. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man’. Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gn 2:18,23-2). This dual narrative of the one institution is of inestimable importance in showing the complementarity (and not the opposition) between the two ends of matrimony as taught by the Church: “the twofold end of marriage: the good of the spouses and the transmission of life”⁸.

6. One flesh

At this point, further consideration of the biblical statement that the spouses ‘become one flesh’⁹ may lead us deeper into the God-given mystery of conjugal sexuality. What is meant by these words, and what consequence can be drawn for our purpose?

Pius XII already commented on the unitive significance of this powerful biblical expression: “In its natural structure, the conjugal act is a personal action, a simultaneous and immediate cooperation on the part of the husband and wife, which by the very nature of the agents and the proper nature of the act is the expression of the mutual gift which, according to the words of Scripture, brings about union ‘in one flesh’” (Address, October 29, 1951: AAS 3 (1951), 850).

It is clear that “*una caro*” cannot be taken literally as implying that husband and wife become one single being. Yet it does mean something very real. Spouses in love would naturally like to be fused into one; but this cannot actually be attained, for they always remain two separate persons. It has been common enough to hold that this “one flesh-ness” of the spouses is shown in the child that may derive from their union. This is suggestive but not altogether satisfactory

(among other reasons, because their union does not necessarily give rise to a child).

In anthropological terms the expression seems better explained by holding that in their marital intercourse the spouses become ‘one principle of life-giving power’. In this sense, and in this sense alone, they are made truly “one” in their intercourse¹⁰. For that, however, their intercourse itself must be true, i.e. it must not violate the inseparable connection between its unitive and procreative aspects, which gives its essential conjugal meaning to the marital act. Violation of this connection falsifies their intercourse; it no longer unites in any conjugal sense; it is no longer the marital act.

In relation to the morality of conjugal intercourse, John Paul II applies the test of its *truthfulness*; that it should respect and reflect its double and inseparably connected aspects, unitive and procreative. “In the conjugal act it is not licit to separate the unitive aspect from the procreative aspect, because both the one and the other pertain to the intimate truth of the conjugal act. The one is activated together with the other and in a certain sense the one by means of the other” (General Audience, Aug 22, 1984).

7. The marital use of condoms¹¹

These reflections can help solve an apparently new moral question that has recently arisen: whether spouses can licitly engage in condomised sex when their motive is not contraceptive but simply to protect one of them against possible HIV infection. The general argument that the use of condoms is morally permissible in such a case is that, since the *purpose* is prophylactic and not contraceptive, their use does not contravene *Humanae Vitae* – whose scope would be limited to a condemnation of contraception.

As we have seen, the scope of *Humanae Vitae* goes much further; and provides a clear answer to this recent hypothesis. Condomised intercourse may not be a contraceptive act in *purpose*, i.e. to avoid possible conception. But it is anti-sexual (or contra-sexual) *in nature*, impeding that bodily intercourse by which the spouses express their being one. It is not a ‘completed’ sexual act in any human sense. It is so incomplete that it is not sexual intercourse at all, any more than *coitus interruptus* is. *Coitus interruptus* involves the beginning of a true sexual act, but its completion is deliberately frustrated. One might consider calling condomised sex *coitus impeditus*; but that will not do, for there is not even the initiation of a true conjugal act¹².

Condomised sex is as unnatural as oral or anal sex. It is not sexual intercourse but sexual abuse, a pantomimic sexual act deprived of *both* its unitive and its procreative significance.

Animals too have intercourse; but it is not human. Intercourse is only human when it signifies a personal union – a union of the persons of the spouses – in one flesh. Now, in contraceptive intercourse there may be pleasure, but there is no conjugal union. It is an instance of two people sharing sexual satisfaction together. But it is in no way conjugal

The De-humanisation of Marital Sex continued

intercourse expressive of the real union of their persons. On the contrary, it is no more than solitary sex performed *à deux*; in other words, mutual masturbation. It undermines respect; it does not and cannot unite; it separates.

Complete sexual pleasure is legitimate, constructively formative and a gift of God when, and only when, it accompanies natural marital intercourse. Christian morality has always held that to seek satisfaction in the genital organs independently of lawful conjugal intercourse is gravely sinful. This applies fully to contraceptive sex between spouses for it is a gravely corrupted act, which can give a sexual release or satisfaction to one or both partners, but not – we repeat – in a conjugal way. As an act, it remains intrinsically self-centered, non-donative, non-unitive. Both physically and psychologically, it gravely violates the very nature and dignity of the conjugal act; and equally violates the respect that the spouses must show to each other in their marital intercourse.

In summary, then, we see the power of that principle enunciated by *Humanae Vitae*: the two meanings of the marital act cannot stand apart. If you separate them, you destroy *both* meanings; i.e. if you “disconnect” or divorce sexual intercourse from its inherent procreative meaning or function, you deprive it of its unitive meaning and function. The consequences of this de-humanisation of sexuality, prophetically foretold by Paul VI¹³, have become so sadly evident over the past four decades.

In relation to condomised intercourse in particular, it is beside the point to argue that (e.g. in cases of avoiding possible HIV infection), the *intention* is not contraceptive. That may be true, but the more important fact is that the act is not unitive; it is in no way expressive of the uniqueness of conjugal sexual intercourse.

So, it is not simply that a condomised act is wrong because it is contraceptive. It is wrong because it is *denaturalised*, being both contra-ceptive and contra-unitive. It has lost its very nature as a physical act of union. It is no longer intercourse between husband and wife such as to signify and enact their mutual conjugal self-donation.

8. Failure to distinguish sexual love and lust

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* warns that lust always threatens sexual love, also the love between husband and wife: “the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination” (no. 400). Lust is that powerful and self-centered aspect of sexual attraction that obscures the relationship and respect between man and woman, husband and wife. In the present state of our nature, lust can quickly make itself present when there is a sexual attraction. “Lust is disordered desire for or inordinate enjoyment of sexual pleasure. Sexual pleasure is morally disordered when sought for itself, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes” (no. 2351). Lust centres on obtaining pleasure and tends to reduce the other person from the status of a person to be respected and loved to that of an object to be seized and enjoyed.

In our present state of human nature, lust accompanies our sexuality and, if not countered, prevents sexuality from being a school and a means of love, and turns it into an obsessive form of self-centeredness that tends to make others into objects of gratification or exploitation, and not persons to be respected or loved.

Contraceptives give priority to lust on the part of one or both spouses. This means that the other, at least in the enactment of the sexual act, tends to be reduced to being a means of sensual satisfaction, and not treated as a person and spouse.

Love and respect for one’s partner indeed often demand restraint and, if necessary, sacrifice. What is needed is a campaign of *human sex*; educating people in how love and respect go together; and hence how married love, if true, facilitates restraint and self-sacrifice whenever the presence of lust tends to make conjugal intercourse self-centered and exploitative.

9. The call to chastity

“Safe-Sex” has become an obsessive slogan in Western societies, and it figures high on the agenda Western agencies press on the emerging world. It is more and more presented as a sort of moral obligation – but the ‘morality’ involved relates to “safety”, not to sexuality. Sexual conduct of any form is considered to be perfectly acceptable. What is unacceptable, what indeed must be regarded as irresponsible and even immoral, is “unsafe” sex; unsafe because it might do serious harm to one’s own bodily health or to that of one’s ‘partner’. That is the only danger, the only clearly wrong” thing in all of this matter. With that proviso – that it does no harm to the health of the body – sexual conduct is a neutral area. The idea is absent that sexual conduct can do harm to the health of one’s spirit, of one’s humanity; that it can overthrow a person’s human balance, turning him or her obsessively in on self, seeing in others no more than sex-objects, incapable of any deep or lasting love or of the respect that is the very hallmark of love.

Chastity, in the various forms and with the varied demands it makes according to one’s state, is presented by the Church not just as a religious obligation but as a natural imperative if mutual respect is to be preserved between the sexes, and love be safeguarded against the undermining force of lust.

The Church believes that people have a natural capacity to distinguish between generous love and self-centered lust. It teaches that chastity is a necessary preparation for marriage; that mutual respect provides the framework within which true love can grow between a couple, giving them the clarity of sight to judge extent and genuineness of their love. It also teaches that chaste mutual respect is a condition of harmony and happiness in marriage. Spouses too, if they are not chaste in mutual relations, reduce each other to the level of an object to be enjoyed and not of a spouse to be revered within the plans of God.

“Complete sexual pleasure is formative and a gift of God when it accompanies natural marital intercourse.”

The safe-sex approach is fundamentally insulting to humanity in general. It implies that young people cannot be chaste or respect each other before marriage; and insistently sends them the message that any desire to relate to others in a pure way or to live a chaste love, is impossible in practice and foolish in outlook. It is equally insulting to married people to affirm that they cannot be expected to live that same mutual respect, that they are impelled to reduce each other to the level of an object to be enjoyed and not kept and revered as a spouse to be honored.

The proponents of “safe-sex” are emphatic that the Church, in preaching chastity, is “impractical”, out of touch with human nature, and an obstacle to human progress and people’s welfare. Of what progress are they speaking? Is it progress for humanity when sexuality is deprived of all sense of mystery and sacredness, when sexual attraction is no longer sensed as a force directed to a life-long communion of two persons, when sexual activity is to be as promiscuous as among animals, when sexual intercourse is reduced to a meeting of two bodies which is quite compatible with a one-sided or mutual contempt for the persons involved – the very level of prostitution?

Under the heading of “Continence Protects the Dignity of the Conjugal Act”, John Paul II insists: “Continence consists in the capacity to dominate, control and direct drives of a sexual character... The role of conjugal chastity, and still more precisely that of continence, lies not only in protecting the importance and dignity of the conjugal act in relation to its procreative meaning. But *it also lies in safeguarding the importance and the dignity proper to the conjugal act as expressive of interpersonal union*” (Audience, Oct 2, 1984; emphasis added). No interpersonal union is expressed or effected by a contraceptive act between husband and wife. It is a non-unitive act where each one uses the other as a source of pleasure but neither shows a truly human respect for nor is united to him or her.

Chastity is possible, both before marriage and in marriage. And chastity is always the safeguard of love and respect. Benedict XVI echoes the positive call of the Church to both the married and the unmarried: “Have great respect for the institution of the sacrament of Matrimony. There cannot be true domestic happiness unless, at the same time, there is fidelity between spouses. Marriage is an institution of natural law, which has been raised by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament; it is a great gift that God has given to mankind: respect it and honour it. At the same time, God calls you to respect one another when you fall in love and become engaged, since conjugal life, reserved by divine ordinance to married couples, will bring happiness and peace only to the extent that you are able to build your future hopes upon chastity, both within and outside marriage” (Address to Youth, May 10, 2007).

Notes

¹I am aware that the reader may initially take the reference here to “seed” in the usual (though restricted) biological sense of the male *semen*. This would be a hindrance to following the argument being developed. I refer not just to “seed”, but to “seed of oneself”. By this I mean the complementary *procreative element*, whether male or female, which the spouses offer to each other in intercourse, and the giving-accepting of which constitutes the maximum expression of their corporal union.

The discourse here is anthropological (based on the unity of body and soul) and not simply biological. The reader who understands this, will also understand that our argument has no interest in nor is affected by marginal and non-typical cases (as, for instance, the older man who marries and may not be capable of actual insemination).

²This anthropological analysis is developed at length in my article “Married Love and Contraception”: *Osservatore Romano*, Oct. 10, 1988; cf. www.cormacburke.or.ke/node/67.

³“biblical knowledge can be explained as ‘possession’” John Paul II, *General Audience* March 26, 1980.

⁴*Humanae Vitae* makes the point quite clearly: “a conjugal act imposed on one’s partner without regard to his or her condition or personal and reasonable wishes in the matter, is no true act of love, and therefore offends the moral order in its particular application to the intimate relationship of husband and wife” (no. 13).

⁵The post-conciliar Code of Canon Law (1983) has inserted this phrase, *humano modo*, in defining what form of intercourse consummates marriage. Canon 1061, 1 states that a marriage is “consummated, if the spouses have in a human manner engaged together in a conjugal act in itself apt for the generation of offspring... by [which] the spouses become one flesh”. The introduction of the “humano modo” here has served to confirm the already common jurisprudential doctrine that marriage is not consummated by a contraceptive act between the spouses.

⁶“Contraception contradicts the *truth* of conjugal love”, John Paul II, Address, September 17, 1983.

⁷Some may wish to dismiss these arguments as if they rested on a purely ‘biological’ concept of human sexuality. Behind this dismissiveness lies the dualism that is more and more common today: the tendency to disconnect body from spirit and to reject the Catholic approach that the body is part of the person and that its physical functions are meant to reflect and fulfil the aspirations of the soul. Pope John Paul’s “Theology of the Body” is a profound refutation of this destructive dualism.

⁸*CCC*, no. 2362. cf. C. Burke: “Marriage: a personalist or an institutional understanding?": *Communio* 19 (1992), 278-30.

⁹Gn 2:24. It is on this same strong expression that Jesus bases his teaching that man must not separate what God has joined together: Mt 19:4-6.

¹⁰“the procreative and unitive goods of marriage are tightly bound together. The one-flesh unity of spouses is possible *because* human (like other mammalian) males and females, by mating, unite organically – they form a single reproductive principle. ... Masturbatory, sodomitical, and other sexual acts that are not reproductive in type cannot unite persons organically: that is, as a single reproductive principle. Therefore, such acts cannot be engaged in for the sake of marital (that is, one-flesh, bodily) unity as such. They cannot be marital acts” (Robert P. George: “Marriage, Morality, and Rationality” in *The Meaning of Marriage*, Spence, 2006, p. 151).

¹¹cf. Luke Gormally, *Marriage and the Prophylactic Use of Condoms*, (*Faith*, March-April 2006, 16-24).

¹²Hence one understands that, even if their complaint remains merely at the sense-level, many couples, especially many men, complain of the ‘something missing’ in the experience of condomised sex.

¹³“Responsible men can become more deeply convinced of the truth of the doctrine laid down by the Church on this issue if they reflect on the consequences of methods and plans for artificial birth control. Let them first consider how easily this course of action could open wide the way for marital infidelity and a general lowering of moral standards. Not much experience is needed to be fully aware of human weakness and to understand that human beings – and especially the young, who are so exposed to temptation – need incentives to keep the moral law, and it is an evil thing to make it easy for them to break that law. Another effect that gives cause for alarm is that a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and, disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection.... [So] In preserving intact the whole moral law of marriage, the Church is convinced that she is contributing to the creation of a truly human civilisation” (HV 17-18).

Science and Religion: Towards a Constructive Dialogue *by Alister McGrath*

Alister McGrath Professor of Theology, Ministry, and Education at King's College, London, debunks Hawkings' atheistic philosophy of science. But he does not think that a conclusively convincing theistic version is possible. Professor McGrath, a former atheist, is author of *Why God Won't Go Away: Engaging the New Atheism*, to be published by SPCK in February 2011.

There is no doubt that the natural sciences offer one of the most successful ways of exploring the world. A delight in the beauty of the world around us leads to a deeper desire to make sense of it. The rise of science was partly driven by this longing to go deeper, to understand more of the world in which we exist. What is the best way of making sense of the clues we see around us? What, to use phrase a phrase of the Hungarian philosopher of science Michael Polanyi, is the "hidden reality" towards which they point?

I certainly felt this deep sense of wonder when I was young. It moved me to want to study the heavens, and build a little telescope to look at the stars and planets. I studied sciences at university partly out of a sense of delight and fascination, and a deep sense of intellectual inquisitiveness. It was like scratching the surface of something deep and mysterious – yet something I very much wanted to know more about.

The Import of Science

The natural sciences represent one of the greatest intellectual achievements of the human race. They have opened up new ways of thinking, and cleared the way for a deeper understanding of the way the world is. Science is a vital tool in our engagement with reality. But every tool needs to be calibrated before we can use it responsibly. How reliable is it? Are there conditions under which it malfunctions, producing false positives or distorted results? What are its operating limits? We must be critical about every tool we use in our quest for truth – including science. Good tools, when badly used, lead to unreliable outcomes. The wise person is one who knows the limits of the methods being used to get results. Otherwise, the results cannot be trusted.

Recent debates about atheism and religious belief often involve appeals to the natural sciences. Yet Sir Karl Popper, a great philosopher of science, once commented that "science doesn't make assertions about ultimate questions – about the riddles of existence". The kind of questions that Popper has in mind are ones that most of us think about from time to time. Why am I here? What's the point of life? I have no doubt that science can identify the mechanisms of life. But that's not the same as telling us what life is about. The question here is about meaning, not mechanism. Telling us how something happened doesn't tell us about why it happened, or what it means.

So what might science have to say about God? Or the meaning of Life? It's an issue that has been rekindled

recently by Stephen Hawking's latest book *The Grand Design*, which takes the view that God is somehow made redundant by the laws of physics. Let's look at this in more detail.

Every shrewd publicist knows that the best way to sell a book is to generate lots of advance publicity. That's why there was such interest in Hawking's book, which declares that there is no need for God to light the blue touch paper of the cosmic firework. Hawking tells us that "because there is a law such as gravity, the Universe can and will create itself from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the Universe exists, why we exist." The "big bang" just happened spontaneously, the outcome of the laws of physics, not a cosmic designer. It's a great way to promote a book. And it's also a great way to keep the age-old debate about God going, as it raises such interesting questions.

It's widely agreed that the natural sciences are neither atheistic nor theistic. They just don't operate at that level. They can certainly be interpreted in religious or anti-religious ways. The militant atheist Richard Dawkins uses science as a weapon in his war against religion. But others see science and religious faith as mutually illuminating. For example, Francis Collins's book *The Language of God* argues that belief in God makes more sense of science than atheism. Both sides can be argued; neither has been able to prove its case; both are entirely reasonable.

Hawkin's Category Mistake

So what about Hawking's latest book? Does this move things along? I don't think so. My scientific colleagues in Oxford and London are puzzled by Hawking's bold declarations about God, mainly because they are such speculative interpretations of what is already a very speculative theory. His analysis is disappointingly weak at the critical points. The Big Bang, he argues, was the inevitable consequence of these laws of physics. "Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing." Yet Hawking appears to confuse law with agency. Laws themselves don't create anything. They are merely a description of what happens under certain conditions.

Imagine that you're watching a game of cricket. Newton's laws of motion help us understand how a player hits a six. But those laws don't cause this to happen. There is a human agency involved. The laws help us understand what is going on here – but they don't make it happen.

“popular culture has become increasingly willing to abandon absolute dichotomist ways of thinking,”

Hawkins tells us that we don't need to invoke the idea of a creator, because the laws of physics are already there? Well, this is hardly anything new. But it simply postpones the issue by one stage. Where did these laws of physics come from? Who made them? How did gravity come to exist in the first place? Who put it there? What is the agency involved?

Hawking seems to think it is a question of either the laws of nature or God. Yet this simply fails to engage with the question of agency. Think of Leonardo da Vinci painting the Mona Lisa. The laws of physics help us understand something of what is going on here. But they hardly compel us to write Leonardo out of the picture, as if he is an unnecessary agent in the process of composition.

But the problems with Hawking's approach run a lot deeper than this. A lot of scientists are angry with Hawking, for risking bringing science into disrepute by overstating itself. Science is the great success story of the unaided human intellect. It is widely regarded as the most secure and reliable form of human knowledge, and has gained this enviable reputation by the modesty of its ambition. Scientists know that they don't have to comment on everything – just what can be shown to be true by rigorous and testable investigation. Science only seeks to describe the forms and processes of the world, and declines to comment on issues of meaning and value. It stands above ethical, political and religious debates. And it is right to do so.

“Telling us how something happened doesn't tell us about why it happened”

The cultural and intellectual authority of science depends critically upon its absolute neutrality in such debates. If it is hijacked for ideological purposes, its public reputation can only suffer. This point was appreciated long ago. Darwin's great supporter Thomas H. Huxley (1825-95) famously declared that science “commits suicide when it adopts a creed.” Huxley was right. If science allows itself to be hijacked by fundamentalists, whether religious or anti-religious, its intellectual integrity is subverted and its cultural authority is compromised.

That's one of the reasons why so many scientists are troubled by the New Atheist agenda. They see this as compromising the integrity of science, and hijacking it for the purposes of an anti-religious crusade. Baroness Susan Greenfield, one of England's most distinguished scientists, was asked to comment on Hawking's musings about God. Was she worried by scientists making claims about other areas of life? “Yes I am”, she replied. “Of course they can make whatever comments they like but when they assume, rather in a Taliban-like way, that they have all the answers then I do feel uncomfortable. I think that doesn't necessarily do science a service.”

She's right. And anyone who uses science as an anti-religious weapon needs to heed her comments. “All science is provisional and therefore to claim to have the definitive answer to anything is a hardline view. It would be very great shame if young people think that to be a scientist you must be an atheist. There are plenty of scientists, such as genome researcher Francis Collins, who also have Christian faith.”

Greenfield is surely right here. In one sense, science has nothing *legitimate* to say about God. As the great Harvard evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould (1941-2002) rightly remarked, “science simply cannot (by its legitimate methods) adjudicate the issue of God's possible superintendence of nature. We neither affirm nor deny it; we simply can't comment on it as scientists.”

The “New Atheism” sets science and religion in permanent opposition, with the ultimate triumph of the former being only a matter of time. Science has become a weapon in the New Atheism's all-out war on religion. Indeed, it is not unreasonable to argue that the New Atheism does more than just reflect the cultural stereotype of the “warfare” of science and religion; it actually depends upon it for its plausibility. But the history just isn't there.

A New Era of Dialogue

Historians of science are generally agreed to have shown, during the 1970s, that the “warfare” model of the relation of science and religion was historically untenable. The historical myths on which this model depends so critically – especially in popular atheist propaganda – have been comprehensively dismantled. In recent decades, popular culture has become increasingly willing to abandon absolute dichotomist ways of thinking, and engage with the more messy complexities of history and culture, instead of reducing them to mindless slogans and stereotypes. Everyone knows that “science” and “religion” are shorthand terms for enormously complex and diverse beliefs, practices, and communities.

Happily, there are signs that things are moving on. The public seems increasingly willing to appreciate that the relation between science and faith is more complicated than media-driven slogans. Maybe there is hope that civilised conversation will at last take the place of confrontation and ridicule. Science and religious faith have lots to talk about, including the grounding of their beliefs. Let's hope these conversations are allowed to take place, and not prohibited by what Susan Greenfield called the scientific “Taliban”. They're too important to be avoided, and too interesting to be ignored.



Letters to the Editor

The Editor, St. Mary Magdalen's Clergy House, Peter Avenue,
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THE GATHERING STORM

Dear Father Editor,

Thank you for the July issue of *Faith* and its splendid editorial ("Budding Hopes and Sudden Storms: Newman's Beatification and Rage against the Church").

Speaking about the contemporary lack of faith you say that it is not clear what is going to come of it. For examples of what is coming of it I would refer to the Christian Legal Concern website. For instance one Duke Amachree has recently discovered that it is dangerous to say "God Bless" to a stranger.

Yours faithfully
Fr Alhelm Cameron-Brown OSB
Prinknash Abbey
Gloucestershire

FOCUSING MORE UPON SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Dear Father Editor,

I have just read most of the latest articles in your November-December magazine. I'll be copying some of them to send to some priest and philosopher friends who I think would most appreciate them. I was delighted to read that this unity is coming about through the best Catholic thought, especially for our grandchildren who are subjected to the prevalent influences.

I am so glad, too, that the Pope made such an impression on the British Isles. I agree that he is just the right leader for these difficult times.

Now if you'll permit me some critical comment: I am discouraged to see how much homosexuality gets coverage in your magazine. True, the sexual revolution has caused the waters to become very muddied. And because it is so complicated an issue, it might be better to exclude it from your main focus. Otherwise, I fear that serious readers will

simply write you off without grasping the true significance of your main work.

As your magazine goes a long way to clarify one very big problem, that is gift enough.

Yours faithfully
Jane Vitale
Pocatello, Idaho, USA

"GIVING SCANDAL": STILL A RELEVANT CONCEPT?

Dear Father Editor,

Thank you for William Oddie's September column. It, in effect, gives the lie to Archbishop Longley's attack on those of us who pray outside the Church of Our Lady and St Gregory during the five o'clock Masses for "lesbian and gay Catholics" every first and third Sunday. The Archbishop's words were published in the 11th December 2010 edition of *The Tablet*. They include some inaccuracies which need correcting.

First, our prayer vigil is not a protest. We are praying in reparation for any sacrileges that might be taking place.

Secondly, the practising nature of numerous of the congregation's relationships is in the public forum, as Dr Oddie's above-mentioned column shows. Westminster diocese seems to be nullifying standard Catholic practise concerning those whose public lifestyle is in objective and serious contradiction of Christianity. Archbishop Longley dismissively tells us that "The Church does not, as it were, have a moral means testing".

He says he doesn't know whether any of us "have made attempts to meet the people who are going to these Masses". In fact we have met many of them. Some of us have been down to the Social Hour which follows every Mass where we have received kind hospitality. I would like to put it on record here that most of them are very friendly and perfectly honest about their homosexual lifestyles, introducing us to their partners and emphasising that they are in sexual relationships. So we are not "making any assumptions" about them.

Of course there are chaste homosexuals in the Church who do live chaste lives and they need our respect and support. From

my personal friendships and numerous phone calls I have received I know that many, perhaps the vast majority, would never ask for or attend any Mass arranged especially for homosexuals. They go to Mass in their own parish and only receive Holy Communion if they are in a state of Grace, like the rest of us. They are very concerned about the Soho Masses where everyone receives Holy Communion in spite of openly admitting they are in and intend to stay in homosexual relationships.

I do feel the official turning of a blind eye to the reality is not in any sense compassionate or pastoral. These Catholics need and deserve proper guidance, especially the young ones who have not received good religious instruction. I cannot forget the poor young man who said to me, "There is no need to worry about us Daphne, if it were still wrong these Masses would not have been especially arranged for us."

Yours faithfully
Daphne McLeod
Fife Way, Great Bookham, Surrey

THE PROTESTANT VIEW OF SACRIFICE

Dear Father Editor,

In his article *Priesthood in the New Testament* Father Vickers leaves me at something of a loose end at the point where he says: "It is no surprise that at the Reformation the Protestants rejected both the Mass and the priesthood ..." (July/August 2010).

The question is why did the Protestants abjure the idea of Eucharistic Sacrifice? The most obvious explanation is that given by Richard Bennett and Michael de Semlyen in *John Henry Newman: Becoming Rome's First Ecumenical Saint* (Dorchester House Publications): "Nor can it be called a sacrifice because it [Scripture] consistently insists that the Sacrifice is *once and for all* and, therefore, unrepeatable. The unique oneness of Christ's sacrifice is in this very fact, that it was *one* offering *once* made. The concept 'once' is deemed so important that it is asserted seven times by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament."

Now, this explanation is, at face value, compelling. However, there is a refutation which, surprisingly, the Church has never offered. The identity of the Sacrifice of

“There are chaste homosexuals in the Church who need our respect and support.”

the Mass with that of Calvary requires an identity of the Last Supper with both and requires us to isolate the quintessence of Christ's Priesthood.

“Do this in commemoration of me” easily establishes that Jesus commanded His Apostles to do identically the same thing as He had done in pronouncing the words “This is my body given for you” and “This cup is the new covenant in my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

The clue lies in the word “covenant” (Hebrew: b'rit). In the Bible a covenant is by definition always sworn, and where there is no oath there is no covenant. By the words of institution Jesus was not predicting His own death as an event which would happen to Him. He was,

in the quintessence of priesthood, swearing a promissory oath reinforcing His decision sacrificially to die on His own terms. Hours later He was under arrest, and dead within less than twenty-four hours. The swearing of the oath and its fulfilment are mutually identical, the latter assured by the fact of the former, because Jesus was incapable of perjury.

It should be clear that, though a man may risk his life in a cause of sufficient importance, he sins gravely if he directly wills his own death as he goes in harm's way to give effect to that decision, and commits an egregious blasphemy if he promises on the Divine Name to do so. Unless he happens also to be God. Such an awesome oath is not something a

man may safely swear on his own initiative, hence the need for sacramental ordination. When a validly ordained priest pronounces the words of institution, it is not the death of Christ which is repeated, but the oath by which He swore to die. The priest and the people implicate themselves in Christ's oath, and lawfully only by reason of His divinity and the validity of the priest's ordination.

It follows that, when we go to Mass, we effectively stake our eternal salvation on the profession that Jesus is God, telling heaven that if He is not, then the true God may cast both Him and us into hell on the Last Day.

Yours faithfully
Michael Petek
Balfour Road, Brighton



The Truth Will Set You Free

By Fr Hugh MacKenzie

THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO ENCOUNTERING EVIL

Our current editorial reflects upon the reality of evil, as did the March 2010 instalment of this column. Below we offer a meditation upon the Christian response to evil.

When we hear of terrible crimes and atrocities, we may be tempted to cry out for God's judgment on the perpetrators. We are outraged at the enormity of the wrong. But we should stop and think when we do this. If we call God's justice down upon the world, we need to be very confident that we can stand with our own head high before the Almighty. Justice does not have favorites. Hopefully we have not committed the grosser sins that get reported in the papers. But our lack of charity, our petty injustices, selfish greed and angry words are capable of destroying other lives as much as any terrorist bomb. None of us is truly innocent.

Jesus is the only innocent man, and his mother is the only sinless woman. If any one has a right to condemn this world it is Jesus. If any one could legitimately hate humanity for what was done to her son, it is Mary. But Jesus said explicitly: “I have not come to condemn the world” but to redeem it. He prayed constantly for sinners, and the greater the depths to which an individual sinks, the more urgent and compelling is his love for them. Also Mary's heart follows where the heart of Jesus leads, which is why she stood

faithfully at the foot of the cross, praying for us all. None of us deserve to be loved like this. But we are.

When he went to the cross, Jesus refused to give up on his people. He carried on loving despite the brutal rejection. Like a parent grieving for a wicked child, he committed himself to make up for the bad things we have all done, no matter what the personal cost. And the cost was high. It is like restoring order and sanity to a corrupted society after a terrible tyrant has been overthrown, or bringing a heroine addict back from the brink of self destruction. But these are only comparisons. We can see the outer sufferings of Christ, only he knows the true spiritual cost.

On Calvary he not only makes up for the selfishness of others with his selfless love, he also apologises to his Father for the infinite offence which sin gives to Divine Goodness. It is not that the Father demands the cruel sufferings of Jesus as some kind of payment for forgiveness. Rather God's justice means that he cannot simply ignore the reality of sin. Damage has been done to his creation which must be put right. The fabric of goodness which he wove into all things has been torn, so it no longer reflects his own perfect Being. This terrible gap which has been opened up between the Creator and his creatures must be bridged. God the Son was always destined to be the living link between God and man through his incarnation. Now he becomes “humbler yet” and makes himself into that heavenly bridge. He reconciles us to God is his own body and blood.



Book Reviews

Beauty for Truth's Sake: On the Re-enchantment of Education

by Stratford Caldecott, *Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2009, 156pp, £12.99*

In their struggles with Christianity, the pagan philosophers of late antiquity presented Pythagoras as their answer to Jesus: here was a good and spiritual man whose knowledge and wisdom became foundational for all later philosophy. In this fascinating manifesto on the re-enchantment of education, Stratford Caldecott also appeals to Pythagoras, but to a baptised Pythagoras, his thought about mathematics and music transposed into a Christian key, something already under way in writers such as Boethius and Augustine.

Taking as his starting point Benedict XVI's appeal for a liturgical understanding of human existence, Caldecott shows how the rationalism that has reduced western education to something purely utilitarian will be overcome through a fresh appreciation of the transcendentals of truth and goodness, but only where the neglected transcendental, beauty, is allowed to work its influence. The perception of form is fundamental if the elimination of meaning is to be reversed.

A first chapter considers how the medieval *quadrivium* of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music became separated from the study of philosophy and theology, as if the *quadrivium* was an end in itself rather than the way in which a person was made ready for the study of philosophy and theology. A true appreciation of

'liberal' education was thus lost, as was a strong sense of the rootedness of the higher disciplines in the study of number and its relationship to physical time and space. The Pythagorean inspiration of the vision proposed is clear and so too is the liturgical destination of education, where time and space are made holy in the worship of God. Caldecott is not making a romantic or antiquarian proposal: ancient and medieval understandings need to be adapted to where we find ourselves now in the story of human understanding.

A second chapter argues for the education of the heart and imagination not just to feel but to know. This is crucial for science too as C.S.Lewis, Charles Taylor, and others, have argued. There follow two chapters developing this theme of the reintegration of science with the poetic mode of knowledge. This requires appreciating anew the nature of symbolism, the analogy of being which it presupposes, and an alternative vision of mathematics, what Caldecott calls 'the lost wisdom of the world'. He speaks about the symbolism of numbers, the 'golden ratio' or 'golden section' that is found throughout nature, and symmetry, in which complexity and unity converge. Mathematics connects directly with theology, he continues, showing (following Augustine) how pointers to the Trinity are to be found everywhere. Much of this is inspiring and convincing though some of it feels contrived: Caldecott acknowledges that some of the speculations he records may appear forced.

The fifth chapter considers harmony, another element in the classical definitions of beauty, and he reflects on it in music, architecture, ecology, and astronomy. There are many beautiful thoughts and applications here as he sketches a Christian cosmology whose principles and values are at once scientific, practical, moral, aesthetic, and theological. He is happy to call the one who subscribes to such a vision a 'Christian Pythagorean' (p. 115).

A final chapter considers 'the liturgical consummation of cosmology'. The philosophical and theological roots of 'secular modernity' continue to be exposed and examined, and Caldecott calls on many contemporary thinkers in support of his diagnosis. The way forward, he believes, is in recovering a sense of revelation and worship, in particular in recovering the ability to pray. This cannot be done wilfully, of course, but emerges spontaneously from a particular way of appreciating the world: as an objective and beautiful thing, a symbolic reality whose fabric reveals, in a great variety of ways, the forms or archetypes of the world's order (pp. 13, 125). A sense of the sacred, celebration of the liturgy, wonder and gratitude: these are the things in which we need to be re-educated not just for the joy of living in an enchanted 'Liturgical City' but because it is the only way to keep our education humane and our life civilised.

Like all manifestos this book is relatively short, but clear in its diagnosis and in its prescriptions, as well as being pregnant with many suggestive lines of thought. Anyone concerned about the condition of the perennial philosophy, or the future of Christian civilisation, ought to read it.

Vivian Boland OP
Blackfriars, Oxford

Behold the Lamb of God

by Pope Benedict XVI, *Family Publications, 112pp, £8.95*

This selection of Pope Benedict's reflections on the Eucharist ranges from 2005 to 2009. It contains various homilies and addresses and concludes with extracts from the Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007).

The meaty part is in the homilies. Because the Eucharist is a fact that the priest lives with, it is helpful to be reminded that "the purpose of this partaking is the assimilation of my life with his, my transformation and conformation into the one who is living Love (p. 11)." "We cannot live without

“He cites Rahner to the effect that finding a corpse in a tomb does not refute the resurrection.”

joining together on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist...How will we be able to live without him ?” (pp 13.17) “We need this Bread to face the fatigue and weariness of our journey (p. 14).”

There are also his scriptural/theological insights. He explains that the Last Supper was celebrated in accordance with the Qumran calendar the day before the Temple Passover, “Jesus celebrated the Passover without a lamb – no, not without a lamb: instead of the Lamb he gave himself.” (p. 26) He points out that the Eucharist can never be a private event: “The Eucharist is a public devotion that has nothing esoteric or exclusive about it. Here too, this evening we did not choose to meet one another, we came and find ourselves next to one another, brought together by faith and called to become one body, sharing the one Bread which is Christ. We are united over and above our differences of nationality, profession, social class, political ideas: we open ourselves to one another to become one in him (p. 34).”

He reminds the Canadians that we must not trivialise the Eucharist because “It is not a meal with friends. It is the mystery of a covenant.” At the same time, “it can never be just a liturgical action. The liturgy does not belong to us. It is the Church’s treasure. (pp. 39, 41, 49)

As in the Gospel there will be those who cannot accept such a great mystery: “One might say that basically people do not want to have God so close, to be so easily within reach or to share so deeply in the events of their daily life (p. 15).” He adds, “Today we run the risk of secularisation creeping into the Church (p. 61).” It is because of this that he emphasises that we should “shun idols, guard our eyes from ‘vanities/nothings’ (pp. 44, 48) so that we can “adore the God of Jesus Christ who out of love made himself bread broken, the most effective and radical remedy against the idolatry of the past and of the present.” (p. 36)

This short book reminds us once again of the breadth of scholarship displayed by Pope Benedict, which reminds us of

the great gift of Jesus, our food of Life for the journey which we all hope to accomplish in and with Him.

Fr James Tolhurst
Chislehurst

How God Acts: Creation, Redemption, and Special Divine Action

by Denis Edwards, Edinburgh: Augsburg Fortress Press/Alban Books, 2010, 207pp

Edwards begins his book with a classic question in response to natural disasters: “Why is God doing this?” (p. xi) He suggests that the question has renewed importance today in view of the tremendous suffering which seems to be an essential feature of our evolutionary world: predation, mass extinctions, and so on. Edwards’ response is to advance a noninterventionist theory of how God acts in the world. God acts exclusively through created, secondary causes, always respecting these natural processes, never overturning the laws of nature nor setting them aside, suffering with creation when disasters occur, rejoicing as these processes bring forth new realities.

Edwards is admirable in his recognition that theology should take science seriously, and shows a good understanding of the universe as a multi-layered unity, constituted by patterns of relationships between realities at all levels from fundamental particles to galaxies. He is surely right to see God’s work of creation and providence in these natural processes. He also commendably puts forward a vision of the unity of all God’s actions as fundamentally one work, but differentiated in its many aspects of creation, evolution, personal providence, salvation and redemption in Christ and eschatological fulfilment.

However, it is Edwards’ insistence that God works *only* through natural, secondary causes alongside this sweeping vision of the scope of God’s work that led me repeatedly to questions and difficulties. Perhaps the

most obvious is the question of miracles. Edwards explicitly rejects Aquinas’ view of miracles as works where God acts directly instead of through secondary causes (p. 84), preferring to see them as explained by features of the natural world which science has not yet discovered. One wonders whether he thinks an aeroplane would have been a miracle in the past. More seriously, one wonders whether he really believes in miracles at all: he quotes J. P. Meier with approval as questioning whether Lazarus was clinically dead and suggesting that Jesus’ walking on the water was an invention of the early Church (p. 80).

Jesus’ resurrection proves to be another difficulty. Edwards declines to comment on the process of resurrection itself, following the Gospels’ own silence on the matter. This in itself is perfectly acceptable, but he should have followed his conviction through to the end and refused to assert (even “tentatively”) that it can be accounted for in a noninterventionist way. He also declines to comment on the empty tomb, but cites Rahner to the effect that finding a corpse in a tomb does not refute the resurrection (p. 99). Edwards is happier to speculate about how the resurrection appearances do not overturn the laws of nature, suggesting that they may be mediated by the assembly, the Word of God, the Eucharist, personal love, and so forth.

Enough of such comments – although I could continue regarding his views of the atonement, intercessory prayer and the general resurrection; the latter including, it would seem, the animals, since all creation will be renewed (although the plants and viruses are not considered!). Worthier of some pondering were his ideas about original sin. He notes that in the higher animals genetic evolution of social behaviour will be a key factor. Sinful choices amongst the first human beings could conceivably provide a mechanism by which, for instance, violent tendencies were preferentially selected and passed on to future generations. Clearly this is not an adequate explanation of original sin – *inter alia* it does not account for



Book Reviews continued

inherited guilt – but perhaps there is something of value here.

In the end, it was the lack of clear distinction between the material and the spiritual, between the immanent and the transcendent, and between the natural and the supernatural, which again and again prompted me to bafflement. However, I wonder how far that was inevitable given Edwards' underlying intention to provide a theology in response to the fate of the animals in evolutionary history. Perhaps the truth lies elsewhere, as Vatican II seems to indicate: "man is the only creature on earth that God has wanted for its own sake," (GS 24) since we alone have spiritual souls and are called by God to the supernatural end which is the beatific vision.

Fr Stephen Dingley

St John's Seminary, Womersley

Blessed John Henry Newman: A Richly Illustrated Portrait

by Kathleen Dietz FSO and Mary-Birgit Dechant FSO, eds., Leominster: Gracewing, 2010, 160pp, £12.99

John Henry, Cardinal Newman, Meditations and Devotions

*London: Baronius Press, 2010,
448pp, £24.95*

The historic visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Britain will undoubtedly bring many blessings to the Church in these lands, and not the least will be the rediscovery in many quarters of Blessed John Henry Newman as one of the great figures of English Catholicism. The two books under review will, in different ways, assist this process of rediscovery and promote a renewed appreciation of his gifts.

We begin with 'A richly illustrated life' edited by two Sisters of the Spiritual Family 'The Work', who are custodians of Newman's shrine at Littlemore. This book essentially does what it says on the cover: it assembles a fine collection of paintings, photographs and other images illustrating Newman's long life (many of which will be new to most

readers) and accompanies these illustrations with a short but comprehensive sketch of Newman's life and work. There are six chapters, taking us from 'The Beginnings' up to 'The Cardinal' and ending with a brief epilogue focusing on Littlemore itself as it has developed since Newman's day. For someone discovering Blessed John Henry Newman for the first time, this book provides an admirable outline of his life and achievements, while even long-term Newman devotees will admire the profuse and well-selected images. As the great Newman scholar Ian Ker notes in his foreword to the volume, this book 'is beautiful both in the simplicity of the text and in the accompanying pictures'.

The Baronius Press edition of Newman's 'Meditations and Devotions' is a worthy volume specially produced to celebrate the great Cardinal's beatification. As a proudly 'traditional' Catholic publisher Baronius habitually takes care to produce its works to a high standard, and this book is no exception. Handsomely bound, with marbled end-papers, silk ribbons and gilded edges it is certainly a pleasure to look at and to handle. The text too, well printed on high quality paper, will repay many years of use.

Happily, Baronius have chosen to reproduce the full text of the 'Meditations and Devotions', as opposed to the reduced version of 1907, subsequently reproduced in various editions up to present times. This abbreviated version missed out many gems, not least Newman's Litanies and in particular the Meditations for Eight Days. This new edition is prefaced with a helpful introduction by Fr Jerome Bertram Cong. Orat., which succinctly reminds us of the spiritual tradition which Newman represents. Fr Bertram notes that Newman died just before the great rediscovery of 'contemplative prayer' in the early twentieth century – the Cardinal owned the works of St John of the Cross but the pages remain uncut. Instead Newman's devotion found expression in vocal prayers (such as the Litanies) and in the more

formal Meditations which make up a large part of this book. As Fr Bertram suggests, those who have never felt drawn to the 'contemplative' spiritual tradition may find Newman's work especially helpful – but in truth, there is something in these pages for everyone to treasure.

Many of Newman's Meditations have for their subject matter the doctrine of the Church. As Fr Bertram remarks, 'Doctrine, for Newman, is the expression of Truth, and above all things he longed to bear witness to Truth, as his Master before him'. One feels that Pope Benedict XVI might share very similar sentiments. Be that as it may, for the people of our age, likewise seeking Truth amidst the shallowness and relativism of the day, these solid and substantial meditations on the dogmas and doctrines of our Catholic Faith may well come as a refreshing change amidst so much that passes for 'spirituality' in the contemporary Church. The prayers in this book are above all Christ-centred, often referring to Newman's deep love of the Blessed Sacrament and profound attachment to Our Lady, as well as his devotion to other saints, not least his own spiritual father, St Philip Neri, founder of the Oratory. These prayers remind us of the deep inner life which sustained Newman on his pilgrim journey, and together with the illustrated biography from Gracewing, this book will surely be welcomed by all devotees of Newman's life and thought.

Fr. Richard Whinder

St. Mary Magdalene
Mortlake

Correction:

The beginning of our Nov-Dec review of the CTS Bible stated that this Bible had been presented to the Pope *during his latest visit*. This false timing was added at sub-editing and was not the mistake of the piece's author Fr Andrew Byrne. We apologise for the confusion.



The Road From Regensburg

Papal-inspired thought in search of a new apologetic

The Primacy of Christ as Hermeneutical Key of Scripture

From the recent post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Verbum Domini.

For “the work of the Synod to have a real effect on the life of the Church ... I would like to ... make constant reference to the *Prologue of John’s Gospel* (Jn 1:1-18), which makes known to us the basis of our life: the Word” (p.12, *Alive Publishing*)

“... [It] says of the divine *Logos*, that ‘all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made’ (Jn 1:3); and in the *Letter to the Colossians* it is said of Christ, ‘the first-born of all creation’ (1:15), that ‘all things were created through him and for him’” (1:16). (p. 19).

New Vision Has Been Too Long Delayed

From “Light of the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald” [2010, CTS]. The Pope’s comments on condoms have been widely reported and analysed. They would seem to favour a development in moral philosophy. We plan to write about such development, not least in the light of the raging controversy, in our next issue. Below we quote some parts of the Pope’s answers that argue that a, what we would call, “new synthesis of faith and reason” is long overdue.

“Where is secularism right? Where can and must the faith adopt the forms and figures of modernity - and where must it offer resistance? This great struggle pervades the whole world today” (p. 57)

“the intrinsic translation process of the great words [of the faith] into the speech and thinking of our time is under way but has really not yet succeeded.” (p. 64)

“The important thing today is to see that God exists ... as a new emphasis we have to give priority to the question about God” (p. 65).

“Today it is still the major task of the Church to unite faith and reason” (p. 77)

“Nowadays we are rediscovering the importance of the interactions between the earth and the rest of the universe, and so it makes perfect sense that we should also relearn to recognise the cosmic character of the liturgy.” (p. 105)

“We must summon fresh energy for tackling the problem of how to announce the gospel anew in such a way that this world can receive it, and we must muster all of our energies to do this.” (p. 130).

“In light of [the] would-be scientific intellectual model, matters of faith appear as archaic ... This way of thinking ... has changed man’s basic orientation towards reality. He no longer seeks the mystery, the divine, but is convinced that science will at one point decipher everything ... The other side is that precisely science itself is now regaining an insight as to its

limits, that many scientists today are saying: “Doesn’t everything have to come from somewhere?”... A new understanding of religion is re-emerging... one that emerges from the intrinsic coherence of the *logos* – which is exactly the real faith in the gospel that the gospel itself sought and proclaimed”

“... People today no longer have an immediate intuitive grasp of the fact that Christ’s blood on the Cross is expiation for their sins. Formulas like these are great and true, but they no longer have a place in our overall system of thought and world view; they stand in need of new translation and comprehension” (p. 135).

“The bishops must seriously reflect on ways to give catechesis a new heart and a new face.”(p. 140)

Towards a New Synthesis

From “Address of his Holiness Benedict XVI to participants in the Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences”, October 28, 2010.

“as increasing accomplishments of the sciences deepen our wonder of the complexity of nature, the need for an interdisciplinary approach tied with philosophical reflection leading to a synthesis is more and more perceived.”

How to Rebuild

From the Homily to members of Roman Universities, 16th December.

Building one’s own existence, building society, is not a work that can be accomplished by distracted and superficial minds and hearts. It takes profound educational work and continuous discernment, which must involve all the academic community, promoting that synthesis between intellectual formation, moral discipline and religious commitment which Blessed John Henry Newman proposed in his “Idea of University.”

In our time we feel the need of a new class of intellectuals capable of interpreting social and cultural dynamics and offering solutions that are not abstract but concrete and realistic.

Peace and Rediscovering the Human Soul

From the 2011 Message for World Peace.

“Religious freedom expresses what is unique about the human person, for it allows us to direct our personal and social life to God, in whose light the identity, meaning and purpose of the person are fully understood. ...Without the acknowledgement of his spiritual being, without openness to the transcendent, the human person withdraws within himself, fails to find answers to the heart’s deepest questions about life’s meaning ... [and] does not have an ‘identity’ to safeguard and build up through truly free and conscious decisions... *Freedom without relationship is not full freedom.*”



Comment on the Comments

by William Oddie

Ideal or Truth?

Nothing exceeds the endless voracity of the secular press for a dramatic front page headline. The fact is, they've all got to *have* front pages, each with its own "splash" headline. And if no real news turns up, what are they to do? During the run-up to the papal visit, we all got pretty well inured (if we weren't already) to the way in which the secular Press will take a Catholic news item, sometimes quite small in itself, and then turn it into a major news story which entirely misses the point. But the Pope's remarks about condoms to Peter Seewald for his book *The Light of the World* – naughtily leaked out of context and without commentary by the *Osservatore Romano* – surely produced the most dramatic example of this phenomenon for many years.

From the statement that "[The Church] of course *does not regard* [the use of condoms] *as a real or moral solution* [to the problem of HIV/AIDS], but, *in this or that case*, there can be nonetheless, in the intention of reducing the risk of infection, a first step in a movement toward a different way, a more human way, of living sexuality" (my italics) we somehow arrived at the astonishing Sunday Telegraph splash headline "Pope approves use of condoms to fight Aids" (under the strapline "Historic U-turn by Catholic Church). Grotesque, or what?

Quentin de la Bédoyère, in his *Catholic Herald* blog, said more or less what was or ought to have been already clear enough: "The Pope's statement that condom use is acceptable 'in certain cases, where the intention is to reduce the risk of infection' has lit up the headlines. But put the lights out: nothing has changed."

Dr Janet Smith, on the *Catholic World Report* website, gave what may be something like an authoritative commentary (worth reading at much greater length than I can quote it here) on the particular example the Pope chose, one which caused a

considerable raising of eyebrows.

"There may", said the Holy Father, "... be a basis in the case of some individuals, as perhaps when a male prostitute uses a condom, where this can be a first step in the direction of a moralisation, a first assumption of responsibility, on the way toward recovering an awareness that not everything is allowed and that one cannot do whatever one wants. But it is not really the way to deal with the evil of HIV infection. That can really lie only in a humanisation of sexuality ... The Holy Father does not in any way think the use of condoms is a part of the solution to reducing the risk of AIDs. As he explicitly states, the true solution involves 'humanising sexuality.'"

And that's all. The secular response is understandable: journalists need stories; it's not so much that they don't care about the truth, but that they really aren't necessarily equipped in a story about the Church, especially if they're not in anyway religious, to recognise it when it's staring them in the face. But parallel to this kind of understandable secular distortion, there was a jumping on this particular bandwagon by liberal Catholics who really didn't have that kind of excuse, and whose reaction was for that reason more to be deplored. Perhaps the most informative example of the "historic U-turn by Catholic Church" syndrome among Catholic journalists was the *Today* programme's "Thought for the Day" on the morning after *The Sunday Telegraph* splash story, pronounced from on high by Clifford Longley, who is the BBC's token "authoritative" Catholic and the elder statesman of the Tabletistas – the Archbishop of Canterbury, as it were, of the modern liberal English Catholic tendency. My comments are interpolated in italics:

"When Pope Benedict came to Britain in September, almost everybody expected he was going to wag a

disapproving finger at our sexual immorality. (*No they didn't: only the atheist coalition was going on about his views on sexual morality. Maybe Longley was, who knows? But he's not exactly typical of most ordinary Catholics.*) But he didn't sound like that at all, and he's just proved himself to be the pope of surprises once more. The interview he gave to a German journalist has transformed the terms of the internal Roman Catholic debate about the use of condoms in the fight against Aids HIV. (*No it hasn't: see Quentin de la Bédoyère, Dr Janet Smith, above and many others too numerous to mention.*) But I think he has actually changed much more than that. From today the entire polar icecap of Catholic sexual morality has started to melt. (*WHAT? What? Wishful thinking, or what? Read the pope's remarks in full: is there any way you could reasonably come to that conclusion?*)

"Some will argue that nothing much has changed (*you bet they will*), and the Pope didn't change the Church teaching that contraception was sinful. But henceforth the emphasis changes from natural law, which is where the ban on contraception comes from to what the pope calls the humanising of sexuality (*how is that a change of emphasis away from the natural law? The natural law is a body of unchanging moral principles known not from revelation (though parallel to it) but by reason, principles regarded as a basis for all human conduct: to speak in this way of "the humanisation of sexuality" is simply the understanding of the natural law in particular human circumstances: there is no movement away from natural law – say, to revelation or ecclesial authority; we are still within its ambit. There is a real inability, already emerging in Longley's account, to understand the difference between juridical and pastoral discourse. The pope is a teacher of doctrine*

and the moral law; he is also a pastor: a pastor above all, and perhaps overwhelmingly most importantly, when he speaks directly to his people, as he is clearly doing in this interview – that’s why it’s with a journalist, not a theologian).

“Benedict didn’t just say”, Longley continued, “that he could think of cases where condoms might be acceptable. Other senior figures in the Catholic Church have said as much or more, though it must be admitted no pope has gone that far before. But it’s the reasoning he used which is much more significant. He has changed the conversation. He was asking, in effect, what does God want of us in each specific situation in which we find ourselves. (*How is that a change of “the conversation?” That’s what the Christian religion was always about, isn’t it? What planet is this man living on?*). How do we make a move in the right direction? That is not the conventional Catholic approach, which usually gives the impression that only the ideal is good enough and everything else is a mortal sin (*usually gives that impression, does it? To whom? Anything but the ideal is a mortal sin? What rubbish is this? Is that really what liberals suppose orthodox Catholic teaching to be? They know perfectly well of course that it isn’t, and only say so when, as Longley is doing, they have an axe to grind (here the only alternative explanation is an ignorance so profound as to be incredible).*

“We might”, Longley proceeds, “call this new approach ‘gradualism’ (*new in what respect?*). It doesn’t drop the ideals, but it recognises that we can’t all reach them in one move and some of us will never get there at all. But that doesn’t prevent us from setting out (*Again, what’s new about that? That’s what any normal priest tells his people all the time, in both pulpit and confessional*). He gave the striking example of a male prostitute infected with HIV. If that man uses a condom to stop himself infecting others, that is a step in the right, virtuous direction

a first assumption of moral responsibility as pope Benedict put it.... This unexpected outbreak of common sense (*Unexpected how? Only in the sense that this kind of “common sense” is what all properly instructed Catholics have always lived by, so one doesn’t expect it to be regarded as any kind of “outbreak”*) doesn’t ask the traditional Catholic question “how far can you go” (*How is that “traditional”, rather than a perversion of Catholic moral teaching derived from a debased, half-jocular, popular understanding? What pope ever said or implied that Catholics should ask such a question or anything like it?*) ... it asks instead “what kind of person do I want to be?” or, in the context of faith “what kind of person does God want me to be, and how can I take some small step in that direction?” Once you pose the question that way, God knows, all sorts of possibilities appear.”

But that is, of course, how the Church has always posed the question in relation to the spiritual journey of particular individuals: it has been, indeed, the whole basis of the Church’s teaching about how we are to grow closer to God, and how the normal occasions of human life can nurture that process of growth. Hence, for instance (CCC 2227): “Children... contribute to the growth in holiness of their parents”. No aspect of our lives falls outside this imperative to ask Longley’s apparently newly discovered question “what kind of person does God want me to be, and how can I take some small step in that direction?” Thus (CCC 2461): “True development concerns the whole man. It is concerned with increasing each person’s ability to respond to his vocation and hence to God’s call.” Above all (CCC 1784): “The education of the conscience is a lifelong task.... The education of the conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart.”

“A lifelong task” says the Church (and always has): not a matter of muddling through life with some sort of impossible moral checklist,

perpetually asking “how far can you go?”, a question deriving not so much from the Catholic tradition as from the dilemma of cradle Catholics caught up in the maelstrom of collapsing social norms and carnal yearnings unleashed by the sexual revolution of the ‘sixties, of which we can say, in Lady Bracknell’s words “... I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to?”

“How far can you go?” was a question asked by those who wanted to have their cake and eat it: the Church never uttered it. It is a question, frankly, invented by and for theological liberals, for those who want to be in the Church as well as in the secular world, and who want, in the interests of a comfortable life, to reduce the area of contradiction between the two as much as possible. That’s what Longley is really after: but it can’t, it mustn’t, be done. We are “signs of contradiction” or we are nothing. As Chesterton understood, “orthodoxy” is the exact reverse of what people suppose it to be, an assertion of “established” ideas and standards: the “chief merit” of orthodoxy, said Chesterton, is “that it is the natural fountain of revolution and reform”. We are the subversives: Longley is a distinguished pillar of the new Establishment. I daily expect him to be translated to the House of Lords.

Notes From Across the Atlantic

by Peter Mitchell



INCREASING REVERENCE IN THE ORDINARY FORM OF MASS

Father Peter Mitchell contextualises the impact of the new translation of the Missal from his vantage point at St. Gregory the Great Seminary in Seward, Nebraska, where he teaches Latin and Theology. His father was born and raised in Hertfordshire.

The arrival of the new year means that here in the States we now have less than one year to go until November 27, 2011, the date chosen by our Bishops' Conference for the implementation of the new English translation of the Third Edition of the Roman Missal. While there have inevitably been a handful of naysayers attempting to derail this needed reform, the impression of this John-Paul-II generation priest in a small rural diocese is that the majority of faithful Catholics are interested and eager to learn about the upcoming changes to the texts of the Mass, as well as the theological reasons underlying them.

Although there is unfortunately still no shortage of liturgical abuses to be found in not a few dioceses across the USA, the good news is that such abuses are becoming ever more confined to left-over pockets of resistance.

From this writer's vantage point there would seem to be two interesting phenomena concerning the increasing momentum towards the new translation. The younger a priest is the more likely he is to be unapologetically enthusiastic about this development. And to the extent that liturgical abuse persists in a given diocese, there will also be in that place a far greater interest in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite as a refuge from liturgical abuse. On the other hand, dioceses that have been protected by wise episcopal guidance from liturgical aberrations in the celebration of the *Novus Ordo* are generally blessed with both clergy and

laity who truly love the Ordinary Form of the Roman Rite. They are excited to see its celebration made even more dignified and reverent by the beauty and splendor of the new translation of the Missal.

The "new" trend in the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy is unmistakably towards what is becoming more clearly one of the hallmarks of Pope Benedict's pontificate: the authentic implementation of the liturgical reform according to the mind of the Second Vatican Council.

At the Newman Center on campus at the University of Nebraska we are blessed to have a chanted Latin Mass (Ordinary Form) celebrated once a month. The Mass features a splendid choir chanting the Propers and Ordinary of the Mass as well as various motets in a chapel with outstanding acoustics. The readings are proclaimed in English and the Liturgy is celebrated *ad orientem*. This Mass was begun five years ago at the initiative of a young priest returning from studies in Rome, who noted with no small amount of irony that it seems the only Mass one cannot find *anywhere* is the Ordinary Form of the Roman Rite as it is envisioned by the current *Missale Romanum*. It has drawn the interest of a growing number of students and young families and is another sign of the fruitfulness of the ongoing reform of the Conciliar liturgical reform here in the States. The laity who attend this Mass seem to be drawn to the opportunity both to sing and to hear the language of the Church proclaimed clearly and simply. The beautiful rhythm of the chant alternating between priest-celebrant and people as the Mass is prayed, including the occasional chanting of the Roman Canon, is one of the most appealing aspects of the sung *Novus Ordo*, an embodiment of the "noble simplicity" which is one of the foundational principles of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

One great light in the midst of the many questions leading up to the

implementation of the new translation is The Liturgical Institute at the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois. Founded by Francis Cardinal George in the year 2000, the Institute is fast becoming a widely respected resource for bishops and dioceses across the United States in the important work of liturgical formation. The Institute is currently in the process of presenting its workshop, "Mystical Body, Mystical Voice," to the clergy and laity of dozens of dioceses across the country, in anticipation of the arrival of the new translation of the Missal next Advent. The workshop employs a dynamic presentation of the texts of the ritual books themselves as the basis for a rich theological understanding of the way in which the Word becomes flesh in and through the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. The Institute's underlying philosophy is rooted in the patristic and sacramental ideals of the liturgical movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, fidelity to the principles of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, and the understanding that the principles of the 2001 Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam* have given the Church an essential key to the ongoing implementation of the Conciliar liturgical reform.

At our most recent diocesan clergy conference, this workshop was very well received. By the end of the day it was quite clear that the majority of the priests in attendance were excited about the opportunity the new translation affords for a more broad-ranging liturgical catechesis at the parish level. Although the presenters indicated that they had received a less-than-enthusiastic reception in some of the places where they had spoken recently, the many positive comments I heard from my brother priests following the workshop are another encouraging sign about where liturgical practice is going in the United States at the beginning of the 2010s.

All that being said, there still remains the admittedly challenging prospect of actually instructing the faithful in the pews to change their established habits of prayer next November 27. “And with your spirit” will replace the nearly reflexive “And also with you.” How will American Catholics adjust to professing in the Credo that the Lord Jesus “was incarnate of the Virgin Mary” rather than the less theologically precise “was born of the Virgin Mary” that we have been praying for the last forty years? Can Americans handle such lofty English? I for one am confident that we will warm to it and gradually come to appreciate it with gratitude. As our presenter at the workshop on the new translation told us with a smile, “The Brits have been saying this for decades, so I’m sure we can figure it out!”

by Joseph Bottum

WHAT THE NEW YORK TIMES DIDN'T SAY

It’s amazing what’s left out of obituaries. On 8th August 2010, actress Patricia Neal died, aged eighty-four. The next day her obituary appeared in *The New York Times*, where reporter Aljean Harmetz discussed Neal’s life and career in detail. Neal won an Academy Award for Best Actress for her role in the film *Hud* (1963). She later made a remarkable recovery from a series of strokes that she had in 1965. In 1949 the twenty-three-year-old Neal appeared in *The Fountainhead*, an adaptation of Ayn Rand’s novel, with Gary Cooper. During the filming, Neal fell in love with the older (and married) Cooper, and the two began a three-year affair. Neal eventually became pregnant. Under pressure from Cooper and in fear that having a child out of wedlock would destroy her career, Patricia Neal had an abortion. In her book, *As I Am: An Autobiography* (1983), Neal recalled the guilt she experienced. “But for over thirty years, alone, in the night, I cried,” she wrote. “For years and years I cried over that baby. And whenever I had too much to drink, I would remember that I had not allowed him to exist. I admired Ingrid Bergman for having her [illegitimate] son. She had guts. I did not. And I regret it with all my heart. If I had only one thing to do over in my life, I would have that

baby.” Harmetz mentions Neal’s abortion and briefly quotes her regrets from her autobiography. But here is what Harmetz doesn’t mention. Neal eventually converted to Catholicism (as did Cooper). She also became a pro-life activist. In 2007 Neal served as the honorary co-chair for the twenty-second Annual Charity Ball for Life. According to Msgr. James Lisante, who celebrated Neal’s funeral Mass, Neal often told women who were thinking about having an abortion: “Don’t make my mistake. Let your baby live.”

LEUVEN REORIENTATES ITS CATHOLICISM

After almost six centuries, the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven – the oldest continuing Catholic university in the world and alma mater to such distinguished graduates as Erasmus, St. Alberto Hurtado and Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen – is rethinking the whole “Katholieke” thing. “It’s time for a different orientation,” says Mark Waer, the rector of the university. It seems the university has been contemplating cutting ties with the Church for some time, but the final straw was the Vatican statement condemning the Nobel committee’s decision to award in vitro fertilisation pioneer Robert Edwards the 2010 Nobel Prize in medicine. “Every new scientific insight clashes with resistance from the Vatican,” the rector complains. The Church’s “rigid Catholic morals” (Waer’s words) don’t fit well with what the rector calls the university’s “aspirations in biomedical research”. Of course, Waer assures us, “this doesn’t mean we drop the ‘K’ in our name. We stand behind the values of the Catholic faith” – at least the ones that earn Waer’s imprimatur.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE?

Many of us have grown frustrated with the environmentalist movement, at times because of its demand for what feels like religious observance, and at other times because of a blurry distinction between sensible and lunatic approaches. To follow the logic of some environmentalists, human beings are inextricably part of the problem behind climate disruption: we can labour to diminish our net harm to Mother Earth, but it remains clear that our presence and

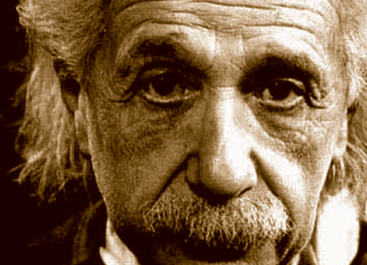
consumption cause harm. So, then, would the passing away of the human race make things better? Or would the earth be better off if we kept ourselves alive? Well, both – and neither. While dying off would, we’re told, be quite pleasing to Gaia, dying itself is an environmentally expensive proposition. As a recent *Time* article noted:

Death, despite being the most natural of processes, is bad for the environment. Coffins, most of which are made from nonbiodegradable chipboard, take up valuable land space. Even when coffins are biodegradable, embalming liquid, which often contains carcinogenic formaldehyde, can leak into the soil. Cremation, during which remains are burned at 1,562°F (850°C), comes with its own problems. According to the research of University of Melbourne professor Roger Short, the process can create up to 350 lb. (160 kg) of greenhouse gases per corpse, including the remains of the coffin.

So if both living and dying are bad for the earth, we can only hope the green movement can establish some magisterial authority to explain to us exactly what it is we should do. Otherwise we’ll have to keep listening to Al Gore.

SUICIDE STATS

It’s always hard to bring up points such as this in argumentation, as they tend to inflame the passions. But it’s heartening to find that irony – along with argumentation – is on your side of the debate. In Oregon, where assisted suicide is legal for the elderly and infirm, state officials have been concerned of late with a rising suicide rate among Oregonians who aren’t officially considered damaged goods. With the Oregon suicide rate 35 percent higher than the national average, bureaucrats at the state health authority have expressed dismay (but are, perhaps, also relieved) that suicides of the elderly have been legally redefined so as not drive this horrifying statistic up even further. The bureaucrats don’t seem to think it’s odd that they are advocating the public funding of suicide prevention in a state whose government promotes suicide. In other words, suicide is really, really bad, except when it’s not.



Cutting Edge

Science and Religion News

Avoiding The Key Question: “Am I A Monkey”?

The Californian Professor Francisco Ayala, the Spanish winner of this year’s Templeton Prize, has now published a short work entitled *Am I a Monkey?* It is a deliberately concise volume, just 83 pages long, examining six short questions on the acceptability of evolutionary theory, in accessible language. The six questions he tackles are: (i) *Am I a Monkey?* (ii) *Why is Evolution a Theory?* (iii) *What is DNA?* (iv) *Do all Scientists accept Evolution?* (v) *How did Life Begin?* (vi) *Can one Believe in Evolution and God?* Written by an eminent Catholic scientist who was involved heavily in the March 2009 conference in Rome’s Gregorian University on the legacy of Darwin, this little book in many ways provides an ideal starting point for a Christian eager to understand the evidence for the theory of evolution.

Ayala is at pains to show that the evidence for evolutionary theory is overwhelming, and that it provides a sensible framework in which to do biology, explaining many of the characteristics of living organisms and their interrelation. The idea of a common ancestor to all living creatures is supported by the fossil record, by anatomical similarities, and ultimately by molecular biology, the remarkable mapping of evolution possible by comparison of creatures’ DNA profiles. All of these are explained simply by Ayala in the course of his six answers.

However, the very question which he does not fully answer is the one of the title: *Am I a Monkey?* As we highlighted in the July/August 2010 version of this column, Ayala does not affirm that man’s nature is dual, spiritual as well as material, which would explain exactly how man is fundamentally different to all other created beings on earth. He merely repeats his quotation of A.H. Strong from 1885 “that the brutish ancestry of human beings is not incompatible with their exalted status in the image of God” (p. 75) which is true, but falls far short of an explanation.

Strangely for someone feted for his harmonising of science and religion, he embraces (p. 73) the profoundly unhelpful, culturally speaking, cop-out of their “non-overlapping magisteria”. This influential post-modern idea of Stephen J. Gould affirms that science and religion are two different windows from which to view the world, and there should be no cross-over. This attitude preempts serious consideration of the higher question of a *synthesis* of faith and science which is the real need.

“Strangely for someone feted for his harmonising of science and religion, he embraces the cop-out of their ‘non-overlapping magisteria’”.

It is interesting to note that Gould was inspired to consider non-overlapping magisteria after reading Pius XII’s 1950 encyclical *Humani Generis*, which famously allows for the hypothesis of evolution of the human body in as much as this does not contradict the divine infusion of the soul. If we use Gould to interpret Catholic teaching we are bound to be dualistic not just about science and religion but also about body and spirit, as if God somewhat arbitrarily glues a spiritual soul onto the physical human body. As we briefly discussed in our last editorial such thinking is behind the extremely widespread academic ignorance of the idea of the spiritual soul. Yet this idea is basic to Catholic tradition and coherent anthropology.

Newman on Lawful Matter and Originating Mind

In his first meditation to the Pope and the Roman Curia for Advent, Fr Raniero Cantalamessa OFM Cap, Preacher to the Pontifical Household, delivered a wide-ranging and fascinating analysis of ‘scientism’ as part of a series on obstacles in the mind of modern society to a new evangelisation. The other meditations treated ‘secularism’ and ‘rationalism’. In his second section,

entitled ‘No to scientism, yes to science,’ he offered a fascinating quotation from our new English *beatus*, Cardinal John Henry Newman. Here’s how Fr Cantalamessa introduces a passage written by Newman in 1868, just a few years after the publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*:

“The new Blessed John Henry Newman has given us a luminous example of an open and constructive attitude to science. Nine years after the publication of Darwin’s work on the evolution of species, when not a few spirits around him were disturbed and perplexed, he reassured them, expressing a judgment that anticipated the Church’s present one on the compatibility of such a theory with biblical faith. It is worthwhile to listen again to key passages of his letter to Canon J. Walker, which still retain much of their validity: ‘I do not fear the theory [of Darwin] ... It does not seem to me to follow that creation is denied because the Creator, millions of years ago, gave laws to matter. He first created matter and then he created laws for it – laws which should construct it into its present wonderful beauty, and accurate adjustment and harmony of parts gradually. We do not deny or circumscribe the Creator, because we hold he has created the self-acting originating human mind, which has almost a creative gift; much less then do we deny or circumscribe His power, if we hold that He gave matter such laws as by their blind instrumentality moulded and constructed through innumerable ages the world as we see it ... Mr Darwin’s theory need not then be atheistical, be it true or not; it may simply be suggesting a larger idea of Divine Prescience and Skill ... At first sight I do not see that “the accidental evolution or organic beings” is inconsistent with divine design – It is accidental to us, not to God.” (*Letters & Diaries*, vol. XXIV).

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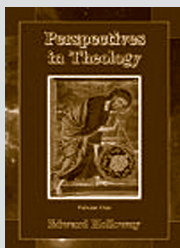
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Faith Movement offers a perspective upon the unity of the cosmos by which we can show clearly the transcendent existence of God and the essential distinction between matter and spirit. We offer a vision of God as the true Environment of men in whom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

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

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