

# faith

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Roger Nesbitt

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Peter Bristow

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# faith

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# Time to Proclaim the Primacy of Jesus Christ in Creation *Editorial*

“The Christian picture of the world is this, that the world in its details is the product of a long process of evolution but that at the most profound level it comes from the Logos. Thus it carries rationality within itself.” (Pope Benedict XVI, as Cardinal Ratzinger, *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*. Ignatius 2002 p.139)

## What is the Relationship Between Jesus Christ and the Universe?

Who is Jesus Christ? Why did he come? What relevance does he have for us, as we begin the third millennium since his birth? The future of Christianity, of the Church, and indeed of the whole of the human race, depends on the answer to these questions.

This is an age of enormous development in human and scientific knowledge. We live in a world which has been transformed by science and technology. Back in the 1920s the philosopher A.N. Whitehead wrote:

“When we consider what religion is for mankind, and what science is, it is no exaggeration to say that the future course of history depends upon the decision of this generation as to the relations between them.”<sup>1</sup>

However, we can and must formulate this question in an even more radical way. What is the relationship between the universe, as revealed to us by science, and Jesus Christ, the greatest, most remarkable religious teacher the world has ever known, and who claimed to be the Son of God?

This is not an idle question, nor just a question for those who happen to have a philosophical turn of mind. Our twenty-first century science-inspired culture is relentlessly becoming more inimical to the Christian formation of the human personality. The only truly effective way to counter this particular yet powerful resistance to the Grace of God is to show that Jesus makes sense of our increasingly successful knowledge of the physical realm. We believe that we can show more than this. Amazingly we can show that the cosmos which science is increasingly laying bare to our eyes is made for Christ.

It is the unique characteristic of mankind that although we live in the physical universe – indeed we can trace our material origins back through the evolution of life and the physical development of matter, all the way back to the Big Bang itself – we yearn for something more than matter, something greater. To show that Jesus Christ is the meaning and fulfilment of mankind, we will need to show that he is the full answer to that yearning, the utter fulfilment and joy of that higher, spiritual aspect of man. But further, we will need to show that he, in the unity of his divine *and* human natures, is the meaning of the entire universe itself.

## The Debate About the Place of Christ in Creation

This is the classic debate between the Scotists and the Thomists on the place of Christ in Creation. The Scotist view teaches that Christ was predestined to come into the

world before the creation of the universe. This means that Christ would have become Incarnate even had there been no sin to give us the fullness of salvation and grace that we need. We can say that the consensus among theologians at present seems to be Scotist. Nonetheless it is not as central to the Church's theology and catechesis as it should be. In the seminaries and theological faculties it is treated on the one hand as of purely academic interest and on the other, as portrayed to many of us when training to be priests, of no significance at all. We would like to argue here that the time has come for this question of the place of Christ in Creation to be decided at the highest level and be given priority in the Church's theology and catechesis in the twenty-first century.

Atheism, and the purely secular approach to life it inspires, gives no answer to the meaning of the universe. Faced with the magnificent development of the universe and the evolution of life – processes bursting with intelligence, scientific wisdom, and purpose – it asserts that there is absolutely no reason for their existence. There is thus a contradiction at the heart of so-called ‘scientific’ atheism, which recognises a wonderful, meaning-filled universe, but denies the Intelligent Mind which gives it meaning.

## The Pessimism of the New Atheism

The “new atheism” of such writers as Richard Dawkins is given widespread publicity and seems to have considerable influence. Dawkins in trying to address the reasons for the universe's existence comes to a very negative conclusion:

“The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference.”<sup>2</sup>

Professor Keith Ward replied, somewhat diffidently:

“Dawkins’ belief that this is a blindly indifferent universe is a piece of wishful thinking [...] In fact, though evolutionary biology itself, as a scientific discipline, is silent on the subject of God's existence, it provides a quite remarkable array of data which strongly suggests the existence of at least an extremely wise and powerful designer. The universe does not look blind; on the contrary, it looks as if it has been contrived with the greatest intelligence... The hypothesis of God is superior in explanatory power.”<sup>3</sup>

The new atheists avoid a central fact of our experience of the universe – that it is good and that it is our home. Despite the enormous impact of sin and evil it remains a beautiful and good universe, coming from the source of goodness



## **"We must show that Jesus makes sense of our increasingly successful knowledge of the physical realm."**

itself. St. Paul preaching on his first missionary journey made this point:

"We have come with good news to make you turn from these empty idols to the living God who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that these hold. In the past he allowed each nation to go its own way; but even then he did not leave you without evidence of himself in the good things he does for you: he sends you rain from heaven, he makes your crops grow when they should, he gives you food and makes you happy." (Acts 14:15-17)

The new atheism is not rational and many today realise this. God is returning from the evidence of science. Two well-known scientists have famously and bluntly said that: "Science is a surer path to God than Religion" (Paul Davies) and "The universe is a put-up job" (Fred Hoyle). The "Test of Faith" DVD we reviewed in our last Cutting Edge column presents a range of such contemporary scientists. Only last month Professor Bersanelli of the recently launched 'Planck laboratory', a European space agency project, declared "it is in the wonder and the beauty and the connectedness of the whole creation [...] that I see a sign of the Creator." It is natural, then, to ask: What is the ultimate purpose of the universe and why did God create it? It is the need to respond to this question that makes the debate about the place of Christ in Creation so important in preaching the Gospel today.

### **The Teaching of the Apostles on the Cosmic Christ**

The Apostles preach Christ as our personal redeemer who forgives our sins and rises from the dead to conquer death. He is our personal saviour and redeemer. This must always remain our key message: "For me to live is Christ" (Phil 1:21), "I live now not I but Christ lives in me... I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal 2:20-21)

Nonetheless the same Apostles also clearly preach that Christ is the meaning of the cosmos. There are many texts but the key ones are: John 1:1-14; Ephesians 1: 3-10; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1: 1-4. In these texts the vision of Christ in the early Church was clearly that the whole creation was predestined for Christ before the tragedy of sin. In the next article in this issue Fr Nesbitt looks at the presentation of this theme in Catholic tradition and its scriptural foundation. Below we would draw out the key scriptural themes, before moving on to the contemporary magisterium.

Both St. John and St. Paul, the deepest and greatest teachers of the New Testament, preach the same vision of the cosmic Christ. They proclaim that the universe has no meaning except for Christ and that it was created "in Him, through Him and for Him." (John 1:3; Col 1:16) The vision of Sts John and Paul is the one from which Scotus drew his inspiration. We believe for our time that we should draw out "things new and old" from this great treasury of teaching.

Pope Benedict XVI in a very interesting comment on Colossians 1:15-20 in one of his General Audiences in 2005 refers to the Jewish teaching, at the time of Christ, that: "The whole world was created in view of the Messiah". It is generally understood that the Rabbis in Jesus' time clearly taught that the Messiah was predestined from the beginning of Creation. The Pope reminds us that the Jews were Scotists on this point before the coming of Christ! We suspect that on the road to Damascus St. Paul found his rabbinic teaching was perfectly fulfilled in his overwhelming vision of Christ as the Lord of Creation, Salvation and Redemption which he was to proclaim later in his letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians.

### **The Perspective of St. John**

St. John's prologue to his Gospel (John 1:1-18) clearly presents Christ as the fulfilment of Creation which is the product of the Logos and the Mind of God. We need to return to that important text again in this age. It gives us the deepest vision of the early Christians on the place of Christ in creation. As St. Paul did, so St. John also takes a cosmic perspective on his Lord and Master. He begins by echoing the very first words of the creation narrative from the book of Genesis: "*In the beginning* was the Word ..." (John 1:1, cf. Gen 1:1). The "Word" (in Greek *Logos*, from which we have the English word *logic*) means the personified Wisdom and Intelligence of God, the Mind of God, in creating. St. John is quite clear that the *Logos* is divine: "... the Word was with God *and the Word was God*. He was with God in the beginning." (1:1-2) Everything is created through him (1:3).

In this vision mankind can only find its light, its true environment, in him: "All that came to be had life in him and that life was the light of men," (1:4) and again: "The Word was the true light that enlightens all men; and he was coming into the world." (1:9) St. John acknowledges the effects of sin on this coming of the Word into the world, but the whole tenor of his vision is that sin causes a failure of recognition and acceptance of the Word, not that sin is the reason for his coming. "He was in the world that had its being through him, and the world did not know him. He came to his own domain and his own people did not accept him." (1:10-11)

Then comes the climax of the whole of this vision – the greatest description of who Jesus Christ really is:

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth." (1:14)

St. John is teaching many things in this simple verse. In the first place, the Word through whom all things were made takes flesh, a full human nature: Jesus Christ is true God and true man. Next, the universe was only created for the Word to become flesh. St. John is surely leading us to this conclusion by his careful interweaving of the themes of the

## Time to Proclaim the Primacy of Jesus Christ in Creation

### continued

eternal Mind of God, the Word (1:1 and 1:14), his involvement in the work of creation, which is “his own domain”, from *the beginning* (1:3 and 1:10), along with several references to the Incarnation itself (1:9, 10, 11, 14).

And there is yet another, deeper meaning to this important text. The Greek word *eskenosen*, usually translated as *lived* or *dwelt*, is translated literally as *tabernacled*.<sup>5</sup> It means literally that God *pitched his tent* among his people. (The same word is used with the same deep meaning in Rev 21:3, and the idea is prefigured in Sirach 24:3-10.) This unique expression is used in the Old Testament of the *Tent of Meeting* or *Tabernacle* in the desert, where Moses and Aaron went to speak with God, the place where God lived among them and beside them. And the words which follow, “we saw his glory”, are also related to the Tent of Meeting: when Moses had finished its construction, “the cloud overshadowed the Tent of Meeting and the *glory* of the Lord filled the tabernacle.” (Exod 40:34) This in turn alludes to the *overshadowing* of Mary by the Holy Spirit in the conception of Christ (Luke 1:35). So St. John is describing the Incarnation as also the coming of the ‘New Temple’. In his own Person Jesus fulfils what was shown symbolically by the Old Testament tabernacle and temple: he is truly the place where God dwells among his people.

Furthermore, St. John describes the great benefits that we receive through the Word made flesh: firstly, grace and truth, which are so much more wonderful than the Mosaic Law (1:14, 16-17); and then, above all, personal knowledge of God, and intimacy with him, which alone can satisfy us:

“No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, who has made him known.” (1:18)

As Chapter 6 of John’s Gospel goes on to confirm there are intimations here that Christ’s very “flesh” (*sarx*), in its very physicality, is our Bread of Life. The Primacy of Christ in the light of modern science vindicates, with a new profundity we believe, the Catholic tradition which has affirmed Tertullian’s “the flesh is the hinge of salvation” (see our Editorial for September 07, “Renewing our Vision of the Sacraments”, and the lively correspondence that followed in subsequent issues).

This vision of St. John is very old but also very up to date. The idea of creation through the *Logos*, the Word and Wisdom and Intelligence of God, harmonises perfectly with the modern, scientific perspective on the universe as highly intelligent, bursting with wisdom, and full of amazing design. But St. John goes on to show that this scientific knowledge of the universe is inadequate on its own: the universe leads to man – and the meaning of man and of the whole universe is only found in the *Word made flesh*, for whom the universe was made. Moreover this is not just an abstract theory. Through Jesus Christ it gives every single human being a living meaning and a relationship with God. It is a vision

*personified* in the Word made flesh. Jesus Christ, for St. John, is therefore, we would argue, the Master-Key to the meaning of the universe, and the Master-Key to our own personal lives. It is a single vision of creation fulfilled in the Incarnation – probably the most profound statement ever made of the true meaning of Christianity.

### The Vision of St. Paul

We have already seen how St. Paul shows us the deeply personal nature of our communion with the divine Person of Jesus our Saviour. In his letter to the Ephesians he states that God “chose us in [Christ] *before the foundation of the world*.” (Eph 1:4) Thus not only we ourselves but Christ also is part of God’s plan from before creation, and so this is clearly before sin. The universe is created for us and even more for Christ. St. Paul continues to talk about God’s eternal purpose, “which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” (Eph 1:9-10) So Christ is the beginning and the end – the Alpha and the Omega – of the whole of creation.

Commenting on this passage Pope John Paul II says:

“In God’s eternal design, the Church, as the unity of humanity in Christ the Head, becomes part of a plan which includes all creation. It is a ‘cosmic’ plan, that of uniting everything in Christ the Head. The firstborn of all creation becomes the principle of ‘recapitulation’ for this creation, so that God can be ‘all in all’ (1 Cor 15:28). Therefore, Christ is the *Keystone of the Universe*. As the living body of those who belong to him by their response to the vocation of being children of God, the Church is associated with him, as participant and minister, at the centre of the plan of universal redemption.”<sup>6</sup>

In his letter to the Colossians St. Paul again gives us this same vision of Christ, the “first born of creation” (Col 1:15), as pre-destined before creation: “all things were created through him *and for him*.” (v. 16) There are echoes here of Christ as the Heir to creation. Once again, he is clearly both the beginning and the end of creation: its origin and purpose. Again in his second letter to Timothy, he states: “God saved us and called us to be holy – not because of anything we ourselves have done but for his own purpose and by his own grace. This grace has already been granted to us, *in Christ Jesus, before the beginning of time*.” (2 Tim 1:9)

### The Letter to the Hebrews

Another passage from the New Testament should be quoted, because it witnesses to this same faith and vision of the first Christians in very succinct and beautiful language:

“At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken through his Son, the Son that he has appointed *to inherit everything*



## “the Church must proclaim the cosmic Christ as an essential part of the preaching of the Gospel”

and through whom he made everything there is. He is the radiant light of God's glory and the perfect copy of his nature, sustaining the universe by his powerful command.” (Heb 1:1-3)

### The Magisterium on the Threshold of the Cosmic Christ

In the history of the Church the place of Christ in Creation has never been taught by the Magisterium at the highest level. But in very recent years it has begun to address the question. The first serious references are in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992) and in the first chapter of Pope John Paul II's letter for the new millennium *Tertio Millenio Adveniente* (1994). In both of the above the title “**Lord of the Cosmos and Lord of History**” given to Christ is a real development of doctrine. If Jesus Christ is “Lord of the Cosmos” then we are surely right to presume that this is before the advent of sin. Surely he does not just become Lord of the Cosmos as a consequence of sin?

The *Catechism of Catholic Church* might be seen as developing upon the seminal Vatican II statement, which it closely paraphrases in paragraph 450, that the Church “holds that in her most benign Lord and Master can be found the key, the focal point and the goal of man, as well as of all human history.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 10).

The Catechism states that:

“God's ‘plan of his loving kindness’, is conceived by the Father before the foundation of the world, in his beloved Son. This plan is a “grace [which] was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began”, stemming immediately from Trinitarian love. It unfolds in the work of creation, the whole history of salvation after the fall, and the missions of the Son and the Spirit, which are continued in the mission of the Church.” (257).

It is very difficult to see how a plan conceived in the Trinity before sin could be anything other than Scotist. Are we to believe that our sharing in the life of the Blessed Trinity only comes about due to original sin?

While not giving this question the prominence it should perhaps deserve the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, gives some remarkable texts that lead to the threshold the cosmic Christ. Some of these important texts are:

“In the creation of the world and of man, God gave the first and universal witness to his almighty love and his wisdom, the first proclamation of the ‘plan of his loving goodness’, which finds its goal in the new creation in Christ.” (315)

“Jesus Christ is Lord: he possesses all power in heaven and on earth. He is ‘far above all rule and authority and power and dominion’, for the Father ‘has put all things under his feet.’ (Eph 1:20-22) **Christ is Lord of the cosmos and of history.** In him human history and indeed all creation are ‘set forth’ and transcendently fulfilled.” (668, our emphasis)

“God created the world for the sake of communion with his divine life, a communion brought about by the ‘convocation’ of men in Christ, and this ‘convocation’ is the Church. ... Just as God's will is creation and is called ‘the world’, so his intention is the salvation of men, and it is called ‘the Church’.” (760)

“The name ‘Jesus’ contains all: God and man and the whole economy of creation and salvation.” (2666, see also 280)

In *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, Pope John Paul II states:

“Christ, the Son who is of one being with the Father, is therefore the one who reveals God's plan for all creation and for man in particular ... ‘[He] fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear... By his incarnation the Son of God united himself in some sense with every man’. (Vat II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 22)” (4).

“Christ, true God and true man, **the Lord of the cosmos, is also the Lord of history**, of which he is ‘the Alpha and the Omega’, ‘the beginning and the end’ (Rev 1:8; 21:6). In him the Father has spoken the definitive word about mankind and its history.” (5, our emphasis)

In Pope John Paul II's Encyclical Letter *Dies Domini* (On the Lord's Day) (1998) he states:

“It is true that the Word was made flesh ‘in the fullness of time’ (Gal 4:4); but it is also true that, in virtue of the mystery of his identity as the eternal Son of the Father, he is the origin and end of the universe: ‘Through him all things were made, and without him was made nothing that was made’. (Jn 1:3) and, ‘In him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible ... All things were created through him and for him’. (Col 1:16) This active presence of the Son in the creative work of God is revealed fully in the Paschal Mystery, in which Christ, rising as ‘the first fruits of those who had fallen asleep’ (1 Cor 15:20), established the new creation and began the process which he himself will bring to completion when he returns in glory to ‘deliver the kingdom to God the Father ...’, so that God may be everything to everyone’ (1 Cor 15: 24,28). Already at the dawn of creation, the plan of God implied Christ's ‘cosmic mission’. This *Christocentric perspective*, embracing the whole arc of time, filled God's well pleased gaze when, ceasing from all his work, he ‘blessed the seventh day and made it holy’ (Gen 2:3). Then was born the ‘Sabbath’, so characteristic of the first covenant, and which foretells the sacred day of the new and final covenant [in Christ]. (8) *The Sabbath recalls that the universe and history belong to God. It is a celebration of the marvels which God has wrought in creation and salvation.*” (15)

# Time to Proclaim the Primacy of Jesus Christ in Creation

## continued

### Proclaiming the Full Gospel

Thus we can see that this insight is rooted in Biblical revelation and the early Church's profession of faith, as well as being increasingly widely and authoritatively acknowledged in our own era. Because of this we feel justified in arguing that, at this juncture of the Church's history, the Church must proclaim the cosmic Christ as an essential part of the preaching of the Gospel and that if we do not do so then we are just not preaching the full Gospel.

It is interesting that Fr Philippe Yates in his article in *Faith* (Jan/Feb 2008) on Blessed John Duns Scotus made the interesting point that the pre-conciliar Church was too narrowly Thomist on everything, including the place of Christ in Creation. Fr Yates thought that there was an unbalanced perspective which followed Pope Leo XIII's very necessary attempt to reform theological studies in the Church at the end of the 19th century, a narrowness that was made worse by the modernist crisis that continued into the 20th century. For these reasons the great tradition of the Franciscan school, and of Scotus in particular, were not given due prominence. Perhaps it is time, while not forgetting the genius and perspective of St. Thomas Aquinas on other parts of the Catholic Faith, to reaffirm this vital tradition

Let us remember that if those who are Thomist concerning the most basic rationale for the Incarnation are correct, then without sin there would have been no Virgin Mary, no Incarnation and no Jesus Christ. As the Franciscan Maximilian Dean writes: "If man's redemption is the primary reason, then sin has the upper hand. In other words, all the positive blessings of the Incarnation which can be expressed, quite apart from the redemption, would hinge upon sin – our divinisation in Christ, our adoption as sons of God, our eternal predestination in Christ... are all these blessings really because of Adam's fall?"<sup>7</sup>

Development of the relationship between Christ and Creation is now essential because it is at the heart of the relationship between Religion and Science, and Faith and Reason.

### "All Things Have Meaning in Jesus Christ"

To return to the question posed at the beginning, what is the relationship between the universe and Jesus Christ?

In the first place, we have seen that, from the very sciences themselves, the universe reveals God as the supreme Mind behind the amazing order, design and beauty of creation. And this creation is purposeful: it is set up to develop and evolve, leading ultimately to man, who is made body and soul for God. Next, God, who created the universe, revealed through his People before Christ came that "the world was created only for the Messiah". Thus the Messiah, or the Christ, is both the total fulfilment of the universe and the total fulfilment and happiness of man.

Jesus claimed to be the Christ – to be God in Person, our Saviour and Redeemer; and he manifested that divinity in his teaching and in his miracles, especially his own resurrection. His claim is unique among all the religious leaders and prophets the world has ever known. Jesus also claimed that the universe was made for him: he is the "Heir" of the Kingdom prepared before the foundation of the world; and if because of sin we do not acknowledge him, then "the very stones will cry out". St. John and St. Paul also clearly taught the same doctrine: "through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him", and "all things, visible and invisible, were created through him and for him."

Thus we can see the relationship between the universe and Jesus Christ: **Jesus Christ is the Master-Key to the meaning of the universe.** The universe was made through him and for him. It was made so that he could take flesh and enter his creation; so that he could give himself to us in love in the greatest way possible, by taking on our human nature to be our brother, our Saviour and our God.

The Master-Key could not have been found in any secular philosophy or in the physical sciences alone since man is made to the image of God and his meaning and purpose, and that of the whole universe, will only be found in God himself. All attempts to find the meaning of the universe and of man in secular philosophies or in created things are doomed to failure. We must look to God for the revelation of that Word, that Master-Key which unlocks the final meaning of the universe – Jesus Christ, God and Man, Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all things. In summary:

"Without Christ man is meaningless, without man the evolution of life is meaningless, without life the earth is meaningless, but all things have meaning in Jesus Christ, to whom all things visible and invisible are relative, and to whom all things bear witness in their being."<sup>8</sup>

We can and must draw a new vision of Christ for this age, which will be the basis of a synthesis of science and religion. It is a vision that our secularised world at its deepest level desperately needs and is longing for; for Jesus Christ is Lord of the cosmos and Lord of history, the Master-Key to the meaning of the universe, and also the Master-Key to the meaning of every mind and heart.

### Conclusion: Time to Proclaim the Primacy of Christ

We have said before in *Faith* magazine that Pope John Paul II, supported especially by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, through his wide ranging and deep teaching over a long pontificate had really re-built the Catholic Faith and encouraged us all.<sup>9</sup> In his teaching He had brought the Church to the very threshold of a new synthesis of the Catholic Faith and the scientific vision of the universe. In some of his catecheses, in the Catechism, and in his Letter for the new millennium there has been a remarkable convergence.



**“St. John goes on to show that the universe leads to man”.**

What we are asking now is that Pope Benedict should go further and finally address the central synthetic principle of all Catholic teaching, *Christ the Sacrament of Creation*, and issue an encyclical on the Primacy of Christ in Creation. The Pope himself has got very close to this in the words quoted at the top of this piece. We ask that the Church should now proclaim the Primacy of Christ over all Creation. For a new evangelisation we must preach the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Such a proclamation would be part of a tradition started in the Old Testament in the teaching that the world as only created for the Messiah. It was fulfilled by Sts John and Paul, the greatest and most profound teachers of the New Testament, and has then continued in the long history of the Church by a wide range of saints and doctors such as: St. Irenaeus, St. Justin Martyr, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. John Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Albert the Great, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Bonaventure, St. Mary Magdalen Pazzi, St. Francis de Sales, St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Edith Stein, and not forgetting Pope John Paul II.

We would humbly ask the Holy Father to articulate this teaching and to proclaim finally that the Universe was only created for Jesus Christ, and for no other reason. Only Christ therefore is the ultimate answer to the personal, social and even ecological problems of the cosmos in which we live. Christ is the personal answer, bringing peace to our souls, conquering the appalling tragedy of sin and death. Christ is the social answer, teaching us to value all human life and how we behave to each other. Christ is even the ecological answer, bringing God's presence into the cosmos which was created for Him. We realise that this claim for

Christ is a staggering one, a “sign of contradiction”. Many, however, disturbed by the emptiness and pessimism of the new atheism and agnosticism are yearning to find the true meaning of the universe, but there will be others who will hate and reject it. Thus it was with Jesus at the beginning so it will be at the end but the Gospel must be preached to the whole of creation.

### Post Script

If any reader, particularly from beyond *Faith* movement, would be interested in supporting the cause that the Primacy of Christ in Creation be more officially proclaimed and promoted do please let us know. It is also now possible for those committed to the importance of this vision to join *Faith* movement. On this theological theme the two *Faith* Pamphlets in the series *Reasons for Believing Jesus our Saviour* and *Jesus our Redeemer* are recommended.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>A.N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, Cambridge University Press, 1926, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Dawkins, *River out of Eden* p.133 Wiedenfeld & Nicholson. 1995.

<sup>3</sup>Keith Ward, *God, Chance and Necessity* p.202 One World. 1996.

<sup>4</sup>General Audience 8th Sep 2005, and also in *Psalms and Canticles for Evening Prayer* CTS. p. 169.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Nestlé, *Greek/English Inter-linear Translation*, Bagster, 1979.

<sup>6</sup>General Audience, 31 July 1991.

<sup>7</sup>Maximilian Dean FI *A Primer on the Absolute Primacy of Christ: Blessed John Duns Scotus and the Franciscan Thesis* Franciscans of the Immaculate Publications 2006 p. 13.

<sup>8</sup>Edward Holloway, *The Path from Science to Jesus Christ*, Faith Pamphlets, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup>“John Paul II: The Outstanding Teaching Legacy – But Is Anyone Listening?” *Faith* June 2005.

# PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

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# A Priestly Perspective Upon Dying

by Fr Augustine Hoey OSB

*Fr Augustine Hoey, an oblate of the Benedictine order and an author, meditates upon the role of the priest as minister of Christ's death.*

The ultimate purpose of my priestly life is to prepare people to die: to live immersed in this world, while continually lifting our eyes beyond. I, regularly when reciting the Office, take on my lips words of Psalm 116 "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." In the *Anima Christi* I say "...in the hour of my death call me..." Each time I seek the support of Mary in reciting the Hail Mary I ask her to be near me when I die "...pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death." How do I apply this to myself? As a priest, how often do I preach about death or reflect on my own dying?

## Thinking About Death

The Christian gospel (good news) can be summed up in three words, Christ is Risen (not Christ is crucified!) The Resurrection is at the heart of the Apostolic preaching (Acts 2:22-36). It immediately gives everything in this world an eternal perspective. All the problems and issues of our day, which are so vividly presented to us on our TV screens, must be seen in the context of Eternal Life. St. Vincent de Paul says, "We can only be truly Incarnational when we have an eternal perspective about the whole creation". We are before the unfathomable strangeness of Easter where human perception touches the very frontiers of the Eternal

"The ultimate purpose of my priestly life is to prepare people to die: to live immersed in this world, while continually lifting our eyes beyond."

Many shudder at the thought of death and don't want to talk about it. Yet it is so vividly and daily brought before us on the TV screen in the violent war-torn world in which we live, and so close to us in the scourge of abortion. At one time dying usually took place within the context of the family, within the home, but now it is often moved to a hospital or hospice, surrounded not by our families but by the paraphernalia of the medical profession.

My priestly vocation means I shall frequently be at a death bed. Thomas a Kempis tells me, 'If thou hast seen anyone die, reflect that thou wilt pass the same way thyself. There is a tremendous emphasis in the gospels on being always prepared and ready to die. Death may come unexpectedly 'like a thief in the night'. The foolish bridesmaids were not ready (Mat 25:1-13). The man who built bigger barns was not ready (Lk 12:13-21)

## Preparing For Death

The Lord's Prayer sweeps us up to Heaven in its opening words, 'Our Father who art in heaven'. This sets the right context for the rest of the prayer. There are very few hymns we sing in which we do not say how much we are looking forward to our life in Heaven e.g. 'O Salutaris', 'O grant us life

that shall not end in our true native land (Heaven) with Thee'. The early Christians spoke of death as our '*dies natalis*', that is our birthday. Dying, like being born, is something no-one else can do for us. It is done alone,

We are born,

Love, beget children, make friends,

Stay single, strive for mastery or fame

Or simply go on living.

To each, in turn comes the unavoidable ending

Death the ultimate solitude, which no-one can share.

Am I convinced that death is a new birth? Life is changed, not taken away. It is birth into an endless life. "I do not die, I enter into life", writes Thérèse of Lisieux. For the Christian, death establishes our final end and there are no second chances.

I must frequently reflect on the fact that I have been created by God for Eternal life and all my earthly existence is meant to be a preparation for it. The days of preparation are tumbling away behind me. Eternity is coming towards us in great strides (cf. Thérèse of Lisieux)

Peter Abelard said

"Now in the meanwhile, with hearts raised on high,

I for that country must yearn and must sigh,

Seeking Jerusalem, dear native land,

Through my short exile on Babylon's strand"

Heaven is the full Vision of God. Occasionally I have a tiny glimpse of what it will be like. It will be a state of perfect love. All the loves I have on earth which have been spoilt and tarnished by my selfishness, will be put right. Human words cannot express these great realities. When mystics have caught the slightest glimpse, they have been beside themselves. Thomas Aquinas said that his monumental theological works were nothing but straw by comparison with the Reality. The Psalms tell me "I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living.... I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." St. Paul says, "Life to me, is Christ, but then death would be a positive gain" (Phil 1:20) and "What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, what the mind of man cannot visualise; all that God has prepared for those who love him" (1Cor 2:9).

I shall enter into contemplation of God's great wonder and masterpiece of creation, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Death will bring me to my final state. I know that during my time on earth I am unstable and often cry out with St. Paul "in my disordered nature I obey the law of sin" (Rom 7:25). Temptation lurks on every side, "Everyone, no matter how firmly he thinks he is standing, must be careful he does not fall" (1Cor 10 v13). Death will bring final faithfulness.



**“whatever I do, when united with the doing of Jesus, however small the effort or hidden the suffering, makes its impact felt throughout the whole church.”**

### **A Good Death**

My death is a unique event. There can be no rehearsal or repetition. It is the final choice for God; it is the culmination of all those myriad choices I have made for Him during my life. “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”. If I keep saying these words through out each day, my familiarity with them will make it easy to say them for the last time.

My dying, when united with that of Jesus, will give me a share in the wonder and mystery of redemption. I will deepen the understanding of my incorporation into Jesus at my baptism and how this brought me into a living relationship with all my fellow baptised in Heaven and on earth. So whatever I do, when united with the doing of Jesus, however small the effort or hidden the suffering, makes its impact felt throughout the whole church, militant, expecting and triumphant. Like a stone thrown into a pond the ripples are wide and far reaching.

Our Lord became obedient to and accepting of his death on the cross. If I accept my dying in union with his acceptance, I shall make reparation for all human infidelities and rebelliousness, including my own.

“All the loves I have on earth which have been spoilt and tarnished by my selfishness, will be put right.”

My death may be accompanied by physical pain and discomfort. I hope I may be able to unite these with Our Lord’s suffering on the cross to make amends for my own sins of sensuality and in reparation for a world addicted to sex and the cult of the body.

Our Lord hung naked on the cross, stripped of everything. As I lie dying I hope to be able to reflect on the fact that I brought nothing into this world and I can take nothing out and so make reparation for all the times I have bowed the knee to a society dominated by materialism. Perhaps in the process of dying I may be able to penetrate more deeply Our Lord’s words, “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”. I hope it will help to reconcile the deep distrust, envy and suspicion of each other which haunts the human race.

### **Priestly Visibility**

I, as a priest, am a living symbol of Eternity. I am a sign of contradiction: whenever I appear passions immediately crystallise, coalitions are formed, love and hatred spring up instantaneously and concentrate around me. I am a touchstone of consciences. I am never ignored. My very nature makes me a living witness to the ‘other world’. My mere presence speaks of that ‘here-after’ which so many would like to forget. I should be a concrete visible sign of Heaven. Yet what are the deep motives which prompt so many priests today not to be a visible sign, not to be men marked out in the middle of the crowd, or to dress in such

a way so as not to be recognised as one whom the finger of God touched at ordination? Why am I hiding in disguise? What am I afraid of?

Does all my priestly ecclesiastical activity cloud my vision of Eternity? Each morning, on rising, when I make an oblation of myself to God, I should always remind myself that I am one day nearer Heaven...one day nearer the goal and end of all my conflicts. “I long to be exiled from the body and to be at home with the Lord” says St. Paul (2Cor 5:7). This longing is no form of escapism from the daily round. I shall find that the more I prepare to die, the more my zeal to bring many people to glory will be quickened. A new edge will be given to my labours which, in one sense can be described as “preparing people to die”.

### **Priestly Dying**

Preparing myself daily for death will help me to see everything against the background of eternity and to have a right perspective about the tumult, the activities, the fashions and issues of this 21st century. It will give me a bright judgement. This is what I must teach, day in and day out. If I have prepared, here below, by a life of union with Jesus and with all my brothers and sisters, to live a final community life in Heaven, I shall be able, like St. Francis, to welcome death as a sister who opens the door of our Father’s house... “In the hour of my death call me and bid me come to you.”

A French priest sums it up very well:

“A priest must aim to fulfil the ideal of death, the death of a victim united with Jesus crucified. But let us not wait until the last hour to prepare to make this act of union. Perhaps we shall at the end be absolutely unconscious; perhaps surprised by death. At any rate we shall be weakened by suffering. Then we shall have neither time nor strength to improvise the great act of a fully Christian and sacerdotal death. Our whole life should be a preparatory exercise for the great act of our death, the act of our supreme sacrifice with Jesus. Perhaps in growing old, we shall be frightened by the emptiness, by the poverty of our sacerdotal life: a life which will seem to us a blank and a failure. The final supreme act can repair much (like the penitent thief). Let us prepare for this act of reparation. Let us not waste the greatest, the most fruitful moment of our life... the real final ‘handing over’.”

Dying is my last and greatest priestly function when in union with the victim of Calvary. It is my last offering of myself, however unworthy it may well be and I want to make it for the greater glory of God and for the benefit of the whole Church. It is my last Mass. ■

# The Christ Centred Vision of Creation: The Witness of Scripture and Tradition *by Roger Nesbitt*

Fr Roger Nesbitt, Chairman of *Faith* movement, and Parish Priest of Folkestone shows how the early Fathers harmoniously developed scriptural themes to present the Person of God-made-Man as the necessary completion of creation. He also brings out and reflects upon tensions in the tradition on this point. This article has been developed in a collaborative manner through *Faith* movement symposia.

## A Vision for our Times

Through the *Faith* movement we promote a vision of creation and revelation as one Christ-centred work of God. The so called “Scotist” perspective on the Incarnation is integral to that vision. This does not mean that we downplay the reality of sin and the importance of the cross, far from it, but we think that it is only by understanding the cosmic significance of the Incarnation that we can the full drama and measure of redemption.

The issue of the motive for the Incarnation has never been formally defined, but we can find at least a presumption of the Scotist perspective in many important magisterial texts, and an almost overwhelming wealth of opinions in its favour among the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. (for a comprehensive discussion of the sources see Dean, Maximilian Mary, *A Primer on the Absolute Primacy of Christ*, Academy of the Immaculate, 2006).

On the question of the purpose of the Incarnation the Catechism says that “He came for us and for our salvation” ... “in order to save us by reconciling us with God”<sup>1</sup>, and quotes St. Gregory of Nyssa: “Did not they (the sickness and slavery of humanity) move God to descend to human nature and visit it, since humanity was in such a miserable state.”<sup>2</sup> But it also lists three other motives for the Incarnation: “... so that we might know the love of God”; for Christ “... to be our model of holiness” and “... to make us partakers of the divine nature”, citing St. Irenaeus and quoting St. Athanasius famously that “God became a man so that we might become God”.<sup>3</sup> Then it quotes an early work of St. Thomas Aquinas: “The only begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in His divinity, assumed our nature, so that He, made man, might make men gods.”<sup>4</sup>

## Tension and Debate in The Tradition

St. Thomas is often regarded as the greatest champion of the opposing view of the Incarnation, which accordingly became known as the ‘Thomist’ view. However, while in his earliest work he thinks it “probable” on balance that the Word would not have become flesh unless we had fallen<sup>5</sup> in the later *De Veritate* he says that the primacy of Christ is the end to which the whole of creation is ordered and is the principle of our predestination into the supernatural life.<sup>6</sup> Yet again in the *Summa*, while he still finds the idea of Christ coming to fulfil and perfect his creatures whether or not they had sinned to be a theologically beautiful and inspiring vision, he feels that the authority of Scripture and is lacking and thinks it “most probable” that God would not become man except as a remedy for sin.<sup>7</sup> His earliest commentators made attempted

to synthesise these varying statements – speculating that God may have become man in a sinless world, but with “impassable” flesh, incapable of suffering.<sup>8</sup>

The speculative question: “Would Jesus have come had there been no sin?” was not actually framed in that way until the twelfth century.<sup>9</sup> The earlier fathers typically wrote in response to current controversies, emphasising whatever aspect of the Christian mystery seemed appropriate to the moment. Varying emphases, sometimes concentrating on the redemptive reality of Christ’s mission, sometimes on his cosmic significance, can therefore be found throughout the tradition, often in the same writer according to context.

This should not really be surprising, nor is there any inherent contradiction between the two thoughts, unless there is a specific denial that Christ would have come apart from sin, and that is rare. As we have seen Aquinas is far from categorical on the subject, only cautious out of concern over an apparent lack of Scriptural warrant. Although that perception is rather puzzling, since the New Testament provides ample support for the Incarnational vision of creation, and the Greek fathers frequently refer to these texts.

## The Evidence of Scripture

The early evangelisers naturally emphasised first the centrality of the atonement outlined, for example, in Hebrews 2:14-15. But many other Scripture texts also give a wider context and fuller exposition of the mystery of Christ, and these are also found throughout the patristic writings.

When Martha confessed her faith in Jesus saying: “You are the Christ; the one who was to come into the world.” (John 11:27) she was not expecting the crucifixion, but she seems to have spoken out of a common expectation that the Messiah had been decreed in the eternal plans of God. Some of the rabbis said clearly “the world was not made except for the Messiah” and “From the beginning of the world God desired to dwell among His creatures and this desire was fulfilled when the tabernacle was erected in the wilderness.”<sup>10</sup>

This saying from a first century collection of Syrian Rabbis echoes the exact word used in the prologue of St. John “The Word was made flesh and tabernacled (literally: ‘pitched his tent’) among us” (John 1:14). The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated the presence of God on earth in Tent of Meeting in the desert and later the Holy of Holies in the Temple, but its true fulfillment was in the tabernacle of Christ’s own humanity.

To many pious Jews, therefore, the idea of the Incarnation, while certainly being a revelation, may not have been a



**“Cardinal Newman wrote ‘matter is an essential part of us, and as well as mind, is capable of sanctification’.”**

complete novelty. The crucifixion was the truly scandalous thought, so much so that much of the New Testament is devoted to showing the necessity of the cross from the prophecies of the Old Testament.

Yet even in the pages of the Gospels the Lord's mission is not presented simply as a response to sin. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem because she did not recognise “the hour of her visitation” (Luke 19:44). The Messiah's visitation among his people is not prompted by sin, it is sin which undermines the joy of his coming. his vocation is first and foremost a positive one. “I have come so that you may have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10); “so that my joy may be in you and your joy be complete” (John 15:11); and so that you “may be with me where I am” (John 17:24).

### **The Heir of The Vineyard**

In the parable of the vineyard Our Lord speaks of himself as the rightful “heir” of creation. “He came into his own” (John 1:11), the Greek making it quite clear that this does not just mean he came to His own people but into his own his own domain. Again the parable shows that he is not heir to the Father's because of sin, it is sin that seeks to rob him of his rightful inheritance.

“Athanasius answered that His ‘work and office was appointed before the creation of the world’; and the rest of the material creation is aligned on His coming”

In his triumphal entry into Jerusalem Jesus dismisses the misgivings of the Pharisees about the crowds adoring welcome saying: “If they were silent the very stones would cry out.” (Luke 19:40) implying that he is the fulfillment of every aspect of created being, even the very foundations of matter.

At his trial Jesus proclaims, “Yes, I am a King, but now, I tell you, my Kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). The kingdom of Christ was originally intended as the perfection and glorification of this created order, but sin changes the manner of his Kingship and delays his final triumph until the new creation is complete.

### **“Before the Foundation of the World”**

In his teaching about that final triumph and judgment Jesus tells us that he will say to the righteous: “Come you blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). He also uses same phraseology in His farewell discourse at the Last Supper:

“Father I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may see the glory you have given me, because you loved me *before the foundation of the world.*” (John 17:24).

This thought is then repeated and preserved throughout the New Testament. 1 Peter speaks of Christ making us “co-sharers of the divine nature” through the Incarnation;

something “even the angels longed to catch a glimpse of.” St. Peter says this was “premeditated before the foundation of the world, but revealed..., at the end of the ages for our sake” (1 Peter 1:20).

In 1 Corinthians St. Paul speaks of “the things God has prepared for those who love Him; things beyond the mind of man... a mystery... predestined to be for our glory *before the ages began*” (1 Corinthians 2:6-10). Romans similarly affirms that we were “predestined *before time began* to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He should be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Romans 8:28).

Ephesians again uses the exact formula of the Lord's own words: “*Before the foundation of the world* He chose us, chose us in Christ, that we should be holy and blameless before Him and to live through love in His presence; determining that we should become His adopted sons through Jesus Christ”(Ephesians 1:3-12).

Sin is foreseen and accounted for in the eternal counsels of the Trinity, for we have redemption “through His blood, such is the richness of the grace He has showered upon us” (Ephesians 1:6), but the order of priority is plain.

“He has let us know the mystery of His purpose, the hidden plan He so kindly made in Christ from the beginning, to act upon in the fullness of time, that He would bring all things together under Christ as head, everything in heaven and on earth” (Ephesians 1:9-10).

### **Human Nature Created in View of Christ**

Drawing on this Pauline thought and vocabulary in the immediate post-apostolic era St. Irenaeus wrote: “Christ recapitulates in himself the orders of the flesh and spirit.”<sup>11</sup> This is often portrayed as a particularly Greek way of thinking, but it is really a Hebrew mode of thought. There are many a rabbinic comments to the effect that “the whole of creation is featured in man”<sup>17,12</sup> Another rabbinic text says that “He created man from below and the soul from above, and this is meant by the verse – ‘God founded the earth with Wisdom’ (Proverbs 3:19)”.<sup>13</sup> This is saying that the Wisdom of God is most perfectly manifest in human nature which bridges and combines both physical and spiritual orders of creation.

An early Christian writer in Syria developed this line of thought as follows: “In as much as in Man are joined the seen and the unseen things, he is the truth of those things which are in Jesus Christ.”<sup>14</sup> Human nature as flesh and spirit was created not only ‘in Wisdom’, but specifically ‘in Jesus Christ’ the Incarnate Wisdom of God who recapitulates all things in himself.

St. John Damascene also explains the Incarnation in almost exactly the same terms:

“Since man is a microcosm, the knot that ties together all substances visible and invisible, because he himself is both, it was most fitting that the Lord and ruler of all things should desire that in His only begotten and consubstantial Son, the unity of divinity with humanity should be realised

# The Christ Centred Vision of Creation: The Witness of Scripture and Tradition

## continued

and by this means the unity of divinity with all things, so that God should be all in all.”<sup>15</sup>

In another passage of the *Adversus Haeresis* St. Irenaeus wrote that: “Unless flesh and blood stood in need of salvation then the Incarnation would be meaningless.”<sup>16</sup> At first sight this might appear to be a strongly ‘Thomist’ statement, but he then goes on to say: “The flesh, in order to be capable of eternal life, is in need of salvation to heaven and participation in God through Christ.”<sup>17</sup> The meaning of “salvation” here is not saving from sin but from futility. Flesh and blood is mortal and cannot enter communion with the divine unless God unites human nature with himself.

“Irenaeus wrote ‘The flesh, in order to be capable of eternal life, is in need of [...] participation in God through Christ.’”

Human nature is only meaningful because it is made in view of Christ who is to come at the fullness of time and confer immortality through union with himself and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Since the fall, humanity is also in need of restoration and atonement by a further and radical gift of mercy in Christ.

### The Son of Man

The Pauline presentation of Christ as the ‘New Adam’, is rooted the Lord’s preferred title for Himself – Son of Man which, in turn derives from the messianic vision of Daniel 7:9-10. The title, therefore, also speaks of Christ as the head and humanity. For the Jewish rabbis and for the early Christian theologians ‘Adam’ is a prophetic image of the messianic Son of Man, which means that Christ is prophesied and prefigured not just in the age of innocence before sin, but in the being, in the very flesh and blood of Adam before he fell.

St. Cyril of Alexandria denounces as impiety the opinion that Christ is for us rather than we are for Christ.”<sup>18</sup> Others explicitly affirm that Adam was created in the image of Christ (cf. Genesis 1:26-27).<sup>19</sup> An ancient hymn used in the Divine Office even says that the face of Adam was actually modelled on the face of Christ.<sup>20</sup>

St. Clement of Alexandria,<sup>21</sup> St. Jerome,<sup>22</sup> St. Augustine<sup>23</sup> and St. Ambrose<sup>24</sup> all wrote along similar lines. St. Ambrose, of course, also wrote the *Exultet* with its famous exclamation “O happy fault! O necessary sin of Adam, that won for us so great a Redeemer.” This is a clear example of the shifting focus found in the tradition at times. It would actually be heresy to try to turn St. Ambrose’s poetic and hyperbolic expression “necessary sin” into a dogmatic and, even worse, a practical truth. Sin is permitted in God’s eternal purpose, never willed or necessary. Sin evokes, one might even say provokes, within the human heart of Christ an even greater outpouring of undeserved love, but it is never the author of that love nor the reason for the existence of that most Sacred Heart.

The Catechism synthesises these twin emphases for us in the following way:

“Christians of the first centuries said: The world was created for the sake of the Church. God created the world for the sake of communion with His divine life, a communion brought about by the convocation of men in Christ, and this convocation is the Church. The Church is the goal of all things and God permitted such painful upheavals as the angel’s fall and man’s sin only as occasions and means for displaying all the power of His arm and the whole measure of the love He wanted to give the world.”<sup>25</sup>

### The Bridegroom

Our Lord also refers to Himself as “The Bridegroom” of the world, a title also rooted in Hebrew Prophecy (see especially Isaiah 61:10-62:5). If the figure of Adam is a type of Christ then ‘Eve’ is a type of the Church. In Genesis the woman was taken from the man the sleeping body of the man and reunited with him in marriage. So the physical creation which culminates in human nature is ‘taken from’ the patrimony of the flesh of Christ. The cosmos which is made for the sake of the Church – the Woman crowned with the stars (cf. Revelation 12:1) – is decreed towards union with God in the flesh of Christ. The greeting of Adam to His Bride “flesh of my flesh, bone of my bones” is, prophetically speaking, that of Christ to His Church. It is St. Ambrose again who is most explicit about this perennial patristic theme.<sup>26</sup>

It is from this perspective that St. Paul can affirm that every marriage is a share in work of Christ and the Church, which is the primary mystery. St. John of the Cross, later developed this theme in his mystical poem on the Heavenly Bride and Groom.

### The Firstborn of all Creation

Colossians teaches that:

“He is the image of the invisible God and the first born of all creation, for in Him were created all things in heaven and on earth: everything visible and everything invisible... all things were created through Him and for Him. Before anything was created. He existed, and He holds all things in unity. Now the Church is His Body, He is its Head” (Colossians 1:15-18).

This refers not just to the eternal person of God the Son but to the his Incarnation: “In His body dwells the fullness of the Godhead, and in Him too you find your own fulfillment, in the one who is Head of every Sovereignty and Power.” (2:9-10) The Incarnation is for our fulfillment not just our rescue.

The phrase “firstborn of creation” could be misunderstood to mean that Christ was the first creature to be created, which is what the Arians of the fourth century said, citing this text and Proverbs 8:4 which underlies it. St. Athanasius answered them saying it is not the person of Christ who is created but His “work and office was appointed before the creation of the world”; and the rest of the material creation is aligned on His coming “like stones cemented in form and order.”<sup>27</sup>



## “The meaning of ‘salvation’ here is not saving from sin but from futility”

Athanasius continues:

“Therefore we can see the meaning of the Word taking upon Himself our mortal flesh and being created as a ‘beginning’ of God’s works... Before we were created, we had been elected in the predestined Incarnation of the Son, to spiritual and everlasting life and happiness. Our life was founded, it was established and hidden in Christ before anything ever was... Thus all our happiness being connected with Him, we become sharers with Him in the everlasting joys of heaven.”<sup>28</sup>

### Alpha and Omega

The Colossians hymn is thought to be an extended commentary on the first word of the Book of Genesis : “In the beginning” (Hebrew *B’reshit*). So for Athanasius as for St. Paul, and indeed for St. John (cf. John 1:1), “In the beginning” means ‘In Christ’ through whom, in whom and for whom everything exists.

“St. Paul sees the redemptive office of Christ as the most fitting crowning of His already predestined incarnational primacy.”

Athanasius goes on to explain that when He adopted our nature into “closest communion with Himself”, he also took “with it that sentence of death which had it had incurred... (thus)... from all eternity He provided first for our being first, and afterwards for our redemption.”<sup>29</sup> In this he was following the order of St. Paul’s thinking, who sees the redemptive office of Christ as the most fitting crowning of His already predestined incarnational primacy.

“As He is the Beginning, so was He first to be born from the dead so that He should be first in every way; because God wanted all perfection to be found in Him. And all things are reconciled through Him and for Him, everything in heaven and everything on earth, when He made peace by His death on the cross.” (Colossians 1:18-20, see also the Philippians 2 hymn, “he was humbler *still*”).

The Fathers spoke of the Incarnation as the plenary manifestation of the divine majesty, citing Titus 2:11 & 3:4<sup>30</sup> and Revelation 3:14 (see also 2 Corinthians 1:20) where Christ is named as the great “Amen”. Revelation also speaks of him as the “Alpha and Omega” (Revelation 21:6 & 22:13), the beginning and the end of all God’s works. These titles are difficult to explain unless we accept the Pauline, Petrine, Johannine teaching that the Incarnation is decreed as the first thought upon which creation is aligned. He comes to complete the covenant communion of life and joy between God and Man. Sin broke the covenant and dishonoured the Messiah, but where sin abounded grace has super-abounded with an even greater outpouring of undeserved love in the Paschal Mystery.

### The Predestined Glory of Christ’s Humanity

This appears to be the completely consistent apostolic vision and this remains the dominant theology of the Eastern

Church, not just academically, but liturgically and spiritually. In the Western scholastic tradition this theology has been named ‘Scotist’ after Blessed John Duns Scotus who frames the question in terms of the glorification of the human nature of Christ as the highest good of creation:

“Now the human nature in Christ was predestined to be glorified, and in order to be glorified it was predestined to be united to the Word ... and therefore he intends glory to this soul before he wills glory to any other soul and to every other soul he wills glory before taking into account the opposite of these habits.

“... neither is it likely that the highest good in the whole of creation is merely something that chanced to take place, and that only because of some lesser good. Nor is it probable that God predestined Adam to such a good, before he predestined Christ. Yet all of this would follow, yes and something even more absurd. If the predestination of Christ’s soul was for the sole purpose of redeeming others, it would follow that in foreordaining Adam to glory, God would have had to foresee him as falling into sin before he could have predestined Christ to glory.

“Consequently we can say that God selected for his heavenly choir all the angels and men he wished to have with their varied degrees of perfection, and all this before considering either the sin or the punishment of the sinner. No one therefore is predestined simply because God foresaw another would fall, lest anyone have reason to rejoice at the misfortune of another.”<sup>31</sup>

### The Providential Order of Love

Other saintly champions of the Scotist view in the Middle ages include St. Catherine of Siena, St. Bernadine of Siena and St. Bonaventure. Of the great thinkers of the Counter Reformation St. Francis de Sales is the most explicit in his *Treatise on the Love of God*, where he gives a complete Scotist synthesis of the “providential order of God”, which he says comes directly from his “study of Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Fathers.”<sup>32</sup>

“From eternity God knew that He would make on innumerable throng of creatures... and that He would communicate Himself to them. He saw that among all the ways of communicating Himself there is none so excellent as that of joining Himself to a created nature in such a way that the creature would be engrafted and implanted in the Godhead so as to become with it one single person.

“After choosing for this happy state the sacred humanity of our Saviour, supreme providence then decreed that He would not restrict His bounty to the person of His beloved Son, for that Son’s sake He would diffuse it among many other creatures.”<sup>33</sup>

Aware of a criticism sometimes leveled at the Scotist view, St. Francis says of the Incarnation that “this sovereign sweetness was communicated perfectly outside itself to a creature” by God’s own free and eternal choice, and this is

# The Christ Centred Vision of Creation: The Witness of Scripture and Tradition

## continued

the basis of the created order as God freely willed to make it. The “original justice” in which men and angels were created “was naught else but the most sweet love which would dispose them for, turn them towards and set them on the way of eternal happiness.”<sup>34</sup>

God indeed foresaw that both men and angels would rebel. He had created them in love, which of its nature is free and involves the possibility of rejection. With the angels the rejection was total and unprompted by anything except formal self adoration, but with man it was otherwise; humanity is frail and was sorely tempted from the outside. But most of all God treated humanity with mercy because “... it was from human nature that He had decided to take a most blessed portion for union with His divinity.”<sup>35</sup>

“Sin cannot be foundational to our humanity and most certainly not to His.”

So far from sin motivating the Incarnation, it is the Incarnation that motivation of Divine mercy towards us because it is the foundation of our nature in the first place. Through the Incarnation he willed to make himself “companion to our miseries” and to “show the riches of His goodness, through a copious redemption”.<sup>36</sup>

### The Catholic Principle Par Excellence

John Henry Newman later found the Scotist perspective to be truest to the Greek fathers he studied so closely.<sup>37</sup> Faber too wrote from the same point of view in his treatise on the Blessed Sacrament. In *The Development of Christian Doctrine* Newman says that the teaching on the Incarnation “establishes in the very idea of Christianity the sacramental principle as its characteristic” because “It is our Lord’s intention in the Incarnation to make us what He is Himself.” It also teaches us “that matter is an essential part of us, and as well as mind, is capable of sanctification”.<sup>38</sup>

*Gaudium et Spes* sums up the perspective with the arresting statement: “The Church believes that the key, the centre and the purpose of the whole of man’s history is to be found in its Lord and Master”.<sup>39</sup>

### Conclusion

The Council called for a re-presentation of Christ to the world in a way which would draw on the whole wealth of Catholic tradition and shed the light of Christ on the best insights of the modern world. From all that we now know of the unity of the sciences and the dynamic unfolding of creation we are in an even better position to vindicate the Scotist line as the only worthy and coherent account of the Mystery of Christ. If we are to re-evangelise the modern world, and in the process answer the false or flawed theologies which have arisen to plague us in the last thirty years, we must be able to offer something deeper and more fulfilling, but completely true to the apostolic faith. The vision of Christ and His Church explored here is central to that task too.

We can show how God freely created us for fulfilment in the wisdom and joy which is His own Being. The Father thinks and wills us through the Incarnate Son for whose sake we are wanted and destined unto Himself in the love who is the Holy Spirit. This is the source of our dignity as human beings and the full meaning of being created “in the image of God”. We are built on Christ. Sin cannot be foundational to our humanity and most certainly not to His.

Man was made in view of Christ, not Christ in view of sin. His birth from Mary was not simply a means towards crucifixion. He did not merely borrow our humanity in order to die. He entered nature which had been prepared for Him since the beginning. He truly came into His own and in Him we see how God has loved us with the total fullness of Himself. But when He found us broken and alienated from eternal life He loved us also to the utmost of His psyche and the last drop of His blood on the cross.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Catechism of the Catholic Church 456.

<sup>2</sup>St. Gregory of Nyssa, Orat Catech 15, CCC 457.

<sup>3</sup>CCC 457.

<sup>4</sup>Opusc. 57, 1-4; CCC 457.

<sup>5</sup>Sent. I, IV dist XLVIII q ii a, also ST ha q xxiii 3:4.

<sup>6</sup>DeVeritate q.xxix.a.7.

<sup>7</sup>STh IIIq.1a.3.

<sup>8</sup>Thus Cajetan and Suarez.

<sup>9</sup>Rupert of Deutz asked the question in this form in 1194, answering it in the positive.

<sup>10</sup>Midrash B'reschit Rabba Berlin 1909 - in Levene, A., *The Syrian Manuscripts on the Pentateuch* in the Migana Collection, London 1951 p.134. (cf.Num 7:12).

<sup>11</sup>Adv. Haer 4.3.

<sup>12</sup>Avot de Rabbi Nathan, Recension A, ch.13.

<sup>13</sup>Midrash Tanhuma Buber ed.Vilna 5673.

<sup>14</sup>Lines 25-26 of Genesis Commentary in Levene A., *The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis* (London: Taylor's Foreign Press, 1951).

<sup>15</sup>Hom. de transfig. Dom PG 96572.

<sup>16</sup>Adv. Haer Book 4:3.

<sup>17</sup>idib.

<sup>18</sup>Paedagogia I cx ii.

<sup>19</sup>Iraeneus Adv Haer 5:16, Tertullian Adv. Praexeam 112 De Resurrectione Carnis c.6 col 802.

<sup>20</sup>Friday, week 4, Morning Prayer.

<sup>21</sup>Strom. 5 c.7.

<sup>22</sup>Liber Hebr. Quaest. in Genesi c. 1.

<sup>23</sup>De Genesi contra Manichaeos I.I.c.2.

<sup>24</sup>In Haexameron erron I.I.c.2.

<sup>25</sup>CCC 760 cf. Pastor of Hermas Vision 2, Justin Apol 2, 7; Epiphianus Panarion 1, 1.

<sup>26</sup>Exposito Evangelii secundum Lucam I IV n.66. See also Gelasius epistola et Decreta adv. Pelagianum Haeresium, Isidore of Seville In Gen 102, John Damascene In Epist. ad Eph. c.v.32.

<sup>27</sup>Orations Against the Arians 63 & 77.

<sup>28</sup>op.cit. 4, 76-77.

<sup>29</sup>ibid.

<sup>30</sup>cf. Gregory Nanzianzen Orat. 27, Hippolytus Adv. Noetum n.15, Gregory of Nyssa Oratio catech. 100, 24, Basil In Psal 44 n.5, Leo the Great Sermon 21 de Nativitate Domini c.1.

<sup>31</sup>Opus Oxoniense III, d 7, q 3.

<sup>32</sup>Op.cit. bk. 4 ch. I.

<sup>33</sup>ibid.

<sup>34</sup>ibid.

<sup>35</sup>ibid.

<sup>36</sup>ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Discourses to Mixed Congregations 32 1-2, & 358. See also Ian Ker, *Healing The Wound of Humanity: The Spirituality of John Henry Newman* DLT 1993.

<sup>38</sup>Development of Christian Doctrine, chapter 7 ss.1.

<sup>39</sup>*Gaudium et Spes* cf. Karol Wojtila, *Sources of Renewal*, (Collins) 1980 p.282.



# An Advent Call for a New Vision of the Virgin Birth *by Edward Holloway*

*A twenty-five year old Newsletter meditation for the First Sunday of Advent, Esher Parish, Surrey, originally entitled "The Truth Does Matter."*

At the beginning of Advent it is as well to say that the truth concerning the Virgin Birth of Christ does matter, and the truth concerning the physical resurrection of Christ as well, and that with all deference to the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Durham. St. Paul put it simply a long time ago to the Christians (and they were a troublesome and doubting enough lot) of Corinth, when he said that "if Christ be not risen, then my faith is vain, and your faith is vain, and we are of all men the most wretched".

"As ages pass, and mankind becomes more sophisticated, more clever, and more proud, it is true that the testimony of ages so long past, and the testimony of miracles and wonders so long past will fade in its probative force, and must do so."

The early Christians had no time for "spiritual senses" and metaphorical expressions to "manifest what Jesus meant to them". Only comfortable middle class types, clerical or lay, in warm, protected surroundings, go in for that type of psychedelic nonsense. They gave up so much, they suffered so much, they endured the searing agnosticism and cynicism of the Greek mind, always looking for just that sort of thing to say... they also endured the searching, probing minds of the Jewish Pharisees, seeking with desperation to stop this 'new heresy' from spreading. We know from the whole sweep of the Gospels and the Pastoral letters, and from the writings of the saints of the early Church, that these people meant what they said, lived standards higher than any heretofore existing on earth, and hoped for a fullness of Salvation, and a resurrection of the body simply because Christ did so rise.

There is no doubt that the Christian people and their priests all through the ages have believed in the literal meaning of the birth of Christ without the intervention of St. Joseph, or of any man. There is no doubt that they have always in the feast of Easter Night celebrated the real, and physical body of Our Lord: "feel my hands and my side, that it is Myself indeed, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see Me to have". As ages pass, and mankind becomes more sophisticated, more clever, and more proud, it is true that the testimony of ages so long past, and the testimony of miracles and wonders so long past will fade in its probative force, and must do so.

The evidence that these things really happened, will be the power, *through development of doctrine* in the Church, always to give a new vision of the meaning of the Incarnation, and of the sheer relevance of Christ, and his Church to the nature of man, to personal holiness, and to the need for Man to have as answer from to the question "who am I" and "what is my meaning and my end". It is the sheer consistency and continuity of this line of revelation and understanding, which does, as time goes on, become more and more the evidence of Jesus.

Just as the Virgin Birth, and the physical Resurrection of Christ are and were requirements of his literal Divinity and uniqueness upon the human scene, so also this type of development to which we appeal cannot take place, *except* in a Church which claims the infallible magisterium on earth of the same Jesus in the name of his *Divinity*, and can manifest a line of consistent and coherent, definition because she has done so. There is no other way. The alternative is the agnosticism and subjectivism which is destroying the Church of England, and making Ecumenism an irrelevant concept. The true meaning of Ecumenism can only be to bring all people Catholics, and non-Catholics, (including their bishops and archbishops) to see and understand and evidence for the literal Divinity of Christ. This involves the need of a magisterium on earth which is truly that of Christ, and proves its credentials and divinity by its continuity and coherence, whether to men it is "welcome or unwelcome" as St. Paul puts it to Timothy. It is worth our while to ponder this thought in Advent time. ■

# Christ and Creation: The Convergence of Maximus and Holloway *by Kevin Douglas*

Kevin Douglas, assistant priest at Craigshill, Livingston, presents some significant philosophical and theological parallels in two thinkers separated by fifteen centuries.

To be recognised officially as a doctor of the Church is, it seems, a convoluted process requiring various levels of Curial and Papal approval. The status of St. Maximus the Confessor is a moot point. Nonetheless in one of his recent encyclicals, *Spe Salvi*, Benedict XVI unambiguously referred to Maximus as “the great Greek doctor of the Church.” (*Spe Salvi* 28) The Pope’s public expression of esteem is part of a broader re-evaluation of Maximus’ thought. Until fairly recently he was a largely neglected figure, treated as a kind of footnote to the great Christological debates of the fourth century. However the publication of H. U. von Balthasar’s pioneering study, *Kosmische Liturgie*, in 1941, renewed interest in Maximus’ thought in the Latin West. Von Balthasar’s book was itself also part of a broader movement: in the middle of the twentieth century theologians like von Balthasar, de Lubac and Chenu were major proponents of the *Ressourcement* movement. They sought to respond in an authentically Catholic way to what they saw as the short-comings of the then dominant Thomist synthesis by returning to the Fathers of the Church, the sources of Catholic theology.

Given this context in which Maximus’ thought has been consciously advocated as an alternative to the “old” Thomist synthesis, Benedict XVI’s words of praise take on a deeper resonance. This is especially true for those of us who espouse and seek to develop the “vision” of the Catholic faith to which *Faith* movement and magazine is committed. A comparison of the broad lines of Maximus’ thought and Edward Holloway’s reveals that, despite a different idiom and set of cultural references, there are striking similarities. The purpose of this article is to examine some of these similarities. In doing so we will bring to light some significant evidence that Holloway’s thought, despite its somewhat seminal state and unusual provenance, has a pedigree within the Catholic tradition. Holloway’s vision is deeply coherent with, and in places even advances upon, the insights of St. Maximus the Confessor. Moreover at this point in the Church’s history as the influence of Maximus’ thought increases, it is the conviction of this writer that the new synthesis that scholars are, more or less explicitly, seeking in Maximus is to be found in a more developed form in the *Faith* vision.

## Who Was St. Maximus?

Although this is not the first time that Maximus has been mentioned in the pages of this magazine, nonetheless a brief overview of the man and his historical context will serve as an introduction to his thought. He was born in 580AD in the Eastern Roman Empire and came from a well-to-do family in Constantinople. He entered the Imperial civil service and seems to have been rapidly promoted. About the year 614AD he gave up civil life and entered a monastery near Constantinople. There are reasons, though not conclusive, to suggest that he was never ordained a

priest. Maximus then lived in a series of monasteries being forced to move by the invading Turks. He was a great opponent of monotheletism: the heresy that denied Christ’s human will. In short, this period was marked by a series of heresies which undermined the full humanity of Christ. St. Maximus and the Pope at that time St. Martin I heroically upheld the integral humanity of Christ against the Roman Emperor who wanted to compromise on this issue in order to overcome the internal divisions within his Empire and so to face its external aggressors. As a direct result of Maximus’ refusal to brook any compromise his tongue was cut out and his right arm cut off as these were the offending articles with which he confessed the faith – hence the title confessor – and he died of his injuries in exile in 662AD. His doctrine which upheld the full humanity of Christ proved triumphant at the council of Constantinople in 680-1AD.

## Parallels Between Holloway and Maximus

Although in his lifetime and during the years immediately subsequent to his death, the chief significance of Maximus’ thought was widely agreed to be his defence of orthodox Christology, the content of his teaching is more expansive. In particular his description of the cosmos in terms of the *logoi* of created being cohering in the one *Logos* of God would seem to have particularly fruitful applications in the current theological climate.

Maximus plays on the terms *logos* and *logoi* continuously, but at its most basic the term *logoi* refers to the rationale, in a very loose sense one might say the nature that makes a thing what it is. Thunberg, one of the most important scholars in the field, defines the term: “Thus it denotes the created existence of a thing as founded in God’s will that it should be, it is the principle of its coming to be”.<sup>1</sup>

It should be noted that the *logoi* of creation whilst defining the individual realities that exist are not in Maximus’ estimation wholly autonomous. Maximus writes “the logoi of all things [...] are securely fixed in God.”<sup>2</sup> And goes on to add

we affirm that the one *Logos* is many *logoi* and the many *logoi* are One. Because the One goes forth out of goodness into the individual being, creating and preserving them, the One is many. Moreover the many are directed toward the One and are providentially guided in that direction. It is as though they were drawn to an all-powerful centre that had built into it the beginnings of the lines that go out from it and that gathers them all together. In this way the many are One.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore the rationale, or principle, of every existent thing pre-exists in the one *Logos* of God who is the second person of the blessed Trinity. Furthermore the rationale of every existent thing centres upon and finds its fulfilment in the one *Logos* of God.

**“Maximus believes that the material universe, as observed by man, to some degree reveals God.”**

Maximus adds a further and significant detail to his description of the created cosmos revolving around the Logos of God. In *Ad Thalassium* 60, discussing the Incarnation Maximus writes:

“This is the divine purpose conceived before the beginning of beings. In defining it we say that *this mystery is the preconceived goal for which everything exists*.”<sup>4</sup> [my italics]

We, therefore, have a Christocentric universe that is made for the Incarnation.

To anyone with even a cursory knowledge of the *Faith* vision this must all sound uncannily familiar. Yet the similarities do not stop there. Maximus has implicit concepts of the environment and the environed.

“For all created things are defined, in their essence and in their way of developing, by their own *logoi* and by the *logoi* of the beings that provide their external context. Through these *logoi* they find their defining limits.”<sup>5</sup>

The *logos* of an existing individual is defined in relation to the things around it. Creation is one harmonious cosmos made up of mutually inter-defined individual beings. The rationale of every single one of these beings pre-exists as an intention in the mind of God. Furthermore this rationale exists immanently within each individual being and each being has as the reason for its existence and as its fulfilment and as the goal towards which it tends the Incarnation of the Logos.

Such a relational principle of intelligibility immanent to a unified individual seems close to Holloway’s concept of the “relative form”. Furthermore contrast these insights with one of the central pillars of the *Faith* vision: the unity law of control and direction. Holloway writes:

“The Law of Control and Direction [...] is not a law of matter in a specific sense. It is not the law of this event and effect, or of that event and effect, it is a law in matter that is cosmic and all-inclusive, so that the entire universe is one equation of meaningful development, in mutual relativity of part on part, at all times throughout space.”<sup>6</sup>

In Holloway’s view we are faced with one harmonious cosmos in which all the individual parts act according to a single law of control and direction and this law is the expression of the mind and intention of God Himself. In another of his writings Holloway makes the point “Christ is [...] the ultimate meaning of the unity law.”<sup>7</sup> As noted above though the idioms may differ – Maximus arguably draws his terminology from Stoic sources and Holloway, with his talk of relativity and events and effects, owes much to modern science – but the insights and the overall vision expressed are strikingly similar.

## Evolution and Modern Science

Though we cannot here enter into details Holloway’s vision is developmental: it takes into account both the Big Bang and the theory of evolution. In short the process by which matter combines in increasingly complex forms moves

firstly towards a material brain that can harmonise with a spiritual soul and once man, a spiritual/material being, has made an appearance, the one unity law of control and direction moves forward toward the Incarnation. To quote Maximus “this mystery is the preconceived goal for which everything exists.” For Holloway the final goal of the process modern science calls evolution is nothing other than the Incarnation.

Holloway’s theology engages intentionally with the findings of modern science. It would be grossly anachronistic to expect to find in Maximus’ writings any account of evolution. However, in his vision the universe is created in a state of dynamic openness to the grace of divinisation:

“God, who is beyond fullness, did not call into being those things that are becoming, out of any need of his, but so that they, participating in him proportionately, might enjoy him.”<sup>8</sup>

This means that, although the cosmos is created perfect, it is not finished at the moment of creation. It is moving towards its final divinised state. Maximus believes in a dynamic and to some extent developmental cosmos. Therefore, though definitely constituting an advance upon Maximus’ thought, it would not be radically inconsistent with his world-view to accommodate within it the discoveries of modern science.

Moreover, because Maximus believes that the creation is for the Incarnation he has a correspondingly high regard for material reality. By no means am I suggesting that Maximus anticipates the development of our modern science with their specific methodologies and fields of competence, but he does believe that the material universe, as observed by man, to some degree reveals God. Throughout his oeuvre he talks about how, to cite just one example, God may be known “from the orderly arrangement of beings.”<sup>9</sup> Because Maximus attaches such great value to the revelatory potential of the natural world, we have every reason to suppose that had he lived in later times he would have availed himself of any advances in our knowledge of the natural world.

## Holloway and Maximus – Differences

Despite the profound similarities in their description of the cosmos, their agreement on the place of the Incarnation as the goal of all creation and despite the fundamental agreement in their methodology – Holloway engages with the sciences and Maximus privileges observation of the natural world – the differences between Maximus and Holloway go deeper than simply the terminology they used. Thirteen hundred years divide these two men. Holloway and Maximus share a vision, but Holloway had the privilege of reflecting upon that vision in the light of multiple advances in our knowledge of the natural world and with the benefit of centuries of increasingly precise theological reflection.

To cite one simple instance of Holloway’s thought being – as one would naturally expect – more explicit and refined



## Christ and Creation: The Convergence of Maximus and Holloway continued

than Maximus', Holloway has an unequivocal definition of the difference between matter and spirit. For Holloway it is axiomatic that "mind is that which controls and directs, and matter is that which is controlled and directed."

Maximus also observes the distinction between matter and spirit. He couches it in Platonic terms of a distinction between the sensible and the intelligible realms, as with most scholasticism across the centuries. In a frequently quoted passage of his *Mystagogy* he writes,

In fact the whole intelligible cosmos, being mystically imprinted on the whole sensible cosmos in symbolic species, shows itself to those who can see; and the whole sensible cosmos is in the whole of the intelligible cosmos, existing in the *logoi*, and being made intelligibly simple according to the intellect.<sup>10</sup>

Maximus asserts a reciprocity, even between the two realms, and his esteem for the material cosmos far exceeds that to be found in many of the other Greek Fathers, the Cappadocians being a case in point. But, although Maximus may assume the distinction between sensible and intelligible reality, he does not seem to provide any explicit definition of the distinction. If such a distinction is to be found somewhere in Maximus' oeuvre then certainly the secondary literature on this aspect of his thought is lacking.<sup>11</sup>

Whilst it is perhaps unfair to demand anachronistically precise definitions from Maximus, nonetheless it is important to note that in contemporary theology these distinctions and definitions must be made. The lack of an adequate distinction between matter and spirit has for instance hamstrung the use of modern scientific knowledge in proving God's existence. Moreover it has, for instance, had vast and disastrous ramifications in the theology of

Teilard de Chardin whose theology though somewhat passé now has had serious repercussions in the pastoral life of the Church.

Maximus, whilst remaining explicitly and firmly loyal to Rome, was the great synthesiser of the Greek patristic tradition. The compelling parallels between the *Faith* vision and Maximus' thought highlight how eminently and authentically Catholic the *Faith* vision truly is. Although it might appear somewhat unprecedented to those familiar only with the traditions of the Latin West, the seminal vision we present, in fact, builds upon and is profoundly coherent with the patrimony of the Greek Fathers which fundamentally belongs to the whole Catholic Church. Moreover, given the parallels between this vision and his thought, Maximus' increasing prominence is a powerful testimony to the timeliness of the former.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Chicago 1995, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup>*Amb. Io.*, 7, PG 91, 1081A.

<sup>3</sup>*Amb. Io.*, 7, PG 91, 1081B-C. Tr. P. Blowers and R. Wilken *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*. P. 57.

<sup>4</sup>*Thal.*, 60, CCG 22, p. 75, 34-36.

<sup>5</sup>*Amb. Io.*, 7, PG 91, 1081B. Tr. P. Blowers and R. Wilken *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*. p. 57.

<sup>6</sup>E. Holloway, *Catholicism: A New Synthesis*, Surrey 1976. p. 64.

<sup>7</sup>E. Holloway, *Perspectives in Theology*, Oxford 2005. p. 13.

<sup>8</sup>*Car.*, PG 90, 1029C.

<sup>9</sup>*Thal.*, 40, CCG 7, p. 273, 113-114.

<sup>10</sup>*Myst.*, 2, PG 91, 669B-C.

<sup>11</sup>Cooper's work (A. Cooper, *The Body in Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified*, Oxford 2005) which is the most recent study of Maximus' approach to the body, goes no further than asserting his positive evaluation of sensible reality and the "pedagogical function of the material universe". This does not constitute an account of matter.

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# Jesus Christ: The Master Key to Hope in the Age of Science *by Edward Holloway*

For the second time (see July 2008) we publish part of a 1950 book written by Fr Edward Holloway, “Matter and Mind: A Christian Synthesis”, of which only a dozen copies were made. Almost 60 years on his insights into religious sociology seem difficult to dispute. His diagnosis concerning the role of scientific knowledge is, we believe, gradually becoming accepted (see our current Cutting Edge and Road from Regensburg columns). This extract is from the beginning of Chapter Nine, Section 1, “And the Word was Made Flesh.”

## **The Springs of Christendom Run Low**

The joy, the inspired enthusiasm, with which the first Christians proclaimed the Incarnation of Christ and the tidings of great joy that it held for all the peoples is known to us as a matter of history, but it has become a fact of past history rather than modern history. Today, when Christian civilisation hangs in tatters, when the Catholic Faith of the nations has been rent with heresies and schisms, when good men who glory in the name of Christians proclaim not one and the same, but many Christs, all differing in their revelation and not all Divine, the voice of the apostles of Christ falls hollow upon the nations, and men listen with respect, but not with confidence. It is not easy, even for the voice of truth to assert itself with the same ringing majesty as of old; the message of salvation and new hope has lost its loud fearlessness, and Christendom itself, the haven of the world, is urgently in need of a redemption within itself.

Yet even today, when the Faith of Christ is decayed among the nations, and when Christianity seems to belie the promises of Christ, and to be passing into the dead world of human religions, one more among many, even today, whatever individual values we hold sacred, whatever sanctity we claim for the personality of man, whatever freedoms, above the rut of biological materialism, we try to salvage from the ruins of a culture, all these are the droplets which remain within that chalice of the Christian Faith dashed down by the nation. They remain like scattered heirlooms from a wasted treasure. The fullness these noble teachings once verified has withered among us. The living springs of Christendom run low; – the waters of life which Christ promised to the peoples, do they not seem today to be a poor and muddled trickle? But the spring still flows, and if it flows it can flow strong again, and fill to overflow those banks of the human capacity to comprehend which currently stem its stream. As in a time of drought strong rivers fail, and cities languish in the molten air with fly-blown plagues. But come the blessed storm they are cleansed, revived, and sweetened, and pulse with fiercer life, conscious of death so near; so will it be with us.

Whatever our shame as Christian men, the needless poverty from decayed inheritance, we who have received in so rich a measure of Christ’s fullness over two thousand years have not lost all. The weakness and the wickedness of men, and all the bitter tears, the foul squalid things, the chaos of pride, lies, and deceit which have welled up from the heart of man which gives of its abundance, not all these have

prevailed to death against the Church of Christ, nor yet belied even those words of Christ within a proverb, that ‘by their fruits you shall know them’.

## **The Renewal of Christianity Will Come**

At this present time, in a period of decline in Christian faith and morals which is still unchecked, still sweeping even lower, it remains true that the teachings given men by Christ, although whittled away and progressively abandoned, still preserve a better level of charity, justice, and chastity in human affairs throughout Christendom than prevails in those regions where the name of Christ has hardly entered, or where it is bitterly persecuted. The nations of Western Europe, the nearest to the power of antichrist, whilst conscious of their own miserable decadence, yet shrink from the bloody servitude of Marxist Communism. In the name of what liberties do they refuse to surrender, except those liberties with which Christ alone has set them free?

Let men be of good heart then, for Christ’s religion will show itself, and at this present time, to be no failure, for it has within itself the power to bring up from its vast treasury, new things and old for the light and the comfort of men of good will. Far from having failed within herself, or even having failed from the malice of men, so that the world stands upon the final consummation that will follow the final apostasy, the Church of Christ, we dare surmise, has not much more than begun her history. What are two thousand years against the sum of human history which has passed before them? And what may two thousand years appear among the centuries still to come? It is not given to men to know the future, but we have no reason to presume that the pages of man’s story are turning upon the last leaves of their concluding chapter. There is no reason to think that all history is ending irrevocably for men because the human race quails before powers which it dare not trust itself to use, and before unanswered riddles it has come to despair of solving.

From all this it can much more reasonably be argued that we are ending rather the first great era of universal civilisation, and entering upon a second world civilisation that will be greater and more all-embracing than the first.

If in the ruins of Rome, St. Augustine dreamed of a civilisation that should be the City of God on earth, and penned, even while weighted with despair and expectation of the end of the world, the noble outline of the Christian



order which inspired so much of mediaeval thought, how much more reason have we today, with so much greater resources, to expect for our civilisation a resurrection out of our decay. The time for the manifestation of Christ in the Incarnation was wisely chosen indeed in the plan of God, for it came at a period of expanding and settled civilisation under the aegis of the Roman Peace. In spite of all the breakdowns and the partial collapses, that Empire of Rome which stood across the West and the East never really perished. It recovered to expand more widely in the middle-ages, and in the modern period, it was continued in, and with, the Christian tradition, even after the rise of Protestantism, and it endures to our own day in the Christian peoples, free and submerged alike, of the modern world.

The epoch of settled and expanding civilisation which began with the Romano-Hellenic Empire, was the first historically known period of widespread and continuous human culture over a significant area; it came indeed to cover most of the known world by the time of the birth of Christ. At this present time also, many of our woes arise from the insufficiency of the practical embodiments of Christian belief in existing society to inspire that society, or to direct it. Marxism itself is only a new claimant to a very old throne, the throne of authoritative religion, and therefore the throne of the Christian and Catholic Church. It is an alternative from which bad Christians and agnostics alike have begun to shrink in horror, for even if the Church had no more within her to give the modern age, even so would she be a better light to men than the black slavery of the spirit which has arisen out of the East, and stands upon the shores of the West.

### **Expect a Further Development**

We must expect today, when we all know that a new era has begun in the history of human civilisation, that if the religion of Christ is true, and is founded upon the only claim which makes Christianity the hope of mankind – upon the Divinity personal and unambiguous of Jesus Christ – that we will find within the bosom of the Church's doctrine all that we need to fire the world anew, and to restore all things in Christ. This new inspiration will certainly be given, for it has never failed to happen that in times of crisis the Spirit of God has worked within the Church with a new power. This new inspiration will be yielded up from those unfathomed depths of the riches of Christ from out of which the world, like the householder in the gospels, may bring up treasures both old and new. We must expect new developments within genuine and orthodox Catholic theology with the more confidence, because men so urgently need a new and a more compelling synthesis of Christian thought and modern knowledge.

Now, for the first time since man opened his eyes to this earth, his world is one in space and time. It is agreed with little dispute among all intelligent men that mankind must

rapidly integrate a truly universal civilisation, and become one people in the brotherhood of a world-wide commonwealth. Now is the time when Christ our Lord, who ceases not to work even unto now, will bestow upon us all in greater and richer measure from the fullness of that Faith which was revealed to men in the Person of God and the nature of a man. The economy of the Incarnation continues unto the end of time for men in the authoritative Christian Church, and from the deposit of that Faith, guarded with jealousy and without betrayal from the citadel of God which rides the seven hills of Rome, there will be shown to men a deeper vein, and richer yet, of God's pure gold, latent within the inexhaustible mine of Christian Faith long worked by men.

This we must anticipate with faith and ardent hope, because the times require it, and the arm of God is not shortened more in the present time than in days of old. The Church is never old; nothing she has achieved in the days of her youth will become the boast and marvel of a weak senility. She never ages, and her strength must wax with the centuries to match new needs. What things then we have heard as done in the days of our fathers, greater than these will be done in ours, by the strength of the Son of Man who is born to us. For at all times, and throughout all times, the government is upon his shoulders.

*“As in a time of drought strong rivers fail,  
and cities languish in the molten air with  
fly-blown plagues. But come the blessed  
storm they are cleansed, revived, and  
sweetened, and pulse with fiercer life,  
conscious of death so near; so will it  
be with us.”*

Never since the days when rude minds, but minds aflame with the certainty of truth, laid siege to the proud and empty paganism of ancient Rome has there lain before mankind both the need, and the attainable prospect of one world civilisation, confirmed through one Faith from God, and under God, pacified in the unity of one brotherhood, one aim in human affairs, one common charity of end and purpose. So vast an opportunity as ours the first Apostles of Christ did not enjoy, if they had done, how certainly would they have grasped it, making it a glory to suffer and to labour for the name of Christ.

The meaning for mankind of the Incarnation of God in all that it meant two thousand years ago; in the deeper and more urgent meaning it bears for men today, cannot be expressed fittingly in the clipped language of mathematical science. The language of poetry and mystical theology, the intimate and lovely language of love possessed in fulfilment, this tongue alone uplifts the heart of a man when he has come to love not the Incarnation, not an abstract dogma, nor even a fact, but the Person of Jesus Christ. The

## Jesus Christ: The Master Key to Hope in the Age of Science

continued

language of physics and the sciences of matter is not the language that wells up spontaneously within the spirit of man which transcends all matter, and wings its way upward into God's pure ray, until, so guided upon its limpid beam, it shall have homed deep within the infinity of the Sun of Justice. Not in matter, nor in the sciences of matter, but in the depths of the spirit of a man will we find the kingdom of a man's own self; a kingdom, but a vassalage too, because the soul is the throne prepared for the Word of God from the conception of a man.

### Jesus Christ – One Wisdom in Which Science and Religion are Complementary

We have elsewhere pondered the impossibility for Science to usurp the place of Theology in human life, and the malaise that men have suffered since the irresponsible attempt to supplant God by a feeble human rationalism, shot through with stupid errors. Nevertheless, in the very name of the Incarnation itself, and the majesty of divine wisdom contained within that economy of human salvation, we insist urgently upon the fact that the birth of Christ is the summit not only of theology and philosophy, but of the material sciences as well.

In this age when so great a gulf seems to yawn between the truths of the Church and the truths of the physical sciences, we must come to see the perfect reconciliation of these two in the unity of an economy which is one wisdom, a wisdom in which Science and Religion are necessarily complementary, not contrary, nor even autonomous systems of knowledge which are unrelated intrinsically, but unable to clash.

If the human mind, enlightened by the grace of God which is offered to every man, will lift its eyes a little from the earth, it will see the mighty consummation in the human nature of Christ of the whole process of living development through evolution. *Without Christ, man is meaningless; without man, all life besides is meaningless; without life the earth is meaningless; but all things have meaning in Jesus Christ, to whom all things are relative, through whom all things consist, of whom all things bear witness in their being.*

“We insist urgently upon the fact that the birth of Christ is the summit not only of theology and philosophy, but of the material sciences as well.”

It is to be expected that Christianity should be developed anew with greater fullness at this time when the presentation to the world of the Faith of Christ has become too meagre precisely on that level of the relation between religion and the physical sciences which is the natural meeting place today between revealed and natural knowledge. It is no scandal that such a redeployment of Christian teaching has not existed until the present time, because only now, in misery, fear, and frustration are all the tribes of the earth disposed to listen in humility and with sincerity. There is then need today for all men to possess a deeper insight into the meaning and fullness of Christ.

# Catholicism a New Synthesis

by Edward Holloway

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

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# Cutting Edge

## Science and Religion News

### CARDINAL PELL: TOWARDS A MODERN FOUNDATION OF THEISTIC CIVILIZATION

At a 'Festival of Dangerous Ideas' held in Australia from October 3rd to 4th in the Sydney Opera House, Cardinal George Pell, Archbishop of Sydney, delivered a lecture from the same platform as the atheist and vociferous British journalist, Christopher Hitchens. The Festival was a new initiative of the Opera House, co-organised by the non-denominational 'St James Ethics Centre,' by which "Through courageous discussion, [they] aim to stimulate, provoke and engage with the wider world."

Cardinal Pell's presentation, "Without God we are Nothing", attempted to describe the contradictions of modern atheism. As part of his argument he approvingly quoted Professor Antony Flew, the ex-atheist, "of all the great discoveries of modern science, the greatest was God". Pell presented the components of what we believe is a convincing argument for the existence of God, without quite connecting them together.

It is this lack that would seem to be keeping him more tentative than St. Paul (Rom.s 1:19) and Vatican I concerning our ability to "prove" convincingly the existence of God from nature. He simply argues that theism is "more reasonable" than atheism or agnosticism.

On the other hand the flow of his argument seems to give a stronger weighting to the evidence of science. Having quoted the invariably profound, long-term *Sunday Times* journalist, Bryan Appleyard, to the effect that "matter evolved in an elaborate, finely tuned conspiracy to produce air-breathing, carbon based life forms possessed of self-consciousness" he goes on to state that "Living matter, or living beings, are purpose driven". He discusses the reproductive processes that result from the "directive capacity of DNA" and "believe[s]" that the idea that "blind and purposeless forces [...] spontaneously produce such a process is [...] *metaphysically impossible*" (our emphasis).

The fact that, in terms of evidence for purpose, Pell argues more strongly for DNA and "living matter" than non-living matter does have slight resonances of the Intelligent Design mindset. As ever with such argument we would agree with the basic sentiment but would suggest that it is fatally undermined if the idea that "purposeless forces [...] spontaneously

produce" non-living matter is *not* also seen to be "metaphysically impossible". It can only be the fact of the inter-related unity of the whole cosmos, living and non-living, which allows the definite metaphysical conclusion.

The rest of Pell's piece presents some points which seem to be tentatively moving towards such a synthesis:

- "the God for which we are arguing is not a God of the gaps, not a God who is brought in to paste over the gaps in our present scientific knowledge, which might be filled later as science progresses. It is the whole of the universe which is not self-explanatory, including the infrastructure and elements we understand scientifically. Many people have found evidence for the mind of God in the laws of nature, in their regularity and symmetry."
- "God is beyond space and time [...] spiritual, not material", that is on the level of love.
- "there is a mental, purposive or intentional explanation more fundamental than the basic laws of physics, because it explains even them", a quote from Brendan Purcell.

### The Failure of Atheism

The overall thrust of the lecture well argues that atheism cuts off the branch on which it is sitting. Modern attacks upon theism invoke concepts of goodness, justice and intelligibility. Yet atheism sees the universe as ultimately meaningless and thus fails to give any justification or real coherence to these concepts. On the other hand the Christian transcendent, personal God, Pell argues, has a rational foundation in the reflections of Greek philosophy, as well as the discoveries of modern science.

And yet "Here in Australia public discussion and debate often proceed as though most of the population is godless, atheist or agnostic. In fact only 17 per cent do not accept the existence of God. [...] This mismatch is due] more to the secularist hostility to Christianity which remains the most formidable barrier to their programme for an ever broader personal autonomy." Pell does not offer an analysis concerning how, given theism's intrinsic superiority over atheism, the "godless" assumption has become (increasingly) so dominant. We have argued before that a deeper analysis into the interaction of Greek philosophy and modern science is needed if we are to

understand the momentum of modern agnosticism, and re-synthesise the concepts of physical formality and spiritual mind. (See Edward Holloway's *Perspectives in Philosophy: Volume 3 – Rethinking the Greeks in the Age of Science*.)

### NATURAL SELECTION AND HUMAN CIVILITY

A recently established American evangelical journal, *The City*, has now started being available to all readers online – via the website [www.civitate.org](http://www.civitate.org). This journal is a publication of the Houston Baptist University, and the new edition is very pleasant to read via their flexible online-reading facility. In the Summer 2009 issue there is a particularly instructive article entitled 'Who owns Science? The End of Secularism' by Hunter Baker on the application of neo-Darwinian ideas ('survival of the fittest' etc) in the social/political realm. He argues convincingly that for all the neo-Darwinian atheists' claim that man is no more than the result of blind scientific forces, they have to wriggle to claim, as they do, some place for justice, equality and political fairness. He writes:

"One finds this near neck-breaking turn in the kinds of things Richard Dawkins says. He is a dogmatic atheist and an evangeliser of the strongest anti-metaphysical conclusions from Darwin's work. Does this turn him into a Nietzschean nihilist of some kind? No, Dawkins has very proudly proclaimed that though he is a 'passionate Darwinian' in the academic sense and holds Darwinism as 'the main ingredient' for understanding all of life and our existence, he is at the same time a 'passionate anti-Darwinian when it comes to human social and political affairs.' So, the survival of the fittest and natural selection is the real reality underneath our veneer of civilization, but we must actively think differently when it comes to ordering political life. Again, why? If Dawkins is right and blind nature is running the show, isn't that anti-Darwinian stuff in politics little more than cheap sentiment? Why not just follow nature and install a program for culling the weak and breeding stronger, smarter human beings?"

The ideas of Baker's article are more expansively treated in his new book, *The End of Secularism*, published in August by Crossway Books.





# Letters to the Editor

The Editor, St. Mary Magdalen's Clergy House, Peter Avenue,  
Willesden Green, London NW10 2DD [editor@faith.org.uk](mailto:editor@faith.org.uk)

## TOWARDS AN INTELLIGENT DESIGNER

Dear Father Editor,  
May I throw a little stone into the pond of the discussion about intelligent design? For some reason, many Catholics interested in the evolution/natural selection debate seem afraid of the concept because it has been taken up by the 6-day creationists.

Not so the Holy Father, however. In one of his meditations on the Psalms (*Psalms and Canticles* CTS 2006, P. 199) he writes: "In the beginning the creative Word – this Word that created all things, that created this intelligent design which is the cosmos – is also love."

Intelligent design, may I suggest, is not something that has been proved or disproved. Trying to do that is like trying to prove or disprove the existence of someone who is sitting in the room with you. Because of this, one can only conclude that the ability or inability to see it depends on a disposition of the mind and heart.

Yours Faithfully  
Philip Trower  
Stansted Bury  
Ware  
Herts

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

It would indeed seem appropriate to guard against completely accepting the legitimacy of the hijacking of the term "Intelligent Design" by the neo-Creationists of the American Discovery Institute and like-minded. The "disposition" highlighted by Mr Trower surely admits of support

by carefully articulated evidence, just as it has admitted of massive suppression by the powerful misinformation of our agnostic culture.

## THE TOUR OF ST THERESE: HOW INCARNATIONAL AN ENCOUNTER?

Dear Father Editor,  
Some Catholics have been alarmed by the recent tour around England of major primary relics of St. Therese of Lisieux. The provenance of some of this concern is perhaps unsurprising given that the crowds who came (over 6000 to the Oxford Oratory, for instance) included a minority of Senior Citizens, who might possibly remember the cult of relics from their youth, but was mainly made up by the young and middle-aged. Many of the latter must have been fresh to this ancient Christian way of venerating the saints and seeking their help. The success of the tour surely testifies to the wisdom of Pope Benedict's efforts to re-connect contemporary Catholicism with the devotional riches of the pre-conciliar Church.

However there may be some genuine reasons for unease. These I hope can be raised constructively without intending any slight, or lack of gratitude, towards the many bishops, priests and lay organisers of an event which must have won many graces for the English Church.

In the first place it was odd to be presented with the bones of St. Therese double-wrapped, as it were, in both an opaque ornate casket and then a large clear plastic container. Normally the veneration of relics involves at least seeing primary relics (the body), or secondary relics (items touched by the saint in his or her lifetime), or touching tertiary ones (the immediate container of the primary relics). But here the faithful had to make do with touching the container for the tertiary relic (the transparent case) or seeing the tertiary relic through it. If part of the point of devotion to relics is to foster a deeper realisation of the incarnational nature

of genuine Christianity, as a religion which encompasses and redeems the body as well as the soul, the extra distancing effect of the plastic case may have been counter-productive. Could not the clergy at each stop have taken the casket out of the case in order to facilitate a fuller devotion?

Ideally of course the casket itself might have been partly transparent. This is not gruesome: as Addis and Arnold wrote in relation to relics in their *Catholic Dictionary*, because of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body 'Christians have lost that horror of dead bodies which was characteristic of the heathen'.

The other problem with the plastic case is that it may have reduced the therapeutic value of the tour. Today, just as in the early and medieval church, part of the devotional appeal of relics, particularly those of great saints, lies in the possibility of miraculous cures (Acts 19:12), either through their instrumentality, or on the occasion of their close proximity. The Council of Trent taught that 'through' the relics of the saints 'many benefits are bestowed by God on man' (1563, session 25). The body of every saint is to an exceptional degree a temple of the Holy Ghost, and the impressive track record of cures (affirmed by the Catechism of the Council of Trent) presumably stems from a continuing connection between the physical remains and the possibility of divine intervention. Tradition suggests that the holiness and curative possibility is much greater for primary and secondary relics, but still exists for third-class, in this case the casket.

So perhaps it was unfortunate that the faithful were prevented from touching the casket.

Yours Faithfully  
Christopher Zealley  
Old Witney Rd  
Eynsham  
Oxfordshire

## **DEFENDING CATHOLIC THEOLOGY OF THE MASS**

Dear Father Editor,

I write on the occasion of your  
“A Response: Possible Theological  
Development” in the September/  
October issue of Faith.

I shall be grateful if you would indicate  
where one may find Old Testament  
support for the statements on page  
22 that “among the Jews of the Old  
Testament, the Passover was... [1]  
the continuing reality of spiritual and  
corporate liberation by which God was  
redeeming his people in the present.  
[2] It also presaged and contained  
the promise of the final and plenary  
liberation from slavery to sin and death  
that was yet to come with the advent  
of the Messiah”

Thanking you for your kindness in  
this matter.

*Yours Faithfully*  
L.W. McGrath  
Bunker Hill Road  
Auburn  
New Hampshire  
USA

## **EDITORIAL COMMENT**

Our thinking here has been influenced  
by Alfred Edersheim – see for instance:  
[www.piney.com/Edersheim11.html](http://www.piney.com/Edersheim11.html)  
Here are some relevant Old Testament  
references, and associated explanations.  
The quotations in point 1 are from  
[www.salvationhistory.com](http://www.salvationhistory.com).

1. In Exodus 19-20 Moses describes  
events in the first generation after  
the Exodus to assembled Israelites  
as if they “are themselves there, as  
witnesses and participants in those  
events. [...] through the power of God,  
they are being made contemporaries  
of those events [...] part of the family  
of God created by the covenant.”  
Deuteronomy 16:3 brings out these  
points with regard to those celebrating  
the Passover. “Every Israelite, even  
today, speaks of the exodus in the first  
person. It is “what the Lord did for me  
when I came out of Egypt” (see Exodus  
13:8). In the Passover [...] the lamb dies

instead of the first-born, is sacrificed  
so that the people could live (see  
Exodus 12:1-23,27).” (see also Exodus  
6:6; 15:13; Psalm 69:18; Isaiah 44:24;  
Genesis 48:10).

“It’s not as if God can ever forget His  
covenant. Here, and elsewhere in the  
Old Testament, when God ‘remembers’,  
He is acting to accomplish His will –  
answering prayers, granting  
forgiveness, saving, and blessing His  
people (see Genesis 30:22; 1 Samuel  
1:19; Psalm 98:3; 105:42).”

2. At the Passover, the Jews set aside  
a cup in case the Messiah, the New  
Moses, should come and deliver them.  
This new Exodus, Jeremiah predicted,  
would mark the start of a “New  
Covenant”, one *unlike* the old in that  
we would be given a “new heart” with  
the power to be fully free from sin,  
freed from the slavery to unfaithfulness  
experienced by the people of the old  
covenant (see 23:7-8; 31:31-33). Isaiah  
depicts this new Moses as one bringing  
an even greater redemption and  
deliverance of God’s people (11:15-16;  
43:2,16-19; 51:9-11). He would come  
and fulfil the promise of the Messianic  
Banquet (Isaiah 25-26 65:13), presaged,  
that is, by the Passover.

*Dear Father Editor,*

I would like to comment on the first  
paragraph of Fr.Crean’s critique of  
attitudes to the Modern Mass as it  
sets the detached academic tone  
for his whole essay (September ‘09).

“The way of talking about the Mass  
nowadays isn’t exactly wrong.”

“It seems to involve a false emphasis”.

“It seems to carry with it ideas that  
I do think mistaken.”

There is no “seems” or “not exactly  
wrong” about it, the modern attitude  
with its understating the sacrificial part  
of the Mass almost out of existence is  
wrong, wrong, wrong. A weakened Mass  
(and a distorted catechesis) has brought  
the western Church almost to its knees  
and, according to statistical projection,  
to its death in a couple of decades if  
something drastic is not done soon.

What Fr. Crean is talking about here  
is probably nothing less than the  
greatest triumph of Satan in the history  
of the Church. The watering down  
(and reducing the power of?) the  
indispensable source of the Christian  
spirit calls for something much more  
vehement than the language of inter-  
departmental memoranda in Whitehall.

Oh for some occasional passion!

I don’t doubt that Fr. Crean’s essay is  
excellent and very much suited to your  
largely intellectual readership, but for  
me it does not exactly set the blood  
pounding in the veins.

What we need is not polite criticism,  
however learned, or millions of careful  
diplomatic words at those endless  
conferences and workshops, but the  
thunder of an O.T. Isaiah or Jeremiah.  
The urgency of the situation calls  
for no less. Why does God not send  
us a real prophet? Presumably  
because we don’t deserve one. There  
is plenty of sophisticated theological  
chatter around but not enough of  
Our Lady’s demand for prayer and  
penance.

*Yours Faithfully*  
Jim Allen  
Seymour Drive  
Torquay

## **PRECURSORS OF THE HOLOCAUST**

*Dear Father Editor,*

As anti-family legislation gathers  
pace, as recorded by John Deighan’s  
articles, (*Faith*, ‘Learning from  
homosexual Activism’ March 2009,  
“The Undermining of the Family:  
Where are we at?” November 2007),  
it is instructive to note some key  
cultural conditions which enabled  
the Holocaust. I list them below and  
would make the observation that  
they are becoming present in our  
own society.

– Fundamental intolerance towards  
certain legitimate groups of people  
and ideas on the part of a race-  
obsessed government. Policies  
designed to foster intolerance.



## Letters to the Editor continued

- The imposition of a pervasive bureaucratic tyranny to enforce conformity and to criminalise individual freedoms of speech, thought, association and action.
- State claims of total ownership rights over the individual in the name of freedom through such devices as ID cards, racial and religious categorisation and so on.
- State sponsored surveillance, growing ability to monitor large sections of the population.
- Undermining the primary rights of parents in order to coerce children

and families into compliance with and servitude to the state's cultural agenda.

- Deliberately creating conditions justifying legislation and bureaucracy governing inter-cultural conduct, suppressing traditional culture and religion.
- Replacement of traditional religious teaching in schools by officially sanctioned race based ideologies, and emphasising reproductive 'hygiene' rather than genuine morality.
- Denigration of targeted religious and racial groups, manufacturing laws

that make their continued functioning difficult or impossible.

- The official acceptance of eugenics practices and the collusion of the medical, academic, commercial and political establishments in the implementation of eugenics programmes.

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## The Truth Will Set You Free by Ciaran Corrigan

### A YOUNG PERSON'S EXPERIENCE OF PRACTISING THE FAITH

*Ciaran Corrigan, a recent Business Studies graduate of Glasgow Caledonian University describes some of the influences that helped him to stay a practising Catholic. This piece was initially given as a witness at the 2009 Faith Summer Session at Woldingham School.*

I didn't exactly jump with excitement at the opportunity to produce this piece. As soon as the organiser of the *Faith* Summer Session said my name I thought "What does he want?" and following that phone call I thought long and hard about what I would say. Would this be OK? I'm not sure I like what I have to offer. Still, it has given me the opportunity to reflect on my faith and the importance and meaning of God in my life.

A few weeks after I was born my parents got me baptised, entering me into the family of God. I am fortunate in that my parents are still together and have encouraged me in every part of my life, teaching me right from wrong and passing on to me Christian morals and values. My parents introduced me to God from an early age and have always highlighted the importance of attending Mass every Sunday and even daily when possible, regardless of where we are, in the country or not. My faith was also influenced by my Grandparents, who I was very close to, and it was from them more than anyone else that I learnt how to pray. My Grandparents attended daily Mass and also said the rosary together every evening. We used to

joke as children that their dog at the time was definitely not a Catholic as she ran to her bed as soon as she heard their rosary beads. I learned to admire the devotion my Grandad had to the Sacred Heart and respected the fact that he was a pioneer throughout his life, a devotion which my Mum also took when she was 18. When my Grandad died three years ago it was a really difficult time for me and my family, but even though I was devastated by his death I drew great strength from my faith and realised he was at peace with Christ.

The example of faith that my grandparents and parents gave me throughout my early life was really important to me. It was they who taught me to try and make God the *centre* of my life, rather than fit God *around* my life. However, as you know, there comes a point for all of us as we grow up when it is no longer acceptable to take our cars and Lego to Mass and when we have to make up our own minds about faith. For many of us, our faith is given to us through our parents and we should be thankful for this and not take it for granted. But, as we get older it becomes our responsibility to strengthen, grow and develop our faith realising that it is an essential part of our lives, and gives us real meaning.

As young Catholics today the decisions we make become harder as the temptations surrounding us become more seductive, making it easy to succumb to sin and turn our back on God. The pressure of living in a society full of distractions makes it harder for us to work out what is right and wrong, to say no to certain things and saying yes to God. We are fully



**“we should encourage each other and realise that confession is an important part of our faith”.**

aware of the different pressures and temptations surrounding us and we can all stand up and say ‘I am a sinner’. The beauty and benefit for us Catholics is that we have the opportunity to confess our sins so that when we fall along the way, we have the chance to repent and get back up. I really do believe that going to confession regularly, even if it is difficult and at times embarrassing, is extremely important. I feel relieved and uplifted following my confession knowing that I have been forgiven, ready to start afresh. This does not mean it is OK to become complacent about confession and think it doesn’t matter if I do this, because I can always go to confession and I will be forgiven. That’s not how it works! It’s important to be aware of our sins, confess them and be as sincere and honest as possible. We all know it is not easy to go to confession, I find going to confession very daunting and sometimes think ‘Oh no, what will the priest think or what if he knows who I am?’ But then I remember the feeling following confession and think how many confessions has a priest heard and the chances of him being shocked by my confession is not exactly high. This is why we should encourage each other and realise that confession is an important part of our faith.

“I am fortunate in that my parents are still together and have encouraged me in every part of my life.”

Living as young Catholics today is difficult and this is especially true during secondary school and after, when everyone becomes subject to peer pressure. I found secondary school the worst as I was and altar server from when I was 9 up until I was 18. I really enjoyed my time as an altar server but during those 9 years I took some amount of criticism especially from friends who no longer went to Mass. This wasn’t seen as a cool thing to do and it bothered me for a while, but then I realised I enjoyed it and felt as if I was becoming closer to our Lord rather than further away like my friends. I think, that the fact that I was an altar server for so long actually helped strengthen my faith as I was more involved in the Mass and it was a great privilege to serve God in this way. I also remember being slagged off when I started working a part time weekend job as I told them I couldn’t work on a Sunday morning due to my commitment as an altar server. I still remember their reaction as they laughed and joked at me. I’m sure we have all heard the names before such as bead rattler, bible basher or Jesus lover but these names didn’t really mean anything to me and slowly even the ones who had ridiculed me began to respect me and my relationship with God. In fact throughout my five years with them I have only worked three Sunday mornings and they have always managed to let me go to Mass if need be.

When I went to university I found that my religion was never really an issue. As I stayed at home in first and fourth year attending Mass was easy, especially with the human alarm clock that is my parents. The only challenge was holy days of obligation but I always ensured I was either back home in time to go in the evening or went at university or a parish in

Glasgow. It became slightly more challenging when I stayed away from home in second year and the temptations and bad habits became so much more attractive. It then became my responsibility to make my own arrangements for Mass but as there were several churches near my flat there was no excuse. It became an even bigger challenge in third year when I spent 6 months in Slovenia as I shared a flat with four friends and I was the only Catholic. We arrived on a Friday and as is the Catholic fashion one of the first things you do is find out where the nearest Church is and its Mass times. Being away from home in another country with people who had no interest in God was very testing. I also found it difficult going to Mass every Sunday and concentrating on the Mass as I was completely out of my usual environment. One Sunday, after a 35 minute sermon in Slovenian, I remember thinking “What am I doing here?” And what made it worse was that confession was impossible as the Priest did not speak English and I was not fluent in Slovenian. However, I did keep going to Mass, even though it was difficult, and boring, and I think I grew in my faith because of being faithful. Personally, I think it is real challenges like these that we face as Catholics that help us to build and work on our relationship with God. I am not standing here claiming to be perfect or sin free because I am not but it is through resisting temptation and standing firm that we grow and deepen in our faith.

Following my time as an altar server I was asked by my parish priest to become an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion and felt honoured to be asked as I did not feel myself worthy of distributing the body and blood of our Lord at such a young age. By doing this I have continued to feel closer to God and I am happy and privileged to have an active role in the parish. I must admit though that one of the biggest influences in the development of my faith was during the reign of a certain priest involved with *Faith* movement in Bannockburn. Attending the youth group weekly allowed me and numerous other friends to develop our faith. Because we had talks on the faith, we learnt more about the Church and what she teaches and, most importantly, we had the opportunity to ask questions and to discuss about things we didn’t understand.

It was through the Youth Group in the parish that I first started coming to *Faith* Sessions and these have been really important for me. Getting to know many other young normal (well almost normal...) Catholics was really important and encouraged me to keep practising the faith even when it was hard, and what I have learned through the talks (even though I slept through many...) and the discussions has helped me to grow in my faith. As for the friends I have met here, I am lucky as we are all a very close group and go on random nights out, trips and holidays. Coming to *Faith* has always been a good laugh and really enjoyable, but the real reason we come is the same reason we are all here today: to grow closer to Christ our Lord and help one another to do the same. In other words, “to seek above all the Kingdom of God.”



# Comment on the Comments

by William Oddie

## Christian Courage

There is an ever present question for those of us who have never had to face a period of real and overwhelming adversity. How would our faith survive if we were indeed faced by such a trial – and if it did, how much would it be a source of strength?

By “adversity”, I don’t simply mean what Shakespeare calls “the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to”. An experience like bereavement can be truly terrible, but it is a natural part of life, and it comes to us all. But what about the kind of experience which may be so utterly unnatural, as well as being distressing, that it is potentially utterly and finally destructive? I am thinking in particular of the disgrace and imprisonment of one previously held in high esteem: an experience so horrific that in this country such a person would be placed under a 24 hour “suicide watch”.

The answer has nothing at all to do with the associated consideration of whether or not such adversity is in some way deserved. I have only ever personally known one person who has undergone such a trial (a trial in both senses of the word): Conrad Black, who appointed me editor of *The Catholic Herald* about ten years ago and who is now serving a six year prison sentence in Florida. And I ought, before going any further, to declare my own firm belief – having followed his trial as it ran its course – that his conviction and imprisonment were gross miscarriages of justice. He himself continues to insist on his innocence and to believe that in the end the American legal system will discover it. I very much doubt whether he is right in this; but I hope he is.

All that is by the way, except that those who think that his present ordeal is undeserved are more likely to be concerned about how he is bearing up. The answer appears to be that he is enduring his imprisonment remarkably

well, and that his Catholic faith has had a great deal to do with this. *The Catholic Herald* in September published a long article by Lord Black, abbreviated from an even longer chapter, which will appear in a book about the conversion to Catholicism of a number of well-known Canadians. It contains the following:

The Catholic life in the prison where I write is active and intellectually stimulating. Confidence that there is at least some sort of an organising principle in the world, the experience that worship sometimes produces – which can enhance an understanding of travails and observations – and some metaphysical background, do provide a hinterland for perceptions, and with it, relative serenity and proportionality, even, and perhaps especially, in times of extreme tension, poignancy, and adversity. And there have been some.

That’s all; the article isn’t about life in prison, or how he came to be there, but about what he obviously thinks more important, how he came to commit himself to belief in the Catholic religion in the first place: but that, too, is relevant to his endurance of his present situation. It was Cardinal Emmett Carter of Toronto who after he had hesitated and agonised for months finally gathered him in:

The Cardinal [said] that I was “at the door”, but that the one point I had to embrace if I wished to enter, and without which, all Christianity, he boldly asserted, “is a fraud and a trumpery”, was the Resurrection of Christ. If I believed that, I was eligible; if I did not, I wasn’t. What he was asking was not unreasonable, and I reflected on it for a few minutes and concluded that since, as defined, I believed in God and in miracles, I could at least suppress doubt sufficiently to meet his criterion. I considered it a little longer to be sure

that I wasn’t allowing momentum, contemplative fatigue, or my great regard for him to push me over the finish line.

After a silence of perhaps five minutes, I said that I thought I could clear that hurdle. He asked me if I wished to be received. I did, and was, in the chapel in his home a few days later, on June 18 1986. I thought of Pascal’s attribution to Christ: “You would not have sought me if you had not already found me”; and of the statement by, I think, one of the saints, that “All the way to God is God, because Christ said: ‘I am the way.’” I have taken the sacraments at least once a week since, and have confessed when I feel sinful. This is not an overly frequent sensation, but when it occurs, I can again agree with Newman that our consciences are “powerful, peremptory, unargumentative, irrational, minatory and definitive”. The strain of trying to ignore or restrain an aroused conscience can be intolerable. Confession and repentance, if sincere, are easier, more successful, and more creditable. Though there are many moments of scepticism as matters arise, and the dark nights of the soul that seem to assail almost everyone visit me too, I have never had anything remotely resembling a lapse, nor a sense of forsakenness, even when I was unjustly indicted, convicted, and imprisoned, in a country I formerly much admired.

It is difficult not to admire Conrad Black’s determination to make something positive out of this dreadful experience. Last year, an article in *The Daily Mail* which was positively dripping with *schadenfreude* (oh, how his enemies have relished his downfall) could barely restrain a sense of admiration, despite the article’s vicious tone:

**"It is difficult not to admire Conrad Black's determination to make something positive out of this dreadful experience."**

...the *Mail* has learned that far from being cowed by the whole experience, Conrad's bombastic self-assurance throughout the trial continues to serve him well, protecting him from the self-pity that might otherwise have engulfed him.

By all accounts, while not exactly "flourishing", he is certainly bearing up well...

Dubbed "Lordy" by his fellow inmates... after initial jail work as a dishwasher, [he] has been "upgraded" to work in the library, where he has virtually unlimited access to newspapers and email...

"Conrad remains very snobbish, despite having the same daily routine as all the other prisoners," said a source. "He said he was shocked by how uneducated most of his fellow inmates were" [...]

No matter, since they now have "Lordy" to bring some of his sparkling intellect and insight to bear.

Of late, Conrad has been holding lectures in American history which have been attended by both inmates and guards alike. The talks have been so successful – and entertaining – that they have been moved from the library to a bigger venue within the prison to accommodate demand.

It is perhaps just as well he remains busy, given that the U.S. prison service does not much allow for leniency when it comes to early release, and Black is likely to serve at least 85 per cent of his sentence, making him past 70 by the time he regains his freedom.

Conrad Black, I firmly believe, received a very severe sentence because he fought his conviction (a colleague who made a "plea bargain" was rewarded for giving evidence against him with a light sentence of six months) and because in the post-Enron era the highly politicised American system has been reconfigured to savage anyone perceived as a "fat cat" who falls into its clutches. The difference, though,

is this: that through the Enron fraud, millions of people lost their savings, their pensions and their livelihoods. Nothing remotely similar has been the result of the supposed offences for which Conrad Black has been imprisoned.

The judge ought to have given this consideration more weight. When she was considering her sentence, I was asked to be one of those who wrote to her asking for clemency. The text of these letters is now in the public domain, so I can quote here part of what I said, though for all the difference it made to this hard-hearted woman, I might have saved my breath to cool my porridge:

After his departure [from the *Telegraph*], stories of his personal kindness and of good done by stealth began to surface; in particular, of one columnist, dying of cancer, who on his instructions remained on salary, and whose medical expenses were paid, to the end. I understand that there are similar stories about his Canadian newspaper empire.

In short, this is a man of stature and great humanity, the balance sheet of whose life shows that he has done immensely more good in the world than harm. I am not familiar with the American law on the charges on which he has been found guilty. But it is surely the case that there are no blighted lives (apart from his own) as a result of anything he has done: there are undoubtedly, however, many whose lives he has touched who will share my deep belief that he has now suffered enough.

As for his "arrogance" and "bombast" I will end by quoting an article written (before his sentence was handed down) in the Canadian paper *The Gazette*, by L.Ian MacDonald, a former employee of this outstanding newspaperman, who was a proprietor who, for all his great power, always (as I can testify) supported his editors – and where they needed him, his journalists – through thick and thin:

Is Black the author of his own misfortune? Well, a public company can't be run like a private one, not where the rules of corporate governance are concerned, particularly in the United States and especially in the post-Enron era. In hindsight, Black might have saved himself a lot of trouble by not listing on the New York Stock Exchange in the first place...

Here's what I know about him, as a friendly acquaintance of many years: His humanity and humour, neither of which has been much in evidence in the Chicago media circus, shine through.

[One anecdote] of a mutual friend will illustrate, and if Nick Auf der Maur were here, he would tell [it] himself.

When Nick was struck with cancer in 1996, he had to suspend his column during his treatments, and since he was a freelancer here with no benefits, he would be losing his only source of income at a time when he needed it most. Conrad *very quietly* sent word he should be paid for the duration of his illness [my italics]. Then when Nick died in 1998 and we were putting together what became the bestselling book of his columns and tributes from friends, Conrad was delighted that we asked him to contribute. He made the deadline, stayed within the word limit, and in one of the best pieces in the book, told stories of Nick at his own expense.

His Catholic Herald article can still be read online at:

<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/features/>. As Damian Thompson commented in his *Telegraph* blog, "Why not read the whole thing before rushing to judgment?"





# The Road From Regensburg

## Papal Encouraged Dialogue in Search of a Modern Apologetic

### COMMENTS UPON CARITAS IN VERITATE: AVOIDING METAPHYSICS?

In the last edition of this column we highlighted some key faith and reason themes in the Pope's latest encyclical. They are, we think, important to the overall message of the Letter.

1. **Diagnosis:** True human development means overcoming the false materialistic reduction of the nature of man (n. 26, 29, 76). This false ideology is in a symbiotic relationship with globalization (variants of the term appear 54 times), science (n. 31, 51) and technology (n. 69, 70, 77). These latter are good in themselves but become dangerous (n. 31, 34, 68, 74) when materialistically interpreted (e.g. "the rejection of metaphysics by the human sciences" n. 31, & cf. 53, 77) and abused (n. 5, 28, 75).

2. **Prescription:** This situation calls for "a new trajectory of thinking [...] a deeper critical evaluation of the category of relation [...] using] metaphysics and theology, [...] a metaphysical interpretation of the 'humanum' in which relationality is an essential element" (n. 53-54, see also n. 9, 19, 31, 33, 43).

3. **Towards a New Metaphysics:** This "new humanistic synthesis" (n.21) should involve a view of human knowing and truth as an intrinsic, yet ultimately gratuitous, relationship (n.34, 77 and footnote 88). This epistemological relationship is between the spiritual Mind of God, the spiritual mind of man (n.29, 72), and the material object of technology, (n. 26, 68-70). Which is to say it is the heart of a newly developed metaphysics.

Below we give extracts of 18 synthetic commentaries (as opposed to those that are primarily descriptive overviews) from within British, American and Italian Catholic publications. All of these refer at least to some degree to the Pope's call for a new "trajectory" or "synthesis" or "thinking". In many other commentaries this theme is ignored. Numerous simply suggest that the main thrust of the

Encyclical is to point out the contradictions of materialism, and/or focus upon its specific reflections on economic and social governance. We would also note:

- Whilst some of the prominent synthetic attempts to capture the encyclical's central themes mention "anthropology" we have discovered only one (see Stratford Caldecott below) that mentions "metaphysics". Perhaps in more popular presentations today that term needs a lot of explaining. Which is perhaps the heart of the modern crisis. Still, the Encyclical uses the term at key points of Chapters Two and Five with significant thematic links to other parts of the encyclical, not least Chapter Six on technology.
- The theme of **technology** whilst prominent in the encyclical is hardly mentioned at all in the commentaries – the five we have found which go beyond simply mentioning it as something which can be unethically abused are referred to immediately below – but two are by someone involved with the encyclical's genesis, Archbishop Crepaldi.
- Below that are the eight we have found (including another helpful piece by Crepaldi) which refer to the Pope's suggested developments concerning **epistemology**.

### TOWARDS A NEW VISION OF MAN FOR A NEW AGE OF TECHNOLOGY

**Mgr Giampaolo Crepaldi**, Archbishop of Trieste, Secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace until the publication of the Encyclical, spoke at the **press conference** kicking presenting the Encyclical. He started by affirming that the "synthetic point of view assumed by the encyclical [...] is *receiving precedes doing*." (see below sub-section on the 'human subject' for his later important development of this insight).

After drawing out how the encyclical applies this to various social, economic and ecological issues he highlighted, concerning "the problem of technology", that "this is the first time an encyclical deals with the subject in such an organic

manner [...] The exclusively technical mentality [and ideology] in fact, reduces all to pure doing .... [True human development] requires a new perspective upon man that only the God who is truth and love can provide."

In a commentary soon after, in the prominent Italian Catholic current affairs review **Tempi** he argued that "the overall vision [...] affirms that] "the definitive Word [...] is not sort of added on from the outside like an opinion, but professes to be the response to human expectations [...]"

This counters the false "ideology of technology [which] is the new absolutism [...] in which] the problems of the human person are reduced to psychological problems [...] Man is the unity of body and soul. *Caritas in veritate* restores to the spirit and to life their rightful place in the construction of the earthly city."

**The editorial** to the summer edition of **Il Regno**, the magazine of the Centro Editoriale Dehoniano of the Sacred Heart Fathers, suggests that the complexity of the text results from its gallant attempt to address the two big questions, globalization and the rise of technology – the latter requires "new eyes and new hearts to overcome materialism". It goes on to highlight "the difficulty of bringing together the perception of challenge with a new thinking (not just socio-economic) that could better describe, in a Christian fashion, the congruence of new facts with the language and syntheses already given by the tradition [...] Decisive is the recognition, whether positive or negative, of technology. This is the 'objective aspect of human action' (n.69), but its pervasiveness and force can transform it into the ideology of globalization."

**Nate Wildermuth** of **catholicpeace making.com** argues that the most important theme in Pope Benedict's new encyclical has been almost entirely ignored:

"At the official press conference that unveiled *Caritas in Veritate*, Cardinal Mgr Renato Martino, President of the Pontifical Council of Peace and Justice [...] said that Cold War ideologies 'have been replaced by the new ideology of technology,' and that the 'arbitrary

## “The Christian claim is to respond to an expectation of truth and charity already implicit in things, in each thing, in each reality with its respective autonomy.”

nature of technology is one of the greatest problems of today's world.' Archbishop Crepaldi [secretary of the Council] explained that *Caritas in Veritate* is 'the first time an Encyclical deals with this theme [of technology] so fully.'

"[...] In] the last chapter [...] 'The Development of Peoples and Technology'[... s]ummarising the previous five chapters, Pope Benedict writes that the 'supremacy of technology tends to prevent people from recognising anything that cannot be explained in terms of matter alone,' (77) [...] This] chapter has been given the silent treatment by not only the mass-media, but by professors, theologians, and generally by those who ought to know better. When those who introduce the encyclical [make the above statements ...] one would expect to see a lot of thinking, writing, and reading done on that topic. But nothing of that sort has occurred, at least publicly. Why?

"[...] because the technical worldview is 'now so dominant' that we have taken its truth for granted. The Pope, when he speaks about technology, must not be questioning anything but its proper use. But *Caritas in Veritate* is not saying that technology must be used ethically. [...] He's opening up technology to a deeper discernment."

In *New City*, the magazine of the Focolare movement, **Frank Johnson** argues that "The divide between the sacred and the secular, the mystical and the material seems to be growing ever wider, at least in Western society. Belief is acceptable as long as it keeps itself to itself and doesn't try to 'interfere' with important 'worldly' issues such as economics, politics, science and technology. [...] For the majority of people in this country organised religion is a thing of the past, adhered to by a rapidly decreasing mount of elderly people. [...] The Pope] offers an explanation and a vision of Christianity that strongly challenges the distorted image described above. [...] God has a plan of love for every human being, for the whole of humanity and the whole of creation."

### ON A NEW CENTRALITY OF THE RELATIONAL HUMAN SUBJECT

*(But no explicit comment upon the cultural significance of technology).*

To us, the most potent synthesis is that by **Mgr Giampaolo Crepaldi**, published on 19th September on the website of the **Card. Van Thuân International Observatory**. He brings out the subjective reception of objective, ontological, truth and love in all our knowing (see n. 34), directly denied by materialistic philosophy of science.

"What renders each person a person, as *Caritas in Veritate* (CV) argues, is not what he/she produces, but what he/she receives. [...] There is a word upon us that precedes us; [...] the fullness of [man's] identity is to be found in his response to this word. The word 'vocation' occurs 17 times in this encyclical. By virtue of this vocation man understands that he is always more than what he can do, and that society as such is always more than what can be accomplished by either the market or politics. [...] The human community lives on the basis of assumptions it knows not how to produce [...] – whether we call it trust, fraternity, solidarity or friendship[...] this] is the ultimate reason for our conduct and behaviour. It is in this sense that CV speaks to us about truth and charity, both of which are received and cannot be produced. They cannot be bought on the market, are not supplied as a sort of public service [...] Truth is revealed to us and charity is given to us. [...]

"The Christian claim is to respond to an expectation of truth and charity already implicit in things, in each thing, in each reality with its respective autonomy. Christianity does not replace them, but from the very outset sheds upon everything a light that makes it possible to enhance all the tiny or huge pieces of truth and charity present at each and every level of existence. [...] The faith is not added on to reason, charity is not added on to justice, ethics is not added on to economics or politics, the Church is not added on to the world, nor is culture added on to nature.... from the

very outset they are in mutual dialogue, with neither confusion nor separation. [...]

"In CV, however, you will never find a statement of religious origin without an accompanying human and rational justification, upon the condition, quite naturally, that reason complies in full with its duty and that the sciences do not let themselves be guided by ideologies. In fact, the religion 'with a human face' does allow itself to be judged by reason, but by reason guided by its own truth and not just any old reason."

**Stratford Caldecott**, on **Zenit.org** argues, in a piece entitled "Metaphysics has returned: And more overlooked themes of new encyclical", that "the encyclical takes Catholic social teaching to a new level by basing it explicitly on the theology of the Trinity and calling for 'a deeper critical evaluation of the category of relation.' Metaphysics is back.

"Next, it introduces a new principle – that of 'gratuitousness' and 'reciprocal gift,' which enables us to break the 'hegemony of the binary model of market-plus-State' (38, 39, 41). In other words, economics as a human activity is not ethically neutral and must be structured and governed in an ethical manner; that is, in accordance with the highest ends of man."

**Tracey Rowland**, in **Catholic World Report's** "round table" discussion (not reported in its print edition) argues that the Pope is affirming that "When cultures no longer serve the deepest needs of human nature and actually narrow the spiritual horizons of people, people don't know who they are and feel depressed.

"The remedy for this pandemic in contemporary Western culture is to grasp the fact that truth is something which is given to us as a gift [...] (cf. n.34). "*Caritas in Veritate* is a masterful synthesis of the Trinitarian anthropology of *Gaudium et Spes* and the subsequent insights of Paul VI and John Paul II, applied to the contemporary context."

**Cardinal Cordes** at the **Press Conference** presenting the encyclical distinguished the tradition of Church social teaching into three stages:



## Road From Regensburg continued

"In a first phase, the attention of this discipline was oriented, rather, to problematic situations within society [...] With the theological emphasis, John XXIII treats more decisively the question of all this in terms of the human person [...] John Paul II then reinforced this [...] In the logic of this Encyclical, we find then a further stage, perhaps a third phase in the reflection on social doctrine. [...] charity is placed as a key link: divine charity works through human action, as a theological virtue [...] Man is not considered only as the object of a process, but as the subject of this process. The man who has known Christ becomes the agent of change, such that social doctrine does not remain a dead letter."

**Giorgio Vittadini**, President of the Communion and Liberation (CL) "Subsidiarity Foundation" affirms in the CL summer magazine *Traces* that the central emphasis is that "it is Christ who fulfils man's destiny". In "defining charity as truth [t]he Pope [...] links it precisely to knowledge. [...] the true theme of the encyclical is the human subject as it stands behind economic activity and determines it."

**Jennifer Roback Morse** of the **Acton Institute** points out on their website that, in the very first paragraph of the encyclical we discover that "Benedict's perspective on Truth has its own view of human freedom as well as of the human good: 'Each person finds his good by adherence to God's plan for him, [...] in this plan, he finds his truth, and through adherence to this truth he becomes free.'"

**Douglas Farrow**, professor of Christian Thought at McGill University in Montreal, in the October edition of *First Things* states:

"At work in all of Benedict's writings is a profound theological vision of the human vocation and destiny. [...] *Caritas in Veritate* has real literary and practical flaws [...] yet, viewed in the light of Benedict's earlier encyclicals, *Caritas in Veritate* can be seen as one long call to conversion [...] requiring 'new eyes and a new heart, capable of rising above a materialistic vision of human events.' It requires a spirit of receptiveness,

an openness to 'the idea of gift' as a fundamental principle of human existence"

In *L'Osservatore Romano* France's Minister of Labour, **Xavier Darcos**, said that the encyclical proposes "a 'comprehensive development' that assures a shared humanistic emancipation." The Pope is asking the world to explore "the path of gift, gratuity and sharing. He condemns the emptiness of blind relativism which deprives men of the sense of their collectivity." The Pope "calls for a new alliance between faith and reason, between divine light and human intelligence. The crisis should force us to reconsider our ways because while the world's riches are growing, the disparities continue."

In a piece challenging the conventional economics of "scarcity" **Eugene McCarraher** argues in *Commonweal* that "The truth, Benedict asserts, is that love leavens the very architecture of creation; that creation is a realm of abundance, and humanity the image and likeness of a triune and infinitely loving God."

### ON NEW UNITY OF HUMAN DIGNITY AND SOCIAL TEACHING

*(But no specific comment upon the encyclical's themes of subjective relationality and objective technology).*

**Rev. Robert A. Sirico**, on *acton.org*, argues that: "Pope Benedict XVI insists on a close relationship between morality and the economy in order to promote a 'holistic understanding and a new humanistic synthesis' [...] and] urges that the [financial] crisis become 'an opportunity for discernment, in which to shape a new vision for the future' (no. 21)."

**John Allen** in the *American National Catholic Reporter* argued that the encyclical presented a "'Christian humanism' for the globalized age", arguing that its main novelty was simply that the Pope "insists that Catholic social teaching must be seen as a package deal, holding economic justice together with its opposition to abortion, birth control, gay marriage, and other hot-button issues of sexual morality. The

pope expresses irritation with [it seems, ..., the] tensions between the church's pro-life contingent and its peace-and-justice activists."

**George Weigel** in a second *National Review* article on the subject states that the Letter is "a complex and sometimes obscure document, in which many intellectual influences are clearly at work. [...] the proponents of *Populorum Progressio* [...] would seem to be promoting a 'hermeneutics of rupture' when they claim that the tradition of Catholic social doctrine began anew with *Populorum Progressio* — a claim that at least some passages in *Caritas in Veritate* can be interpreted to support. [...]

"It is certainly true that Catholic social doctrine challenges all parties in the ongoing debate over political economy in the United States. Yet if the most important development in that doctrine in *Caritas in Veritate* is a strong linkage of the life issues to Catholic social-justice concerns, then it is also true that the challenge of this particular encyclical falls more sharply on those who believe that *Roe v. Wade* was rightly decided, and remedied an injustice in prior American law."

**Clifford Longley** in *The Tablet* argues that "the encyclical's theological keynote" is that it "emphatically unites the Church's roles of spreading the Gospel with working for social justice [...] under the banner of integral human development"

Numerous commentators have criticised Pope Benedict's support for a tier of global governance "with teeth" — even though he also made very clear that this would be very dangerous if linked with the currently fashionable reductionist vision of man. In **Fr Holloway's** words from 1950 earlier in this issue, 60 years ago he prophesied:

"We are ending rather the first great era of universal civilisation, and entering upon a second world civilisation that will be greater and more all-embracing than the first. [...] mankind must rapidly integrate a truly universal civilisation, and become one people in the brotherhood of a world-wide commonwealth."





# Book Reviews

## **A Fine-Tuned Universe: The Quest for God in Science and Theology**

*by Alister E. McGrath, Westminster John Knox Press (available from Alban Books), xvi + 262pp, £26.99*

Judging the book by its title, I was expecting just another account of the various 'coincidences' found in the fundamental laws and constants of the universe, which seem amazingly carefully chosen to allow the emergence of life, and which therefore point to the existence of a Cosmic Designer who brought the world into existence for just that purpose. What I found was much more thoughtful, and correspondingly more valuable as a contribution to the contemporary debate between science and Christian faith. McGrath divides his book into two equal parts. The second part is indeed given over to an account of such fine-tunings, largely taken from the realm of biology; but it is the first half which makes the more original and thought-provoking contribution.

The book starts by considering the concept of natural theology, noting that this very notion is conditioned by prevailing scientific attitudes. In ancient times it denoted a form of thinking based in the real world rather than in myths. 'Classical' natural theology sought to demonstrate the existence of a transcendent realm from a neutral examination of nature: a mode of thought which reached its zenith in Enlightenment England with such characters as William Paley. McGrath suggests a new reformulation of natural theology, seeing its task as offering an interpretation of nature based on Trinitarian faith, including an account of human engagement with nature in the moral and aesthetic dimensions as well.

For McGrath, natural theology should not attempt to prove the existence of God;

its aim is more modestly to show the consistency or 'resonance' between a Christian worldview and what we observe scientifically. In this regard it follows the same form of reasoning as the natural sciences do themselves: not providing infallible inferences which compel assent, but creatively and insightfully – and provisionally – seeking the best explanation of the observed data.

It is here that I took issue with McGrath. I agree that science does not proceed by irrefutable deductive logic; but whilst some scientific ideas are indeed provisional, others surely command certainty. Must I really retain some doubt about the existence of atoms or that bacteria cause diseases? Perhaps the sun really does go around the earth after all! Is it not possible, therefore, that we could achieve certainty about the existence of God from nature? Certainly Catholic dogma asserts the possibility of such reasoning.

I also had some concerns about how objective McGrath considers explanations of scientific data to be. At times he speaks of theologians and scientists 'discerning' or 'having insight' into nature; natural theology has explanatory power because it corresponds to how things really are (p. 40). But elsewhere he says the construction of meaning is the creative work of the human mind (p. 4); natural theology looks at the world through particular spectacles (p. 22) – expressions which are at least open to a subjectivist interpretation.

However I was much happier with McGrath's observation that a Trinitarian worldview fits in very well with a comprehensible universe (since the world and the human mind both come from the Mind of God); with an evolutionary cosmos (following Irenaeus' idea of God's 'economy'); and with the existence of evil as well as good (due to the Fall).

Perhaps McGrath's greatest contribution to the debate is to demonstrate how well St. Augustine's theology of creation provides a foundation for contemporary natural theology. In particular his idea of *rationes seminales* (causal principles embedded in creation from the beginning, which emerge in due time under God's providence) can be happily

accommodated to modern evolutionary cosmology and biology.

The second half of the book gives a good but brief review of the scientific evidence for the universe being fine-tuned for life. McGrath gently states that the evidence is clearly supportive of the existence of God, which is preferable to the alternative explanations of mere chance or observer selection effects. He rightly states that the multiverse hypothesis fails to make God unnecessary, since the multiverse is subject to the same fine-tuning arguments as the universe. However, some deeper discussion of this would have been welcome.

Particularly valuable in part two were the chapters on the persistence of teleology in biological discourse despite its political incorrectness, and the insights into reality being multi-layered (e.g. microscopic and macroscopic; chemical and biological), requiring different sciences to have different methods, and calling for a renewal of metaphysics to incorporate the insights of modern science.

McGrath concludes by remarking, "The extent to which the musings and reflections presented in this volume constitute an argument for God's existence ... must be left to others to decide" (p. 221). If it is the job of a reviewer to make such decisions, I suggest that he has presented abundant evidence which could be worked into such an argument. However, the greater achievement of the book is that its readers should have a deeper insight into what sort of thing such arguments are and how they work.

**Stephen Dingley**  
St. John's Seminary  
Womersley

## **God's Philosophers: How the Medieval World Laid the Foundations of Modern Science**

*by James Hannam, Icon, 320pp, £20*

Dr Hannam wishes to temper, if not completely destroy, two longstanding and fallacious notions about the medieval period in the writing of this work. Firstly the idea that little of scientific consequence occurred during the period due to a mindset that was 'darkened'



## Book Reviews continued

through a belief in God, and secondly that the Catholic Church held back scientific progress in this period for it only to be liberated through the advance of a more 'scientific' and secular age. For the general reader Hannam achieves this and far more besides. *God's Philosophers* is lucid and engaging throughout due to his ability to guide the reader to a broad appreciation of philosophical trends that have led to scientific advance, while lucidly bringing to life the fascinating personalities involved.

According to Hannam the denigration of the Middle Ages began with the humanists of the sixteenth century. Writers such as Hobbes and Bacon caricatured the period partly due to an anti-Catholic bias combined with the fashion to abandon Latin and a rigorous logic in philosophy. Such attitudes were compounded with the philosophers of the eighteenth century writing their own 'whiggish' version of scientific history in which the rejection of the Church provided the counterpoint to the rise of science. In the nineteenth century such an interpretation was popularised by thinkers like Thomas Huxley and Andrew Dickson White in an era in which the formal separation of science from natural philosophy was confirmed. In more recent times it is not difficult to find this narrative alive and well in the popular press and modern media.

Much of Hannam's narrative rests on an understanding that the Church was the environment in which a scientific mindset was actively sponsored and given room to grow: "The popular image of the medieval Church as a monolithic institution opposing any sort of scientific speculation is clearly inaccurate. Natural philosophy had proven itself useful and worth supporting. It is hard to imagine how any philosophy at all would have taken place if the Church sponsored universities had not provided a home for it." The flourishing of free enquiry rested on the very Christian assumption that there was something inherently good and comprehensible to be investigated and pondered, and that man's rational powers were there to be used.

Hannam attributes great significance to the fourteenth century as a period in which fertile ground was prepared for modern scientific advance. This was due

to a combination of factors including the assimilation of the mathematical treasures of the eastern world and the acceptance that the Aristotelian corpus might not be infallible when it came to the truths of the physical world. The attitude of John Burridan (c.1300-c.1361) was typical of the era: "it is evident to us that every fire is hot and that the heavens are moved, even though the contrary is possible by God's power. And it is evidence of this sort that suffices for the principles and conclusions of natural philosophy." This attitude, assuming the ordered and discoverable nature of the world also allowed for God's extraordinary or miraculous intervention in history. Using the advanced mathematics of the period Burridan and Nicole Oresme (c. 1325-1382) amongst others had to conclude that previous ideas on motion and gravity introduced by Aristotle were false according to observation and reason.

It was natural for the medieval thinker to see purpose and order in creation because of their theistic and teleological worldview. Rather than retard the progress of science, such a vision provided the philosophical foundation that enables 'modern' empirical investigation. Whether it be Thomas Bradwardine's (c.1290-1349) assumptions that mathematics and philosophy belong together or William of Conches' (c. 1090-?) understanding that secondary causes did not threaten the omnipotence of God, such medieval thinkers were aided, not hampered by being within a Catholic Europe.

Hannam also contributes to the dismantling, some myths about the inquisition and the debate on heliocentrism. The inquisition was the result primarily of the increasingly pious twelfth century masses taking heretics 'into their own hands.' The inquisition was a rational and controlled response aimed at achieving justice on the basis of evidence rather than hearsay. The result was a reasonable sanctuary for the falsely accused and a legal system "that remains the basis of criminal law in Europe today."

Hannam explains that at the publication of Copernicus' heliocentric theories, no dramatic suppression occurred; in fact the works were dedicated to Pope Paul

III. Any opposition that a heliocentric view provoked at the time was due to a lack of scientific evidence and was from fellow natural philosophers rather than Church authority. Hannam then goes on to show that Galileo was not treated as a heretic nor as someone who had done anything especially wrong. Instead the Church ruled his theories to be a "mathematical hypothesis" rather than a reality that could threaten how some interpreted doctrine. It was a complex mix of envious peers, a personally offended Pope (Urban VIII), fear of uncontrolled heresy, high politics and Galileo's own arrogance that produced his unfortunate censorship as a writer. While we can blame senior figures in the Church for suppressing a theory partly due to ignorance and personal feelings, according to Hannam Galileo is just as much to blame for conspicuously ignoring the request of the inquisition and provoking the reaction that followed.

Hannam concludes by destroying the idea of a *particular* "scientific revolution", happening between Galileo and Newton, claiming that the term is "one of those prejudicial historical labels that explains nothing." Hannam's case is eloquently reasoned throughout and his narrative compelling. Any reasonable Christian without a detailed knowledge of this period should consume this book without hesitation.

**Ryan Day**  
Ampleforth College

### **St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi, Passionate Lovers of Life**

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*by Sister Clare Agnes OSC, St. Paul  
Publications, 188pp, £5.95p*

This is a paperback with a bright cover and rather charming children's-book style illustrations showing plump nuns in patched habits and cheerful monks with round faces and round tonsures. It is simply written and clearly has the aim of introducing the story of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare to the modern reader. I enjoyed it, and found it most informative: I had, like most people who have a vague idea of the story of St. Francis (radical change of heart of rich young man, life of poverty, miracles, stigmata, brings new vibrancy to the Church) little real knowledge on the

## “previous ideas on motion and gravity introduced by Aristotle were false according to observation and reason.”

subject and had always failed to place him in properly in context.

Sister Agnes does an excellent job of setting the scene: an era of social change, an awareness of a need for reform in the Church but those attempting it mostly drifting off into schism or heresy. And she explains the life of St. Francis very well – revealing, for example, that the process of change was a gradual thing and that it began with simple gifts to the poor and a real commitment to prayer, and the more dramatic events such as the encounter with the Crucifix at San Damiano came only after this preparation.

Is this book written for children? Clearly so, from the style and the illustrations – but frankly I think it would appeal to many adult and teenage Catholics today. Sister Clare Agnes is a former teacher and deputy head of a Catholic comprehensive school – after becoming a Poor Clare sister later in life she is able to use her skills in communicating the Faith to good advantage in this book. You hear the voice of the teacher – things are well explained and events set in context so that their real significance can be understood – but the style is not too formal or didactic.

The author is clearly drawn to the person of St. Clare, and writes about her with affection and enthusiasm. There is an emphasis on Clare's very winning personality, her genuine ability to be humble and to serve others, her dislike of anything approaching a sense of superiority or pride. This last is a central message of the book: Francis and Clare saw themselves as being at the service of God and their fellow men and in a special way of the poor.

I like the descriptions of Clare's style as Abbess: her concern not to have favourites, her sense of the community being a family, her way of drawing all into decisions that needed to be made. There is an absence of any cloying sentimentality in the writing style: it is simple and direct, has no clichés, and manages to bring the extraordinary events of several hundred years ago into our reach.

We are living at a time when many people don't read much, and where information is skimmed lightly from the Internet.

School projects degenerate into a few clicks on a computer and some material downloaded and pasted on to sheets of paper in a plastic folder. Knowledge is acquired in bite-sized chunks and noise is everywhere. So it is perhaps a very Franciscan thing to offer a fresh and rather humble approach: a cheerful paperback, readable by anyone and everyone, written in simple direct prose.

“The contemplative spirituality of both Francis and Clare can be summed up very simply. They would say to us: root yourself in Jesus' love for you and desire him with all your being. Empty out of your system all other desires that have a hold on you, put everything down, so that there is room in your heart for him and for others.” There is more, but that's the start, and it's a challenge that renewed the Church in the 13th century and still has the capacity to do so.

After reading this book I understood for the first time why some one might want to enter a Poor Clare convent and follow that Franciscan path.

**Joanna Bogle**  
New Malden  
Surrey

### **Mystery of Faith: Amazing Nearness**

*by Father Tadeusz Dajczer, available from Eucharistic Renewal Books, [www.eucharisticrenewal.org](http://www.eucharisticrenewal.org), 113pp € 97pp, each £6.50 including p&p.*

Father Tadeusz Dajczer who died on Our Lady's birthday this year, graduated at Warsaw and the Gregorian Universities and was for many years Professor of studies at Warsaw's Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University. He was a tireless researcher. In this first of five books now available in English, he makes the audacious claim to have explored undiscovered land in an unknown world. The more one reads, meditates and prays with these truly astonishing writings, the more one realises he makes no false claim.

Over fifty years ago, the late Father Edward Holloway inspired me towards making spirituality a top priority. Daily meditation became essential; he saw that dogmatic theology needs never to be viewed in isolation from the moral and spiritual; radical Christian life and witness

is the interpenetration of *ex opere operato* and *ex opere operantis*; effective expressions of faith and liturgical rites call for fervent inner spiritual life. Faith is never stagnant; it is dynamic and on-going. It is natural to explore beyond the distant hills; spiritual telescopes can regularly pierce through the clouds and mist to focus with greater clarity in infinite regions; theology is constantly developing. It is all very exciting, compelling and revealing.

Dajczer meditates upon how our infinitely loving Eucharistic Lord tirelessly pines from eternity, waiting for each of us as an unrequited lover. He just has by nature to love each of us individually in a way that nobody else can ever begin to do. His love is amazingly personal and unconditional; Our Saviour has not left us orphans; He comes really close to meet us in the Eucharistic Memorial and in every tabernacle. God is infinitely hungry and thirsty to come into our lives. The more we respond, the more our daily love and friendship moves away from the superficial to become warmer and more sincere. So stale and lifeless marriages are able constantly to revive, priesthood avoids instability, boredom and loneliness. We need to share this love and friendship. Others look to us to give to them what we are quite unable to give without the input of infinite love. Umpteen variations of egocentric attitudes block our transmission of the soundest and deepest theological thought in church and school unless we humbly adore before the infinitely powerful One.

These books need to be our regular companions; they are the summary of a deeply God-centred man's lifetime, thought and spiritual explorations. The underlying themes of these meditations spell out with clarity how to sustain marriage and priesthood and reveal the poverty of Christian life and witness without the unique insights of devoted celibacy. I know from my many exchanges with Father Holloway that he would applaud such writings. I owe him too much not to make them known. More than fifty years later, I am also indebted to Father Tadeusz Dajczer.

**Bryan Storey**  
Tintagel



# Notes From Across the Atlantic

by Joseph Bottum



## DISCRIMINATION AND THE CONSCIENCE CLAUSE

In December 2007, when Belmont Abbey College discovered coverage for abortion, contraception and sterilization tucked away in their employee health-insurance policy, they did what any Catholic college would – well, ought to – do, they had that coverage removed. As William Thierfelder, president of the College, explained, “The teaching of the Catholic Church on this moral issue is clear. The responsibility of the College as a Catholic college sponsored by the monks of Belmont Abbey to follow Church teaching is equally clear. There was no other course of action possible if we were to operate in fidelity to our mission and to our identity as a Catholic college.” Now, after a complaint was filed by eight faculty members, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has ruled that Belmont Abbey is discriminating against women: “By denying prescription contraception drugs, Respondent is discriminating based on gender because only females take oral prescription contraceptives. By denying coverage, men are not affected, only women.” Should the college and the faculty members who filed the complaint not be able to reach an acceptable settlement, the EEOC can file a lawsuit against the college in federal court. In its efforts to eradicate discrimination in employment, the EEOC’s ruling tramples North Carolina law. While the state does require that health-insurance plans provide coverage for contraception, there is an exception for religious employers who may request from their insurer a health plan that excludes “coverage for prescription contraceptive drugs or devices that are contrary to the employer’s religious tenets”. In fact, before the eight faculty members at Belmont Abbey filed a complaint with the EEOC, they filed a complaint with the North Carolina Department of Insurance and the Department confirmed the college’s status as a religious institution exempt from the law. Thierfelder has expressed confidence

that the school’s “actions ultimately will be found to be in compliance with all federal and state laws and with the U.S. Constitution”, but even President Bush’s (now rescinded) conscience clause protected only hospitals and healthcare workers. We need, and we need now, a wide-ranging conscience exemption that reaches across the economic spectrum.

## STRANGE LOGIC OF ABORTION

A story has been running in Dallas about “Baby Bella”, a baby abandoned in an apartment complex hallway moments following her birth. The mother, who had disguised her pregnancy to relatives and to her ex-boyfriend, came forward later to Child Protective Services saying, “I made a mistake.” She is facing child-endangerment charges that carry a possible two- to twenty-year prison sentence and a \$10,000 fine. We cannot help but remark that had the woman demanded a late-term abortion, she wouldn’t be facing any legal troubles at all – which underscores the nutty convolutions of logic that abortion imposes on society. The only factor here that determines what happens to a pregnant woman is where and under what circumstances her baby is discarded. An abortuary is permissible; the hallway of an apartment complex is not. Of course there is a difference, but perhaps it is not the obvious one. The mother at the abortion clinic never has an opportunity to see her child alive when she realises, “I made a mistake.” Baby Bella was placed in the care of her biological father, and we are minded to remember both him and Baby Bella’s mother in prayer.

## MULTICULTURALISM GONE MAD

“We’re supposed to be the most multicultural city in the world and it doesn’t seem terribly inclusive,” Denny Alexander explained. It, as it turns out, is ten-year-old playground equipment found in two parks in the west end of Toronto. The offending objects depict the biblical story of Noah’s

Ark, complete with cute pictures of animals in male/female pairings. In the most multicultural city in the world, that just won’t do. The equipment won’t be removed immediately, but the city had decided that, when it “wears out”, it won’t be replaced. “Toronto’s motto is Diversity our Strength,” wrote councilman Adam Giambrone. “City policies across the board look to reflect our multicultural city. One way of doing that is not focusing on any specific cultural or religious tradition.” You really can’t better that line about how awful it is for an inclusive city to, um, include something biblical.

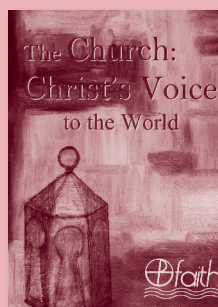
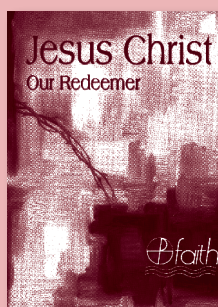
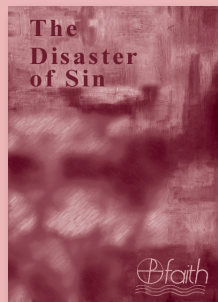
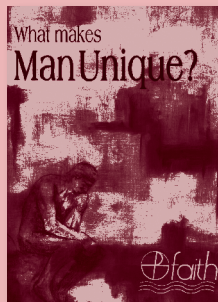
## MAKING IT INTO THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The Office of Religious Life at the University of Southern California extends official recognition to some eighty-six campus religious organisations. Sixty of them are Christian, seven Jewish, four interfaith, three each for Buddhists and Muslims, and one group each for nine other organisations with other affiliations. So who should be the next director of Religious Life on a campus that is largely Christian with small but visible minorities of Jewish, Buddhist and Muslim students? The obvious answer: Varun Soni, glowingly described as “the first Hindu primary spiritual leader at any American university”. “I feel proud,” Soni said. “I feel like I can be a proponent of Hinduism in the public sphere.” And why not? Except, of course, imagine the outcry at the school if a Catholic priest, appointed director, had proudly said that the job made him a proponent of Catholicism in the public sphere.

## MADE IN MY IMAGE

The headline from a recent Newsweek article by Kathleen Kennedy Townsend reads: “Why Barack Obama represents American Catholics better than the Pope does.” An alternative does suggest itself. “Why Barack Obama represents Kathleen Kennedy Townsend better than the Pope does.”

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