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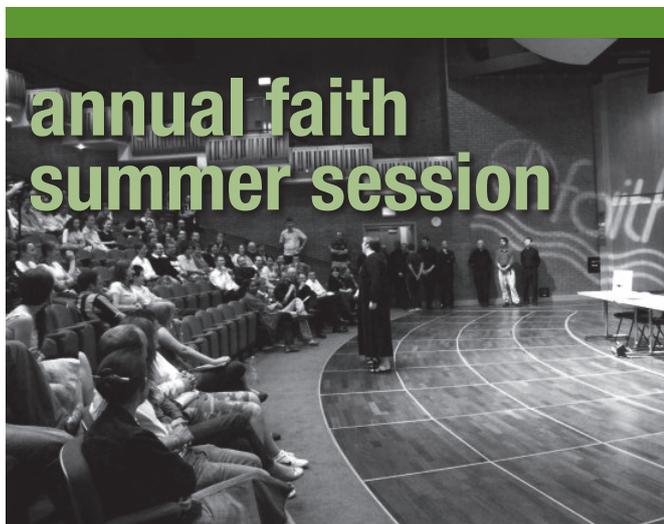
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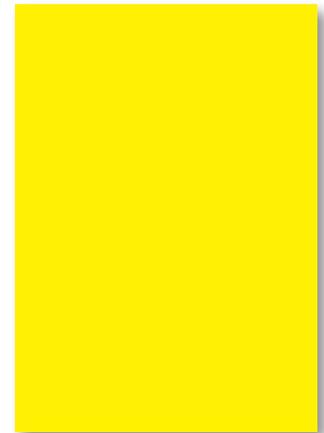
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Editor Hugh MacKenzie, St. Mary Magdalen's, Clergy House, Peter Avenue, Willesden Green, London NW10 2DD, Tel 020 8451 6720, editor@faith.org.uk

Editorial Board David Barrett, Timothy Finigan, Andrea Fraile, Roger Nesbitt, Christina Read, Dominic Rolls, Luiz Ruscillo, Mark Vickers.

Book Reviews William Massie, 187 Pickering Road, Hull, HU4 6TD, reviews@faith.org.uk

Advertising Manager Scott Deeley, St Paul's, 16 Birdston Rd, Milton of Campsie, Stirlingshire G66 8BU, advertising@faith.org.uk

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Finding Purpose in Creation

Editorial

“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” (Matt 6:28-29)

The Presumptions of Materialism

Atheist materialists view existence as ultimately meaningless; a fascinating adventure perhaps, a roller-coaster ride along the slipstream of cosmic chance and coincidence, but with no original purpose and no final goal beyond the swirl and flow of material events. However, this does not mean that atheist philosophers of science view the actual universe as random. The ordered rationality of matter and the practical effectiveness of scientific discoveries is too obvious to draw such a conclusion. They do find coherence in the interactions of material things, but they think that the laws of matter are an all sufficient explanation of life.

It is effectively an article of ‘faith’ for the materialist to believe that everything *must* be reducible to material laws, even when they cannot explain how things such as human consciousness and free will fit into the deterministic patterns of matter. Some are even prepared to stretch the definition of matter to include much that would traditionally have been called “spirit” in order to protect preemptively their assertion of universal materialism. We will return to this a little later. However, first we should notice that there is a more fundamental point which is often overlooked. For all their materialism, materialists still feel obliged to find a unifying and interpretative key to how everything works. What they are actually assuming in doing this, often quite uncritically, is that matter manifests a relationship to *meaning*, and by implication, therefore, to *mind*.

Even Richard Dawkins posits a basic level of meaningful unity within matter at the level of the gene. He calls the gene “selfish”, in the sense of blind and impersonal, but in doing this he is actually positing a law of purposive survival which pertains to the gene as a unit of existence. He is also claiming that this law is the interpretative key to the whole of existence on this planet.

In fact it is quite arbitrary to choose the gene as the only meaningful unit of organization in matter, because that is already a relatively high level of synthesis built upon preceding patterns of physical and chemical order. And in any case “the gene” is a purely analytic sub unit of the greater and more significant complex that is the genetic code along the chromosomes of any organism. And it is a code, a system of natural meanings set within the laws of biochemistry that is anything but random. In fact, more and more the genetic code appears to work according to a highly complex and precise syntax of molecular intelligibility which cannot be truly understood if we focus only on the individual genes.

The point becomes even more obvious with Dawkins’ more recent and frankly thoroughly metaphysical idea of the ‘meme’. The concept of a meme is proposed as of any unit of information which shapes reality simply to the benefit of its own replication. Self evidently this relies on a prior conception of intelligibility. Information, whether genetic or memetic must be information *about* something and *for a purpose* within a context. The champions of atheist memetics often smuggle in a covert value judgment about ‘good’ and ‘bad’ memes into their world view, without ever justifying where this cosmic meta-value is grounded.

It makes no sense to acknowledge organisation and purposefulness at the level of the individual unit but then to deny it to the vast ordered and dynamic unity they form together. Some external principle is required to explain the unity-out-of-multiplicity of any organised system. However we analyse it, material being is intelligible to us at every level from the quark to the quasar, from the boson to the brain of man, and where there is intelligibility there must be Intelligence.

As Cardinal Ratzinger put it his *Introduction To Christianity*, the cosmos has evidently been “thought into being”.

As Pope Benedict XVI he summed up the question more recently:

“Ultimately it comes down to the alternative: What came first? Creative Reason, the Creator Spirit who makes all things and gives them growth, or Unreason, which, lacking any meaning, strangely enough brings forth a mathematically ordered cosmos, as well as man and his reason. The latter, however, would then be nothing more than a chance result of evolution and thus, in the end, equally meaningless. As Christians, we say: I believe in God the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth. I believe in the Creator Spirit. We believe that at the beginning of everything is the eternal Word, with Reason and not Unreason.” (*Creation and Evolution: A Conference with Pope Benedict XVI*, Ignatius Press 2007)

And as Edward Holloway put it in Catholicism, *A New Synthesis*:

“It is the mind of God which imposes ontological unity in multiplicity upon the formulations of complex being. The complex substance is a unity of being because a ‘thing’ is what God knows it to be [...] the Being of God [...] as Pure Act is the only sufficient reason for the unity and entity of every form of being, and the overall unity... of Nature.” [Edward Holloway, *Catholicism: A New Synthesis* (CNS) p.26]

“Materialists still feel obliged to find a unifying and interpretative key to how everything works.”

The Recognition of Mind

We cannot help but recognise some kind of intelligibility at work in Nature. You could say that *mens ad mentem loquitur* as much as *cor ad coram loquitur*. The argument is really about what precisely is the ‘intelligence’ we find in Nature, and how it organises matter into a creative economy of inter-related entities.

It will not do simply to invoke the “the environment” as the organising principle. The environment is, after all, just other material being taken as a collective of mutually interlocking natures. The question of organisational principle is simply deferred not answered. If we invoke the values of “survival”, and “selection for fitness” according to those values, as the fundamental law of material existence, we have actually invoked a principle of order and an implicit value that frames and suffuses the whole material enterprise. This ‘law’, which necessarily transcends the individual parts that act and react according to its conditions, actually resolves to a simpler and more profound principle, a principle of intelligibility through ordered meaning and meaningful order. One could simply call it ‘control and direction’.

Why “direction” as well as “control”? Because any acknowledgement of intelligibility also implies an ordering towards functional purpose. Living forms are actively orientated towards each other for their very identity and fulfilment. They are locked together in bonds of mutual causality, mutual well being and mutual limitation, genesis and nemesis. For the newborn lambs in the farmers’ fields every Spring, the mother ewes and the grass under their feet *mean* something that calls to them from every fibre of their nascent being. Likewise the eagle and the fox are meaningful to the lamb as danger and possible death. Everything around them has meaningful impact, evoking instinctive response, directing their life and defining their place within the environment.

Just as we cannot escape the implication of intelligence at the universal level when we consider the controlled intelligibility of everything within the universe, neither can we honestly escape the perception of direction to the whole course of the cosmos when we perceive the directed intelligibility of every form and function within it.

Direction in Nature

Even so, the idea of direction in Nature is generally greeted with horror by many scientists. They see it as introducing an alien and arbitrary power into the operation of natural laws. Unfortunately, theories of so called Intelligent Design have often played to this prejudice, seeing ‘design’ in terms of special intervention by God to direct the course of this or that particular material feature. We need rather to stand back and see the seamless directional intelligibility of the whole. The design and purpose is not a superimposition upon the laws of matter, it is in the laws of matter, which is to say that it is the very constitution of material being.

Is there a random element in the constitution of matter? At most simple levels of material synthesis, individual nodes of organization like subatomic particles are only determinate as functions within a bigger framework, so it is perhaps not surprising that their behaviour can only be expressed in terms of statistical probability. There will also be an incredibly complex shuffling and shifting of patterns within the system that is dependent on myriad variables. But the outcome of these interactions does in fact resolve into the vast odyssey of life which has shaped the many phases of environmental change on earth. If Nature were random in the true sense of the word, then there could be no physics, chemistry or biology or any functional environment, or indeed any cohesive universe at all.

Through all of the waxing and waning of life forms, where even extinction events create the biochemical, ecological and perhaps the genetic possibility of another phase arising, there has been an evident ascent of life on earth. This is most evident of all in the development of the central nervous system and the brain out of the notochord of more primitive creatures. Indeed that may be the only true orthogenetic pathway in Nature, the organic outcome around which the initial conditions were framed with breathtaking precision and complexity.

Determined materialists like Dawkins still insist that any perception of overall progress in the diversification of living forms is just an illusion. Although it is interesting to note that they have to concede that this is indeed how things appear to be. Once again they can only explain away by appeal to another principle of order: for example, the neo-Darwinian argument that life on earth only seems to be teleological “because of environmental and molecular constraints on the direction of change” (from the online *Wikipedia* entry for ‘orthogenesis’). That, of course, is begging the question. Those “environmental and molecular constraints” are themselves part of the whole ordered and developmental equation that makes meaningful mutation possible. What they are saying, in other words, is that things only appear to develop in a directional way because of the limits and possibilities inherent in the laws of physics and chemistry. Well precisely. The laws of physics, chemistry and biology are not separate and coincidental to each other. They all of a piece. So directionality is no illusion, therefore. It is a cosmic fact.

The synthesis of molecular compounds from atoms, and these from subatomic energies, is bound up with the primal formation and dissolution of stars and galaxies. The complex biochemicals formed out of those building blocks are bound up with the energy of the sun and the changing atmosphere on earth. The formation of life further depends on the ebb and flow of the tides and temperatures and the minerals in the rocks, and so on and so on.

In short, the limits and possibilities of development are built into the initial conditions of the universe. The formation of

Finding Purpose in Creation

continued

new levels of ordered complexity is on the basis of preceding levels of ordered simplicity. The simpler types of existent do not cease to exist, of course, but once higher material synthesis has occurred, there is no going back to an earlier state of the universe. It has been a unidirectional journey through time from the inception of the cosmos. In fact, Time itself is a one way process precisely because the series of material events is intrinsically directional. 'Time' is simply the measure of that causal flow. The atheist biologist may dismiss any talk of "ascent" in the array of living things as an illusion, but the cosmic movement from physics to chemistry, from chemistry to biology, from microbe to man cannot honestly be described as anything else.

Reconnecting Creation and Salvation History

When materialists attribute the growth of the tree of life simply to "natural selection" they are actually taking for granted the cosmic conditions that permit the synthesis of higher levels of intelligible unity out of the precisely ordered conditions of the lower potentialities.

"Some external principle is required to explain the unity-out-of-multiplicity of any organised system."

Yet it is also true that the formal reality of the higher states of material being are not actually contained in the lower states. In this sense matter in its mathematically expressible functionality and interactions is indeed blind when considered in itself. Still, we do know and we can see in retrospect that those energies are in fact pregnant with a potential that does produce the full panoply of life on earth and the masterpiece of neural engineering that is the human brain. Like a literal pregnancy, therefore, the developing equation of energies must exist within a higher context. The foresight that comprehends the existential future and defines the final formality to which the initial potential is relative can only reside in a transcendent point of unity that makes the equational universe a meaningful and directional whole.

"The equation could not begin unless it were poised meaningfully to its historic progress, but neither could the higher unity be there as a unity ... unless at all times the Equation and its potential were relative to the *necessity* whose other name is GOD. To make the universe intelligible and the progression to higher being, up to and including man, intelligible, *God is a necessity not only of metaphysics but also of mathematics.*" (CNS p.66)

This may be a startling thought, even a perplexing thought for our secular age, and an equally strange one to schools of thinking which tend to see the physical and metaphysical as entirely separate. But as Pope Benedict affirmed recently, the material cosmos is "simultaneously physical and metaphysical" (Epiphany Sermon). The meanings in matter are simultaneously both physical and metaphysical. For metaphysics is not abstraction, but the perception and

analysis of the existential from a higher perspective.

"The metaphysical [... is] most beautifully an existential term, and an experience of the beauty of things, and the unity within diversity by which things are bonded to each other in their innermost reality and inter-definition."
(CNS, *ibid*)

So we say that the intelligibility of the cosmos as both controlled and directed requires it to be related to a transcendent Intelligence and creative Will. This is not really a new thought, but rather the fuller deployment of the medieval insight into God as first, formal and final cause against the fuller backdrop of our more detailed understanding of the material universe, which allows us to re-integrate the Christian vision of creation with the Catholic vision of salvation history.

The Messiah and the Unity Law

The unity of control and direction, which is material being as it builds through time and space to its climax in man, is but the partial expression of a greater reality, a Law that defines and drives the unfolding a deeper purpose aligned on a yet higher goal. The complex of ordered energy that is the human body centred on the brain must itself be integrated through its own individual principle of transcendental control and direction – the centred knowing and loving as person which we call our 'soul'. And like every other creature we must also seek our life-law and our ultimate well-being from that which is greater than ourselves. We must live and move and find our being within an Environment that is both spiritual and transcendent but which can touch our inmost being and fill our incarnate existence as truly as the sunlight touches and awakens the trees in Springtime to blossom and bear fruit.

The Law of Control and Direction as it is expressed in human nature is framed in terms of a relationship – a relationship based on God's free initiative and on our free response. It is no longer an economy of mathematical law but of revelation and grace, faith and obedience, of providence and prayer. Yet there will still be growth and development in that relationship, from simple beginnings to the full deployment of God's purpose on earth. The religion of revelation will be naturally developmental as great souls seek deeper union with God and receive fuller wisdom by contemplating his word. Structures of spiritual and social control and direction suitable to the nature of man will be established as part of the fabric of community life under God's personal guidance. The authority and the care of God will become ever more incarnate in the lives of his people. That revealed word will be naturally prophetic too, pregnant with fuller meanings and the call towards a fullness yet to come.

As we attempted to outline in our last editorial, when we search the pages of human history we do find such a line of spiritual and religious tradition that not only claims the direct authority of the Absolute Transcendent One whose name

“The Law of Control and Direction as it is expressed in human nature is [...] no longer an economy of mathematical law but of revelation and grace, faith and obedience, of providence and prayer.”

is “I Am Who I Am”, but is also coherently developmental in doctrine and in providence across millennia. Despite the disaster and setbacks of human weakness, this tradition grows in depth and clarity, pointing with ever more urgent expectation to the coming of someone who will be the fullness of revelation and the end of history.

Indeed it is the dramatic claim of the Christian scriptures that all creation, both physical and spiritual, is brought to its Head in Christ. He is the source of our perfection through union and communion with God, which is why, following the disaster of the Fall, the burden of redeeming the shattered economy of grace falls on his shoulders. Through his victory over sin and all its effects in both body and soul he is the centre of renewed control and direction for fallen humanity. Reformation in truth and authentic love come from union with him in the Church, as creation is healed and perfected to the full measure of God’s original will.

God’s Purpose in Christ – the Wisdom of Love

This is quite a journey for the atheist mind to make, but through it all we can show a wonderful continuity of principle in all the works of God from creation to Christ in his final glory. However, our debate is not only with atheist scientists and philosophers. Many contemporary thinkers do indeed recognise purpose in the universe. But all too often they place an emergent spirituality within matter itself. So much contemporary spirituality, ranging from the pantheism of “Gaia” environmentalism to the process theology and pantheism of some Catholic schools of thought, presume some variant or other of this view. And as we noted earlier, some “materialist” thinkers are prepared to include spiritual phenomena within their definition of matter in order to maintain their materialist stance and exclude transcendence from their world view.

“What is needed is a synthetic vision of the natural and the supernatural in which there is union but not confusion between the two.”

Whether implicitly or explicitly such monist thinking effectively makes “God” a co-valent of the process of creative becoming. What this really means is that there is no God properly speaking. What remains is another form of humanism in which Man himself is God-in-the-making. Such an outlook is more appealing than the cold atheism of Marxism or secular scientism. It readily adopts the language and trappings of revealed religion, yet reformulates doctrine as metaphor, and abolishes moral absolutes in favour of flexible aspirations. It is this view of religion that informs Tony Blair and his Faith Foundation.

Actually, confusion of matter and spirit undermines the objectivity of science too. So Catholic orthodoxy is in fact a defender of the integrity of science and its methodology, because it is through its very rationality and intelligibility

that science necessarily points beyond itself to a higher Wisdom. What is needed is a synthetic vision of the natural and the supernatural in which there is union but not confusion between the two.

For Edward Holloway man is truly oriented towards fulfilment in God. And this is not a merely theological notion. We seek God with a real spiritual hunger and from a positive joy in goodness lived that engenders existential peace and prompts a recognition that seeks deeper knowledge, higher perfection and greater communion in love. Yet the initiative belongs to God. The awakening and the seeking are themselves the touch of divine grace. So while human nature is truly “*capax Dei*”, our end in God remains absolutely supernatural and always, therefore, God’s free and gracious gift:

“...we must avoid the notion that the created spirit, because its only intelligible end is God, has any “claims”, “rights” or “debts” to collect upon the nature of God. No, the meaning of man, and the intelligibility of man, which must proceed as a factor from the very fact that man does exist, and must *mean something*, this intelligibility of man is related not to the Divine Essence as a claim, but only to the Divine Wisdom, as a principle of meaning for the whole of creation. Man must have an end in God, and a joy in God, not because man necessitates God, and thereby logically becomes *part* of God, but because the Divine Wisdom and Will that is evident in man must be true unto Itself. God cannot, because he is God, act irrationally, or with cruelty. These very words denote a defect of being, and God is Perfect Being. Our surety then upon God for our end and our very intelligibility as spiritual persons does not arise from the claims or debts that our spiritual substance vindicates against the Divine Essence. Our surety, which stands forth in all that we have and are is the Divine Wisdom and the Divine Charity. This is good enough. There is no wisdom more substantially true to itself nor love more unchanging than that which proceeds within the substance of God”. (CNS p.109)

Pope Benedict summed up the same point with his habitual succinctness and insight in his Homily for Feast of the Epiphany 2009 when he said, “He is the centre of the cosmos and history because in Him Author and work are united without merging”.

We do find direction as well as control in the constitution of matter which leads to man, and through man to Christ as the Key to the meaning of Universe, the Centre of history and Lord of the Human mind and heart. But this does not mean that our salvation rests on a cosmic theodicy. Salvation rests, as does the whole of creation, on the supreme and self consistent love, the free self-giving of the one in whom and for whom all things were made in obedience to the Father’s eternal will.

The Roots of Modern Science and Society in the West, Islam and China *by Michael Flynn*

Michael Flynn, author of popular science fiction novels in the States, considers the impact of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas upon the development of our technological culture.

“It is through reason that we are human. For if we turn our backs on the amazing rational beauty of the World we live in, we should indeed deserve to be driven therefrom, like a guest unappreciative of the house into which he has been received.” Adelard of Bath, *Quaestiones naturales*

It is often said that until the Scientific Revolution Islam was far ahead of the Christian West in the natural sciences. This belief is a reaction to an earlier age of Western triumphalism that overlooked the genuine achievements of the Islamic philosopher (*faylasuf*); but like many reactionary movements, it overcompensates and praises a golden age that never quite was. Europe was never quite the dark age of ignorance that the “enlightened” philosophers pretended.

At the beginning of the Middle Ages, Islam was clearly the most scientifically advanced civilisation on Earth, and China boasted a more advanced technology. Yet by the end of the Middle Ages the Latin West was clearly ahead of both Islam and China. How did this reversal of fortune take place? Joseph Needham called this ‘the Grand Question’¹.

There were two reasons: *China never had an Aristotle; Islam never had an Aquinas*. Consequently, logic, reason, and science in those cultures were like the seed that fell on barren ground, or among the weeds. In China, science withered; in Islam, it was choked out after a promising start.

The Aristotle Factor

To the Stagerite, we owe: the idea that the natural world is a coherent object of philosophical study, the structure of that philosophy, and the rational and logical tools with which to study it. Aristotle also insisted that knowledge was rooted in sense experience. To most of the Ancient Greeks, the criterion for truth was logical coherence, not correspondence to facts, and many, like Plato, were quite able to doubt empirical reality when it conflicted with a really good logical theory.

Muslims and Christians inherited this framework, but there was nothing like it in China. There, the rational Moist school had been eclipsed early on by Confucianism. Shen Kua was perhaps the greatest of early Chinese scientists, but his writings have none of the conceptual integration of Aristotle or his Muslim and Christian successors: “Notices of the highest originality stand cheek-by-jowl with trivial didacticism, court anecdotes, and ephemeral curiosities.”² In Nathan Sivin’s words, China “had sciences but not science”³. Astronomy, medicine, statics, optics, etc. remained isolated subjects guided by rules of thumb.

The Aquinas Factor

To the Angelic Doctor, we owe the concordance of philosophy and religion, and the admonition never to cite revelation in the proof of a philosophical proposition. Centuries before, Origen had called God the author of two books: scripture and nature. Because of this, Aquinas held that if revelation seemed to conflict with nature, one or the other (or both) had not been properly understood.

Islam initially treated Greek learning with great enthusiasm. The *faylasuf* translated Aristotle’s natural philosophy and wrote brilliant commentaries on it. However, no Muslim ‘Aquinas’ ever reconciled Aristotle with Holy Qur’an. The great Islamic *faylasuf* who embraced the Stagerite – e.g., ibn Sinna, ibn Rushd – embraced him all the way. Those who rejected him – e.g., al-Ghazali – rejected him completely. Consequently, the *faylasuf* were regarded as heretics and, unless they had a powerful protector, were subject to persecution. Al Kindi was publicly flogged and his library confiscated; ibn Rushd was deprived of all offices and forced to flee al-Andalus.

Ibn Sinna tried to reconcile matters with the claim that a proposition could be ‘true in philosophy’ but ‘false in religion.’ This “Double Truth” was specifically rejected by Aquinas and the West.

Early mu’tazilite Muslims claimed “parity for reason and revelation,” but they were suppressed by the Caliph al-Mutawwakil. The rationalist strain never entirely disappeared, but, like the Chinese Moists, has been a distinctly minority position.

The Necessary Cultural and Institutional Context

Cross-cultural studies of science have usually focused on *techniques* and *facts*: whether, for example, experimentation was used, or this or that fact discovered. But every culture has produced brilliant individuals enthusiastic about nature. We need only think of Shen Kua in China or ibn Rushd in Islam. What seems important for the development of advanced technology is not so much individual brilliance, but the “embedding” of science within the culture as a recognised, legitimate *institution*.

How is this achieved? To elucidate this we need a working definition of science. We would suggest that science consists of three somewhat overlapping layers:

- a) **empirical facts** (often deliberately created by experiment and planned observation, as the term *factum est* implies)
- b) **natural laws** describing (in mathematical terms, if possible) regular relationships among these facts;
- c) **physical theories** that ‘make sense’ of the laws and facts, and from which the laws can be deduced and the facts predicted.

All cultures have accumulated facts, but not all have rigorously pursued natural laws and physical theories. That requires “a vibrant, inquisitive natural philosophy that has substantial societal support and encouragement.”⁴

China illustrates this. Chinese astronomers could calculate eclipses tolerably well [facts and formulas], but had no clear explanation for what caused them [physical theories]. Wang Chhung, for example, cited a cyclic waxing and waning of the light of the sun and moon themselves – yang and yin – and dismisses as absurd the idea that the moon consumed the sun during a solar eclipse; for what then would consume the moon during a lunar eclipse?. These were matters that the Greeks

“What matters is not individual brilliance, but the ‘embedding’ of science within the culture as a recognised, legitimate *institution*.”

had settled with geometry three hundred years before! Lacking a sound basis in theory, the purely arithmetical Chinese astronomy decayed; formulas were applied by rote; and by the seventeenth century, the Ming calendar was regularly failing.

What About the Medieval West?

The philosophers of the “Age of Reason” called the Middle Ages the “Age of Faith,” and claimed that because “God did it!” was the answer to everything, no one searched for natural laws. Some have since imagined a “war” between science and religion, and accused the medievals of suppressing science, forbidding medical autopsies, and burning scientists. Bad times for science and reason.

Or was it? In fact, the Middle Ages were steeped in reason, logic, and natural philosophy. These subjects comprised virtually the entire curriculum of the universities. The first medical autopsies anywhere were done in medieval Europe. And no medieval philosopher was ever prosecuted for a conclusion in natural philosophy. In his 12th century *Dragmaticon*, William of Conches wrote, “[They say] ‘We do not know how this is, but we know that God can do it.’ You poor fools! God can make a cow out of a tree, but has He ever done so? Therefore show some reason why a thing is so, or cease to hold that it is so.” Not even the “Age of Reason” could have said it better.

The Embedding of Science

A culture is a web, composed of many intellectual strands. Some of the most relevant to the embedding of early modern science are described below.

1. The universe is rationally ordered. When a multitude of self-willed gods work at cross-purposes, there can be no consistent order to the universe. Hera may overrule Zeus; or Poseidon veto the acts of Apollo. Trees are dryads and wells have sprites and the stars are alive, divine, and influential in human affairs. Both Christians and Muslims believed in a single God, and therefore in an ordered universe.

The Latins believed further that God had “disposed all things by measure and number and weight” (Wis. 11:21). Medieval art frequently depicted God using compasses and other measuring tools to fashion the cosmos. Anselm of Canterbury wrote that by revealing His rational nature, God had *bound Himself* to act in a certain way. Thus, the Christians were disposed to see the cosmos as reliably consistent.

The matter was less clear in Islam. The mu’tazilite Muslims also believed that God was rational and dependable: “Justice is the essence of God, He cannot wrong anybody, He cannot enjoin anything contrary to reason”⁵. But to say that God *cannot* do something struck orthodox Muslims as impious. Some like Ibn al-Hazm claimed that God’s autonomy was absolute: He need not be true even to His own promises.

2. This order is knowable to human reason. Paul states that the demands of the law are written in our hearts (Rom. 2:15-16). From this faculty of *synderesis*, or ‘conscience,’ stems all of Western law, freedom, and responsibility. Aquinas wrote that we must disobey the orders even of our sworn liege if those orders go against our conscience. “From William Penn, who would not take off his hat, to Rosa Parks, who would not give up her seat,” we admire people who are disobedient for moral cause.

One consequence of this recognition of the ‘image of God’ in human faculties, was the belief that by use of reason man could learn the natural order of things. Adelard of Bath neatly summed this up in *Quaestiones naturales*, with this rejoinder to his nephew:

“[T]he natural order does not exist confusedly and without rational arrangement, and human reason should be listened to concerning those things it treats of. But when it completely fails, then the matter should be referred to God. Therefore, *since we have not yet completely lost the use of our minds*, let us return to reason.”

“These features were muted or absent in medieval Islam and in China.”

Islam stressed the inherent limitations of man’s intellect and his inability to truly understand creation. Al-Ghazali wrote in *Tahafut al-Falasifa [The Incoherence of Philosophy]*, “The imponderable decisions of God cannot be weighed by the scales of reason.” Because the Holy Qur’an was perfect and complete, everything needful was contained in it, although the scholar might have to apply analogy (*qiyas*) to find it. Human reason could add nothing new. Reason-based *kalam* could not become the “queen of sciences,” as theology did in the Latin West and remained subordinate to traditional *ijtihād*. And because man lacked the ability to arrive at ethical and moral truths by reason, neither could philosophy become “the handmaiden of theology.” This not only set philosophy in opposition to theology, it cast doubt on the ability of the *faylasuf* to truly grasp the philosophy of nature.

3. Secondary causation. Both Muslims and Christians believed God to be the primary cause of existence itself. But Islam lacked the concept of secondary causation. This lack was perhaps the greatest conceptual obstacle to science in Islam.

William of Conches explained secondary causation thus: “[T]he natures with which [God] endowed His creatures accomplish a whole scheme of operations, and these too turn to His glory since it is He who created these very natures.” This sentiment was common. Albertus Magnus, in *De vegetabilibus et plantis*, wrote,

“In studying nature we have not to inquire how God the Creator may, as He freely wills, use His creatures to work miracles and thereby show forth His power; we have rather to inquire what Nature with its immanent causes can naturally bring to pass.”

Two centuries later, Nicole d’Oresme, who became Bishop of Lisieux, wrote in *De causa mirabilium*,

“I propose here [...] to show the causes of some effects which seem to be miracles and to show that the effects occur naturally [...] There is no reason to take recourse to the heavens [i.e., to astrology], the last refuge of the weak, or to demons, or to our glorious God, *as if he would produce these effects directly.*”

In the twelfth century John of Sacrobosco, flirting with Deism, referred to the universe as *machina mundi*, the ‘world-machine,’ and this phrase became a commonplace in the writings of Abelard, Hugh of St. Victor, Robert Grosseteste, and others.

The Roots of Modern Science and Society in the West, Islam and China

continued

Oresme famously compared creation to a great clock that God had willed into being and set ticking.

By the eleventh century, the idea of secondary causation had become fixed in Western thought. It disenchanting the World. There is no dryad behind the tree, no nymph in the well, only *natures* knowable to human reason. Further, since the heavens, too, are just another created thing (Gen 1:1), the heavens, too, must be governed by natural laws.

Orthodox Islam denied this. Weirdly pre-figuring David Hume, Al-Ghazali, in *Tahafut al falasifa [Destruction of philosophy]*, wrote that fire does not burn cloth:

“The agent of the burning is God, through His creating the black in the cotton and the disconnection of its parts, and it is God who made the cotton burn and made it ashes either through the intermediation of angels or without intermediation. For fire is a dead body which has no action, and what is the proof that it is the agent? Indeed, the philosophers have no other proof than the observation of the occurrence of the burning, when there is contact with fire, but observation proves only a simultaneity, not a causation, and, in reality, there is no other cause but God.”⁶

This reduces laws of nature to “habits of God.” Ibn Rushd, a firm Aristotelian counterattacked with the *Tahafut al-Tahafut [The Incoherence of the Incoherence]*. But the *faylasuf* eventually lost the intellectual struggle. Their writings found larger and more enthusiastic readership in Latin Europe than in Islam itself. As “Averröes,” Ibn Rushd was esteemed in the West second only to Aristotle.

4. The study of nature is a worthy pursuit. The Bible praises the knowledge of nature.

“For [God] gave me sound knowledge of existing things, that I might know the organization of the universe and the force of its elements, the beginning and the end and the midpoint of times, the changes in the sun’s course and the variations of the seasons, cycles of years, positions of the stars, natures of animals, tempers of beasts, powers of the winds and thoughts of men, uses of plants and virtues of roots.” (Wis 7:17-20).

On the other hand, influential Muslims like Ibn Khaldūn could write, “The problems of physics are of no importance for us in our religious affairs or our livelihoods; therefore we must leave them alone.” And when Chu Hsi argued that one should seek principles in the “outside realm” in only thirty to forty percent of cases Wang Yang-ming criticised him for “externalist” views. In China, Sivan writes, “For certainty one looks to illumination, introspection, and other alternatives to purely cognitive processes.”⁷

In China, virtually none of this mental machinery was in place; while in Islam, it was incomplete. Early in the Middle Ages, Muslim *faylasuf* pursued natural philosophy, but they were never accepted by the culture at large and “Greek studies” remained a marginal, private affair.

The above mental machinery was necessary, but it was not sufficient. Other factors came into play as well.

5. The translations of Aristotle’s works furnished the Latin West with a ready-made curriculum that gave coherence to the study

of nature. At first, this came through Arabic intermediaries, later through direct contact with Byzantium.

The Caliph Haroun al Rashid endowed the famous House of Wisdom in Baghdad to translate this material into Arabic, a programme carried out by the Nestorian Christian, Husayn ibn Ishaq and his nephews. The accomplishments of Aristotle, Euclid, Galen, Ptolemy, and the other Greek philosophers, mathematicians, and physicians had a stunning impact on the Arabs and inspired many to study and comment on the books.

But this was always referred to as “foreign studies” or “Greek studies” and was never incorporated into the main body of Islamic thought. To the European Christians, on the other hand, *there was nothing foreign about it*. They had lived for centuries in a vibrant pagan culture, alternately tolerated and persecuted. They *had* to come to grips with Greek learning. Had the medieval Church rejected pagan and Islamic learning, Science might never have been born.

6. The independence of church and state. Charlemagne had modeled his empire on Rome, and that included imperial control of the priesthood, but the Hildebrandine Revolution secured the right to appoint bishops, preside over church councils, etc. By thus stripping princes of their spiritual roles, the medievals created something new in the world: the secular state. In declaring itself legally autonomous and creating the first body of codified law since the collapse of Rome, the Church took on all the aspects of a modern State. In effect, the first secular state in Europe was... the Church.

“To matriculate in the graduate school of theology, the student first had to master natural philosophy.”

Church and State could argue about where the boundaries lay, but neither doubted that there was a boundary. This prevented medieval society from becoming totalitarian along the Chinese model, and (as A.D. Lindsay put it in *The Modern Democratic State*) “preserved liberty [...] by maintaining in society an organization which could stand up against the state.”

Thanks to this separation, *self-governing* collective actors – guilds, towns, universities, professions – could grow in the social space ‘between throne and cathedral.’ Elsewhere, these were subordinate to emirs or mandarins.

7. The universities. Brilliant and creative individuals have adorned every culture. Abelard and al Ghazali were contemporaries. So were John of Salisbury and Ibn Rushd; al-Tusi and Aquinas; Ibn Taymiyya and William of Ockham. In China, we need only think of Wang Chhung, Shen Kua, or Chu Hsi. Clearly, there is no shortage of powerful intellects in any culture. But only in the Latin West did science find a self-governing home base where the ‘ready-made curriculum’ in the translations could be taught.

As Toby Huff points out, the idea of legal autonomy and corporate persons brought in its wake: constitutional government, consent in political decision-making, the right to political and legal representation, the power of adjudication and jurisdiction, and the power of autonomous legislation. Among the new corporate actors were Europe’s greatest contribution to the world: the universities.

“The idea of legal autonomy and corporate persons brought in its wake a whole train of principles.”

These universities were unlike anything else in the world. They possessed a standard curriculum (built around the works of Aristotle), lectures and debates, examinations, degrees of achievement. They elected their own rectors and chancellors, and set their own rules, thanks to the papal bull *Parens scientiarum* [Parent of the sciences], sometimes called “the Magna Carta of the universities.”⁸ Graduates received the *ius ubique docendi*, the ‘right to teach anywhere.’

There was nothing similar elsewhere. The Imperial College in China was a training academy for government bureaucrats and the private *shu-yüan* were no more than cram schools to get candidates through the examinations. They had a standard curriculum in the Confucian classics, but they were not independent of the State. Nor did the curriculum address logic, reason, and natural philosophy.

Islam possessed independent, self-governing colleges, the *madrasas*, but no standard curriculum. A professor taught whatever books he wished. There were no degrees of achievement. Each instructor could issue an *ijaza*, which was an authorization to the student to transmit the material learned, usually a particular book. Students could make the rounds of masters, collecting *ijazas*, but there was no sequence; and no set of *ijazas* added up to anything like a master or doctoral degree.

With one exception, the charters of these *madrasas* specifically excluded the “foreign sciences” of Aristotle. Books on natural philosophy and reason were not forbidden. They could usually be found in the *madrasa*’s library and could be read and discussed privately; but they were not taught publicly in the *madrasa*. The single exception was the observatory-madrasa of Marâgha, where al-Tusi refined Ptolemaic computations. But Marâgha only lasted about 75 years. Natural philosophy never found a home in Islam.

8. The theologian-natural philosophers. Because the entire undergraduate curriculum in a western university was devoted to logic, reason, and natural philosophy, *virtually every medieval theologian had been trained first as a scientist*. This had a tremendous impact on the receptivity to science in the West.

9. Freedom of inquiry into nature. Peter Abelard’s seminal work, *Sic et non*, which quoted Church Fathers on both sides of a series of theological questions, set the tone for the Questions genre of the Middle Ages. The writer set out a Question, stated the best arguments on *both* sides (thesis and antitheses), made a determination (synthesis), and then rebutted each of the antitheses in detail. The *Summa theologica* of Thomas Aquinas is an example. Buridan, Oresme, and other natural philosophers wrote hundreds of Questions in natural philosophy.

The format carried over into university instruction, where the afternoons centred on the public debate, the *disputatio*, in which students were assigned to argue for *and* against a given Question, with the master determining the ‘winner.’ These debates were immensely popular, and often featured pop Questions thrown up by the audience – the *quodlibets*.

All this encouraged what Grant called a “culture of poking into things”⁹. William of Ockham declared, “Assertions [...] concerning natural philosophy, which do not pertain to theology, should not be solemnly condemned or forbidden to

anyone, since in such matters everyone should be free to say freely whatever he pleases.”

It would be impossible to imagine cadets at China’s Imperial College being encouraged to argue *against* passages in Confucian texts. Even in courts of law, the Chinese abhorred disputation. It violated harmony and filial piety. It is likewise difficult to imagine the give-and-take of the *disputatio* in a Muslim *madrasa*.

Conclusion

In sum, the Latins believed in:

- 1) The universe was rationally ordered because a single rational God had willed it into being,
- 2) This order was knowable by autonomous human reason by ‘measuring, numbering, and weighing’ (and reason could be trusted in this regard),
- 3) Matter could act directly on matter in “the common course of nature”; and because God was true to his promises, these actions were dependable and repeatable; and
- 4) The discovery of such relations was a worthwhile pursuit. They also embedded this pursuit in their culture through broad-based cultural institutions:
- 5) Creating independent, self-governing corporations in the social space between Church and State.
- 6) Accepting with enthusiasm the work of pagan philosophers and Muslim commentators and reconciling them with their religious beliefs.
- 7) Encouraging freedom of inquiry and a culture of “poking into things” by means of the Questions genre and the *disputatio*.
- 8) Teaching logic, reason, and natural philosophy systematically across Europe in self-governing universities, in consequence of which:
- 9) Nearly every medieval theologian was first trained in natural philosophy, which created enthusiasm rather than resistance.

Many of these internal factors were muted or a minority position in Islam and were wholly absent in China. Consequently, after an exciting and promising start, rational inquiry into nature in Muslim lands gradually sputtered out; and in China hardly got started. This does not and should not detract from the genuine accomplishments of these cultures in technology, mathematics, and the “exact sciences,” and in the accumulation of facts and lore about nature. In particular, the medieval revolution in natural philosophy could not have happened without the earlier Muslim commentaries on the works of Aristotle, Galen, Ptolemy, and others.

Notes

¹Needham, Joseph. *The Shorter Science and Civilisation in China*, 2 vol., abr. by Colin Ronan (Cambridge University Press, 1985.)

²Grant, Edward. *Science and Religion*. (John Hopkins University Press, 2004), Cf also his *The Foundations of Modern Science in the Middle Ages*. (Cambridge University Press, 1996), and *God and Reason in the Middle Ages*. (Cambridge University Press, 2001)

³Sivin, Nathan. “Why the Scientific Revolution Did Not Take Place in China – Or Didn’t It?” At: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~nsivin/scirev.html>

⁴Huff, Toby E. *The Rise of Early Modern Science: Islam, China and the West*. (Cambridge University Press, 2003)

⁵*ibid*

⁶*ibid*

⁷Sivin, Nathan. *op. cit.*

⁸Gregory IX. *Parens scientiarum*. (Vatican, 1231)

⁹Grant, Edward. *op. cit.*

The Truth About the Sexes: Competing Magisteria in Modern Britain *by Joanna Bogle*

The Catholic writer and broadcaster Joanna Bogle contrasts increasingly fashionable assertions concerning the lack of meaning to male and female with the perennial and profound affirmation of such meaning within the Christian tradition.

A new reading scheme has been launched for boys (*Times*, January 7th 2009) with books emphasising action, adventure, and a team of young people battling against danger. The books are published by the Oxford University Press as a direct response to something that has been worrying educationalists for some while – the fact that boys vastly outnumber girls in illiteracy rates, and that many start secondary schools with very poor reading skills and no apparent interest in acquiring any. The new books form a “reading tree”, each book a little more challenging than the one before, and feature stories about three boys and one girl who are fighting a Dr Evil and his schemes for attempting to shrink the world.

Now this is particularly significant because for years and years – I first recall writing about this in the late 1970s – the policy foisted on schools has been exactly the reverse. The Equal Opportunities Commission (now the Equality and Human Rights Commission, EHR) spent a great deal of your money and mine in telling schools to ban books which showed boys taking the lead or doing adventurous things, on the grounds that such books were “sexist”. The Commission urged that books should be used to convey important social messages: for instance one book which it urged school libraries to acquire, and this writer personally got to see as a governor, was about a boy wearing a pink dress.

The Commission did not do this in order to help more children to read – on the contrary. It was known, even back in the early 1970s, that boys found reading less easy and less congenial than did girls, and were over-represented in remedial reading classes. But this information was ignored, downplayed or dismissed as irrelevant: what mattered was not education, or children’s needs, but feminist ideology.

The Commission was fanatical throughout the 70s and 80s in urging schools to re-write history and, where it deemed this important, biology. Female Red Indian chiefs – although historically inaccurate – had to be shown in history materials, and wall-charts depicting “parenting activities” had to show men and women alike engaged in every aspect of child-care, “including feeding the baby” (my emphasis).

It would be pleasant to think that the new approach on boys’ books – reflecting a genuine panic over the fact that boys lag behind girls in reading, and have been doing so at an increasing rate for these three decades – shows a fresh determination to base future educational policies on truth. We must hope for this. But alas meanwhile the EHR Commission is busy in this and other fields, hammering away.

Transgender and work – your rights in employment and training is among the latest publications produced by the Commission: “This leaflet provides advice to individuals who are undergoing gender reassignment. It may also be a useful source of information for people who are not familiar with transgender issues” declares the Commission’s website. ‘Gender reassignment’ is the new official term for people who decide to have themselves mutilated and given hormonal drugs because they believe they ought to belong to the opposite sex to the one they have been biologically “assigned”.

And there’s more. “Unlawful sexual orientation discrimination happens when someone is treated less favourably due to their sexual orientation, their perceived sexual orientation, or the sexual orientation of those they associate with”, announces the Commission with great magisterial aplomb. This means, essentially, that if a woman announces herself to be a lesbian, this means that she must be deemed to have been conceived that way by the proper, ordered processes of nature in such a way as to want to be sexually intimate with other women. Even though there is no biological evidence for this, we must all act as if it is true. Any suggestion of genetic or psychological wounding (let alone Original Sin) in those with homosexual temptations will be treated as insulting and with increasing likelihood illegal.

Now the problem here is that this is an officially-funded Government body insisting on a particular approach. Even if it is clearly wandering into highly disputed territory and making pronouncements that will quite likely look extremely stupid in the years to come, we have to live and work under its magisterial rulings concerning human nature.

In this, as in so many other instances in the present time and down the centuries, the Church is a voice of sanity and truth. As Catholics, we are allowed to know the truth about human nature – and to rejoice in the fact that medical science is revealing more and more to us about it all the time. We are aware that in this extraordinarily interesting and interdependent world, there is a great deal that we still do not know about human life and about the planet we humans inhabit. But we are conscious that it is an ordered world and that in a mysterious sense it obeys its own laws – thus we are able to see how it is possible to harness energy to provide people with heat and light, how it is possible to grow, cook, and preserve food, how we can heal diseases, and so on.

The notion, fashionable in Government circles for the past three decades, that men and women are alike and – apart from a few trifling differences of internal plumbing –

“It may be that, in the coming years, the Church [...] will be a place of safety in which forthright and honest discussions can take place which are not really permitted or encouraged elsewhere.”

essentially interchangeable – is one that the Catholic Church rejects. The Church – which ushered into existence the great universities of Europe, which established hospitals and schools, which pioneered work in medicine and literature and art and music and the exploration of all the natural sciences – is interested in truth. “Male and female he created them” is not merely a statement from Scripture but a reflection on the physical and spiritual reality of things, and in the modern era we are coming to understand just how very interesting it is that we are male and female, how different and complementary we are, how significant this might be, and how much we need to study and reflect on it.

Catholics have always recognised that the differences between men and women are a physical reality that conveys important truths: that human marriage is a symbol – a living, life-giving, and procreative one – of the relationship between the ultimate Bridegroom, Christ, and his Bride, the Church. In recent years, and especially in the teaching and writing of Pope John Paul II on this subject, we can see a deepening of understanding and perhaps even a development of the doctrine. As has happened so often in the history of the Church, it is when something is attacked (in this instance male/female marriage, a male priesthood, the notion of God as a Father, to name just three things routinely savaged) that deeper insights are perceived and richer truths revealed.

It is not going to be easy discussing these things over the next years. “But what has having children got to do with sexuality?” a TV interviewer asked me recently, with what appeared to be genuine incredulity. She had apparently got to the point where she honestly did not know that a child is the natural fruit of a union between a man and a woman: in her understanding “sex” is something done for pleasure, according to one’s desires, whether lesbian or homosexual or whatever, and procreation an entirely different matter connected with options presented at various times, possibly involving in-vitro fertilization and test-tubes.

Young people in schools and colleges struggle with all of this. They are aware of their own physical and psychological realities. They talk among themselves about relationships and about their hopes and expectations. Many suffer through parental divorce or through the emotional instability produced by a variety of complicated cohabitation arrangements (“I am the possessor of three ex-stepmothers” one young man – himself also now divorced – told me sadly recently). Many worry about their own “sexual orientation” especially in a culture saturated with pornographic images and obsessed with discussions which assume a contraceptive mentality in which sex and procreation are wholly separated. But they are searching for the truth, and for a life grounded in love and in the deep, life-giving realities for which we were made, in God’s image.

“Most girls, actually, do want to get married and have families” one young student told me. “And when we are together, it’s one of the main things that we talk about. Of course, we want jobs and interesting careers – and we want to do things that will make a difference for good in the world. We want to do that. But getting married and having children is also something that is big on everyone’s wish-list.”

At present, the Equality and Human Rights Commission isn’t helping. For all the talk of justice and of opportunities, it doesn’t really help young men and women who want to marry and have families – in other words, to ensure the future of the human race in stability and affection. Today’s young women do want to talk about the realities and tensions that have emerged from the feminist debates of recent years. They know perfectly well that this is not the 1900s: certain battles for justice (the right of women to vote, to hold public office, to receive University degrees and professional qualifications) have been won and we are all grateful for that. But there are new issues, and they have a right to tackle these, not to be stifled by a sense that to raise them is unacceptable: how men and women can help and support one another, how to sustain a lifelong marriage, where sexual morality fits into all this, and the practicalities of home and children and mutual care.

It may be that, in the coming years, the Church will be the sole repository of wisdom on this as on so many other things, and will be a place of sanctuary in which forthright and honest discussions can take place which are not really permitted or encouraged elsewhere. We should be prepared for this. While the straightjacket of stifled debate limits progress within society (with banning of topics deemed “sexist” or “homophobic”), the Church can offer something better.

People do somehow expect the Church to take on this role – of protecting truth, encouraging learning, accepting with honesty a vision of human beings as they really are. Some day, if we take on our responsibility for passing on wisdom and sharing knowledge, for honouring what is true, we may find that officialdom has caught up with us, rejoicing with our fellow-citizens at the rediscovery that marriage can only be between a man and woman, that the two sexes are different and complementary, that there is a meaning and purpose in all this. We even may find an official Government Commission discovering what publishers have just restated and parents and teachers have always noticed: boys and girls prefer different sorts of books, and school reading schemes could and should reflect this. ■

Scientific Knowledge and the Development of Doctrine in Holloway *by Kevin Douglas*

In this tenth anniversary year of Fr Edward Holloway's death Fr Kevin Douglas delineates the character of the 'new synthesis' which Holloway spent much of his life trying to foster. As he used to argue over five decades of writing: we should today expect God to be inviting the Church to receive something along these lines. We think that the urgency of such a development has only increased over the last decade. Fr Douglas is assistant priest of Craigshill parish, Livingston.

A recent editorial in this magazine examined the relationship between Thomism and the thought of Fr. Edward Holloway, the founder of the *Faith* movement. Though acknowledging significant divergences between the Thomist schools and Holloway's thought, the editorial argued that Holloway had remained faithful to both the intentions of the Magisterium, which looks to St. Thomas as the theologian and philosopher *par excellence*, and to the essence of St. Thomas' project because he had attempted to synthesise theology with the scientific culture of his day. The editorial advocated a re-evaluation of Thomas' thought in the light of the discoveries of modern science and suggested that in such a work of re-evaluation and realignment Holloway's contribution was eminently worthy of consideration.

Any such realignment presupposes the process by which the content of Revelation is passed on: how is the unique reality of what God shows us of Himself in Jesus Christ made incarnate in the hearts and minds of each new generation of believers given the inescapable background of a shifting culture and worldview? (*Editor: see first item in our current Notes From Across The Atlantic for a related thought*) Insofar as the editorial left this knot of issues unaddressed it left questions hanging. Clearly a single article will never be the final word on so far-reaching a matter as the transmission of Revelation, but a thumbnail sketch of how this theme might play out in relation to Holloway's work may help to clarify and advance the discussion somewhat.

Most commentators acknowledge that *Dei Verbum* marked a transition in the Church's approach to Revelation from a propositional to a more personalist perspective. Holloway is clearly concerned that what is handed is a living, personal relationship as well as a series of propositional truths. But when he calls for a new synthesis his primary focus is the relationship between what God reveals about Himself and the truths man discovers about the universe. In short, how are the truths of the Catholic faith to be synthesised with the leaps forward in our knowledge yielded by modern science?

John Rist in his recently published *What is Truth?* gives an account of the transmission of Revelation in which he draws attention to the distinction between *saving* truth and universal truth. The truths given to us by Divine Revelation are those necessary for our salvation. As such these truths are certainly the most important truths in our lives. Moreover the Church teaches that Jesus Christ is "the Revelation of the *fullness* of divine truth" (*Dominus Iesus* 5): Revelation is complete in Jesus Christ. Yet no Catholic would claim that Revelation contains every true statement that can be enunciated about reality. Divine Revelation does not contain truths about DNA or Particle Physics or the source of the River Nile for example. Nonetheless a truth, of its very nature, must always be compatible with another truth.

Therefore revealed saving truth, while not containing the truths of modern science, will not be at odds with them either.

In this paradigm the new truths discovered and grasped by the human intellect necessarily stand in a non-contradictory relationship to the one who said "I am the way, the *truth* and the light." (John 14:6) This is why the Second Vatican Council speaking of those who did not know Christ positively evaluated those truths known to them:

"Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel. She knows that it is given by Him who enlightens all men so that they may finally have life." (*Lumen Gentium* 16).

Holloway, however, would go further. The *Lumen Gentium* passage accords a positive value to professed truths which are not specifically of the Gospel. It asserts that these truths even serve as a preparation for the Gospel. This is not sufficiently explicit for Holloway because the above quotation might feasibly imply that these truths have an autonomy from the truth of Christ. Holloway contends that Jesus Christ is the master-key to the whole universe. The universe is for the sake of Jesus Christ: God creates precisely so that He can step into what is His own in the Incarnation. Not only is there a complementarity between the truths of modern science and the truth of Revelation in Jesus Christ, but rather the laws of physics and chemistry, the patterns of evolution, the truths science discovers about the cosmos and every kind of truth cry out for Jesus Christ as their fulfillment and meaning. All knowledge comes from our self-conscious encounter with reality. Modern science is no different. As has been argued in the pages of *Faith* before, as most scientists intuit, scientific knowledge is no more provisional or functional in character than all knowledge of the physical.

The realities which science discovers are not independent of Christ. Holloway argues "The aspiration of human knowledge is to attain as closely as possible to the unity of the wisdom of God." and "There will be no 'autonomies' in the unified field of God's knowledge".

This doesn't mean that independent of Christ these truths are untrue; it means that without Christ these truths, or any truth, is radically incomplete and hence not *fully* intelligible in its truthfulness.

Interestingly, although Holloway's assertion of the Christocentric nature of reality in the light of science might appear very bold, this insight has a long pedigree in the tradition of the Church. St. Maximus the Confessor describes the same reality in terms of the *logoi* or the rationale of created realities having their origin in and finding their meaning in Jesus Christ who is the one *Logos* of God.

“Every new truth discovered in some way deepens our knowledge of Jesus Christ.”

Arguably Holloway is doing no more than drawing out the implications of St. Paul's claim that in Christ God has “made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” (Eph 1:9-10)

Ever Deepening Knowledge

Holloway's assertion that Jesus Christ is the master-key to the universe has a necessary corollary concerning the relation of every aspect of reality to Christ. Every advance in our knowledge of reality, every new truth discovered, impinges upon how we understand the truth given to us in Revelation. Every newly discovered truth in some way deepens our knowledge of Jesus Christ and His working out of our salvation. This process of ever deeper penetration into the mystery of Christ does not mean a quantitative adding to our knowledge of Christ; it does however imply a qualitative development.

The history of the Church is marked by a growing conceptual clarity regarding Christ and the things of God. For example when the Gospel of Mark describes Jesus calming the storm: in his human nature Jesus is tired and falls asleep in the boat, but in his divine nature when he awakes he commands the elements. (Mark 4:35-41) Certainly Mark believes that the single individual Jesus is both human and divine but this does not mean that Mark has arrived at a definition of the hypostatic union in the way the Council Fathers at Chalcedon in 451 did. The conceptual clarity of Chalcedon is in no way contradictory to the Gospels, but the concepts used in the definition presuppose Christianity's appropriation of and transformation of the legacy of Hellenic philosophy. In the wake of the council of Nicea the Arians had objected to the term ‘Consubstantial’ precisely because it was not found in Scripture. Nonetheless the term is now definitively a part of the Church's patrimony. Hellenic philosophy is assimilated and purified. What is true and good in it is used to articulate and clarify the Church's understanding of Christ. What occurred in the almost four centuries between Chalcedon and the writing of Mark's Gospel is a process in which truths with a provenance outside of Revelation are drawn into relationship with the truth of Revelation and illuminate the central truth of Jesus Christ. If this takes place with the truths of Hellenic culture then there is no *a priori* reason to suppose it cannot happen with the truths uncovered by modern science.

If one holds that during the course of human history a process of development and refinement in the Church's understanding of Christ has taken place, this does not mean that one is rushing headlong into a position of historical relativism that is ultimately corrosive of the objectivity of our faith. One can find a scriptural precedent for the development of doctrine in Christ's claim that “when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth.” (John 16:13) Notice that Christ uses the future tense and sees “the complete truth” as a goal yet to be reached. All of which implies a process of development. Furthermore there are sound reasons why this process of development would be in harmony with the objectivity of our faith.

Drawing out the Deposit of Faith

Firstly we are not saying that the content of the Christian faith fluctuates according to the culture and historical period. Revelation is complete in Jesus. This is an unchanging given but *how we understand* that Revelation does admit of development. Moreover the Holy Spirit's guidance exercised through the Magisterium and the presence within the Church of Scripture and Tradition means that the Church can avail itself of both well defined yardsticks and an authority competent to judge this process of development. Secondly the process is not arbitrary: it is an ever deepening appreciation of the given truth that the Catholic faith is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Finally this process of development takes place within history, but history itself is not arbitrary. Though we may not see it, history is under the guidance of God's providence and is moving towards a very definite goal: Christ's second coming.

Although Holloway maintains the fundamental convergence of all truth in Jesus Christ, nonetheless he is not naively optimistic. He is not one of those thinkers so enamored of modernity that they assume any novelty necessarily entails progress. Holloway is well aware that the attempt to synthesise what is authentically of value in modern culture with the perennial truths of the faith is as equally replete with dangers as it is with promise. In various passages within his oeuvre (e.g. see the conclusion of the last editorial of this magazine) he alludes to the grounds, well articulated by Cardinal Newman, by which one can discern whether the synthesis made between the doctrines of Catholicism and the state of modern learning is authentic or a blind alley. In one such passage Holloway makes this revealing observation:

“There will be found a power in the full, orthodox doctrine of Christ to evince for every era a new synthesis of divine and human knowledge. The power to evince new levels of synthesis will depend upon orthodoxy, as a rising cathedral grows naturally so to speak out of the foundation laid to take it.”

A Proportionate Openness

Holloway argues that an orthodox (by which we imply true) understanding of Christ, and as a corollary the whole of the Catholic faith, will be capable of synthesising itself with the truths present in any culture or body of learning with which it comes into contact. The cathedral simile is illuminating because it suggests the kind of synthesis Holloway has in mind. The new synthesis of which Holloway writes is an encompassing structure that builds upon what has gone before. If, therefore, the new synthesis is to follow Holloway's blueprint it will necessarily be marked by four qualities, themselves a development of Newman's criteria. It will truly be an *orthodox synthesis* embracing the whole truth of who Jesus is. There will be an *openness* about the synthesis; in so far as it is a true synthesis it will be open to and capable of accommodating new learning. There will be a *real continuity* in content between the new synthesis and what has gone before: to use Holloway's image, the new synthesis will be built on the foundations of what has gone before. Finally, and perhaps most

Scientific Knowledge and the Development of Doctrine in Holloway continued

controversially, there will be an element of novelty. A “rising cathedral” though it is entirely continuous with and conditioned by its foundations is not identical with those foundations.

Holloway lays great store by “the full, orthodox doctrine of Christ”. In order that a new synthesis be built upon the true identity of Christ a number of pitfalls must be avoided. Firstly this new synthesis cannot be based on a philosophy that in an *a priori* fashion excludes the possibility of Revelation or is in any way systemically opposed to the given facts of Scripture and Tradition. Secondly such a synthesis cannot exclude anything in the Church’s understanding of Christ that seems unpalatable or that modernity finds difficult to give an account of. Moreover, because Christ is a person and not a concept, we are called to more than a simple assent of the mind to certain truths. We are called to a relationship with Christ: a relationship that like any other authentic relationship affects the way we live and our morals. The new synthesis that Holloway called for and spent his life trying to build up was one radically faithful to Christ and his Church and which embraced the fullness of Catholic truth including matters of both “faith and morals”.

Holloway is adamant in his choice of words: he calls for a new *synthesis*. He even uses this as the title of his book. By synthesis he means more than a repackaging or a new spruced up, more media friendly presentation of the Catholic faith. He means literally a synthesis, that is a whole which is formed out of the new elements of learning now made available to theology through the advances made in modern science. In Holloway’s view then such a synthesis must be open to new learning. The discoveries of modern science are real advances in the knowing of God’s creation and so have an impact upon theology. By implication Holloway’s new synthesis cannot be built upon a metaphysics that holds itself aloof from the natural sciences. A metaphysic that is a closed system incapable of dialoguing with science is, in Holloway’s view, a blind alley.

Risk of Imperfection

Holloway’s new synthesis presupposes an overriding continuity between itself and the preceding tradition within the Church. Christianity is a revealed religion so of its essence there is a given, a revealed something or someone that cannot be replaced or superseded. It is, therefore, a cause of great concern to the Church that the truth of Christ be handed on authentically and integrally to each generation: He is our salvation and without Him we perish. Consequently any perceived deviation from what has gone before is rightly viewed with suspicion. As noted above Holloway stressed that “the full, orthodox doctrine of Christ” is quite simply the condition of possibility of any new synthesis. Moreover his simile of a cathedral rising implies a real continuity rising up through the foundations to the spires of the cathedral. However, and here it is important to note Rist’s distinction, it may be that in one period of the Church’s history she, in grasping a particular aspect of saving truth, has combined it with a non-essential proposition. Alternatively it may be that the circumstances of one period have led to one facet of saving truth being emphasised at the expense of another facet of the same saving truth.

For example one may thoroughly applaud St. Augustine’s defence of the primacy of grace in our salvation while at the same time being wary about the apparently arbitrary nature of divine justice as he describes it. Each age must indeed evaluate what has been handed on to it. However, fidelity to the *saving* truth which God has entrusted to His Church in the Revelation of Jesus Christ necessitates a continuity that precludes any contradiction between the new synthesis and what has gone before.

Developments Necessary

Not only does this continuity exclude the notion that there might be a contradiction in essential matters of the faith between one period and another, it also presupposes a progressive development. As in Holloway’s image, when building a cathedral one storey can only be built upon the preceding one. It may be that in the course of history certain dimensions of saving truth become obscured and must be recovered but it is impossible for a theologian to stand apart from tradition and begin his work *ab initio*; to do so would be to cut himself off from the Church, which is the source *sine qua non* of theology, and to deny the historical givenness of Revelation. Each subsequent age contributes something (even if it be only through errors to be confuted) toward a deepening of our understanding of the truths of the faith. The progressive nature of this development would be violated if one were to try to turn the clock back or absolutise one single period as the epitome of what is authentically Catholic. In spite of the vicissitudes of human history the developing sequence of events that constitute the history of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ is simply non-negotiable.

Finally notwithstanding the fact that there must be continuity in the truths that are handed on, that no new synthesis can be orthodox whilst contradicting the saving truth in what has gone before, a new synthesis will be new: it will contain an element of novelty. Holloway talks of a growth in “the degree of union with God in love”. He argues “the new knowledge of man must be regathered into a *greater* vista of God and in God.” [my italics]

Any true advance in knowledge will shed light upon Christ. This is universally true though it holds especially good for modern science because Holloway contends material creation is for Jesus Christ who is the Master-key to the universe. In Holloway’s perspective the truths of modern science do not corrode the truth of Revelation nor do they add new elements to Revelation. They should deepen our understanding of and appreciation for what God has graciously chosen to share with us and consequently they should make us grow in our love for God. In Holloway’s view the theories of the Big Bang and evolution far from being at odds with the Catholic faith actually should increase our awe and wonder, should make us fall prostrate in loving adoration, in the face of God’s “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)

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The Nature of Heresy

by James Tolhurst

In a recent episode of the ‘historical’ television drama *The Tudors*, Henry VIII asked Sir Thomas More how many heretics he had burnt. More answered, “Five”. A priest from California told me that he was scandalized that a saint of the Church could seem to be proud of his efforts on behalf of orthodoxy.

We can quibble with the figures. Philip Hughes claims that only five were burnt between 1527 and 1533 (More was Chancellor from October 1529 to May 1532). He also points out that More was not necessarily involved with each one *and that nobody was burnt in Middlesex*.¹ But the prospect of a saint of the Church admitting to burning heretics is too good to miss for prime-time television. It is useless to point out that canonization of martyrs merely extends to the final act of their lives and not to their previous conduct. More was not squeamish about his role as Chancellor. In his prepared epitaph he admitted that during his life he had been “relentless towards thieves, murderers and heretics.”

We need to examine why he and his sovereign (until 1533 at least) viewed heresy with detestation. Irenaeus had pointed out that it was “a characteristic of heresy that each heretic selected part of the whole apostolic witness and, after adapting it to his system, elevated its authority above that of the other apostles.”²

We are not therefore dealing with some sort of private theological opinion but of a *choice* made (*haeresis*). The essence of heresy is not the opinion but *the persistent and stubborn holding of such views* against the common teaching of the Christian Church. Augustine makes the point “we must not accuse them of heresy when they are not *stubborn* in their opinions.”³ Cross says that the Catholic understanding of heresy is “a willful and persistent adherence to an error in matters of faith on the part of a baptised person.”⁴ In 1976 the International Theological Commission stated,

“According to the classical rules, the fact of one’s professing ‘heresy’ can only be definitively established if the accused theologian has demonstrated ‘obstinacy.’ That is, if he closes himself off from all discussion meant to clarify an opinion contrary to the faith and, in effect, refuses the dialogue.”⁵ It was presumed even in 1976 that all heretics were male...

Its Social Implications

It was the impact of such obstinacy that occasioned the Heresy Act of 1489. The whole of the Western world at that time did not make any distinction between Christian and civic loyalty. They saw a heretic “not only as an enemy of the truth, seducing souls to their damnation, but a threat to the civil order.”⁶ In an early sermon, Newman makes the interesting point, “Are not the principles of unbelief certain to dissolve society?”⁷

Thomas More, as the supreme legislator was bound to uphold the law of 1489 (which Henry repealed, and Mary reinstated), “Every officer of justice through the realm for his rate, right especially bounden, not in reason only and good congruence but also by plain ordinance and statute.”⁸ He saw heresy rather as Prince Charles sees much of modern architecture,

as “likened to a carbuncle”. But he pursued the matter further, and fulminated against heresy as Charles does against GM crops, “Wheresoever this venomous plague reigneth most it infected not all the people at once in one day, but in process of time by little and little increasing more and more, while such personals as at the beginning can abide no heresy, afterward being content to hear of it, begin less and less to dislike it, and within a while after can endure to give hear to large lewd talk therein, and at length are quite carried away themselves therewith. This disease still creeping, as saith the apostle forth further like a canker (2 Tim 2:17) doth in conclusion overrun the whole country altogether.”⁹

“Although we subscribe to religious toleration we need to ask whether our commitment to orthodoxy has suffered in consequence.”

Wilson, who describes More as authoritarian and his treatment of suspected heretics as inquisitorial asks whether Luther himself might be considered “God’s instrument for punishing the sins into which the Church had fallen.”¹⁰ Ronald Knox argues

“Heresy is the stimulus upon which the healthy organ of catholic theology reacts. And the result of that reaction is to form a sort of hard callous around certain important Christian verities, comparable to the fingernail of a human subject, Or the carapace of a tortoise. Thenceforward a kind of natural armour protects, at such points, the faith of simple Christians.”¹¹

But this avoids the question of the damage which heresy does. Thomas Merton whom nobody could accuse of reactionary views, maintained, “The reason heresies have to be condemned is that they contain elements which resemble the truth and therefore lead well-meaning Christians into error.”¹² We need to consider their impact at the time, not the eventual positive contribution to the faith of the Church.

Dealing with Heresy

Augustine — who was confronted by heresies at his back door, tried dialogue and found that it didn’t work. He maintained that there was no other remedy than exclusion to preserve the faith of the community, “When they are vomited out, then the body finds relief; likewise, when the wicked leave, then the Church finds relief.”¹³ This is his commentary on “they went out from us, but they were not of us” (1 John 2:19) It is a point which Newman makes in *Difficulties of Anglicans* and returns to in *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*,

“We know that it is the property of life to be impatient of any foreign substance in the body to which it belongs. It will be sovereign in its own domain, and it conflicts with what it cannot assimilate into itself, and is irritated and disordered till it has been expelled.”¹⁴

Newman was continually experimenting with the concept of organic growth and would contrast the healthy growth of doctrine with heresy “whose formulae end in themselves without development because they are words; they are barren,

“Newman would contrast the healthy growth of doctrine with heresy ‘whose formulae end in themselves without development because they are words; they are barren, because they are dead.’”

because they are dead.”¹⁵ As a test, in contrast to his notes for true development, he pointed to “absence of stay or consistence, ever crumbling, every shifting, ever new forming, ever self consumed by internal strife.”¹⁶

But, given the tendency of heresy to implode, Newman did not expect the Church to stand idly by and wait for this to happen. As early as 1835 he would write to Froude and comment on the abandonment of State prosecution for blasphemy which has a contemporary flavour — and argues that “there should be some really working court of heresy and false doctrine.”¹⁷ His emphasis on the authority of the episcopate was linked in his mind with the power of excommunication which he saw as “more solemn, and its effect much greater than that of merely separating the guilty individual from the intercourse of his brethren.”¹⁸

When Paul passed sentence on the incestuous Corinthian, “You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of his flesh” (I Cor 5:5) he was acting in accordance with the Mosaic code of *herem* or expulsion from the community. The man will suffer in the flesh but his spirit will be saved. It was precisely this argument which led to the punishment being inflicted on heretics which to us seem so barbaric. Aquinas — a Dominican — writes, “About heretics there are two things to say. Their sin deserves banishment not only from the Church by excommunication but also from the world by death.”¹⁹

“If we appreciate the fact of our incorporation into the body of Christ we cannot view with unconcern any attempt to undermine its unity.”

Such blunt words in our society, which has outlawed the death penalty and corporal punishment, cause more than a frisson. But if we accept the premise that heresy is profoundly injurious to the person and has a devastating effect on the Church, then means should be taken to deal with it. Our ancestors felt that strong means were necessary, which would at the same time deter others from joining the heretics. We who argue about the definition of torture in rendition and combat situations when we have officially renounced the use of violence, should appreciate the irony.

The Demands of Faith

Otherwise we should be forced to admit that heresy and orthodoxy exist in harmony or, alternatively, that there was no real difference between them. It was a prospect which appalled Thomas More. Writing to Roper he said that he prayed God that some of us “live not the day that we gladly would wish to be at a league and composition with them, [heretics] to let them have their churches quietly to themselves, so that they would be content to let us have ours quietly to ourselves.”²⁰

Although we subscribe to religious toleration we need to ask whether our commitment to orthodoxy has suffered in consequence, and our attitude is seen by some as an unwillingness to accept the fundamental demands of our faith. More maintained that from the outset he aimed to bring

heretics back to the Church, “Our Lord give them grace truly to turn in time, so that we and they together in one Catholic Church, knit unto God in one Catholic faith.”²¹ If we appreciate the fact of our incorporation into the body of Christ we cannot view with unconcern any attempt to undermine its unity.

Awareness and Charity

Newman noticed in his research (resulting in *Arians of the Fourth Century*) how it was the determined resistance to heresy that “honourably distinguished the primitive Roman Church.”²² There must remain that awareness of heterodox teaching and the need to deal with it. But this should not prevent us from adopting the approach of one of the companions of St Ignatius, and a contemporary of More, Blessed Peter Favre, “Whoever desires to become useful to the heretics of this age must be solicitous to bear them much charity and to love them truly, excluding from his mind all thoughts which tend to cool his esteem for them. It is necessary to gain their good will, so that they may love us and keep a place for us in their hearts.”²³ Favre showed in his life, that it is possible to confront heresy and at the same time win over those who embraced heterodoxy. Newman would say that there must be a leveling up rather than a ‘dumbing down’,

“If England is to be converted, there must be a great move of the national mind to a better sort of religious sentiment. Wesleyans, Anglicans, Congregationalists, Unitarians, must be raised to one and the same (what we used to call at Oxford) ‘ethos’. That is the same moral and intellectual state of mind. To bring them to this is ‘levelling up’”²⁴

Henry VIII would go on to surpass his Chancellor in punishing heretics and all who defied him, including More himself. He exemplified in his own life the impact of heresy and we are still paying the price. ■

Notes

¹ *The Reformation in England* Volume I. Burns Oates 1956 p. 131

² *Irenaeus Adversus Haereses* 3.11.7 MG 7.884

³ Letter quoted in *Summa Theologica Secunda Secundae* 11 a2 ad 3

⁴ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* p. 639

⁵ *ITC Thesis* 12, June 6, 1976

⁶ *The Field is Won* by E.E. Reynolds Burns & Oates 1968 pp. 269-270

⁷ *Parochial & Plain Sermons* 8 p. 112, preached in 1825

⁸ *Works of Thomas More* 1557 p.357

⁹ *A History of the Passion* Burns & Oates 1941 o, 78

¹⁰ *In the Lion’s Court* by Derek Wilson St Martin’s Press New York 2001 p. 283

¹¹ *The Incarnate Son*. Longmans Green 1943 p. 211f

¹² *Bread in the Wilderness* Burns & Oates 1976 p. 10. Tertullian had said much the same, “Heretics seduce the weak, they make the meaner stagger, they weary and trick the learned.” In *Praescriptis* Chapter 15.

¹³ *Homilies on the First Epistle of St John* 3,4. New City Press New York 2008

¹⁴ *Difficulties of Anglicans* I pp 52-3; *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*. Geoffrey Chapman 1961 p. 74.

¹⁵ *Oxford University Sermons* p. 318

¹⁶ *Letters & Diaries of John Henry Newman* Vol 8 p. 442. (to R. I Wilberforce, January 28, 1842)

¹⁷ *Letters & Diaries* Vol 5 p. 10 January 18, 1835

¹⁸ *Ibid* p. 77 (to the Editor of *The Record* October 31, 1833)

¹⁹ *Summa Theologica Secunda Secundae* 1 la 3c

²⁰ *Lyfe of More* p. 35 (ed. E W Hitchcock. Early English Text Society 1935)

²¹ *Works* p. 1138

²² *Arians of the Fourth Century* p. 117

²³ *Fabri Monumenta* Madrid 1914 p. 485

²⁴ *Letters & Diaries* vol 25 pp 3-4 (to Sr Mary Gabriel du Boulay January 2, 1870)

Appreciating the Divine Virtue of Faith

by William Charlton

William Charlton, retired lecturer in philosophy at the Universities of Edinburgh, Newcastle and Trinity College, Dublin, carefully reflects upon how Christians use the word 'Faith' for a God-given knowledge fruitful in good works.

Faith appears to us as something wild and anarchic: a leap into the dark, either daring and adventurous or rash and stupid. It can give us the strength to be heroes, or hurl us blindfolded into folly and disaster. To some it is contrary to reason; it is believing ten impossible things before breakfast. To others it takes over where reason breaks down; reason is a pitiful thing, timid and logic-chopping, and if we wish to get anywhere we must leave it behind and take faith's leap. Faith in another human being, in a lover or a leader, goes beyond what reason can prove; so does faith in a system or a cause; and so, above all does faith in God. To atheists it seems, as Saint Paul puts it, 'madness, but to those who are saved, the power of God' (1 Cor 1.18).

Catholic theologians have traditionally held that religious faith, far from being opposed to reason, is the culmination of it, a supernatural form of intelligence. 'Grace', says Aquinas at the beginning of his *Summa Theologiae*,¹ 'does not do away with nature but perfects it', and 'faith builds upon and perfects reason'.² And Catholic understanding of faith has a further peculiarity. On the face of it, belief in God includes two things, belief that God exists, and trust or confidence in him. In his great praise of faith in *Romans* 3-5, it is the second of these things that Paul has in mind. Abraham was justified by putting his trust in God,³ and our salvation comes through 'faith in Jesus Christ'.⁴ Abraham believed that God would fulfil the promise that he should have numerous descendants (Rom.4.17), and we too must believe that God has the power to do what he says (Rom. 4.21), but in both cases the emphasis is on the steadfast confidence of the believer⁵ rather than the content of the belief. The same conception of faith seems to underlie *Hebrews* 11.⁶ Aquinas, however, argues that faith must be capable of being expressed in words, and formulated in a series of statements or 'articles' that make up a creed.⁷ The idea that faith is the very height of rationality is an obvious paradox, and people with an eye to history sometimes object to creeds on the ground that they cause divisions and have been used to control people and justify religious persecution.⁸ Nevertheless there are reasons behind both these peculiarities of the traditional Catholic view of faith.

'Virtue'

A good starting point for any search into traditional Catholic thinking is the old 'penny' catechism. Its last chapter contained four helpful lists: the 'divine' or 'godly' virtues, the corporal works of mercy, the spiritual works of mercy, and the four 'last things'. Of the divine virtues it says:

Q: How many divine virtues are there?

A: Three; faith, hope and charity.

Q: Why are they called 'divine' or 'godly'?

A: Because they relate to God.

Q: How?

A: Faith is believing in God; hope is trusting in God; and charity is loving God above all things, and our neighbours as ourselves for God's sake.⁹

The catechism, it will be seen, assigns belief in God and trust in God to two different virtues, though as Benedict XVI's *Spe salvi* points out, in several Biblical passages 'the words "faith" and "hope" seem interchangeable';¹⁰ but is either of them to be counted as a virtue? What conception of virtue is being used here?

Today the word 'virtue' is usually applied to good traits of character, qualities which dispose us to act rightly in various sorts of situation. Honesty is a disposition to behave well in matters involving money and gain; courage has to do with danger; temperance with the more bodily pleasures; good temper with sources of irritation and resentment. There is such a failing as credulity, a disposition to believe things and trust people on bad or insufficient grounds; and it is possible also to be excessively sceptical, cynical, suspicious or mistrustful. I am not sure if there is any one quality that disposes to believe or trust on good grounds; perhaps any bad quality impairs our judgment on such things; but having good judgement is not the same as religious faith. People can be disposed to believe things on the ground that they are things which Christ said or which the Church teaches, and this could be called faith in Christ or faith in the Church; but religious faith seems to be something more than this and prior to it; it is through having it that we are disposed to believe Christ and the Church.

When the catechism lists the godly virtues, it is using the word 'virtue' to express a broader idea than it usually expresses today: the idea of any kind of excellence or useful quality. It therefore covers knowledge and skill as well as good traits of character: the ability to play a musical instrument or speak a foreign language would count as an intellectual 'virtue', and so would knowledge of history or geography. Now Aquinas denied that faith is an intellectual virtue (*ST* 1a 2ae q. 62 a. 2), but only on the grounds that the arts and sciences concern the natural order and are acquired naturally, whereas faith concerns God and comes as a supernatural gift. He nevertheless regarded it as a kind of knowledge, the knowledge we need to work out our salvation. We cannot love God or hope for eternal happiness unless our minds have some apprehension of God and supernatural beatitude, and we have this by faith.¹¹

“It must be capable of being put into words.”

Propositions to be Believed

It is because faith is a kind of knowledge that Aquinas says it must be capable of being put into words. The argument¹² is highly abstract, but may be put like this. Knowledge involves truth; in knowing anything we think truly; and to think truly we must have thoughts of a certain complexity, we must think something definite about something definite. We think truly in thinking that things are present or absent which are present or absent, and in thinking things have or lack properties that they have or lack. The words we have in our vocabulary signify the things we think to be present or absent, and the properties we think they *have* or *lack*; and their presence or absence, or something's having or lacking them, is expressed by the way we put those words together in sentences, by the constructions we use. If we cannot say what things we are thinking about and what thoughts we have about them, we cannot claim any truth for our thoughts. This seems reasonable, and that faith aspires to some kind of truth is something even those mistrustful of creeds might hesitate to deny.

What are the truths that we have to grasp by faith?

The ancient creeds, the Apostle's, the Nicæan and the Athanasian, contain different numbers of articles, formulated to meet different difficulties,¹³ but today the chief things of which we are said to be assured by faith are that God exists and Jesus Christ was the son of God, both human and divine. If we believe these things, we shall be disposed to think it a good ground for believing anything else, that it was revealed by God to the Jews of the Old Testament, or taught by Christ or by the Church he founded. In point of fact it is a traditional strategy of Catholic apologists to say that we must first satisfy ourselves on rational grounds God exists and that Christ claimed to be divine and founded a church, and then it will be rational for us to believe the rest of what the Church teaches on its authority and that of Scripture.¹⁴

To many people this strategy seems to demand too much of reason and too little of faith proper; but even if we find it attractive, two things may give us pause. First, faith is commonly supposed to be limited to things we cannot know by natural reason. If we can really assure ourselves by natural reason that God exists then that is not an article of faith, and the same goes for Christ's divinity, if, as apologists claim, we have good rational grounds for thinking that he claimed to be divine, that he was neither mad nor a fraud, and that he rose from the dead. Secondly, although the sentences 'God exists' and 'Jesus Christ was both God and man' look as if they state things someone might believe, they are not straightforward statements, and it is not immediately clear what believing them would amount to. I shall take the second difficulty first; discussing it will make it easier to deal with the first.

'Existence' of God

'God exists' is a grammatically correct sentence, similar in construction to 'Claudius snores'. It consists of a name or singular term and an intransitive verb. The verb is in what is called the 'simple' as contrasted with the 'continuous' form. In 'Claudius is snoring' the verb is continuous. Whereas the continuous 'Claudius is snoring' tells us that Claudius is doing something, namely snoring, now, the simple 'Claudius snores' tell us that Claudius is in the habit of doing this thing, or that he does it from time to time. Does 'God exists' declare that God is in the habit of existing, that he exists from time to time? Clearly not; we should prefer to declare that he is doing something now. But 'God is existing' (or 'Claudius is existing', for that matter,) does not look like a correct English sentence, and if the verb 'to exist' signifies something a thing does, either always or from time to time, what is it? Some theologians cling to the belief that existing is a very basic activity, something we have to do before we can do anything else, but this belief has been abandoned by nearly all philosophers. If Hamlet believes that Claudius snores, it is correct to say 'Hamlet believes Claudius exists'; but that sentence tells us only that Claudius comes into a thought Hamlet has; it does not report a complete thought that Hamlet might have all on its own.

Claudius in Shakespeare's play is a human being, and therefore both a material object and an intelligent agent. As a material object, he can affect other material objects and be affected by them; as an intelligent agent he can be harmed or benefited. Hamlet thinks Claudius exists if he thinks of him in either way, if he thinks 'Claudius makes noises in his sleep' or 'Claudius wants to have me killed'. God is not a material object, and to think that God exists he must come into our thought as an intelligent agent with purposes. We believe he exists if we think that the universe exists because God wants it to, and that there is a purpose for which he wants the natural order to continue. The old catechism says that God made us to know, love and serve him in this life, and to be happy with him for ever in the next, and the belief in God which is the basic article of faith, is the belief that the natural world exists at least partly in order that there may arise people who know, love and serve him while alive, and are happy with him after death.

'Faith' in God

To what extent is this a matter of faith? That there is a life after death is perhaps something we believe because God or Christ has said so; for the moment, I leave that aside.¹⁵ But that the natural order exists because God wants it to is an explanation we have grounds for accepting, independently of any supernatural revelation. The reasons for accepting it do not form the kind of deductive proof we require in logic or pure mathematics, but they resemble the arguments used in a court of law to establish innocence or culpability.¹⁶

Appreciating the Divine Virtue of Faith

continued

So far belief in the existence of a benevolent creator might seem to need no supernatural assistance. But the belief that something occurs for a purpose, or because someone wants it to, is not idle. It does not consist simply in a sentence to that effect said aloud or under one's breath. Belief and desire are not independent. Really thinking anything whatever involves readiness to behave accordingly, and thinking that someone or something has a purpose involves wanting to further or frustrate that purpose. Anyone who believes that the world exists because God so desires, and in order that living things may arise and thrive, must either share his desire for their well-being for his sake, or (a horrible thought) hate them because they are his creatures. Someone who believes that the world exists for no purpose may nevertheless recognise that it contains living things that can be harmed or benefited, and may desire them to thrive for their own sakes; the belief that there is no God does not entail indifference to the well-being of living things generally, but merely excludes loving them for God's sake; a person, however, who really is indifferent to their well-being cannot, whatever he says, believe in the God of the Bible or the Koran.¹⁷

To say that belief in the existence of persons involves this sort of engagement with them sounds like a questionable piece of philosophical theory. So it is: many philosophers still hold that beliefs are like pictures, which may contain information but which of themselves do nothing. But it is finding favour in high places in the Church. In a recent papal document we read: 'The Christian message is not only "informative" but "performative." That means: the Gospel is not merely a communication of things that can be known – it makes things happen and is life-changing.'¹⁸ The term 'performative' was applied by J L Austin¹⁹ to utterances like warnings and promises, these being at the same time instances both of saying and of doing. Faith which is performative is both a believing and a doing.

If belief that God exists requires loving all living things for God's sake as well as for their own, it is inseparable from charity, which according to the old catechism involves loving 'our neighbours as ourselves for God's sake'. It is natural for us as human beings to have concern for some people and some animals for their own sake. We can care for every living thing everywhere only through God, and perhaps only through a God who has dwelt among us.

It is often said that creation is a mystery surpassing our understanding, and that might seem to be a reason why we need faith to believe in a creator. But we must beware of misusing the notion of a mystery: we should not use it to hide intellectual confusion.

'We are inclined to conceive creation as a kind of super-craftsmanship. We say "I can understand how people can make vases out of mashed up newspapers, and even how

they can make glass out of sand, but God made the universe out of nothing, and that is a feat beyond my human powers of comprehension.'" But we are here using the wrong model. Craftsmanship is an ability to bring about a desired outcome; the craftsman knows upon what he must act and how, in order to make that outcome inevitable; and that upon which he acts must be already there. The notion of a kind of super-action upon nothing is incoherent. The model we should be using is rather that of action which issues from free choice, the voluntary action of an intelligent agent. Understanding such action is not knowing what the agent does to make it inevitable, but grasping its reason or purpose. It is that of seeing something as issuing from free choice, as done for a purpose. This is a different kind of intellectual achievement from seeing how a craftsman produces an effect, and it is the only type of understanding that fits creation. Grasping the purpose of the whole order of nature is not different in character from grasping the purpose of a single intelligent human act, but it is more of an adventure. It involves a leap: a leap intellectual and imaginative in more ways than one.'

'Divinity' of Christ

Believing that Christ was divine is different in character from believing that God exists, and it is harder to say in what it consists. The doctrine of Christ's divine nature was developed over several centuries, and the creeds do not offer any neat formulation. Believing that Christ was the son of God is certainly not believing that Christ stood to God in the causal relationship in which Isaac stood to Abraham or Heracles to Zeus, the model that seems to lie behind the passages in the Koran which criticise this belief. Nor is believing in Christ's divinity thinking him identical with the Creator. It cannot be detached from believing that there are three Persons in God. We are taught that 'all things were created in, through and in relation to' Christ (Col. 1. 16-17) but the creeds attribute creation chiefly to God the Father, and belief that God created the world does not of itself involve loving all living creatures for Christ's sake.

When, speaking informally of two human beings, we say one thinks the other is God, and worships the ground he walks on, we are summing up many thoughts and actions, and although the cases are not quite parallel, to say that Christians believe in the divinity of Christ is to sum up beliefs, attitudes and practices which may vary slightly from one Christian or group of Christians to another.

Perhaps a minimal condition of believing that Christ was the son of God is believing not just that he existed in the time of Tiberius but that he exists now. If he is dead and gone in the same way as Shakespeare or Darwin, surviving at best and rather problematically in a paradise beyond space and time, his nature cannot have been divine. But belief that he is here still can take various forms. The Catholic Church teaches that Christ is present in the

“Belief in the divinity of Christ is inseparable from Charity.”

Eucharist as a causal agent, somehow giving us bodily strength and health, and Catholics' acceptance of that teaching is expressed in the way in which they receive that sacrament, but the doctrine of Christ's bodily presence in the Eucharist is one with which even Catholics today have difficulty, and it would be unrealistic to make it the centre of the belief that Christ was the Son of God.

The first Christians attached great importance to the name of Jesus: 'Let it be known to all of you and to the whole people of Israel', says Peter addressing the Jewish hierarchy after the healing of the lame man, Acts 4.10-12, 'that it is in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, and whom God raised from the dead, that this man now stands in your presence healed. This is the stone that was despised by you, the builders, but has become the keystone. And salvation is in none other. There is no other name under heaven given to men in which we are to be saved.' The gospel of John in a number of different passages attributes to Christ claims to be the unique means of salvation. In Jn 6 he says it is only through an intimate relationship with him as an individual living organism, through eating his flesh and drinking his blood that we can have eternal life. In Jn 10 he describes himself as the gate of the sheepfold through which people must enter to have salvation and life in abundance. In Jn 15 he takes the image of the vine, traditionally used to represent the Jewish people, and says that he himself is the vine from which we are to draw life as branches. The letter to the Hebrews teaches that Christ is a unique high priest, not to be succeeded, whose offering of himself on the cross is sufficient offering, once and for all, for human sins (7.23-7; 10.11-12).

Belief in the divinity of Christ certainly includes belief that salvation is through him alone. Different Christians have had slightly different conceptions of salvation. For some it is being freed from sin – and that in itself may be conceived in various ways. We could take the view that Christ's sin-offering atones for the sins of all human beings, past and future. Most Christians believe that it is natural for us to have a life after death, and if that is correct, Christ cannot strictly speaking save us from the finality of death, since death is not final anyhow; but he may save us from Hell, from unending misery after death. If, however, it is not in our nature to have life after death, if we are mortal in the sense that death for us is the natural end, then we can say that Christ saves us from extinction at death by giving us a share of his own divine life; in the words of the priest at Mass, we become partners in the divinity of him who was so good as to share in our humanity.²⁰ But whatever precisely we take salvation to be, belief that Christ was the divine son of God must involve regarding his part in it as non-negotiable. God might have given the same laws to someone other than Moses, or revealed the contents of the Koran to someone other than Mohamet, but only Christ

himself can save us, and if he was not divine, our salvation is an illusion.

Belief that Christ has this central place is expressed most obviously in religious practices: addressing prayers to him and through him, taking part in communal worship and so forth. Less obviously, it is expressed in concern for other human beings. I said that Christians do not love all living creatures for Christ's sake; but if they think he died for all human beings, and wanted all human beings to share God's life through him, then we must either want to advance his purpose or want to frustrate it; we must either love our fellow men for his sake or hate them to spite him.

Knowing Flows Into Loving

Belief, then, in the divinity of Christ, like belief in the existence of God, is inseparable from charity. It also requires devotion to a person who died two thousand years ago in Jerusalem which is quite unlike any attitude we have towards great men and women of the past whom we admire. Would we die rather than deface a picture of Socrates or Joan of Arc, as people have died rather than deface a crucifix? To hold to faith in Christ in the face of human cruelty or natural disaster may require a fortitude that seems to transcend what is natural. Mere judgement that as a matter of history Christ did say and do the things reported in the Gospels is unlikely to be enough.

Wittgenstein said that the human body is the best image of the human mind,²¹ but it is a misleading one. The body consists of parts, of bones, blood-vessels, nerves, organs like the eye and the heart, which are distinct whether we recognise their distinction or not. We discover its composition, we do not invent it. But the things we distinguish in the mind, thoughts, beliefs, desires, feelings, moods, dispositions, are not similarly present in nature waiting to be discovered. We introduce them in order to discuss, explain and modify human behaviour; and since human behaviour occurs and gets discussed only in societies, which have different histories, institutions and physical environments, the psychological vocabulary of one society must not be expected to match that of another. Words for parts of the body have equivalents in every language, but words like 'shame,' and 'honour,' and even 'belief', 'love' and 'mind' do not.

'Faith', 'hope' and 'charity' are words that belong to the vocabulary of English, and it is clear that they are not understood in exactly the same way even by all English speakers. As we saw at the beginning, the old catechism uses the two words 'faith' and 'hope' where some people would use the one word 'faith'. Overlooking such divergences in linguistic usage may have hardened divisions between Catholics and Protestants in the fifteenth century. But besides recognising the elusiveness of the meanings people attach to psychological words, we must

Appreciating the Divine Virtue of Faith

continued

recognise that the mental phenomena to which speakers refer are not really discrete from one another in the same way as bodily parts. Mental life is something continuous, without internal boundaries. The notions of intellect and will or desire are schemata that we (following the philosophers of ancient Greece) impose on human life for the purpose of describing and influencing it; and the notions of faith, hope and charity are further schemata fitted on by theologians as life rises above what is natural. All human action has, we might say, both a cognitive and an appetitive aspect: it expresses knowledge, belief and awareness of the agent's surroundings, character, desire, aversion. Action which is assisted by what theologians call God's 'grace', action that has that gratuitously bestowed beauty, has the same two aspects; the traditional Catholic terminology is that it is an exercise, on the one hand, of the virtue of faith, on the other of hope and charity, which both, as Aquinas says (*ST* 1a 2ae q. 62 a. 3) relate to appetite or will (*voluntas*).

I said earlier that faith in *Hebrews* 11 seems to be rather trust or confidence in God than belief that can be put into words. The chapter begins, however, with a puzzling statement that perhaps applies to both: 'Faith is the substance (?) of things hoped for, the proof (?) of things not seen.' The Greek word *hypostasis* translated 'substance' here can mean various things, including hope, confidence, or promise, so the first part of the statement might be saying only that faith is a kind of confidence in what we hope for. But the word was also used for real existence, and Aquinas takes the statement to mean that faith is the beginning to exist in us of the divine life we hope for.²² This interpretation is followed in Benedict XVI's *Spe Salvi* n.7 and developed in a meditation on eternal life here and now which describes it as a unity. Although the virtues of faith, hope and charity are all gifts of God, not qualities we can acquire naturally, we need not suppose that they are three separate gifts, like socks, gloves and a woolly muffler. There is only one gift, the gift of divine, eternal life; we live with it while we are on earth by doing what we believe God wants us to do, even in the most difficult situations, for his sake. But this life has several aspects, or, as we might say, dimensions. It is steadfast and persevering, it seeks the good of others, and it is rational and conscious, an exercise of thought. If we wish to pick out and label this last aspect, we may call it 'faith'. Catholics sometimes use the phrase 'practising the faith' for going to church; but the suggestion of *Spe Salvi* is that the exercise of the virtue of faith is the cognitive dimension of the whole of our supernatural life.

See last November's editorial, *Mysterium Fidei*, for a meditation upon the act of faith.

Notes

¹1a q.1 a.8 ad 2.

²John Paul II, *Fides et ratio* s. 43.

³*Epistense toi theoi* (Rom. 4.3); the verb *πιστεuein* must mean 'to trust'.

⁴*Pistis Iesou Khristou*. Rom. 3.22,26: not the faith Christ had, though Christ did have trust in God, cf. v.25, Mt. 27.43, but the faith we have in Christ.

⁵An 'interior' or 'subjective attitude': cf. Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 7.

⁶Here too Abraham is given as the exemplar of a man with faith. Eusebius records early divergent opinions on whether *Romans* and *Hebrews* are by the same hand, but the thought in Rom 4 and Heb 11 is very similar.

⁷*Summa Theologiae* 2a 2ae q 1, arts 2, 6-9.

⁸So, for example, Anne Primavesi, *Gaia and Climate Change*, London, Routledge, 2009, ch. 10.

⁹The 'penny' catechism (still sold for one penny in my childhood) derived from the pre-Reformation 'Primers', and expanded over the years; this quotation is taken from a slender version printed in Newcastle in 1790.

¹⁰Section.2. The passages Heb. 10. 22-3, 1 Pet 3.15 and Eph 2.12 are cited.

¹¹The theological virtues direct man to supernatural beatitude as he is directed by natural inclination to his natural end. But this happens in two ways: first, by reason or intellect, insofar as our mind contains certain general first principles, known to us by the light of natural intelligence, by which we proceed rationally in thinking and acting, and secondly by rightness of desire, moving us towards what is known to be good. Both these are defective when it comes to supernatural beatitude... hence in regard to each, something must be added supernaturally to man to direct him to his supernatural end. And first, as regards the intellect, there are added certain supernatural principles, which are grasped by divine illumination; these are things to be believed, and faith is to do with them' *ST* 1a 2ae q 62 a 3. 'By faith the intellect apprehends what it hopes for and loves' *ST* 1a 2ae q 62 a 4.

¹²*ST* 2a 2ae q. 1 a. 2

¹³So Aquinas *ST* 2a 2ae q. 1 a. 6. The word 'article', he remarks, is used to express the idea that they are related to one another like the limbs that make up a living body; the truth is a sort of organic whole, not a series or list.

¹⁴This strategy is pursued with elegance and clarity by R A Knox in *The Belief of Catholics*, London, Benn, 1927.

¹⁵Whether the immortality of the soul can be proved by human reason is a traditional subject of debate among theologians. Aquinas argued that it can, Scotus that it cannot. I return to the question (but without offering an answer) when considering below what salvation is salvation from.

¹⁶See my 'The Doctrine of Creation', *Heythrop Journal* 29 (2008) pp. 620-31.

¹⁷Cf 1 *John* 2.4: 'Someone who says 'I know him [sc. God]' but does not keep his commandments is a liar.'

¹⁸Benedict XVI *Spe Salvi* ss. 2, 4, 10

¹⁹*How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962.

²⁰*Eius divinitatis esse consortes, qui humanitatis nostrae fieri dignatus est particeps.*

²¹*Philosophical Investigations*, pt. 2 s. iv.

²²*ST* 2a 2ae q. 4 a. 1. The word translated 'proof', *elenchos*, normally means disproof rather than proof; but the corresponding verb, *elenchein*, can be used for the informal establishing of something positive.



The Truth Will Set You Free

by Fr Hugh MacKenzie, Parish Priest
of Willesden Green and Editor of *Faith*

AN INTRODUCTION TO DISCUSSING PURPOSE IN CREATION

Most people will admit to believing in “something up there” but they are often not clear what. Others seem to think the word “God” is just a description of our own feelings of love and idealism. If we are going to develop a real relationship with Him, on a basis of daily prayer through our ups and downs, it's important to help ourselves and others avoid slipping into this very fashionable ‘agnosticism’.

We believe on One God, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. We believe in the One who IS – “in the beginning, is and ever shall be”. He revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush saying: “I AM WHO AM”. This name means that God is completely beyond and distinct from his creation. All his creatures, including ourselves, only exist because of his act of love in making us. This does not mean that God is far away from his creation, disinterested and aloof. Far from it. Everything at every moment depends on His Almighty Power, Wisdom and Love in order to exist.

The Church has formally defined that we can know that there is a God by reflecting on the evidence of creation (First Vatican Council). This echoes St Paul to the Romans saying that God left evidence of Himself for all to see in the things he has made (Rom. 1:19-20). In paragraph 283 the Catechism repeats Pope Pius XII all the way back in 1952

in acknowledging that, rightly understood, the scientific discovery of the evolution of life over billions of years ago, from the great explosion of the Big Bang through to “the development of life forms and the appearance of Man” presents no problem to our faith but rather should enhance our wonder.

The catechism calls the Genesis accounts of creation (e.g. in seven days) “symbolic”. This does not mean that they are fairy tales or myths. But neither are they journalism. They tell (with simple direct images and remarkable scientific accuracy) of the building up of the universe by the command of God’s perfect mind alone. The more we discover about the harmony and interconnectedness of the universe across time and across space the more it appears as the unfolding of an incredible plan of a mighty intelligence – a supremely good, personal Being.

More than this, with the eyes of faith we can see creation as the beginning of a great purpose or plan of God’s wisdom and love. Creation is the Father’s first step in gathering people into his own eternal love. The Father is present to all his creatures in a certain way – but human personal beings are called to share consciously in the divine intimacy. God goes on working through us to bring about the purpose of his creation – which is enabling us to call Him “Abba”.

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Letters to the Editor

The Editor, St. Mary Magdalen's Clergy House, Peter Avenue,
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THE PRIMACY OF CHRIST AND THE FIFTH MARIAN DOGMA

Dear Father Editor,

Thank you for the powerful March-April editorial linking the attacks on the pope with a rejection of the 'language' of creation. This was followed by a wonderful meditation on Our Lady's role; she is, to put it rather clumsily, the icon of creation's co-operation with God. She sums up in herself the full purpose of the majestic design of the cosmos.

As we continue to see signs of the relentless breakdown of faith (symbolised by ructions even within the Vatican mouthpiece of *L'Osservatore Romano*), I think it is fair to say that we all yearn for a clear and simple remedy – a succinct way to restore health to an ailing Church. We seek for a means of returning people's hearing to the language of God's plan.

Already there is a strong movement for a final definition of Our Lady's role (a fifth Marian dogma). I can't help thinking that this will greatly assist the *Faith* movement's mission. By a bold refocusing on the Icon of the Unity-Law we would be recognising most concisely the whole sweep of the wisdom of God's economy in creation and salvation. We would also, of course, be exercising our co-operative role with God by calling on Mary's mediation in an unprecedented manner.

Surely it is Our Lady who will provide the opening for the proper acceptance of a new synthetic framework of faith for the new millennium. Pope John Paul II once said in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*: "Christ will conquer through her, because He wants the Church's victories now and in the future to be linked to her". Indeed, it is the Unity-Law which explains to us why God should want to work in this way.

Yours faithfully
Fr Chris Findlay-Wilson
Parish of Our Lady of All Nations
Camborne-Redruth
Cornwall

Dear Father Editor,
The short meditation on Our Lady in the March/April issue did not go far enough in explaining the crucial role that Mary plays in our Salvation. Any coherent Catholic theory of Redemption must rest on the mystery of the incarnation in which there is an inseparable Marian coefficient. The theology behind Mary as Mediatrix needs to be made more familiar to all Catholics. Neither is this idea new as Mgr. G. D. Smith wrote about it in 1938.

Perhaps I might develop this in a possible offering for a future issue.

Yours faithfully
Christopher Bull
Reed Ave
Canterbury
Kent

NEANDERTHAL AND THE FAITH VISION

Dear Father Editor,

Your editorial comments on the distinctions between monogenism, polygenism, and polyphyletism were enlightening (Letters, March '09). Where would you put the Neanderthals in this scheme? There is anthropological evidence that they buried their dead with articles that might be of use in the afterlife. Does knowledge of an afterlife constitute humanity?

Yours faithfully
Dr Robert J. Kurland
Harrisburg
Mount Zion Road
Danville
Pennsylvania

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Awareness of and desire for life continuing beyond death would indeed be a characteristic of being human, for it could only be given to and would only be meaningful and relevant to a creature with a spiritual soul. Any creature with organic body and spiritual soul is human, no matter what their physical appearance, and all human beings on this earth are of one family and origin under God. These are theological truths which we can and should hold with certainty.

Whether the ancient remains found throughout Europe and the Middle East and grouped together as "Neanderthals" (named from the valley in Germany where the type was first found) fit into this family cannot currently be determined with any certainty. The genetic and archaeological evidence is tantalising but open to differing interpretations. Certainly Neanderthals would not have been the squat, grunting brutes of popular myth. Actually we would expect pre-human hominids to be highly sophisticated animals indeed. But it would also be very easy to see

“Space and time are the measures not the static stage.”

Neanderthals as a lost race of human beings specially adapted to ice age conditions. They do seem to be genetically quite distinctive in many ways, on the other hand there is compelling if disputed evidence of interbreeding between them and the ancestors of modern populations in Europe. These are scientific questions which must rely on further investigation. It may never be possible to say whether someone had a soul or not simply from their physical remains and the circumstantial traces of their lives many millennia later.

FINDING SPACE FOR GOD?

Dear Father Editor,

As one of the aims of *Faith* magazine is to give examples of how nature reflects God, I am sending the following.

Let any body A at any point P, move away. It can only be at P or distant from P, therefore its motion from P is, first, its being at a particular amount of distance from P (this insight is prior to the assumption that A traces a continuous line from P – and disproves it!)

I asked a physicist, Dr P E Hodgson, staunch Catholic as well as a physicist, whether the claim that a moving body is constantly in and out of existence (which claim the above understanding of motion implies) was acceptable to science and he replied “there are speculations about this, but no experimental evidence”.

The particular amount of distance between any point visited by a moving body and the next one visited must be in accordance with some or other law of nature and must be decreased by a mathematical Mind.

The above understanding of motion as a non-continuous event accords neatly with Brian Greene's claim that “it” (i.e. what he has just written) “forcefully challenges” the notion that the fabric of space and time is continuous. And, Professor Nancy Cartwright writes “discontinuity is exciting in many areas of physics”.

It seems sure that one cannot have discontinuity without God,

*Yours faithfully
Damian Goldie
Church Hill
Totland Bay
Isle of Wight*

EDITORIAL COMMENT

We don't think that a 'point' is an intelligible reality outside of its context. The relationship of anything with its environment is fundamental to its very being and intelligibility. Lest we risk falling into Nominalism we need to affirm that to be 'at P' is to be already in dynamic movement away. Movement then is profoundly natural to anything physical, it is the development of its being of which space and time are the measure not the static stage. Moreover the ultimate level of being of anything created is its dynamic, relational, immediate dependency upon the Mind of God.

The popular argument to God through discontinuity is, we think, a version of the God-of-the-gaps argument the pitfalls of which, and its attendant serious cultural fall-out, have been delineated numerous times in this magazine.

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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Comment on the Comments

by William Oddie

Friends Like These

Well, the Pope's visit to Israel in May provided the final proof, if proof were still required (which it wasn't) that something has urgently to be done about the sheer, utter, mind-numbing incompetence (one struggles for words) of those responsible for the PR of the present pontificate. In case you have blotted the incident out of your memory in self-protection, here it is again, in the words of the *Times* report, which also demonstrated vividly the consequences of blunders like this, when it comes to the opportunities they present for the secular press to produce a grossly distorted coverage of papal affairs:

"The Pope has said he never, never was a member of the Hitler Youth, which was a movement of fanatical volunteers,' Federico Lombardi, a Vatican spokesman, said – contradicting statements the Pope has himself made about his involvement with the group. The Vatican denial came as Benedict's trip sank deeper in controversy and recrimination, eclipsing the message of peace and reconciliation he has been pushing during his pilgrimage."

The relevant documentation was given in *The National Catholic Reporter* by John Allen (who despite the liberal complexion of the paper he writes for has been consistently fair-minded in his assessments of the present papacy): it is the 1997 book *Salt of the Earth*, based on an interview which the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger granted to the German journalist Peter Seewald:

Seewald: Were you in the Hitler Youth?

Ratzinger: At first we weren't, but when the compulsory Hitler Youth was introduced in 1941, my brother was obliged to join. I was still too young, but later, as a seminarian, I was registered in the HY. As soon as I was out of the seminary, I never went back. That was difficult, because the tuition reduction, which I really needed, was tied to proof of attendance at the HY. Thank goodness, there was a very

understanding mathematics teacher. He himself was a Nazi but an honest man, who said to me, "Just go once and get the document, so that we have it ..." When he saw that I simply didn't want to, he said, "I understand, I'll take care of it," and so I was able to stay free of it.

"To be fair", commented John Allen, "Lombardi's point was doubtless that the young Ratzinger never wanted to be part of the Hitler Youth and never participated in it. His concern is probably that short-hand media formula such as 'former Hitler Youth member' can leave an inflammatory, and inaccurate, impression." Asked later in the day for clarification, Lombardi said he could confirm that what Cardinal Ratzinger said in 1997 was correct, that he was registered in the Hitler Youth and was therefore technically a member.

But that "clarification" in no way justified Lombardi's grotesque announcement only a few hours previously that "The Pope has said he never, never was a member of the Hitler Youth", since the Pope never, never said anything remotely resembling what Lombardi said he did. Either Lombardi knew that, in which case he was uttering a deliberate distortion, or he didn't, in which case he went to Israel grossly ill-prepared for such a difficult and sensitive visit. Whichever it is, he ought to have been sacked immediately.

By the time you read this, he may have been, in which case there is a chance that things might now improve. The chances are that he hasn't. For, the fact is that the problem is deeper simply than that the Pope has an incompetent Press Officer: it is that he is surrounded by incompetents everywhere he looks. The month before the Pope's visit, George Weigel gave an analysis in the excellent *Standpoint* magazine (edited by an orthodox Catholic, Daniel Johnson) of why, as he put it in his

article ("The Pope versus the Vatican"), "the Pope needs a Roman revolution":

The Lefebvrist fiasco was a microcosm of the complex set of administrative and managerial problems that Benedict must confront and resolve, if his intellectual lucidity and pastoral good sense are not to be obscured by the incapacities and incompetence of the Curia, the reform of which he was expected to undertake by those who elected him in 2005.

The Curia exists for one reason: to give effect to the will of the Bishop of Rome, who is the source of both legislative authority and policy initiative in the universal Church.... As in all governmental bureaucracies, of course, stated rationale and actual performance are not always aligned. For the Curia not infrequently mimics the behaviour of every other bureaucratized power structure on the planet.... It is often thought that popes have a unique freedom of action. The fact is that the exercise of papal governance is deeply affected, for good or ill, by the competence of the Curia and its senior officials. Contemporary popes can and do go over or around the Curia to shape the international debate, as John Paul II and Benedict XVI have shown. Yet there is no governing the Catholic Church over or around the Curia.

The Pope's problems with the Roman Curia as a whole, however, take us further than we can go here. My theme is the way these problems affect the way in which the secular world perceives the Pope in particular and the Church in general. And the trouble is that the incompetence of those responsible for the Pope's public relations gives a strong impression that it is the Pope himself who is out of his depth, even when he very clearly (to anyone who knows from the inside what he is saying and doing) is not. Take the way the Press reacted to his

remarks about condoms, made to a handful of journalists on the plane to Africa in March. When he commented – in response to the usual question about why he was so unreasonably opposed to condoms as a means of fighting Aids – that in fact condom distribution isn’t helping, and may be worsening, the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa, he provoked an avalanche of hostile comment, much of it almost hysterical in tone. The assumption was that here was an ignorant and bigoted old man, simply out of touch with modern realities.

So, where was the Vatican Press Office when all this was going on? He should have been immediately backed up by a rapid response unit, ready at all times to react to such criticisms with the facts, who could (in my dreams) have quickly established that what the Pope said was absolutely consistent with current thinking among at least some respected secular authorities. After the fuss had all died down (in other words, when it was too late to protect the Pope’s reputation from lasting damage), some of these authorities spoke out in the Pope’s defence. Edward C. Greene, Director of the Harvard School of Public Health, wrote bravely in *The Washington Post* that “in truth, current empirical evidence supports him”. The difficulty was, that to say so, even for a scientist with the facts at his fingertips, was to go against a powerful and intolerant conventional wisdom: “We liberals”, he wrote, “who work in the fields of global HIV/AIDS and family planning take terrible professional risks if we side with the pope on a divisive topic such as this. The condom has become a symbol of freedom and – along with contraception–female emancipation, so those who question condom orthodoxy are accused of being against these causes.” The facts are however, that “major articles in... peer-reviewed journals such as the *Lancet*, *Science* and *BMJ* have confirmed that condoms have not worked as a primary intervention in the population-wide epidemics of Africa”. Why? One reason is that “when people think they’re made safe by using condoms at least some of the time,

they actually engage in riskier sex”. What *has* worked in Africa, continued Greene, are “Strategies that break up... multiple and concurrent sexual networks [pc-speak for ‘promiscuity’] – or, in plain language, faithful mutual monogamy or at least reduction in numbers of partners, especially concurrent ones”.

What the Pope had said on the plane went no further than that: he said only that AIDS “is a tragedy that cannot be overcome by money alone, and that cannot be overcome through the distribution of condoms, which even aggravates the problems”. So, not the witterings of a senile bigot: but a comment from an unusually intelligent and well-informed pope, in touch with current research. He had already made it clear what the radical solution to the problem was: that the “traditional teaching of the Church” on chastity outside marriage and fidelity within it had proved to be “the only sure way of preventing the spread of HIV and Aids”. Or, in Dr Greene’s words, the solution was “faithful mutual monogamy”.

Now, the fact is that everyone knew that on a journey to Africa, someone sooner or later was going to bring up the question of condoms. Everyone, apparently, but the Vatican Press Office. And those articles in peer-reviewed journals such as the *Lancet*, *Science* and *BMJ*, mentioned by Dr. Greene, were all in the public domain: the Vatican Press Office should have known about those, too, and should have been ready to quote them *the instant the Pope made his off-the cuff remarks*. They should have been ready: when the *Times*, for instance, ran a piece headlined “critics attack Pope for his ‘myopic’ views on condoms”, their reporters had to fall back on old general statements on condoms, rather than having a vigorous defence against the latest attacks, based on current scientific literature, to quote. I know journalists, I have been one: rather than having laboriously to fish around in the cuttings for old statements to warm up, they would infinitely have preferred a feisty defence to quote, hot off the wires from the Vatican Press Office

(that large building on the right, just before you enter St Peter’s Square: full of all the latest communications gear and a lot of people who haven’t the slightest idea of how to use it).

Instead, the Pope was left undefended, to the tender mercies of supposed Catholics like the wretched Sir Stephen Wall, who attacked his views as being “a mixture of the extreme and bizarre”, and concluded that “He has lost credibility” and that “his papacy will not recover”; and to the ravages of Western secular opinion, contemptuously summed up by a cartoon in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, reprinted in *The Washington Post* and other organs, which showed the pope ghoulishly praising a throng of sick and dying Africans with the words “Blessed are the sick, for they have not used condoms.”

The gross inadequacy of the Press Office is one example of the incompetence of the Curia as a whole (on which, again, see George Weigel’s *Standpoint* piece at <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/media/me0081.htm>). As Weigel, perhaps somewhat gloomily, says, “...no pope can govern successfully with an ineffectual Curia whose gaffes undercut the papal message and erode its authority.” Reforming the Curia is a major task: but it has to begin somewhere: why not start with the Press Office? Fr Lombardi should go. But there is no point in his departure if he is simply replaced by someone equally ineffectual, who knows nothing about the way journalists operate. The simple fact is that the Press Office will only be improved by bringing in a replacement from the outside (as was Fr Lombardi’s predecessor, the much more impressive layman Joaquin Navarro Valls). Somewhere, the dream candidate exists: it would be reassuring to know at least that the search was on.



Book Reviews

The Big Questions in Science and Religion

by Keith Ward, Templeton Press
(available through Alban Books Ltd,
Edinburgh), 281pp, £9.99

“The original problem with religion is that it is our first, and our worst, attempt at explanation. It is how we came up with answers before we had any evidence. It belongs to the terrified childhood of our species, before we knew about germs or could account for earthquakes. It belongs to our childhood, too, in the less charming sense of demanding a tyrannical authority: a protective parent who demands compulsory love even as he extracts a tithe of fear. This unalterable and eternal despot is the origin of totalitarianism, and represents the first cringing human attempt to refer all difficult questions to the smoking and forbidding altar of a Big Brother.”

So wrote Christopher Hitchens in a typically blunt contribution to a series of articles published by the Templeton Foundation under the title “Does science make belief in God obsolete?” Hitchens, along with fellow militant atheists such as Richard Dawkins, speaks for many in our cynical, post-Christian society, and his vehement diatribes eloquently express modern secular attitudes towards religion, Christianity in particular.

We can be grateful to Keith Ward for so clearly exposing the fundamental misunderstanding at the heart of their arguments – that religion was invented by primitive people to explain natural phenomena such as floods and

earthquakes, and that the rise of modern science (inspired, of course, by Enlightenment values exalting human reason over divine revelation) has rendered religion obsolete. In a recent lecture delivered at Gresham College, London, Ward points out that the modern scientific establishment is committed to a programme “to propagate a reductionist, materialist worldview under the guise of ‘proper science’.” He then makes the crucial point that materialism and reductionism are philosophical theories “that are in no way entailed by the practice of evolutionary biology”.

Religion, says Ward in his lecture, “seeks axiological explanation [ie an explanation of the universe in terms of moral and aesthetic values] and is grounded in existential self-understanding. Modern materialism does not accept the possibility of axiological explanation – all explanations must be non-purposive, just in terms of general and impersonal laws... all true understanding must lie in a dispassionate, experimental, publicly verifiable attitude to the world. It is not surprising, then, that materialists systematically misunderstand religion. They do not even see what it is about.”

Ward, an Anglican minister who was once an atheist, is a philosopher by training and Professor of Divinity Emeritus at the University of Oxford. He has written numerous books on comparative theology and the interplay between science and faith. Some of them, notably *God, Chance and Necessity* are explicitly apologetic in tone. *The Big Questions in Science and Religion* is not. Instead, it offers a wide-ranging overview of the often contentious relationship between diverse religious views and new scientific knowledge. Ward emphasises the reasonableness of theism but his views are not always consistent with Catholic orthodoxy, particularly concerning the vital distinction between spiritual mind and physical matter.

Ward identifies ten basic questions about the nature of the universe and human life. Among these are: *Does the universe have a purpose? Do the laws of nature exclude miracles? Can science provide a wholly naturalistic explanation for moral and religious beliefs? Has science made belief in God obsolete? Are there any good science-based arguments for God?* Drawing on his expertise in world religions, Ward considers concepts from Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam and Hinduism, as well as Judaism and Christianity. He also comments on the speculations of cosmologists, physicists, mathematicians and philosophers, and evaluates the role of religious experience as evidence of a non-physical reality.

Below we will look briefly at the chapters dealing with meaning and purpose, evolution and creation, the soul, scientific justifications for belief, and the relationship between morality and religion.

In the first two chapters Ward asks how and why the universe began – whether it has any ultimate explanation and whether it has a goal or purpose. Of course, any talk of ‘design’ or ‘purpose’ is an anathema to writers such as Richard Dawkins, for whom causality has a purely natural basis. It’s pointless to ask why the universe exists, they would argue – it ‘just is’. One is reminded of A N Whitehead’s remark that “those who devote themselves to the purpose of showing that there is no purpose constitute an interesting object for study”.

Ward cites Boethius, who described God as the “infinite ocean of being”, and introduces the idea of a Cosmic Consciousness that unites all possible states and chooses to actualise those that have, or can bring about, intrinsic value. Seen in this light, the ultimate explanation of the universe is a combination of necessity and value:

“Materialism and reductionism are philosophical theories that are in no way entailed by the practice of evolutionary biology.”

“The unlimited ocean of possibilities and the consciousness in which alone it can be contained is necessary. The coming into being of some possibilities is for the sake of their value. There can be no more complete an explanation for the universe than this.”

“Whether or not there is a God,” says Ward, “I think we can see how the universe could have a goal and roughly what it would be – the existence of intelligent life with understanding, wisdom and happiness, free of suffering, disease and death.” The problem of suffering, of course, is one of the biggest stumbling blocks in the way of faith, and in chapter 3 Ward asks how the cruelty and waste of evolution can be reconciled with creation by a good God. His view, with which your reviewer would concur, is that an evolutionary process necessarily involves suffering and destruction:

“The physical laws of this universe depend upon destruction, mutation, conflict and therefore destruction and death if intelligent persons are to evolve in it. If we understood the laws of nature fully, we would see that such destruction and the suffering conscious beings feel ... are inevitable consequences of a universe like this.”

He has an interesting take on original sin, which, from an evolutionary perspective, he suggests, can be seen as a trigger for certain genetic mechanisms predisposing us to selfishness and aggression. As a result, human beings have “immeasurably increased the sum of suffering and brought spiritual death, the death of the sense of God, into the world.” The qualitative distinction between physical suffering (of animals) and spiritual suffering (of humans) is not drawn out.

In chapter 6, Ward asks if it is still possible to speak of the soul. Neuroscience, he says, has shown the dependence of conscious experience upon the brain but it has not reduced consciousness to observable states of the brain. His view is that human

consciousness is generated from and remains dependent upon a physical brain, though it can also influence neural states. He comes down in favour of a theory of “integrative dualism”, in which consciousness is seen as “an emergent reality that is logically but not (in this world) causally separable from a physical brain and body.” In as much as this view sees body and soul as distinct but complementary it is harmonious with the approach fostered by *Faith* movement (e.g. March 2008 editorial: *Body and Soul – Rediscovering Catholic Orthodoxy*) but Ward’s approach falls short of the Catholic understanding of the soul as being immediately created by God, rather than “emerging” from a gradual process of complex development.

We’re used to hearing atheists and agnostics saying that you don’t need religion in order to lead a moral life, but can science provide a wholly naturalistic explanation for moral behaviour? Ward examines this question in chapter 8, where he points out that in Judaism and Christianity morality is inspired by a vision of a God of supreme goodness, whose nature is meant to be reflected in human society, and whose final goal is “the transfiguration of the cosmos by a fully realised personal unity with God”. Critics of religion often claim that its adherents grovellingly obey moral laws, not for the sake of leading a good life or behaving altruistically, but for fear of eternal punishment at the hands of a vindictive God. Ward’s answer is that morality is a “reasoned response to Supreme Value and neither a wholly autonomous decision about how to live nor blind obedience to a set of arbitrary divine commands”.

“Serious religious believers”, says Ward, “have a reason for altruistic conduct that is not available to non-believers, and that reason has overwhelming force. It is not that, if you disobey God you will go to hell ... it is that loving God and enjoying the Divine Presence is the most reasonable and appropriate aim

of human life. Loving God fulfils the highest human potentialities and brings the greatest happiness. And it entails following the commands God gives for attaining such ultimate human well-being.”

In chapter 9 Ward asks if there are any convincing arguments for God from modern science. Perhaps surprisingly, he suggests that the Enlightenment can be seen not as a rebellion against religion but as a product in Europe of religious thinking driven by an understanding of Jesus as the eternal Logos, or Wisdom of God, in whom all things are destined to be united. Such an understanding certainly leads us to expect a rational universe patterned on divine wisdom and accessible to human beings made in the image of God. However, it’s a belief that inspired Christians long before the Enlightenment. Indeed, according to writers and scientists such as Pierre Duhem, Stanley Jaki and Peter Hodgson, science in the modern sense of the word took root in the late Middle Ages, fuelled by a heady mix of Christian theology and the newly rediscovered riches of Greek philosophy and mathematics.

Those seeking a purely physical explanation for all that exists are often drawn by the idea of a ‘multiverse’ consisting of all possible universes, including our own. Such an idea purportedly allows us to dispense with the notion of a Creator, but Ward is rightly sceptical:

“If your choices are between the existence of a huge number of universes, all of which exist *for no particular reason*, and a Supreme Intelligence, existing by necessity, that selects contingent universes from the realm of all possibilities for the sake of their value, anyone could be forgiven for thinking that God is the simpler and more rational hypothesis.” (our emphasis)



The fact that, in the multiverse theory, the hypothesised universes are necessarily inter-connected, by being defined relative to each other, makes the first option an even less viable escape route for atheists, we would think.

Ward shows that modern cosmology provides good arguments for the existence of a wise Creator, but considers that such arguments are only convincing if we accept the existence of Spiritual Reality in the first place. As he sees it, it is personal experience that leads someone to think there is a personal God. All science can do is help us to describe God in a reasonable and coherent way.

Those of us who are familiar with *Faith's* vision of creation would argue that we can go much further than that. All knowledge, including scientific knowledge, comes ultimately from personal experience (though scientists cannot, for example, directly observe the subatomic particles whose existence they infer from their experiments).

Science and technology have shown that our minds can master aspects of the cosmic unity of matter-energy – a unity over which only a greater mind (God) can have complete mastery. The “spiritual realities” of our own minds, and supremely the mind of God, are affirmed by our own ability to know and understand the physical.

Moreover, it is foundational to Catholic orthodoxy that God, the origin and end of all things, “can be known with certainty by the natural light of human reason from the things that he created”. These words from Vatican I are fully supported by many passages of Scripture, from the Book of Wisdom to the Letter to the Romans.

So, rather than believing in God because of our spiritual experiences, the fact that we have such experiences confirms and deepens what reason and science *can* lead us to believe, namely that God exists as a transcendent and

personal being who wills to reveal himself to us – and does so supremely in Jesus Christ, who is not only Lord of the universe but also Lord of our hearts.

Ward writes in his introduction that his main purpose is to convey the “depth, difficulty, intellectual excitement and importance of these big questions” There’s no doubt in this writer’s mind that he has succeeded. He has also provided a clear and fair summary of some of the most impressive achievements of the human mind, which amply vindicate Plato’s belief that “the unexamined life is not worth living”. Finally, it is a pleasure to read a book on science and religion that is not only well written and informative but refreshingly free of the point-scoring belligerence that often mars such debate.

Adrian Read
London

Human Goods, Economic Evils – A Moral Approach to the Dismal Science

*by Edward Hadas, Foreword by
Stratford Caldecott, ISI Books,
Wilmington, Delaware USA, 400pp, \$22*

It is generally forgotten that until the late eighteenth century economics was a branch of ethics. Indeed, Adam Smith, whose 1776 book *The Wealth of Nations* founded modern economic analysis, was Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University. Since that time of course it has wriggled free to such an extent that its claims of expediency are often used to inhibit ethical discourse and action. For example, the World Bank advises against providing aid to developing countries, arguing that the pressures of poverty will force them to build ‘the market solutions’ which it claims are the only effective answer.

Should, and indeed can, economics be put back into an ethical framework? That is the ambitious task taken on by Edward Hadas in his new book, *Human Goods, Economic Evils*, whose aim is to

“combine economics with philosophy and theology”. From a Christian point of view the author deserves praise for his repeated emphasis that economics is about living, breathing, people, not the disembodied rational ego of classical economics, and therefore that it must have a spiritual dimension. As he says, “Economic activity is part of the life of men, those creatures who are described in the Bible as being made both from ‘dust from the ground’ and a ‘breath or spirit from God’ (Genesis 2:7).”

The need to keep this spiritual dimension constantly in mind when considering economic activity is one of the main themes of this book. Another is a key distinction between the economic system under which we live, and the economic theory which seeks to explain it. In conventional terms we might call them ‘capitalism’ and ‘classical economics’. The author points out that the former works out very well, as the current standard of living in developed countries is way beyond anything even princes could have dreamt of just a century ago. In other words, the productive ability of the system to produce goods and services, what Hadas colloquially calls “stuff”, is very high. He points out that economic theory considers itself as the science of scarcity, whereas “the economic problem has been more than solved among the rich sixth of the world’s population. They live in plenty.”

This is a good and valid point, but I wish the author had looked at it in a more nuanced way. *Human Goods, Economic Evils* seems to take it as axiomatic that this massive increase in physical wealth can be credited to capitalism. Might it not be attributable to advances in science and technology? (*Editor*: see Michael Flynn’s article in this issue) The book also gives little consideration to the damage our modern industrial system may be doing to the capacity of the earth itself to support life.

Much stronger, it would seem to us, is the author’s attack on classical economics as being fundamentally misguided, and lacking in relevance to the real world. The book’s chapter on “The Problem with Conventional Economics” is brilliant, and should be required reading for any Catholic beginning to study economics. As it says “the economists’ most basic problem is anthropological”, in other words the subject is based upon a narrow and restrictive concept of rationality which ignores the richness of human relations in favour of an obsolete utilitarianism. Whilst increasingly pontificating (I use this word deliberately) on social issues, it excludes any discussion of ethical or religious values. The book also points out the narrow focus of conventional economics, which ignores large parts of the real economy, such as people caring for each other.

I should point out that while most books on economics are fairly turgid, and often full of graphs and complex equations, there is none of this in *Human Goods, Economic Evils*. Indeed, it is written with a crystal clarity which is rare these days in any work of non-fiction. However, it is not simplistic. Indeed, the wealth of references and large bibliography illustrate the huge amount of research, and the amount of thought, that went into the writing of the book. On the other hand, I think that it would have been helpful to have a chapter on the evolution of economic thought. This would explain the increasing mathematical sophistication of the economic models from the ‘political economy’ of Adam Smith to the marginal analysis of Marshall in the nineteenth century, and the complex mathematics of modern economics, but at a cost of decreasing relevance to the real world.

We probably would not be in our current economic mess if governments had not believed in the economists’ models based upon theorems of rationality and perfect information. People often criticise mediaeval

scholastic philosophers for allegedly considering angels dancing upon the end of pins, but nobody seems to denounce modern economics’ fatuous obsession with game theory. Edward Hadas has never formally studied economics, and I believe his negative arguments would be stronger if he had, for he would know that within the discipline there are elements of a cult, i.e. that there is a sense among economists that their narrow outlook is the only true way of seeing the world.

The book is also to be commended for sketching out Catholic Social Teaching (CST) as the only valid alternative that fully captures man and economic society. There are two points the book makes that I would like to emphasise here. First how CST’s conception of the *common good* is so much broader and deeper than the shallow theoretical basis of ‘utility’ used by economists. Second, to stress the Catholic concept of the *person*, whose basic idea, in effect, is relationship to other people, in contrast to economics’ inadequate foundation of individualism, whose basic idea is that everybody is considered to be in opposition to other people. (Think of economics’ obsession with the word ‘competition’.) Or to end with some words of author’s, “As usual, conventional economists start out from the wrong ontological place. Like many contemporary philosophers, they do not like to talk at all about the Good—the transcendental, mysterious, divine ultimate that should be at the centre of economics.”

Russell Sparkes
London

What Happened at Vatican II?

by John W. O’Malley, *Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, xi, 380pp, £19.95*

In *The Pastoral Office*, printed for the private use of his clergy after the First Vatican Council, Cardinal Manning forecast that, if the Council was to be reassembled, its first duty would be to build upon the work already achieved “and to define the Divine powers of the Episcopate and its relation to its Head”. He considered the definition would be: “In virtue of consecration, every Bishop receives the apostolic power of the keys,” and “in this Divine grant resides the power of governing the Church,” (pp. 218-219). While, of course, the Second Vatican Council did not make formalised doctrinal definitions, the issue raised in Manning’s statement, the relationship between the papacy and the episcopate (usually identified as the issue of ‘collegiality’), in O’Malley’s view constitutes “the lightning-rod issue of the Council”.

In this new study there is a danger that collegiality assumes undue dominance in analysis and argument, nudging from centre-stage John XXIII’s more fundamentally spiritual ideals of renewal and the search for ecclesiastical unity at a time when the Church seemed to be exuding a renewed sense of strength and self-assurance. The generic character of John XXIII’s original intentions for the Council, of course, was essentially responsible for much of the subsequent struggle between the Council Fathers and the Roman *curia*, the latter being accustomed to dealing with ‘live issues’ rather than with general goals of development. An anticipation that the Council was going to exceed one or two years in time was a direct consequence of this tension as was the rise to prominence and leadership in debate of particularly forceful prelates and/or national groupings. The duration of the Council in turn presented severe financial strain on Vatican resources at the beginning of its fourth year and



influenced Paul VI's determination to seek closure.

O'Malley is especially single-minded in eschewing the use of terminology such as 'liberal' or 'conservative', making the valid point that such broad groupings were not easily identifiable at the time and were often marked by a certain fluidity in connection with particular issues. More frequently he uses the terminology *aggiornamento*, *development* and *resourcement* to represent major aspects of the work on the sixteen final documents of the Council. They are terms that can be modernised as 'updating', 'unfolding' and 'returning to sources' respectively. Taken together, they argue for 'change' but, in the hands of O'Malley, with a wary glance upon the inherited tradition of the Church, earlier conciliar authenticity and the authority of papal teaching.

O'Malley seeks to produce an even-handed introduction to the Council and its work but it is obvious his sympathies lie with 'progressive' teaching rather than with those papal or curial interventions that seem unduly influenced by traditional approaches. His personal warmth lies with John XXIII rather than with Paul VI, with Augustin Bea rather than with Michael Browne, with Cardinals Frings, König and Suenans rather than with Ottaviani, Siri or McIntyre. He does point out, however, that when the wrangling is over, the sixteen final documents of the Council "give no sense of before and after; nor do they indicate, except occasionally, in a soft way, that what they are saying changes anything that earlier seemed normative".

Paul VI differed substantially from his predecessor in attitude to the Council. He is shown as intervening with a certain regularity, even in minor matters, usually relating to procedure or presentation. Sometimes he became involved in matters of substance. He was as determined, for instance, to remove reform of the *curia* from the Council's jurisdiction as he was

to retain the teaching about marriage in his own hands. He saw himself as the guardian of orthodoxy of the Council. He intervened on the schema *On Religious Liberty* and contributed a preliminary explanatory note to *Lumen Gentium*. He promptly met the issue of collegiality by establishing the Synod of Bishops by means of a *motu proprio*; it was to be a strictly advisory body and subject directly to the Pope. National bishops' conferences also needed Papal authority. O'Malley sees the establishment of the Synod of Bishops, in particular, as an expression of papal primacy, designed to uphold the work of the First Vatican Council.

In the eyes of the faithful the loss of Latin in the liturgy is perhaps the most clearly defining outcome of the Council and one of the most criticised aspects of its aftermath, despite its laudable intention to create greater, truer participation of the laity in public worship. Pope Benedict XVI is on record as stating that he is convinced "that the crisis in the Church that we are experiencing today is to a great extent due to the disintegration of the liturgy" that began to be evident in particular countries following the Council. There is now a growing desire for 'a reform of the reform'.

O'Malley's account of the Second Vatican Council is a dramatic presentation of events and is a valuable resource. It exemplifies his view of the complexity of the Council "and therefore the complexity of saying anything valid about it that does not die the death of a thousand qualifications".

Professor V. Alan McClelland
University of Hull

Reginald Cardinal Pole 1500 – 1558 The Last Archbishop of Canterbury

by Michael Hutchings, *The St Joan Press*, 116pp, £13.99

This life of Cardinal Pole is an important and beautiful book. Pole is not treated to hagiography; but that is unnecessary: his life is most edifying. Had he been put to it, the evidence is that he would have rejoiced in martyrdom and would be in our list of saints. Hutchins quotes others on Cardinal Pole including an enthusiastic endorsement from none other than a certain Cardinal Ratzinger.

This book is worth buying just for an appendix that gives various prayers: the dedication of England to the Mother of God and St Peter; the litany of intercession for England; prayer from the Mass of English martyrs; an old prayer for the Conversion of England; and a prayer to beg the prayers of the saints. How splendid it would be if this book leads to the re-introduction of these prayers or even, dare we hope, that the English bishops would once again dedicate our country to Our Blessed Lady and St Peter, as was done annually in every Catholic church in England until the Second Vatican Council.

The book is on high quality paper, generously printed and beautifully illustrated. It should be a great help in enabling our schools to fulfil their important task of disseminating our history – a must, then, for their libraries.

Eric Hester
Bolton

BRITISH PEOPLE DESPAIRING OF A COHERENT WORLD-VIEW

A survey by 'ComRes' on behalf of the 'Theos' think-tank, whose results were released in February to coincide with the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth, has discovered that there is a high degree of confusion in Britain concerning the relationship of science and religion. The fascinating 116 page report makes clear that the strident atheistic use of science has not won hearts and minds, but also that agnosticism, with a certain apathy, rules the day.

People were asked to choose between four possible positions concerning the origins of life on our planet:

- Young Earth Creationism (YEC): "God created the world sometime in the last 10,000 years."
- Theistic Evolution (TE) "evolution is the means that God used for the creation of all living things on earth."
- Atheistic Evolution (AE): "evolution makes belief in God unnecessary and absurd."
- Intelligent Design (ID): "evolution alone is not enough to explain the complex structures of some living things, so the intervention of a designer is needed at key stages."

"When asked which position they considered most likely, 17% chose the YEC position, 11% chose ID, 28% chose TE and 37% chose AE".

One of the most significant conclusions of the study is that it "clearly demonstrates that [...] there is a great deal of confusion, contradiction or uncertainty about these issues. People, in general, are more likely to be sceptical about positions regarding the origins of human life than they are to think that any one idea is true." One of the numerous contradictions in the results was that "11% say ID is the most likely explanation, yet 51% say [in a follow-up question] it is either definitely or probably true."

"11% of the total sample are convinced and very consistent in their opinions, 28% are fairly convinced and consistent ... 31% are openly contradictory in their opinions". Of the 39% who expressed

a clear preference, without contradicting this in a later question, those who specified theistic evolution were 12% of the total sample, those who went for atheistic evolution were 16%

The authors of the report suggest that "When issues are not very important to people they may show cognitive dissonance or even contradictory views since they have not necessarily taken the time to form well thought-out opinions." The report shows that "older people are more likely to hold consistent and certain views than younger people."

Allowing for the above significant rider other interesting results of the survey include the below beliefs:

- 40%: human beings are uniquely different from other living things and so have a unique value and significance.
- 12%: science positively supports religious belief
- 26%: science neither supports nor undermines religious belief.
- 47%: science challenges religious beliefs but they can co-exist.
- 10%: say that science totally undermines it.
- Two thirds of people (65%) consider evolution (TE or AE) to be the most likely explanation for the origins of human life.
- A third (32%) of all practising Christians (defined as regularly reading the Bible and going to services) are YECs.
- AEs are more likely than the total sample to have a bachelor's degree or higher (41% compared to 31%),
- Significantly more of the Muslims questioned believe that evolution has been disproved by the evidence than the population as a whole (28% compared with 9%).
- 23% of Muslim respondents were YECs, 16% IDs, 6% TEs and 5% AEs.

PILL CREATOR HIGHLIGHTS CHESTERTON'S PARADOX

Carl Djerassi, an Austrian chemist now in his 80s, was one of the key contributors to the development of biochemical compounds that led to the oral contraceptive pill back in the 1950s. Back in December he published

a commentary in Austria's *Der Standard* regretting the "demographic catastrophe" which his original home country is now experiencing, and reminding the populace that they would need to produce about 3 children per family to reverse the trend towards a shrinking population. Contrary to many reports, he did not make any connection between 'the pill' and this population disaster, but the irony was not lost on many commentators, who began – perhaps unfairly – to brand his article a 'confession.' Djerassi subsequently argued his case in *The Guardian* on 27th January insisting that "Contraception, birth control, abortion, or the pill were nowhere mentioned in my article," and yet he did dwell on the "de facto separation of sex and reproduction." Clearly the imminent collapse of many countries' populations is a worry, for economic reasons, and yet is still not yet giving rise to any significant response amongst Western societies to move to a more pro-family and less contraceptive culture. Chesterton observed the relevant psychological denial: "They say birth control; what they mean is no birth, and no control."

ADULT-STEM-CELL BREAKTHROUGHS

In December a research team led by Professor Richard Schneider at Imperial College, London, announced much progress in a technique for taking a patient's own cells and adapting them for re-growing heart muscle after damage caused by heart disease or cardiac arrest.

In November the *Lancet* published the results of an international research project whereby a Colombian lady received a new trachea (windpipe) which had been grown from a donor trachea (as it were, a 'scaffold') repopulated with stem cells, for the very first time, from the patient's own body. It was carried out in June 2008, and was a complete success, with no hint of any rejection, and with the local blood vessels growing normally in the transplanted organ. This is a major step forward, proving the viability of adult-stem-cell procedures that do not thereby involve the destruction of human embryos.



The Road From Regensburg

Papal Encouraged Dialogue in Search of a Modern Apologetic

POINTERS TOWARDS THE URGENTLY NEEDED NEW “APPRECIATION” OF FAITH AND REASON

In the last edition of this column we briefly highlighted Archbishop Nichols’ use of the Pope’s 2006 Regensburg lecture in order to diagnose our culture’s “positivistic” failure to use reason effectively in founding “community cohesion”. On the 3rd June last at Heythrop College the new Archbishop of Westminster offered what seems a helpful development of his vision. We would briefly note below the harmony of these foundations with the vision proposed by *Faith* movement, and with the continued diagnosis of Pope Benedict and his supporter Sandro Magister.

1. Archbishop Nichols on Need to Transcend Knowledge of the Physical

It is the Archbishop’s recently published essay “Community Cohesion and Catholic Education” in *The Nation that Forgot God* (Social Affairs Unit, 2009) which lays out the main points of his argument.

He points out that mixing children of different cultures in common schools is no guarantee of multi-cultural harmony. Rather it is necessary to educate the young coherently in the appropriate values.

Yet the former approach seems to trump the latter in modern discourse. The open teaching of clear moral principles, which is sometimes even attacked as ‘indoctrination’, is rejected in favour what is termed “toleration”. In his recent lecture at Heythrop College Nichols pointed out that in fact this is just the teaching of a different set of values, but in a less open (“covert”) and in fact less rational manner than is done in Catholic schools.

The scientific ethos, which Nichols reminds us Pope Benedict called “the will to be obedient to the truth”, discovers “magnificently, what can

be done” with the objects of sensation. But it cannot answer the question “should it be done?”

Positivist materialism leaves out of rational reckoning a fundamental and essential aspect of human experience, “the experienced reality of the person” in his social and moral dimensions. No man is an island and the rational, moral, communal realm is crucial to his nature. It is left out of consideration by a culture that emphasises rights over duties and arbitrarily places some rights over others. The recent Sexual Orientation Regulations allowed the rights of same-sex couples to trump those of religion and of children concerning their parents, without clear reasoning let alone discussion.

As the Pope brought out at Regensburg human reason is open and points beyond itself. It looks for completion from a higher power, the creator revealing himself. Revealed Religion completes the spiritual dimension of man.

“Faith, the response to revelation, fulfils our human capacity and destiny [...] Here is solid common ground for the dialogue between faith communities and government on the whole range of vexing issues that face our society [...] and dialogue between the major faiths. This clearly was part of the invitation of Pope Benedict in his Regensburg lecture.”

As such religion is indispensable to man’s happiness and his rational and moral operation, and so to fostering the values which are essential to multi-cultural community cohesion. “Shared moral reasoning as a basis for community cohesion is the alternative to radical individualism which has led us so far on a path that is clearly divisive and inimical to a cohesive society.”

“It is clear that the strengthening and maturing of faith which we seek requires a deepening appreciation of the role of faith in completing and fulfilling our human nature and in particular its harmony with true reasoning. But this is no easy task especially as for so long religious belief

has retreated from the onslaught of positivist thinking into the enclave of personal conviction or has taken the root of unreasoning fundamentalism. If we are to play our full part in the task of building our new society then we need to show quite clearly the strength of our faith in terms that are accessible to others. This can only be achieved in two ways. In the recovery of the true capacity of reasoning for both moral and religious insight and of course in the witness of lives well lived, the evidence of schools well run.”

2. Faith Vision on how to Transcend Physical Observation *a posteriori*

We would want to suggest that this crucial “recovery” involves providing the ‘missing link’ of synthesising the “scientific ethos” with that of the moral “experienced reality of the person”. We need directly to challenge the relentless reduction of the latter to the former, through which, for instance, human consciousness of right and wrong is explained by hormones and genes. Observation of the objective physical will always be determinative of the metaphysical and of what is accepted as rational. In a society where the “magnificent” discovery of and “obedience to the truth” of the physical realm is so influential it is crucial that we have the means to interpret it non-reductively and in such a manner that it points to the non-physical, spiritual realities of divine and human mind, that is God and the soul.

This can be done we think by acknowledging the holistic, hierarchical and interlocking nature of the whole of the unified cosmos. The recognition, and development of this by our minds shows how all things need a meaningful environment, including the whole cosmos. It points to a greater, absolute Creator Mind, which is also the environment of our personalities, matter and mind, body and soul. Moreover this mind ministers this necessary ‘enviroming’ of us by becoming flesh.

Which brings us to Archbishop Nichols’ Heythrop lecture concerning the harmony of our knowledge of the natural environment and that of human beings.

Archbishop Nichols: “we seek a deepening appreciation of the role of faith in completing and fulfilling our human nature and in particular its harmony with true reasoning.”

3. Archbishop Nichols on the Proper Human Ecosystem

This approach to enabling physical science to support spiritual morality dovetails we think with some points in Archbishop Nichols’ Heythrop lecture.

He uses the concept of “human ecology” employed by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI in “appealing to a concern of all of us [...] the well-being of our environment.” The human person needs the right environment, in John Paul’s words, “to develop every aspect of the individual: social, intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual.”

Nichols goes on: “When looked at more closely, this ‘human ecology’ is in fact a series of interlocking ecologies, as indeed is the complex of ecological systems which make up our natural environment.” Catholic schools foster an environment in which all are welcome through, first, respecting each person who is “created by God and has an inner dignity, or spiritual dimension, that comes from God alone.” Secondly comes an “atmosphere of justice” and thirdly recognition of the “faith and religious experience which is innate in human beings”.

He then emphasises the specific Catholicity of our schools:

“We recognise that just as all truth rests in the Word of God, through whom all things were made and through Whom all thing will come to their completion, so too the construction of a true human ecology can only be achieved in relationship to the Word [...] we can see and sense the echoing of that eternally spoken Word in so much of the created world around us [...] which Word is] expressed in all those actions and events which make up the history of salvation [...] we recognise most centrally that this eternal Word of God, in whom all things makes sense, finds flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth who then becomes its fullest expression and true presence in the world [...] the centre of true human ecology is the person of Christ.”

4. Pope Benedict in The Holy Land Confirms the above Themes

In the Holy Land last May, declaring he was a pilgrim for peace, the Pope repeatedly returned to the theme of inter-faith dialogue based upon “the vast potential of human reason” and the transcendent unicity of God. Visiting the Grand Mufti at the Mount of the Temple in Jerusalem he prayer that “Muslims and Christians further respecting the respectful dialogue they have already begun [...] will explore how the Oneness of God is inextricably tied to the unity of the human family.”

He told organisations working for interreligious dialogue that the spiritual transcendence of the human person “in the constant search for something beyond [...] presents] the possibility of a unity which is not dependent upon uniformity.”

In Jordan he argued strongly that faith does not weaken but rather strengthens reason “to resist presumption and to reach beyond its own limitations [...] and] protects civil society from the excesses of the unbridled ego which tend to absolutise the finite and eclipse the infinite.”

On the plane going out he gave a three point plan for peace which matches Nichols’ three point plan to make the Catholic school a healthy environment for all:

1. Encourage all involved to open their hearts to the divine guidance for which they are made;
2. Urge all to challenge injustice and oppression; and
3. Use reason to find solutions which take account of the dignity of the human person.

In Jordan, Prince Ghazi, the head of the Islamic institute behind the post-Regensburg Open Letters to the Pope signed by impressive ranges of Islamic scholars, thanked the Pope for his regret over the “hurt caused by the lecture”. He went on to welcome the Pope as a defender of moral values and “a simple pilgrim who comes in humility and gentleness to pray where Jesus Christ the Messiah, peace be upon him, prayed and was baptised and began his mission 2,000 years ago.”

5. Sandro Magister deepens Biffi’s Anti-materialism

On the occasion of the 900th anniversary of the death of St Anselm of Aosta and Canterbury Sandro Magister has made the epistemologically realist and relational point that, contrary to some prominent abstract interpretations, Anselm’s ‘Ontological Proof’ of God primarily shows that “those who deny the existence of ‘that than which no greater can be thought’ trap themselves in an insurmountable contradiction, cutting off the possibility of all thought.”

Magister then recommends Cardinal Biffi’s Papal supported sermon for the anniversary at Aosta. In this Biffi depicted Anselm’s perspective as, contrary to much modern emphasis, grasping that “reality as a whole is much greater than we grasp through simple natural understanding, substantiated solely by sensory experience, inductive and deductive reasoning, mathematical calculation [...] faith not only is not separable from reason, and does not harm it, but is even the greatest and highest exercise of our intellectual faculty.”

We would concur noting that the task of defending these spiritual and supernatural realms as fulfilling *and flowing from our knowledge* of the physical and natural realms is the philosophical challenge at the heart of the modern culture war.

Notes From Across the Atlantic



We present below some reflections upon faith and culture from writers associated with the New York based *First Things* magazine. This syndicated column is a development upon that of the late Fr Richard John Neuhaus.

GETTING THE NEEDED THOMISTIC DEVELOPMENT RIGHT

There is little doubt the mid-twentieth-century split between *Communio* theologians (then called followers of the *nouvelle théologie*) and the Thomistic theologians has caused no little trouble for the teaching office of the Catholic Church. This makes the present moment both hopeful and dangerous, as theologians seek ways to overcome the polarization and assist Rome in needed academic and theological renewal.

Both the hope and the danger are on display in the Fall 2008 issue of the journal *Communio*. Tracey Rowland, for instance, offers an overview of recent work on natural law, and she has in view the explicit possibility “of reconciling tensions between the younger generation of Catholic scholars working within the Thomist and Balthasarian traditions.” She rightly points out that “the work of Servais-Théodore Pinckaers might stand as a bridge uniting the efforts of younger Thomists and Balthasarians because of its accent on the theo-dramatic nature of moral life,” but she also at times indulges in such unhelpful labels as “Baroque Thomism” and “nuptial mysticism.”

William Portier moves further in this unhelpful direction in his review of Fergus Kerr’s *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians* in the same issue of *Communio*. He seems to think such Thomists as Ralph McInerny and Romanus Cessario believe that “Henri de Lubac, and, by implication, Pope John Paul II, have ruptured and destabilised Catholic theology.” Catholic theology is, of course, in a destabilised condition, as anyone familiar with what passes for theology in Catholic universities is well aware. But to suggest that McInerny and Cessario blame John Paul II is to replace their arguments

with the bogeyman of “Reactionary Thomists” still latent in the minds of academic theologians who otherwise know little about the debates involved.

There’s no doubt Portier means it. He goes on to say that blaming de Lubac and John Paul is “the central claim of the Thomist resurgence,” and he seems to have in view R.R. Reno’s recommendation – in his review of Kerr’s book in the May 2007 issue of *FIRST THINGS* – that neo-scholastic doctrinal teaching deserves to be revived, at least insofar as its goal was to offer a standard presentation of the Catholic doctrinal tradition. Portier’s main point is to reject Kerr’s critique of “nuptial mysticism” and the challenge Kerr offers to de Lubac. Along the way, however, he reads Kerr as simply offering a new version of the same old debate that bogged down twentieth-century theology. Tracey Rowland’s suggestion that serious Catholic theologians can join in the renewal of academic theology’s commitment to magisterial teaching is both more hopeful and more helpful.

[See our Editorial ‘Towards Realigning Thomism’, *Faith*, Jan 2009, for our positive assessment of Reno’s review.]

SIMPLE PLEASURES

The circus came to town yesterday. At midnight on 23rd March, ten elephants walked through the Midtown Tunnel and along 34 Street, on their way to Madison Square Garden: the 139th annual Animal Walk of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey’s Circus. The great grey legs of the pachyderms, their swinging trunks, that strangely rapid shuffle that they do: a simple pleasure to see. Except that the animal-rights activists were out in protest at the entrance to the tunnel. There are no simple pleasures remaining in our puritanical times; each human pleasure is

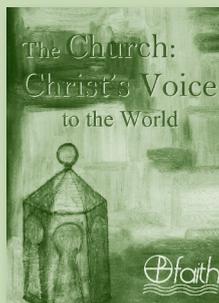
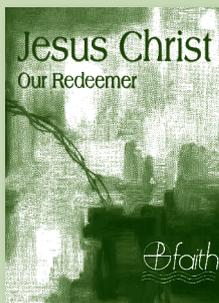
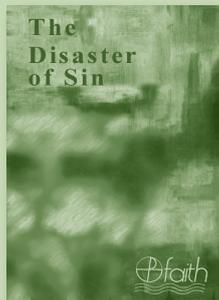
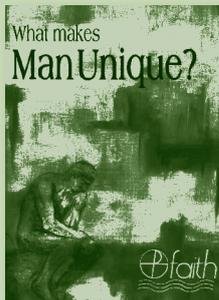
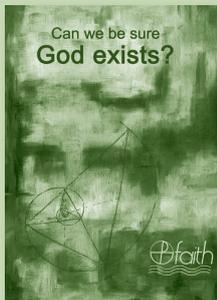
run through the great fires of human guilt, where it must be consumed. Or perhaps I mean each small and innocent joy must be consumed. What strange days: the complex pleasures of human sexuality are declared simple and guilt-free, while the simple pleasures of a circus parade are rendered complex and guilty.

TRIUMPH OF PUBLIC OPINION

Back in February, Dr. Jeff Steinberg, director of Fertility Institutes in Los Angeles, announced that he would help couples choose the eye, hair and skin colour of their children using genetic embryo screening. “Genetic health is the wave of the future,” he told the *New York Daily News*. “It’s already happening and it’s not going to go away. It’s going to expand. So if they’ve got major problems with it, they need to sit down and really examine their own consciences, because there’s nothing that’s going to stop it.”

As it happens, enough people did sit down, examine their consciences and then stood right back up again: the public outcry eventually forced Steinberg’s clinic to suspend the service. In its news release, the Fertility Institutes admitted that, “though well intended, we remain sensitive to public perception and feel that any benefit the diagnostic studies may offer are far outweighed by the apparent negative societal impacts involved”. The clinic hasn’t exactly stopped practicing eugenics. They still boast of a “100 percent sex-selection success rate” – meaning, of course, that embryos of the undesired sex are discarded. The clinic also screens embryos for “albinism or other ocular pigmentation disorders” as well as a range of genetic abnormalities such as Down syndrome and haemophilia. Eugenics is fine, as long as you don’t alter eye and hair colour.

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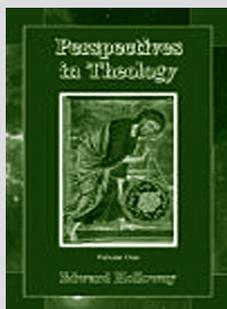
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Our understanding of the role of Mary, the Virgin Mother through whom the Divine Word comes into his own things in the flesh (cf. John 1:10-14), is greatly deepened and enhanced through this perspective. So too the dignity of Man, made male and female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

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