

faith

July • August 2008 • Volume 40 • Number 4

The Importance of Science for Modern Evangelisation
Editorial

The Decline of Christian Belief in the Age of Science
Edward Holloway

Assessing the Church's Response to Science
John Farrell

Donating Organs: An Ethics and Science Case Study
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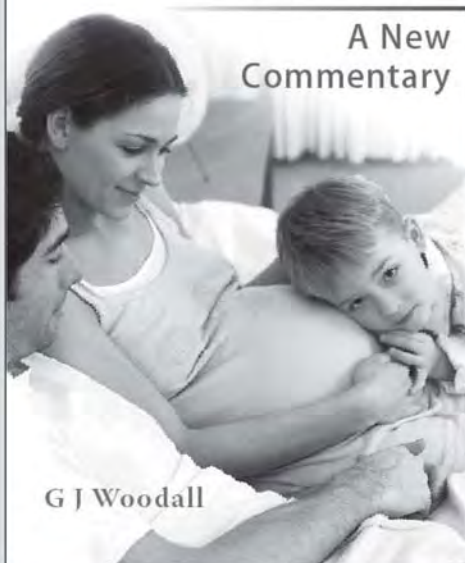
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Faith Online links and **Sunday by Sunday** sermon suggestions are no longer appearing in the hardcopy magazine. They can be found on our website www.faith.org.uk. In preparation for our redesign and advertising of the magazine we are slimming it down (see page 5).

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Why is Science Important to Modern Evangelisation?

"Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ... God so clothes the grass of the field ..."
Matthew (6: 28-30)

"In saying that the Church should take serious note of modern science in her catechesis and in her evangelisation we are merely affirming that this improved observation should help to develop further our vision of reality."

In an address given to the Pontifical Council for Culture last March, Pope Benedict said "that ... a fruitful dialogue between science and faith is ... especially important. This comparison has been long awaited by the Church but also by the scientific community ...".

The relationship between science and religion is indeed "especially important" today. Recent events, as for example the publication of Richard Dawkins' book *The God Delusion* and of other best-sellers of a similar vein, and the ensuing public reactions, have only confirmed this. A recent *New Scientist* editorial, which termed religion "distinctly non-rational", labelled this debate "one of the most contentious educational and intellectual issues of the decade".

The Historical Challenge of Modern Science

An appropriate response to the challenge of science has been "long awaited by the Church". Since the advent of formal experimental methodology science has, sadly, been widely perceived as a threat to traditional Christianity. At its most philosophical, this challenge was first identified by Francis Bacon. More famous are the notorious affairs of Galileo and Darwin concerning cosmology and evolution. We should not underestimate the seriousness of these challenges, nor their lasting impact, for it is still commonly presumed that science disproves religion.

This is the intellectual air most people breathe, especially the young. In my own local Catholic Sixth Form College, for instance, the students consistently challenge their school chaplain with the claim that 'science', along with suffering, contradict the whole idea of God.

The use and abuse of science is one of the important engines of our increasingly prevalent agnosticism and we serve no one by ignoring the fact that most people now have difficulties reconciling science and religion.

Science is Now the Predominant Mindset

Scientific thinking is the predominant mindset of Western society. Not that everyone is a scientist; but science is pretty much universally presumed to be true. Contrast this with Christianity, which is now largely considered mythical and irrelevant; or with politics, now largely considered corrupt and all 'spin'; or, indeed, with philosophy, now often thought of as an absurd, esoteric pastime.

A glance at the contemporary mass media is enough to confirm this assessment. Science is generally reported as plain fact. Politics is fodder for a good argument. Christianity is seen as blind faith, discussable on a take-it-or-leave-it basis – or else it is reduced to Sunday teatime hymns for Granny. And as for philosophy, it dare not show its face except on late-night BBC 2 or mid-morning Radio 4.

Although the dismissal of other disciplines is lamentable, it is right and good that science is taken as true – because it works. Technology proves it. Daily modern life is a testament to the truth of modern science: cars, computers, mobile phones, medicine, television, aeroplanes, GM crops, cloning ... the list is endless. Science has credibility – there are good reasons for believing it. It is not just a matter of inspired guesswork; it is testable by experiment, and it is usable.

There is no greater validation of the objectivity of knowledge than that it enables intelligible, coherent, fruitful, wilful action. This experience is at the heart of human self-consciousness, in our inherent, meaningful relationship with our distinct environment.

It is not, therefore, true to assert that scientific knowledge is made up simply of theories which are the products of our own minds, conflicting models which we project onto the evidence as we attempt to interpret it. There is progress and refinement of interpretation in science as we perceive wider contexts to what we know, but it is not a subjective exercise. Our theories are successful. Atomic bombs kill – computers work. Scientific knowledge is objective and real.

It is true that such physically ‘useful’ knowledge is not so exalted as metaphysical knowledge, the object of which ranges, through observation of the physical, beyond into the spiritual realm. But it doesn’t make scientific knowledge less true.

For all these reasons science is never going to go away, and neither is the scientific mindset of our society.

The Need for a New Synthesis: A traditional Idea

It is not surprising that science gets at the truth about the world, for fundamentally science is nothing other than sophisticated observation of the cosmos. Neither is experimental methodology and mathematical description a radically new way of knowing. Indeed, observation of our physical environment and reflection about it, that which Aristotle called “Physics”, was foundational to his, and Aquinas’s, “Metaphysics”. Their philosophies were *a posteriori* not *a priori*, and the constructive achievements and the grand civilisations that have been spawned by this way of thinking have proved their validity. All that modern science has done is to improve the quality of our observation – which in turn should have improved the quality of our civilisation.

In saying that the Church should take serious note of modern science in her catechesis and in her evangelisation we are merely affirming that this improved observation should help to develop further our vision of reality. Yet such serious note has not been taken by the Church, and neither has our

technologically advanced society become a better civilisation.

The ignoring of the perennial relevance of science has itself been a perennial temptation. Fifteen centuries ago St. Augustine warned against it when, concerning “the earth, the heavens ... the kinds of animals, shrubs, stones and so forth”, he stated that “it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics which he holds to as being certain *from reason and experience*.” (*The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, AD 394 – our emphasis). The temptation today is stronger and more dangerous than ever.

In *The Abolition of Man* C.S. Lewis put the reactions to the New Science of Bacon, Descartes and their respective successors in an appropriate context. He suggested that the pre-Enlightenment popularity of an “abstract” metaphysics was “an unhealthy neighbourhood and an inauspicious hour” for the advent of “the modern scientific movement”. He called for “a new Natural philosophy”, adding “I hardly know what I am asking for”, though “I also suggest that from science herself the cure might come.” (*The Abolition of Man*, Fount, pp. 47-48).

Ronald Knox made this call more starkly in *God and the Atom* back in 1945: “I suspect that the atom will be the totem of irreligion tomorrow, as the amoeba was yesterday. Meanwhile we have to reckon not only with the attacks of our enemies, but with the inadequate apologies of faint-hearted friends. There will be an intensified demand for the kind of apologetic which gives up the notion of religious certainty, and attempts to rally the sporting spirit of our compatriots in favour of a balance of probabilities. There will be fresh attempts to dissociate natural theology altogether from our experience of the natural world around us, to concentrate more and more on precarious arguments derived from the exigencies and the instincts of human nature itself. Meanwhile the seminary-trained theologian, with all the wisdom of centuries at his finger-tips, will more than ever find himself talking a strange language, more than ever at cross-purposes with the shibboleths of an Atomic Age. So it will go on, I suppose, till we find someone with enough courage, enough learning, enough public standing to undertake the synthesis; there is a battle royal, long overdue, which still has to be fought out at the level of academic debate.” (p.13)

The New Synthesis Answers the Historical Challenge

For Edward Holloway, the founder of *Faith* movement and former editor of this periodical, claimed to have received a key to developing such a synthesis. For Holloway human reason is that natural and immediate power of spiritual mind

over physical matter which recognises unities of matter-energy and sees the potential to develop them into new unities. For the human mind, that is the spiritual soul, is in the image of that Mind which creates and sustains the whole cosmos.

Developing this theme Holloway proposed a *Unity-Law of Control and Direction* which shows that a developmental cosmos is indicative of a Supreme Mind. Thus he saw modern cosmology and biological evolution as evidence in favour of God, not against. We can look forward expectantly to the complete unification of physics into a grand unified theory, not as the vindication of materialism, but as clearly showing the unity of the Mind of God and of his plan in creation.

Science itself also gives us clear evidence for the spiritual soul in man. Material evolution led to a natural threshold, where any further increase of animal intelligence would have been biologically useless. When it did occur it could only be sustained on the basis of integration into a higher realm: it required the gift of the spiritual soul.

And so science leads to an epistemic threshold: it demands religion to make sense of the spiritual reality of man. Science does not ultimately make sense without religion.

Thus the new science dovetails, more wonderfully than did the old science, with the History of Salvation, which is also developmental and evolutionary. Science and religion are ripe for unification, and the Unity-Law of Control and Direction is that unification. As Edward Holloway said, in an unpublished book from which we print extracts in this issue,

“Without Christ man is meaningless, without man the evolution of life is meaningless, without life the earth is meaningless, but all things have meaning in Jesus Christ, to whom all things, visible and invisible are relative, and to whom all things bear witness in their being.”

What is more, the New Synthesis supports orthodox Catholicism in a manner that avoids the dangers of fundamentalism and fideism, real dangers for so much neo-orthodoxy. It also, we believe, avoids the dangers of pantheism, rationalism and modernism, which are common errors of most attempts to reconcile science and Christianity.

Science lends its Credibility to the New Synthesis

Modern science has a deeper credibility than Aristotle’s physics if only because it is more testable and more usable. Through the New Synthesis, science in some sense ‘lends’ that credibility to Christianity. What this means is that we can put forward credible *preambula fidei* (in other words, rational considerations which show that the act of faith is

fully reasonable to the non-prejudiced human mind). These ‘preambles’ are credible to our culture because they are based in our science. In fact, we can powerfully show that the act of faith is the *only* rational option in our scientific culture. (It is worth noting, in passing, that most schemes of modern evangelisation and catechesis – and even theology courses – offer no *preambula fidei* at all, and thus in fact amount to fideism. The first Vatican Council condemned this error as long ago as 1870 and the tragic consequences of not having responded adequately to that Council’s teachings are still being reaped today.)

The New Synthesis Offers a Challenge in Return

Today, more than ever, science can provide evidence for the existence of God and the existence of the human soul and thus points to a deeper purpose in the universe. If used coherently by the Church it would constitute a real challenge to the agnosticism and indifference of our society. Like St Paul’s Athenian interlocutors many, even most, would remain apathetic; but some would listen and then an opening would be created for the action of God’s grace to work in the minds and hearts of the people He loves.

Christ is Lord of the Cosmos, Not Just Lord of History

In the *Faith* movement we teach Christ as Lord of the cosmos as well as Lord of history and Lord of the human heart. This vision is based in the evidence of the created order itself, and therefore has a firm basis in science, for science is the study *par excellence* of the created order.

Science has revealed God’s plan of control and direction in the very fact of the laws of nature; in the unity of these laws which thus point to the oneness of God; in the developmental power of the laws which bring about all the rich diversity of the universe from stars and galaxies to complex life; and in the openness of these laws to higher synthesis and higher development within the spiritual order.

However, the idea of Christ as Lord of the cosmos is grounded just as much in revelation, building especially on the cosmic Christology of St John and St Paul. The Unity-Law offers a unique perspective on St John’s vision of Christ as the *Logos* or Word of God, for the *Logos* should also be understood as the ‘Reason’ of God ordering all creation – the cosmic order which we discover through science. It can also shed new light on many other Christological titles and themes, for instance “the Alpha and the Omega” theme of the Book of Revelation or the Pauline theme of Christ as God’s purpose and plan for the fullness of time (cf. Eph 1:9-10). Or again within this perspective, new layers of meaning can be identified in St Paul’s teaching that “all things were made through him and for him” (Col 1:16): all things in the universe, from quarks and photons to stars and galaxies, are necessary and interlocking parts of God’s master-plan of creation and salvation - nothing is superfluous.

The centre of the theology of the *Faith* movement is a vision of Christ as the total fulfilment of God's plan from the beginning of creation. Following in the steps of the Greek Fathers, it sees Christ's coming as willed by God from the outset. Christ is seen as the final meaning of creation, quite independently of sin.

But even this vision of Christ finds its necessary foundation in the insights of science.

Renewal of Catechesis

Those involved in the *Faith* movement can testify, from their pastoral experience, to the effect upon young people of introducing this science-religion link. Science can actually be a way into theology for them; a way into fostering an interest in their faith and getting them to thrill to the beauty and wisdom of God. It is exciting. It is fresh. It is so different from the usual, tired, liberal moral debates which are often served up to try to stimulate interest in religion. So different from the trendy liturgies, which frankly very few really like any more. It won't attract everyone, but it does attract many. It can foster in them a love of their faith and it can help sustain their faith throughout their lives.

A Plea to Take Science Seriously

When we teach people about God and His work of creation and salvation, let us not be afraid of science,

for from an objective point of view we have nothing to fear. As the First Vatican Council taught:

There can never be a real discrepancy between faith and reason, since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, and God cannot deny Himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth. (Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, Chapter 4, DS 3017).

The God whom we know through the Catholic faith is also the Author of the laws of science, and all of God's words and works are in perfect harmony with each other. There can be no contradictions.

In today's intellectual climate, where so many who invoke science in support of Christianity seem to do so in more or less veiled forms of creationism (for example, in the 'Intelligent Design' school of thought), and where the prevailing mindset is a complacent presumption that science has disproved religion, it is a matter of pressing urgency to proclaim from the housetops how the magnificent success of modern science points unambiguously to the existence of the supreme Mind of the Creator, and how the trajectory of thought which begins there leads convincingly to Jesus Christ as Lord of the Cosmos.



Faith Magazine is about to be given a new look

Our September/October issue will have a fresh layout and a new cover design. However, readers can be assured that the magazine will continue to explore the need for a new synthesis of Faith and Reason, with quality, peer-reviewed writings that are thought provoking and creative, as well being loyal to the Magisterium and to Catholic Tradition.

Our editorial line will continue to draw on the seminal thought of Agnes and Edward Holloway in order to promote a contemporary and orthodox vision of the Catholic Faith. Our constant aim is to be inspiring, informative and both intellectually and spiritually nourishing. When we are critical of current intellectual trends and other schools of thought, we always try to offer a constructive and more fulfilling alternative.



May we take this opportunity to thank our loyal readers for their ongoing support of this work. In the near future we hope to advertise our magazine widely and we ask for your prayers and also for any practical or financial support that you can offer. May God bless you.

The Editorial Board

The Decline of Christian Belief in the Age of Science

Edward Holloway

For the first time we publish extracts from a 1950 book written by Fr Edward Holloway, "Matter and Mind: A Christian Synthesis". Only a dozen copies were made at the time using one of the original Gestetner machines. The book's subsequent history is recounted in the introduction to Agnes Holloway's God's Master Key (Faith Publications). Based upon these extracts, which are taken from Chapter Two, and from the vantage point of 21st Century Britain, we think it is fair to say that the founder of Faith movement and magazine saw what was coming.

"The implications of a philosophy of evolution closely wedded to experimental science ... shook Christian theology to its foundations and ... now imperils the entire edifice of Christendom. ... (The) trend from essentialism to existentialism does not of itself conflict with Christianity. But orthodox Christianity ... has not been able to synthesise adequately and orientate this philosophical emphasis so native to modern thought. The fool on the other hand has rushed in where the angels feared to tread, and the case for Christianity is being lost by the default of the defendants."

The alienation of the modern mind from stable doctrinal Christianity which increases with each decade of the century, does not proceed haphazardly from private doubts upon a thousand and one points of belief. In terms of ultimate causes the factors which have brought on the intellectual and spiritual sickness of our civilisation are relatively few. It is true of course that a few root causes of disbelief may start a train of indirect consequences which may be for an individual the primary cause of loss of Christian faith. It is true also that an environment of disregard for the authority of doctrinal Christianity facilitates the ready and immediate acceptance of any criticism or objection against Christian faith or morals, – especially morals, – and that for the majority of men, particularly for the majority of the young, these latter are the immediate and primary causes of individual apostasy.

True though this is, no analysis however acute of immediate causes and immediate reasons for the decline in the prestige of Christianity can be the starting-point of remedy and recovery, if these immediate causes are subordinate in nature, time, and importance to underlying causes the importance of which is minimised or even overlooked. There are we believe certain factors, quite definite in themselves and easy to see, which almost alone are the root causes of the tension between the Church and the spirit of the age.

These few factors must be stated bluntly and dealt with honestly. We do not deny or dismiss lightly reasons alleged for disbelief which are far removed from those of which we will treat. It has already been admitted that these essential factors, with us now a hundred years, have bred an atmosphere of agnosticism in society which the adolescent breathes in effortlessly and unconsciously. Each generation hardens in this groove, each element of new knowledge gathered from science is interpreted in a manner hostile to Christian doctrine, and so each generation breeds another farther removed from traditional Christian teaching than itself. This drift away from the Rock of the Church is given impetus by the fact that the prevailing philosophical and social outlook of the churchman is distasteful to the young.

An Unscientific Church

The mind of the churchman, especially of the Catholic priest, is still trained in the static formalism of Aristotle and the cultural tradition of the great classics and the arts. In a Catholic seminary very little modern science is taught at all and then only as an appendage to established scholastic philosophy. It is never taught as the physical background to newer and wider interpretations of the creative act of God, and of the implications of theology. Such a mentality, ignorant of sociology, of economics, of psychology, of physics, of biology, is intolerable to young and virile minds trained in the tradition of the modern sciences, and the philosophies of existentialism that derive from them. The churchman therefore has no capacity to inspire this dominant caste of mind in modern society, nor can he fashion, on the basis of a common cultural inheritance, the blue-prints of philosophy and theology which a new era in human history is seeking.

There are released in society today vivid intellectual energies of which the average priest is almost entirely ignorant, and even if he knows them, he neither understands them nor sympathises with them. Yet these are the raw material of a new civilisation, the mighty and magnificent energies that call for control and direction towards a final purpose, a constructive end. These are the very energies that must be synthesised in a unity of wisdom if any absolute meaning and last goal is to be offered for human striving or affirmed of the human person in a modern culture.

Because of this gulf between the Church and the scientific mind, men turn more determinedly towards those philosophies of life which however grave their shortcomings and whatever their lack of ultimate moral authority, think and speak the mental language of the world today, not of the world of Aristotle nor even of the world of mediaeval scholasticism. The adolescent therefore grows to maturity in an environment of conscious and outspoken contempt for orthodox Christianity and the Church stands increasingly discredited because she has been unable to formulate an intellectualism that will embody the well-proven theses of modern science within Christianity in the same thorough-going manner as the scholastics of the Middle Ages embodied the knowledge of their day within the cultural framework of mediaeval Christianity.

The gulf widens with each generation, and modern means of diffusing knowledge by the press, radio, and film, have brought us now to such a pass that the Christian, and especially the Catholic, whose beliefs are enriched in their religious manifestation by the ceremonies and practices of a most ancient past, finds himself considered the initiate of a recondite cult whose practices are not only unintelligible to men around him, but savour to them of superstition and magic. This cleavage between the devout Catholic and the non-Christian or the nominal Christian stands out in sharper contrast as technical and scientific education replaces the classics in our schools, and moulds an ever increasing percentage of the minds who really make and rule the cultural thought of the times.

Attacking Christianity

We can say of many of the secondary lines of attack upon Christian dogma drawn from the modern sciences and modern critique that the interpretations offered of the evidence is never necessary, and that frequently the evidence itself is too scrappy and too little evaluated as fact to be worth considering. This is particularly true of the modernist "higher criticism" of the Scriptures, and of that wonderful happy hunting ground of leisured cranks, – the study of comparative religion. It is not intrinsic evidence in these spheres which compel conclusions that empty out the content of the Christian faith. It is – and this is the real point – the thought and the presumption that there can be no

reconciliation of these theories with historic Christianity, which places upon the critic the subjective necessity of a modernist interpretation, whether it be idealist or materialist.

If for example the Christian Gospels are considered by themselves without any background of definite belief, or any authoritative norm of interpretation, all sorts of meanings can be put upon the bare words, the more so if the critic is ready and willing to make the early disciples of Christ neurotics, hysterics, or downright liars as the occasion may demand. This sort of critique of the scriptures in general and of the New Testament in particular, is in no way the necessary interpretation of the historic evidences, it is simply the only way a given critic can interpret them in the context of his own preconceived judgement upon the authority of Christian teaching.

The same process of deduction masquerading as analytic induction can be traced in other fields. In psychology above all, theories and judgements concerning the final ends of human motive and human impulse are offered as facts discovered by the analysis of the human mind, which are nothing more than the laughably obvious presumptions of agnostic materialists concerning the abnormal behaviour of minds in any case diseased. Indeed, if the digression may be pardoned, we say without hesitation that one of the most fatuous errors of much so-called psychology and psychiatry lies in the preoccupation of psychologists with pathological cases. After delving around in the sewers of humanity, they come smellily to the surface and from their findings gravely pronounce judgements true of human nature in general. It should be obvious even to the most blinkered specialist that if you wish to know the true orientation and true function of anything living, you must analyse the finest and noblest specimens, not those that are rotting in the last stages of disease.

However damaging these *a priori* critiques drawn from modern sciences may be to the authority of Christianity, and even though they may constitute the proximate and conscious motives for unbelief in the minds of those who make them, they are only secondary and derived factors. They are secondary because historically and philosophically they have a different pedigree, being based upon a few preconceived ideas concerning the nature and processes of the universe, and of man, upon which the whole concatenation of objections hinge. To find these real causes of the modern drift from the Church in Christendom we need to go much further back into the case history of the modern malaise than the more dramatic symptoms of the current year of grace or disgrace. Christian theology itself has developed from the latent potentialities of the mustard seed, and it may also be that the spreading anti-Christian bias of so much modern thought may be a development of a few simple theses, which if they can be resolved in

accordance with Christian orthodoxy and synthesised within Christian theology, will give us the master key with which to unlock all lesser riddles and the power to harness the great creative energies of our times to that culture of Christendom which it bids fair to dissolve.

The Problem of Evolution

Foremost among those discoveries which have revolutionised the thought of the world in countless direct and indirect ways, we place the doctrine of the evolution of material forms of being, organic and inorganic. This teaching owes nearly everything it has to-day to the initial impetus given it by Darwin in the last century. It is not to our purpose here to trace the rise of this teaching, already pre-existing among philosophers in the dialectic of fact to the dust of speculation so that from the philosophic desert blossomed forth the scientific rose. The implications of a philosophy of evolution closely wedded to experimental science were tremendous, and the repercussions are not finished in our own day. This above all was the bombshell which shook Christian theology to its foundations and caused a gradual landslide beneath those foundations which now imperils the entire edifice of Christendom.

As far as the Church was concerned, it meant that the Christian Bible could not be interpreted with the same guileless ease as a schools' elementary primer, containing over some six thousand years the history of the world in detail to the present day. To most of the Protestant sects this was a mortal blow. Their Christian faith rested on the application of subjective personal opinion to an objective and infallible body of fact, the inerrant and literally infallible Bible. The stability of their teaching, never of the highest degree as the proliferation of sects testifies, was preserved in so far as it could be preserved, by the assurance of the infallibility of their final court of appeal. They now found themselves in a situation where the subjectivism of their "free Bible" was matched by the subjectivism and uncertainty of the literally true "word of God" itself. They had no longer any firm ground of authoritative Christian teaching when the Bible itself became a work subject to comparative criticism and enigmatic interpretation. There remained now no canon, except again personal opinion, by which to redefine the very nature of inspiration, let alone to distinguish between the substance of doctrine and its mode of presentation – a distinction they had never been willing to admit before in any case.

This difficulty lay like a great sorrow upon all theologians whose last norm of belief was nothing more certain than private interpretation of the Bible, and while it broke the faith of some, it serves also, paradox though it may seem, to explain how it was that so many non-Catholic exegetes found it easy to strip themselves of theological vesture and to plunge wildly with the higher critics into the maelstrom of that speculative free-for-all and devaluation of Christian

dogma which followed. Only for the Roman Catholic did the parity of Christian teaching remain unchanged, a phenomenon which has continued, to the amazement and indignation of other Christians, even to the present time.

Catholic Reaction

It was true in strict theory and remains true, that the Catholic Church was not directly compromised in her essential doctrine by the knocking away of those props which underpinned individualist Protestantism; yet conservative theological opinion, prone to the same type of literalism since the triumph of Aristoteleanism in the schools of the Church, had swallowed a very bitter pill, or rather refused to swallow it. In their reaction against scientific scepticism, and scientific generalisation which were as sweeping and as prejudiced as any theological temerity, they failed to distinguish the root causes of the new unbelief from the arrogance of the unbelievers, and met with equal contempt and malediction what could only be properly answered by the careful separation of fact from presumption and prejudice on either side. Theologians had become both over-assertive and over-sensitive to error since the challenge of Protestantism, and many Catholics among the educated, formed in a deep rut that allowed no distinction between doctrine and common theological opinion, found their faith hardly less troubled than did their non-Catholic brethren.

Evolutionism and Agnosticism

Even more destructive however to those articles of dogma without which Christianity cannot survive as a religion, nor Christendom as a culture, are the myriad indirect consequences of the acceptance of evolution in the setting of a materialist or pantheist philosophy of life, settings which are almost exclusively associated today with the fact of evolution. Similarities of development, part of, or parallel to the processes discovered in biology, are now recognised in all branches of empirical science, and have justifiably resulted in the universal acceptance by the intelligentsia of all countries of evolutionary philosophies of matter and of the nature of living beings. Inevitably and necessarily this has changed the approach of modern philosophers to man, and to the universe from which background he cannot be divorced. This trend from essentialism to existentialism does not of itself conflict with Christianity. But orthodox Christianity, which in effect means Catholicism, has not been able to synthesise adequately and orientate this philosophical emphasis so native to modern thought. The fool on the other hand has rushed in where the angels feared to tread, and the case for Christianity is being lost by the default of the defendants.

Belief in the existence of a personal God has declined as men have found the influence of mutually relative natural agencies, – environment, natural selection, organic composition, conditioned functional reaction etc., able to

account for natural phenomena that before were related to more general causes or even to the First Cause. The Christian indeed has always recognised the immediate primacy of secondary causes in the bringing about of natural phenomena, but as serial causes have been traced further back, and their astonishing inter-dependence demonstrated, the scientist has tended to proclaim either a mathematical universe in which these secondary causes may be identified with some primary basic formula, or equation, synonymous in definition with a physical ultimate, a universe in which God has no place; or else he has preferred to identify intellect with matter itself and has come to accept that idealistic cosmic pantheism which is almost as common a philosophy today as evolutionary materialism.

The classic proofs for the existence of God derived by the Church in their most accurate form from St. Thomas Aquinas, and the later proofs propounded by such moderns as Descartes, Leibnitz and Kant, have all equally fallen into disrepute. This may be partly because the moderns had some success in undermining confidence in the classic proofs by their criticism without winning any lasting confidence in their own, but the main cause is not any defect in the proofs for the existence of God, at least in the classic proofs, but the general discredit which has fallen upon all systems of thought which ante-date the last century.

Anti-Christian Spirit

Men will not tolerate thought that is expressed in the mental dress of ages totally devoid of modern knowledge, especially when the modern presentation ignores that new knowledge or utilises it only incidentally. When so many syntheses of thought have been shown to be too small a garment to fit a growing world of knowledge, when so many preconceptions have had to be revised in every field of knowledge, the modern man is in no sympathetic mood to listen to proofs for the existence of a personal God unless the very knowledge he has so recently acquired can be geared to the demonstration of such an Absolute. He will not require not merely that the new knowledge be used as the foundation of the proof, but that the very spirit and atmosphere of the new knowledge enter in such a way into the demonstration of God's existence, that the complexities and confusions of human thought engendered by the new knowledge shall be resolved in harmonious unity in the postulate of God's existence, nature, and relation to created being.

We concede that not all who doubt the existence of a personal God do so because they accept the theory of evolution, whether the word be restricted to biology or enlarged to its cosmic significance, but we do say, and from experience know, that most modern agnosticism is bound up with those non-theistic philosophies of evolution that stream off from Hegel as their modern fountain-head. The real content of

many so-called modern difficulties are as old as the eternal hills, as old as human pride, as hoary as the "*non serviam*" which was uttered by the first man and has been re-echoed since down the centuries.

When however to the legacy of criticisms ancient and near-modern there is added the firm acceptance of evolutionary philosophies of materialism or idealism contradictory in trend to Christian teaching, then every new difficulty, every fresh confusion of unabsorbed knowledge, every apparent retreat of conscious mind before reflex conditioned action, is taken as a new refutation of traditional Christian belief.

Conclusion

German philosophy and the idea of evolution have so combined since Darwin, – for all philosophy is an appreciation and interpretation of reality – that it is not now possible to unravel the tangled threads of fact and theory, physics and metaphysics. In reading the works of modern thinkers one cannot tell at a glance whether facts are the motivation of some new critique of religious values, or whether the unconscious theoretical assumptions of general theory permeates the presentation of new data, because physics and metaphysics, – or dialectics, – are so intertwined in modern thought that irrelevant presumptions creep into the work of even the most honest minds. Alongside this stream of modern philosophic and scientific thought, we have the Christian Church, labouring hard to preserve her inheritance and at last gaining a little in Europe, but mainly because of the bitter fruits already ripening in the communist-atheist countries, not because of any new stirring from within herself. The fruits of human lust, pride, and fear, when man supplants God are terrible and inevitable, but a recoil from the new barbarism of the mind already apparent behind the Iron Curtain will not suffice to build a new and positive culture in opposition to the Tyranny of the new errors. The Catholic Christian Church requires itself a principle of cosmic unity that will bind in one whole all wisdom natural and revealed; a principle which will give to Christianity a grandeur and a truth that will far outshine its rivals, and give to man with its deeper truth, the humility, charity and promise of mercy that comes only of subjection to God, a subjection for which the heart of man cries out. If this can be done, or even well begun, then the doctrines of the Faith, true in all ages, can be developed anew and interpreted in a wider sweep to reveal to modern man the character of the new era he is entering, and the character of Christ who has from the beginning made wise provision for all human needs in all epochs of history until the end of time. Then, and only then, will the Church be able to inspire and inform those new patterns of international culture that must emerge if the new energies of human life are to be constructively deployed.

Has the Church Missed the Import of Science?

John Farrell

John Farrell tabulates a worryingly weak strain of the contemporary Catholic Church. The apparent devaluation of science by Catholicism may have had significant consequences. Mr Farrell is the author of The Day Without Yesterday: Lemaître, Einstein and the Birth of Modern Cosmology, published by Thunder's Mouth Press. He lives with his family in Newton, Massachusetts.

"... the concern is that the Church is ignoring the power of the ever more startling evidence of the workings of the natural order ... to inspire more persuasive arguments –not only to reinforce and defend classical philosophy and Church theology – but to prompt careful re-examination of them ..."

In the opening paragraph of his famous Regensburg address on the relationship of Faith and reason, Pope Benedict fondly reminisced about his days "at the old university" where "we would meet before and after lessons in the rooms of the teaching staff. There was a lively exchange with historians, philosophers, philologists and, naturally, between the two theological faculties."

Notably absent from these discussions, apparently, were scientists of any stripe. This is not to take the Pope to task –but rather to point out how there seemed nothing odd about overlooking science in the philosophical discussions in the first place. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that his references to science *qua* science in the Regensburg address were mainly negative, which might suggest that science represents an outpost of positivist skepticism.

And this raises the question whether the Church is neglecting science?

The question may seem startling at first glance. Virtually alone among religions, the Catholic Church maintains a prestigious Academy of Sciences under the auspices of the Pope. Every year Rome sponsors conferences on controversial subjects dealing with science and how it affects humanity. All of the major Catholic universities teach the sciences and confer PhDs in biology, physics, astronomy, etc. The Vatican has its own observatory. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has sponsored a programme precisely to keep abreast of scientific issues that affect society. One could go on.

Catholics and Scientific Expertise

And yet, for all of this activity at the surface level ... there seems to be something missing down deep. Very few of the Catholic universities (with the exceptions of Notre Dame and Georgetown) are considered on the vanguard of any cutting edge research by leaders in the field, whether in biology, physics or astronomy. And for those whose science departments do specialise in research, they, like their secular counterparts, apply to the government for grants to fund their studies. (Not that Rome should necessarily be in the business of funding science. On the other hand, why not?) Rome seems more and more disconnected from the progress of science *qua* science, and to view it increasingly as an outsider.

Many of the scientists who come every year to Rome to take part in the conferences of the Pontifical Academy these days are themselves neither Catholic nor the product of Catholic institutions. And while Stephen Barr showed in his admirable historical list of key discoveries made by priest-scientists over the centuries (featured recently on *First Things'* weblog and in his excellent book *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith*), there have been no priest-scientists of major distinction since the death of Georges Lemaître in 1966.

The Church has not neglected in the past to give the world of science its share of geniuses – and is not hesitant to point this out. At the outset of the expansion of modern science, two priests in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were key contributors to our understanding of genetics and cosmology. However, we have

not seen another Gregor Mendel in well over 125 years, nor another George Lemaître in the last half century and more. With few exceptions, we have not seen men of the cloth actively applying the scientific method and revealing new laws of nature that add to our appreciation of the created world. It's almost as though, with the rise of more secular geniuses, such as Darwin, Einstein, Dirac and Feynman, the Church has become discouraged and dropped out of the race, as it were, content to stand on the sidelines and absorb what it can from purely superficial accounts. Given the Church's crucial role in the foundation of the University system and the birth of natural philosophy in the high Middle Ages this seems tragic.

It is difficult to get hard data on the present generation of US bishops, but it's likely that the percentage with any formal training, either at the undergraduate or graduate level, in science, is small. What percentage of bishops have any training in science? What percentage of priests for that matter? What percentage have a completed undergraduate degree in a science? These are not trivial questions, as I hope to make clear – especially when you compare the clergy to the percentage of the general population of Catholics who are trained in the sciences (including medicine). There is a knowledge imbalance.

“...the foundational role that physics plays for metaphysics is, in the final analysis, what allows theologians coherently to defend questions of faith and morals.”

A look at the curricula of several US seminaries shows no requirement for even a survey course on any one of the sciences. Theology, philosophy, theosophy, canon law, are all part of the regular regimen of the training of priests – as well they should be – but not science. When science affects so many aspects of life throughout society, from the stages of life before birth to the stages of life at its very end, from the fragile balance of the global climate to the technology of modern communications, the conduct of wars, the very place of the earth in the cosmos, one can only wonder why.

Admittedly, part of the reason for this, as Ohio University Professor of Philosophy Scott Carson suggested to me, may be due to the way that humanities majors are structured in universities today. Not just priests in training, but most college students, in fact, can ‘get away’ with few if any science requirements in order to get an undergraduate degree. The pity of this is, they miss being exposed in a

more rigorous fashion to exactly how scientists go about their daily work.

Papal Teaching

There have been close to 400 Papal Encyclicals issued since the death of Galileo in 1642. Very few explicitly deal with a scientific question. *Humani Generis* by Pope Pius XII is a recent exception, but in that letter, a scientific theory was touched on only peripherally: that is, as the theory of evolution applied to the larger question of reason and its ability to reveal the existence of a personal God and the spiritual soul. Of course, there were signs of earlier enthusiasm for science. Pope Leo's excitement was not lost on John Henry Cardinal Newman, whom Leo raised to the cardinalate on April 27, 1879. According to historian Friedrich Gontard in his *The Chair of Peter*:

“Newman said that he was living in a curious period. He himself had not the slightest doubt that the Catholic Church and her teaching stemmed directly from God. But he also saw quite clearly that in certain circles a spiritual narrowness predominated that was not of God. To this the new pope, Leo XIII replied: ‘Away from narrowness!’ He spoke of Galileo as of a man ‘to whom experimental philosophy owes its most powerful impulses’. For this pope, the natural sciences – the Italian Volta, the Swede Linnaeus, the Englishman Faraday – ‘reached as high a degree of nobility and brilliance as we ever see in man’. He was as excited over the railway and other means of communication as if they were miracles. He praised technology or rather man and its creator. ‘What power he displays when through his discoveries he releases this energy, captures it again and so directs it along the paths he has prepared for it as to give inanimate material movement and something akin to intelligence. Finally, he puts it in the place of man and relieves him of his hardest labour ...and the Church, this most loving of mothers, seeing all this happen, has no intention of hindering it but rather is glad to see it and rejoices over it.’” (pp. 518-519)

It is hard to notice the same enthusiasm among Leo's successors of the past century – or indeed even an awareness that the implications of the phenomenal rise of science might be passing the Church by.

The only highly publicised letter we have from a recent Pope on a scientific subject is Pope John Paul's letter to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in 1996 on the subject of evolution. And while the letter is admirable in its clarity (Sean Carroll singles it out in his recent book, *The Making of the Fittest*), it has been open to misunderstanding even amongst the bishops. In his attack on evolutionism in July of 2005, Cardinal Schönborn dismissed it as “vague” before, in *First Things*, thinking better of his assessment. John Paul II's encyclical *Fides et Ratio* devotes a few paragraphs to the

importance of science in general terms, but devotes more pages to warning of the dangers of scientism, the negative aspects of extreme positivism.

Other Contemporary Catholic Contributions

The Catholic disconnection with modern science seemed most acute during the Dover Trial in the U.S. and its aftermath. The uneasiness with which Cardinal Schönborn in his famous *New York Times* op-ed, for example, addressed the scientific aspects of Darwinian evolution; the surprising hostility of many Catholics to the theory as found in countless articles, blog entries, etc., seem to suggest that the Catholic Church and science are not as compatible as we are often assured. Catholic scientists are puzzled now by sudden calls to 'rescue Darwin from Darwinism' and are no longer sure what their own Church believes about the theory.

"St. Thomas Aquinas was attuned to what Aristotle had accumulated about the physics and biology of the natural world as it was known in his era. ... arguing that Christian philosophy, like that of Aristotle, should be empirical."

Recent debates in the pages of *First Things* and other conservative journals over Darwin's theory of evolution and creationism reveal the degree to which Catholics seem stuck in the trees for want of seeing the forest, the lopsided degree to which the Church gives assent to philosophy without deeply exploring the particular science it considers a threat, (this journal, it goes without saying, excepted). Both Cardinal Schönborn and Cardinal Dulles, for example, have suggested in recent essays that science ignores formality, but Stephen Barr, in *First Things*' January '08 letters, has shown that this is not the case, with examples from physics and biology that, for better or for worse, hard-nosed atheists like Richard Dawkins would agree with. While it's true that many scientists have no use for ultimate Final Causality in science, it does not follow that they dismiss the importance of formal and final causes in the study of species and their evolution.

To be sure, overcoming the atheism and materialism which many scientists seem to think is demanded by Darwin's theory is, of course, very important. But the falsity of this is now fairly widely accepted, and repeatedly pointing it out does not progress the argument. The late William F. Buckley's recent article in *National Review* is an example of this. Too often attacks on evolution lack understanding of the basic science as it is understood by working biologists and paleontologists, and this undercuts the point and undercuts

the respect that scientists would otherwise be disposed to give to theologians and commentators when they publicly fret about the philosophies that may lurk behind the methodology of modern science.

Catholic commentators too easily posit a great divide between academic scientific interpretation and the immediate faith and salvation of any individual. Father Martin Hilbert of the Toronto Oratory made this quip in a June 2006 article for *Touchstone* magazine:

"It makes no obvious difference to our salvation whether the geometry of our universe is Euclidian, whether quantum mechanics is the last word in atomic physics, or whether the Big Bang is the correct model for the development of the universe. These theories witness to the power of the human intellect, but few would claim that they bear on questions of faith and morals."

But should we be so quick to dismiss the question of how the world works and what it means for the greatness of God's creation as it is praised in the words of the Psalmist, the Prophets and Saint Paul? Is it not a scandal how few of the clergy and professors of theology decide to devote their lives directly to the study of the natural order – as more of them did in centuries past to the world's everlasting benefit? And worse, how few understand enough science not to feel an immediate defensiveness, wariness and hostility whenever the work of scientists reaches the front pages of the newspapers? Furthermore, how much of the recent scandal would the Church have avoided had bishops and priests in positions of authority in the 70's and 80's been better educated about psychology?

Contrary to Father Hilbert's generalisation, on closer inspection, apprehension of the laws of nature does more than simply bear 'witness to the power of the human intellect'. It underlines the degree to which the universe is subject to rational, dependable laws: laws that can be tested, laws that can be depended upon, processes that can be tested, and processes that can be depended upon. Further, the foundational role that physics plays for metaphysics is, in the final analysis, what allows theologians coherently to defend questions of faith and morals.

Knowledge of the natural order – like the precedents in Canon Law – is cumulative. And it builds among scientists of every persuasion and none a great regard for the natural world and its laws. (How else to explain the appalled reaction even atheistic scientists had to the ridiculous propositions of the deconstructionists and post-modernists, so brilliantly exposed by Alan Sokal's hoax paper on a post-modern interpretation of Quantum gravity over a decade ago?) For Christians, science reinforces faith in the stability and the rationality of the natural order. Even that term,

natural order, more common in the days of the medieval university system, reveals the proper appreciation of science that seems so scarce among the clergy and laity today.

The Need To Develop

It remains strange that so many of the Church's leaders seem incurious to the opportunity of science for the Faith, as the potential impact of science on society (for good and ill) becomes ever more important with each passing year.

"Both Cardinal Schönborn and Cardinal Dulles, for example, have suggested in recent essays that science ignores formality, but Stephen Barr has shown that this is not the case, with examples from physics and biology that, for better or for worse, hard-nosed atheists like Richard Dawkins would agree with."

While the question of the Church's indifference sounds provocative, it emerges from a concern that the Church on the whole is ignoring the great strides being made in modern science, over the past 50 years in particular, and the opportunity it affords – for modern science to inspire theology. Not with new ideas, I hasten to add, or very old ideas dressed up in new jargon (of which the Church over the centuries has seen quite enough). Rather the concern is that the Church is ignoring the power of the ever more startling evidence of the workings of the natural order, as only the scientific methodology can reveal them, to inspire more persuasive arguments – not only to reinforce and defend classical philosophy and Church theology – but to prompt careful re-examination of them.

It is important to clarify: I am not suggesting a new approach to concordism, the hapless temptation to defend a literal interpretation of Scripture, for example, by distorting the latest hot topics in relativistic physics or geology. Father Stanley Jaki has written a superb history (*Bible and Science*) of the many Christians over the centuries who have fallen into that trap.

What I mean is something at once more basic and more ambitious: Exploring science for more detailed empirical reasons to reinforce the Faith.

St. Thomas Aquinas was attuned to what Aristotle had accumulated about the physics and biology of the natural world as it was known in his era. Aristotle was new and

controversial in the world of 13th century Christendom, having come to Europe via translation from the Muslim world. But Thomas ingested Aristotle – one might almost say, he swallowed him whole and imported everything that was useful, not just of his metaphysics, but of his physics and biology, into his work. His commentary on the Physics of Aristotle alone, *In Aristotelis Physicorum*, would have assured his place among the greats of Christian philosophers. But he went much further, arguing that Christian philosophy, like that of Aristotle, should be empirical: it should proceed from what can be grasped by the senses – and not, as the Augustinian tradition held, by what can be grasped purely by the Mind. This did not sit well with many of his fellow theologians at the time (including St. Bonaventure and the Archbishop of Paris), and indeed Thomas's work was condemned for a brief period after his death.

It hardly needs pointing out that St. Thomas is not what most students of philosophy decide to concentrate on when they enter the subject these days. And Aquinas has been dead for over 730 years. During the centuries since the discoveries of Galileo, philosophies of modern science, for better or worse, have replaced the scholastic natural philosophy which was already in decline when he was born. And, with the exception of the brief Copernican hiccup, the Church has not disputed the truth of any of the great scientific revolutions since then (in spite of the recent confusing signals about evolution). But neither, it seems, has it shown any deep interest in them. As Barr's list shows, there were at first quite a few outstanding cleric-scientists at the start of the scientific revolution. But their numbers have dwindled as Rome has shown less and less interest in encouraging the study of the natural order by the clergy.

Instead, the Church too often seems to front a position of defensiveness regarding science, a defensiveness that is not lost on the younger generation of Catholics pursuing careers in biology, physics and chemistry, to say nothing of medicine.

The Need To Rethink

Should not the Church, then, reconsider its current, passive relationship to science *qua* science? Meaning, should it not more directly engage once again in the study of natural philosophy?

One of the 20th century's greatest historians of Christian philosophy long ago suggested that it is time that the Church consider an ambitious approach to the challenge of modern science. In his 1960 book, *The Philosopher and Theology*, Etienne Gilson recommended the Church encourage no less than the training of theologian-scientists:

"...the future of Christian philosophy will therefore depend on the existence or absence of theologians equipped with scientific training, no doubt limited but genuine and, within its own limits, sufficient for them to follow with understanding such lofty dialogues not only in mathematics and physics but also in biology and wherever the knowledge of nature reaches the level of demonstration."

In his encyclical letter on the importance of St. Thomas' work, Pope Leo also alluded to the Church's need to maintain a deep study of science: "When the Scholastics, following the teaching of the Holy Fathers, everywhere taught throughout their anthropology that the human understanding can only rise to the knowledge of immaterial things by things of sense, nothing could be more useful for the philosopher than to investigate carefully the secrets of Nature, and to be conversant, long and laboriously, with the study of physical science."

A Proposal

It seems the time has come – and if not now, when? – for the Church to establish an order specifically dedicated to training theologians as scientists – or taking scientists and turning them into first-class theologians, so that they can more closely delve into the modern science of the natural order and its continued importance for Christian theology. A Church with philosophers of firsthand experience in the study of the natural order, would go a long way to helping her regain for the West what Pope Benedict rightly praised in his Regensburg address, that dedication to the importance of reason in its service to Faith.

My favourite example is Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk, a neuroscientist, who is currently the director of education for the National Catholic Bioethics Center. He was in the lab full-time while he was taking night courses in theology and preparing to enter the seminary. The church needs more priests like him, some for example who could head a new faculty dedicated to training scientists in theology and also overseeing the recruitment and scientific training of seminarians and clergy who have the aptitude and the wish to become experts in branches of science.

Does this sound unrealistic? The Belgian Cardinal Mercier, who died in 1926, would not have thought so, I think. Cardinal Mercier not only began the revival of the study of St. Thomas in the late 19th century, with the gratitude and encouragement of Leo XIII, but it was he who noticed the mathematical precocity of a young seminarian, and fellow Belgian, whom he encouraged to study the then revolutionary new branch of physics developed by Albert Einstein. Georges Lemaître not only quickly mastered Einstein's physics, he took it to the next level by convincing Einstein and his generation that the universe itself was dynamic. In doing so, he laid the foundations of modern cosmology that still guide research to this day. The metaphysical implications of this insight have still to be worked out.

Pope John Paul II liked to repeat Cardinal Newman's adage that truth cannot contradict truth. The Church should not only not fear the truth of the natural order, it should take the lead in studying it, in championing it. For there is nothing to fear in the workings of the natural order and a lot to be gained from deepening our interpretation of it. If this can be grasped by those who have no faith, why can it not be grasped by those who claim they do?

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THE CHURCH'S SUPPORT OF SCIENCE

By Peter Hodgson

The evidence for the Catholic Church's support of science might be put in three categories. Firstly the historical development of modern science, secondly the work of the scientists themselves and finally the actions of the Church authorities.

1. As described in my article on 'The Judeo-Christian Origin of Science'¹, science is based on specific fundamental beliefs about the natural world, namely that matter is good, rational and contingent and open to the human mind, and that any discoveries that may be made should be shared freely. These are all Judeo-Christian beliefs found in the Old and New Testaments and in the Councils of the Church. It is thus no surprise that modern science came into being during the High Middle Ages, when for the first time in history there was a society permeated with Christian beliefs. Thus modern science is built on Christian foundations, and this explains why there was no science as we know it in any of the ancient civilisations of antiquity.

2. Since the Middle Ages, thousands of scientists have extended our knowledge of the natural world. The scientists in the Middle Ages, such as Grosseteste, Buridan, Oresme (a bishop) were Catholic, as were Copernicus (a canon) and Galileo; Newton and Kepler were Christians. This continued during the following centuries, Volta and Ampere (after whom the units of electricity are named) were Christians, as were the pioneers of optics Foucault, Fizeau and Fraunhofer and the mathematicians Cauchy and Hermite. Niels Stensen founded the sciences of paleontology, crystallography and mineralogy, became a priest, was appointed bishop and subsequently declared a saint. The originator of the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe was Georges Lemaitre, a Belgian priest. The Jesuits have always been very active in scientific research, and include Roger Bosovich who developed a theory of atomic structure and Christopher Clavius who was responsible for our Gregorian calendar. Hundreds more are listed in 'Christianity and the Leaders of Modern Science'².

3. The leaders of the Church, particularly the Popes, have continually supported the sciences, initially by founding universities all over Europe during the Middle Ages. The studies of all students included arithmetic and astronomy. More recently the Holy See established the Vatican Observatory in Castel Gandolfo near Rome. Staffed by Jesuits, this carries out an extensive programme of researches on astrophysics and astronomy. Much of the research has now been transferred to Arizona, where observing conditions are far better.

The Pontifical Academy of Sciences was established as a sign of the Church's commitment to scientific research. Its members are chosen for their scientific eminence without any form of religious or ethnic discrimination. The Academy frequently organises Conferences and Study Weeks on scientific subjects. Some recent ones were devoted to 'The Macro-Molecules of Interest to Biology', 'Organic Matter and Soil Fertility', 'Science for Development', 'Science for Peace', 'Brain and Conscious Experience', 'The Human Genome', 'Perspectives of Immunisations', 'Parasitic Diseases', 'Mankind and Energy', 'Modern Biology Applied to Agriculture'. These meetings are attended by world-famous scientists and the results are published in a series of substantial volumes. Popes frequently address these meetings and encourage the work of scientists.

This work of the Church receives little publicity and is generally unknown, but everyone is continually reminded of what is known as the confrontation between the Church and Galileo. Galileo was a great scientist who was the first to use the telescope to make a series of astonishing discoveries. Although he could not prove it, he became convinced that the earth moves around the sun, and that consequently the general belief, following Aristotle, in a central earth is wrong. The Aristotelian philosophers, unable to defeat him on scientific grounds, tried to discredit him by pointing to some words of the Bible that seemed to support the Aristotelian view. Galileo, a devout Catholic, was anxious to prevent the Church from condemning a scientific theory that might eventually be proved to be true. He pointed out that the Bible is given to us to teach us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go; in other words we should not treat the Bible as a source of scientific knowledge. However at that time the Church authorities were more concerned with defending the Bible than with assessing scientific theories, and Galileo failed to convince them. Recently Pope John Paul II has declared that Galileo's theological views are correct and that he was unjustly treated. The Galileo affair is well worth studying as it raises many problems concerning the relations between theology and science, and the philosophy of scientific discovery³.

NOTES

¹P.E.Hodgson. The Judeo-Christian Origin of Science. Coyne lecture given in Cracow; Logos 4.2.138.2001

²Karl A. Kneller. Christianity and the Leaders of Modern Science. Real View Books, 1995.

³Michael Sharratt. Galileo: Decisive Innovator. Blackwell, 1994.

TECHIES IN THE PEWS

Guy Consolmagno SJ,
Researcher and Curator at the Vatican Observatory

Three years ago, I took time out from my own work as an astronomer at the Vatican Observatory to do a Jesuit program called Tertianship. It's a sort of sabbatical we Jesuits take after a dozen years or so in the Society of Jesus to recharge our spiritual batteries, as a prelude to taking final vows. One part of that experience is to spend time someplace different from our normal workplace, doing a different kind of Jesuit work than what we'd become used to. My assignment was to go to the Jesuit school in California's Silicon Valley, Santa Clara University. Instead of doing science, I would be talking to professional scientists and engineers – *techies* – about their faith lives.

It was a fascinating experience. For six weeks I spoke to scientists at the NASA Ames Research Center and at Stanford University; engineers at Hewlett-Packard and Apple Computer; self-employed researchers; consultants at small high-tech startups. They were Catholics and Orthodox, Protestants and Jews, agnostics and atheists. But they were all techies. They were all willing to talk to me because, like them, I am a techie, too – not only a Jesuit brother, but an astronomer with advanced degrees from MIT and the University of Arizona.

We covered a wide variety of topics, and I heard an equally wide range of opinions. Some of my techies were devout churchgoers; others were scornful of organised religion. But all of them knew what I was talking about when I asked my questions; there was nothing I raised that they hadn't already thought about themselves.

But their techie mindset means that they experience religion in unusual ways. That became the topic of *God's Mechanics*, published by Jossey-Bass last October. I took many of those observations and wrapped them in reflections of my own, writing a book that explores how my friends understand religion, and how I as a techie make sense of my own Catholic faith.

For example, many of the techies I spoke with told me that they are baffled by liturgical practices they see in their parishes. The language of spiritual affectivity they often hear from the pulpit sounds like meaningless mumbo-jumbo to a person more used to reading a technical manual or, worse, more used to figuring things out on their own. One techie described the homilies at his church as mere "white noise;" another commented to me, "why should I listen to some guy in a dress up on the altar who doesn't even know how to make the microphone work?" To them, church leaders and ministers rank at about the same low level of esteem as the "suits" where they work, the management types who are clueless about what actually goes on in the lab.

One conversation in particular that I recount in that book epitomises in many ways the reactions I got in these interviews. It illustrates many of the "techie" approaches that I heard, applied to a particular religious issue that bothers many of my science and engineering friends.

We're used to searching for truth in the physical universe, and we use a common set of tools to help us understand that truth: the laws of nature, which we assume are basically constant and unchanging. Indeed, we are taught the same maths and physics, often from the same textbooks, whether we're studying in Manchester or Mumbai. There's really only one kind of physics that everyone agrees on. So, if religion also claims to teach us the truth, why are there so many different kinds of religion?

I brought this issue up with many of my techie friends, and heard a variety of answers. Then, one of those techies and I worked out a sort of summary of the approaches we'd heard...

Jules is a Caltech graduate who now makes his living as a professional photographer; he combines an artistic talent with his scientific abilities in the darkroom to produce some astonishingly beautiful images of nature that now adorn his living room. We're also surrounded by a thousand vinyl record albums, dozens of paintings, and a couple of original signed cartoons. Seeing him sitting there, dressed in a wide Hawaiian shirt with a peace symbol on a cord peeking out from behind his unkempt beard, I am almost transported back in time . . . except the beard is gray now, and the shirt a bit wider than it would have been thirty-five years ago.

Like me, Jules sees himself as a "techie-plus," someone who's part of that community yet still able to step out of it and look it over from the outside.

Jules suggests to me that as many as eighty per cent of techies are religious, but that this number is highly uncertain because the subject matter is taboo among most modern scientists; it's not something we talk about in our daily working lives. The experience of most techies is that discussion about religion is acrimonious and pointless, he says. It's my clerical collar (worn or not) that gives them permission to talk to me, even if it also colours what they are willing to tell me.

When I describe to him my idea that the typical techie is an engineer looking for the rules of the universe, he raises his eyebrows. "Engineers are strong on content but weak on process," he reminds me. "They don't see that the

OTHER ANGLES

process of how one arrives at a solution can be as important as the solution itself."

I describe how David, an astronomer, had worried that there were too many religions: "They can't all be right; so they must all be wrong." Jules laughs and asks, "Why can't they all be right?" But then, in true techie fashion, he and I start to outline and enumerate the different ways that we see techies approach the "many religions" question:

1. They can't all be true, so they must all be false. (David's answer.)

2. They are all true, just different descriptions of the same truth. All churches must be equally true, because they all essentially teach the same thing. This is especially obvious if you view religion as essentially a source of ethical rules for human behaviour rather than theological truths about God and make the techie assumption that content equals rules; then, if all your churches come up with the same rules, they must all be based on the same content, and thus they must ultimately all be the same. (I think I saw this in George, a computer engineer raised Catholic but now a member of his wife's church, the Seventh-day Adventists.)

3. Different religions are like different computer operating systems adapted to different computer platforms; which one is right for you depends on how you are "wired." In other words, the choice of which religion you should follow depends on your personal history, your internal needs, your genetics, or the general question of what you're trying to get out of that religion. This is not quite the same as answer number 2, because it suggests that for a given person, one religion might be better than the others; but for different people with different histories and different needs, different religions might be more appropriate. And like computer systems, some religions have more features than others, but at the cost of a higher overhead and the greater possibility of bugs. Again, the unspoken assumption is that what is important in the differences between religions has nothing to do with how close their theological descriptions of God correspond to reality, either because those differences don't exist or because they are impossible for us to judge, differences too subtle to be detected by us, lost in the "noise" of our human limitations, personal history, genetics, and so on. (This sounds like Alan and Beth, an applied mathematician and a medical doctor, who were "shopping" for a church in which to raise their children.)

4. Different religions are different approximations to the truth, but some approximations converge on the truth faster than others (as described to me by Ian, an Orthodox engineer). This is different from numbers 2 and 3 because it suggests that there is one religion, the one that converges the fastest, that really is "better" than the others, at least in a functional sense, if not necessarily "truer" in the long run.

5. Different religions are like different levels of physics. We know that Aristotelian physics, though a perfect example of "common sense," is actually less accurate (and much less useful or powerful) than Newtonian physics. But likewise, at a certain point, Newtonian physics fails, and we can see that it is less accurate than quantum physics. Only the last comes closest to the truth. For many people, and for much of the time, the less true versions of religion (which may be easier to grasp) can be adequate, just as most human beings happily live in the commonsense world of Aristotle without even realising it, and most engineers can do most of their work using merely Newtonian physics. But at the end of the day, and especially evident in the hardest and most extreme cases, those other versions of physics will fail to give an accurate description of the truth.

Note that of the five, this last model is ultimately the only one that suggests that one religion really does more closely match the truth than any of the others. We can argue about which one!

Adapted from *God's Mechanics*, pp 108-110, c 2008 Jossey-Bass

A fellow techie reading this chapter pointed out something I missed at the time. These five different answers in many ways reflect the differences among the techie types themselves. The first and last answers come from scientists: we expect to find one, and only one, valid theory of nature. There's only one truth, and anything different from that truth is... well... not true. But the the second and fourth answers come from engineers. They are interested in solving practical problems, and they're used to having more than one way to solve a problem. Which solution you use often just depends on the tools at hand. This is also evident in the third answer, which came from a medical doctor and her husband. Elsewhere in my conversation with them, they'd told me they couldn't judge which religion was "right"; they would just be happy if it weren't "obviously wrong". I can see there the doctor faced with a variety of possible treatments for a given ailment; she must choose among them the drug that best suits her patient.

As others have noted, missing in all this conversation is any sense of a personal connection with God, a one-on-one relationship with Jesus. Alas, this reflects how difficult many techies find making such personal relationships work in their own lives. That's who we are.

And that's perhaps why we need to be especially patient and understanding with those techies among us. They struggle to encounter God the only way they can: through their often overdominating intellects.

This piece is a development upon an article on the Jesuit "Thinking Faith" website.



Should We Donate Organs? A Contemporary Interaction of Ethics and Science

Bernard Farrell-Roberts

Bernard Farrell-Roberts argues that government proposals use a profoundly unjustified approach to brain death and the dignity of the human person. This has supported an ethically ambiguous culture in the operating theatre. In such a context organ donorship is of doubtful morality. Mr Farrell-Roberts is Course Director of the BA (Hons) Applied Theology Diaconal Ministry programme at the Maryvale Institute in Birmingham. He is a member of the Brotherhood of the Holy Cross, a small semi-contemplative community of clergy and laity, and of the Joint Bioethics Committee of the Catholic Bishops' of England and Wales.

"The key question that must be answered by all of us now is: If we allow ourselves to be organ donors, can we be confident that our organs and tissue will be removed following our deaths and in an ethically acceptable manner?"

The British Government has recently raised the issue of organ donorship, and, if their proposal goes ahead, we will all need to make up our own minds about what we need to do about donating our organs within the next few months. If we decide that organ donation is not an ethical option in current circumstances we would need to "opt out" formally. Doing nothing will not be an option for us.

Organ or tissue donorship represents a wonderful gift of self. In 1991 Pope John Paul II stated that: "With the advent of organ transplantation, which began with blood transfusions, man has found his way to give of himself, of his blood and of his body, so that others may continue to live. (cf. John 13: 1)"¹. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) goes on to tell us that: "Organ donation after death is a noble and meritorious act and is to be encouraged as an expression of generous solidarity. (CCC 2296).

Having said this, there are conditions that apply to this "expression of generous solidarity." The Catechism also tells us that: "It (organ removal) is not morally acceptable if the donor or his proxy has not given explicit consent" (CCC 2296). There is a further condition brought out in the literature which can be expressed as "if the separation of the body and life cannot be verified, or if there is doubt about the separation of the body and life, organ excision is morally prohibited and should not be allowed"².

I would therefore like to explore these two key issues, consent and death. Both must be taken into account very seriously by anyone considering becoming a vital organ donor, or removing themselves from an assumed consent donor registry.

Valid Consent

In 2000 Pope John Paul II said:

"Both Catholic and Secular Ethics are in broad agreement as to the essential nature of donor consent, and the acceptability of next-of-kin consent. However, due to the shortage of donor organs there are worrying pressures being exerted for some freedom to take organs from donors without consent"³.

His words have proved to be prophetic, as this is the very proposition that we face today in the United Kingdom. Assumed consent would have the effect of making our bodies a commodity for the use of the state and others, and would therefore compromise the dignity of the human person. This would be unacceptable to the Catholic Church⁴.

At the moment for informed consent to be held as valid in the UK it must fulfil five criteria: it must be given voluntarily, without undue influence or coercion; the individual giving consent must be able to process information and understand its implications; sufficient information must be provided for an informed decision to

be made; the information must be understood; and the decision must be registered⁵.

The British Government intends to move away from this very acceptable set of criteria, to one that cannot be condoned by Catholics, that of assumed consent, or "Routine Salvaging Law" as it used to be called. This represents a very fundamental shift in the relationship between the individual and the State. The individual loses the right to decide what should happen to his or her body. This right passes over to the State which has then assumed all rights over the body after death. Or is it only after death? If laws permitting euthanasia were to be introduced, or a legal definition of death made law that contradicted the Catholic position and understanding, then organs could be taken even prior to death. It is important that moves to introduce Assumed Consent in the United Kingdom should be resisted.

There appear to be many flaws in the Government's plans on consent. They do not appear to be backed up by statistics or independent surveys. To the contrary, in 1994 research carried out by Nottingham University and the King's Fund concluded that the introduction of assumed consent was unlikely to result in a significant increase in donor organs. Other reports concur, and the experience of other European and South American countries also backs this up. In one country, Brazil, the number of available organs actually dropped following its introduction, yet here the government predict a 50% increase in organ availability.

Few of us have forgotten, nor should we forget, the 1998 scandal that broke involving the unauthorised retention of hundreds of organs taken from children at post mortems in the Alder Hey Hospital, Liverpool. The extreme reactions shown by the children's parents and relatives surprised many, and delayed the lobby for assumed consent legislation for organ donorship. The psychological trauma experienced by families was obvious, and the long term effects are still being studied. It is quite obvious that if this proposed legislation becomes law these experiences are likely to be repeated again and again.

The Catholic Church is clearly opposed to the Government's proposals, the Catechism telling us that: "It (organ removal) is not morally acceptable if the donor or his proxy has not given explicit consent" (CCC 2296).

Donor Death

The Holy See accepts "brain stem death" as being a valid definition of death. The accepted medical definition being "irreversible cessation of all cerebral activity"⁶. However, it is possible to have "brain death" as defined here, whilst human cells themselves still are alive, and organs continue to function. So how can we know if death has occurred?

The United Kingdom has clearly defined guidelines for the diagnosis of death, designed to ensure that death has indeed occurred. However, the recommended procedures are only as good as the definition of death that they apply, and these definitions often vary considerably from country to country. Peculiar contradictions exist in national laws with regard to organ transplants. In Japan, for example, if a patient has expressed a written wish to be an organ donor then organs can be taken on medical diagnosis of brain death. However, if no such consent is given then a "brain dead" patient is considered still to be alive!⁷

If ethics is allowed to be controlled by the laws of any individual state there is a danger of returning to legal positivism, where the laws of a single state are allowed to contradict universal human rights, allowing residents of that state "legally" to carry out actions that are totally unacceptable to the international community and the Catholic Church.

Medical science is always developing, and what was accepted as true in the past can be disproved in the present. How can society be sure that the medical profession is correct in their diagnosis of brain death? Governments rely on the medical profession to advise them when formulating national law, but what happens when the medical profession is wrong? Numerous documentaries regularly show us examples of exceptions to accepted medical understanding.

Yet when talking about the cutting out of organs, or the removal of a limb, there is no margin for error, life simply must not exist in the donor. Pope John Paul II referred to this problem area, stating that "It is obvious that vital organs can only be donated after death"⁸. Then, in *Evangelium Vitae*, he went on to further develop this theme, declaring:

"Nor can we remain silent in the face of other more furtive, but no less serious and real, forms of euthanasia. These could occur when, in order to increase the availability of organs for transplants, organs are removed without respecting objective and adequate criteria which verify the death of the donor."⁹

Pope John Paul II later highlighted the difficulties posed by the need to know that the donor is dead prior to tissue removal. He stated that:

"It is helpful to recall that the death of the person is a single event, consisting in the total disintegration of that unitary and integrated whole that is the personal self. It results from the separation of the life-principle (or soul) from the corporal reality of the person. The death of the person, understood in this primary sense, is an event which no scientific technique or empirical method can identify directly."¹⁰

Lack of Clarity and Integrity Concerning Brain Death

It is clear that the Catholic Church not only desires that an acceptable definition of death be officially applied, but also wants there to be confidence that medical individuals involved in the removal of any organs should actually apply such a definition.¹¹

The late Dr Phillip Keep, former consultant anaesthetist at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, risked his career by publicly saying that:

“Almost everyone will say they have felt uneasy about it. Nurses get really, really upset. You stick the knife in and the pulse and blood pressure shoot up. If you don’t give anything at all, the patient will start moving and wriggling around and it’s impossible to do the operation. The surgeon always asked us to paralyse the patient.” ...
“I don’t carry a donor card at the moment because I know what happens.”¹²

Is it possible to know that death has occurred in cases where organ donorship may be applicable? Dr David Jones, Professor of Bioethics at St Mary’s College, London, has pointed out that he does not accept that brain death can be assumed for any cadaver with a beating-heart, and challenges the ethical acceptability of the use of any such cadaver for donor purposes¹³. This view is becoming widely held.

It is worth taking a few moments to reflect on a few of the views currently being expressed by medical researchers.

Dr David W. Evans, cardiologist, formerly of the Papworth Hospital in Cambridgeshire, is one of a number of medical professionals who doubt that all organ donors diagnosed “brain dead” are actually brain dead at all. He explained that: “The reason why the heart goes on beating in patients pronounced ‘brain dead’ is, usually, that their brain stems are not really and truly dead but still providing the ‘sympathetic tone’ necessary for the support of the blood pressure.” He is convinced that “brain death” is an invention of those promoting organ transplantation, stating in a letter to the BMJ that their: “explicit recognition that “brain death is a recent invention for transplant purposes is most welcome and should do much to expose the fallacies and fudgings associated with this supposed new form of death, which have been hidden from public and professional view for far too long.”¹⁴

Professor Deng of Columbia University carried out research in 1999 into the results of heart transplants in Germany. His research concluded that only those with a high risk of death actually benefited from heart transplants, more than 80% of donor hearts going to patients who were likely to live for longer without a transplant.¹⁵

I mentioned earlier a standard test that is widely used for the diagnosis of brain stem death. This is where life support machines are disconnected for a 20 minute period, after which brain activity is looked for. This is called the “apnoea” test. One body of scientific research suggests these “brain death” tests not only falsely attribute death to the donor but also injure the falsely diagnosed patient and delay crucial treatment.

Possibility of Recovery After Brain Death

Associate Professor Cicero Galli Coimbra, Head of the Neurology and Neurosurgery Department at the Federal University of Sao Paulo, Brazil published a study indicating that where there is brain damage there is often an area of the brain that is destroyed, but that there is also often an uninjured section as well. Quite often this uninjured section has no apparent function. Between the two there is a “penumbra,” a sort of bridge where the brain cells although not functioning are recoverable. He claims that given time the penumbra can connect the two sections, allowing some recovery of brain function to take place. He also claims that in severe cases a person may be wrongly declared “brain stem dead” or “brain dead”, when in fact recovery may still be possible. Coimbra recommended that the 30 year-old procedures for the diagnosis of brain death should be urgently reviewed.¹⁶

Coimbra shows there are two ways of treating severe brain injury that may produce recovery in apparently hopeless situations. One is to allow the patient time for possible recovery to come about, and the other is the use of induced hypothermia to reduce the brain’s use of oxygen, thus giving doctors more time to treat the patient before further damage occurs due to any lack of oxygen. When reading Coimbra’s report I found his use of hypothermia particularly interesting, as I had already come across a similar use of induced hypothermia in other contexts.

In 1998 research on animals demonstrated that some life remains in the brain after oxygen flow ceases, as well as the possibility of some brain function recovery at room temperatures for 9-24 hours. At hospital cooling temperature (induced hypothermia) the possibility of recovery can remain for up to 20 times longer than this, possibly up to 20 days! The diagnosis of brain stem death is regularly made well within this time frame. At present the normal practice is to wait only five minutes after the heart stops before diagnosis of death.¹⁷

In May 2007 *Newsweek Health* carried an article stating that heart cells can remain alive for several hours even without oxygen, and that it is the sudden resumption of the oxygen supply, as attempts are made to resuscitate the individual in hospital, that causes apoptosis, killing the cells and causing death. This, if correct, would mean that standard emergency protocols are incorrect, possibly causing death rather than

saving lives. A slow resumption of oxygen supply, together with induced hypothermia, appears to bring dramatic results.¹⁸ In hospital trials on 34 cardiac arrest patients in 2006 the normal rate of recovery and hospital discharge of 15 percent was increased to an incredible 80 percent. This research continues.

The cases cited above signify that the possibility of recovery may well still exist when organs are being removed for donorship.

The difficulty in ascertaining whether a potential organ donor is dead was exemplified in a University of Bonn Medical Centre study where two out of 113 who were initially thought to be mortally brain-damaged defied the fatal prognosis and made recoveries. The study involved neurosurgical patients mostly suffering brain trauma injury, and intracranial haemorrhage. The decisions to terminate further treatment were made after stringent and extensive brain activity testing had been carried out. Yet despite this, two such "end of life" diagnoses were subsequently reversed and the patients made unexpected recoveries.

Conclusion: Can One Agree to be an Organ Donor?

This writer would have serious doubts regarding our ability to know either that healthy, reusable organs are being removed after death or in a way that respects personal choice such that it is ethically acceptable to the Catholic Church. The above accounts serve to demonstrate just how little we still know about our bodies, and just how wrong we can be, and often are. What else do we not understand, or are we wrong about? The report we cited concerning recovery from heart attack, if proved correct by more trials, would mean that for years now our health professionals have been killing heart attack patients, whilst trying to save their lives. Coimbra demonstrates that we might cause brain death by testing for it. Events in Bonn prove that even with the most exhaustive tests we are still unable to diagnose brain death effectively.

In considering all the facts we also need to remember the tremendous amount of medical research and development that is going on all the time: the new discoveries, the new procedures and the new drugs. Significant advances are being made in the fields of drug development, bioengineering and nano-engineering, to name but a few. Adult stem-cells are now being used to grow new body-parts that can be implanted with no risk of rejection, the latter being the single largest cause of organ rejection and subsequent death. All these developments are certain to reduce the requirement for donor organs in the future, and must be born in mind by prospective recipients and donors alike.

The key question that must be answered by all of us now is: If we allow ourselves to be organ donors can we be confident that our organs and tissue will be removed

following our deaths in an ethically acceptable manner? In light of the information from medical researchers I would have to say that at this moment in time we cannot. If then the proposed assumed consent legislation becomes law, and we have decided that at the moment we cannot in conscience be organ donors, then we should express our wish not to donate.

It is a tragedy that the uncertainties discussed above are removing from us our ability to give to others one of our greatest gifts, our organs and the possibility of extended life. However, the pace of scientific development is fast and it may be that soon we will be able to change our views on this, and again allow our organs to be transplanted after our death.

In the meantime we need to encourage medical researchers to continue in their search for greater clarity concerning what constitutes medical death, and governments to legislate in such a way as to protect the sanctity of life, and respect for the individual. A good way to start this would be to make one's opposition to the introduction of assumed consent known to the British Government.

NOTES

¹Pope John Paul II, Address To The Participants Of The Society For Organ Sharing, *Transplantation Proceedings*, Vol.23, No. 5 (October), 1991: pp.xvii-xviii.

²Byrne et al, *The Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, April 1999.

³Pope John Paul II, Address to the 18th International Congress of the Transplantation Society, 2000.

⁴cf. Meilaender, Gilbert, The Giving and Taking of Organs, First Things, March 2008, where he emphasises that humans are called to live their bodily life as a personal gift to others and that "presumed consent ... does go a long way toward treating persons as handy repositories of interchangeable parts to others."

⁵Younger, Anderson and Schapiro, *Transplanting Human Tissue – Ethics, Policy and Practice*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

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¹⁶Coimbra Cicero, 2001, *Implications of ischemic penumbra for the diagnosis of brain death*, University of Sao Paulo.

¹⁷Stammberger, et al., 1998, *Effect of a short period of warm ischemia after cold preservation on reperfusion injury in lung allotransplantation*, European Journal of Cardio-Thoracic Surgery, 13, Orlando.

¹⁸Newsweek Takes Chilling Look at How More Heart-Attack Victims Come Back to Life <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/19751440/site/newsweek/>

THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE

THE UNITY LAW AND THE ROSARY

Priests and Catechists involved in Faith Movement find that its key ideas are helpful in presenting aspects of the Catholic Faith to listeners of all ages. Here we use them to place the Mysteries of the Rosary in what we find to be a potent context.

The essential meaning of 'The Unity Law of Control and Direction' is that every aspect of reality is permeated by a single principle which relates it all to the Mind and Will of God. Every facet and every phase of creation builds up to a meaning and a purpose which is fully revealed and fully realised in Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh.

We can grasp this principle at the simple level of material reality with its mathematical constitution and its environmental harmony in evolution, which points so convincingly to the 'Transcendent Unity' or Spiritual Mind that made the cosmos and holds it in being. We can see it at work too in our own nature – a synthesis of both spirit and matter – pointing us towards God as our true Envioner and Law Giver. And we can go on to find it at work throughout human history in the unfolding of Divine Revelation and the building up of the People of God.

This lawful development reaches its peak in the Incarnation and continues in Christ's work of redeeming and perfecting the sons and daughters of God through the Church and the sacraments until the end of time. So we can also contemplate this same unfolding and unified purpose of Christ in our own lives, from our conception as a simple cell, ensouled by God in accordance with the Unity Law, to Baptism and entry into Christ in the Eucharist, through the years of growing up and formation in holiness and the spiritual life – maybe through failure and re-conversion.

We also look on ahead with hope and longing to the fulfillment of heaven, knowing that this will also mean deeper purification and greater love and most likely purgation even after death as Christ continues his work of 'divinising' our being into his own perfect image and likeness. All of this, whether at the cosmic or the personal level, is the working out of the one great Unity Law of creation.

You will find all of this in the rosary too, and with the same sense of many unfolding facets adding up to a unity which is at all times centred on Christ. Mary represented the whole of creation awaiting its Messiah King. She received the

revelation of God's final purpose and plenary love for mankind, and the Word thus revealed became Incarnate from her. How very appropriate then that she should lead and encourage us on our journey of prayer. In the rosary she takes us with her from the advent of the Annunciation, through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, to the contemplation of the glory which Christ bestows on his saints, with Mary again its most perfect recipient.

And just as we can ponder on the Unity Law on many levels throughout creation, and marvel at God's work either in simplicity of principle or in great depth of detail, so too in the rosary we can contemplate the Mystery of Christ at many levels, from the childlike words of trust and confidence contained in the prayers themselves, through meditation on the mysteries of our Lord's loving work for us, to the heights of mystical union with the Mind and Heart of Christ. Truly the rosary is not only a 'compendium of the Gospel', but a summary of all the mighty works of God, and a 'pocket sized edition' of the whole spiritual life.

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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letters to the editor

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HOLLOWAY'S REASONABLE EPISTEMOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Dear Father Editor

With regards to your September 2006 editorial ("The Catholic Vision of Matter: Towards a New Synthesis") and the discussion arising out of it (recent Letters pages), it seems to me that a more fruitful frame of reference for the debate might be Thomas' epistemology. In Holloway's *Perspectives in Philosophy, Volume One*, the epistemological question is his point of departure.

If one accepts Scholastic metaphysics *vis á vis* prime matter and form then the key epistemological question seems to be: how can we come to know the universal apart from the particular? How is it that we are able to classify objects as being of the same type?

Aquinas' solution was to posit a process called abstraction. Because forms cannot be perceived by the senses they have to be abstracted from our sense data by our intellect. This process must of necessity have an active dimension. What is perceived by the senses is that which is there to be perceived. These objects are individual. Analogously, that which can be understood by the intellect is that which is there to be understood. But that which is there to be understood is universal and so not immediately available in our sense data. If it was we could point to it. We could "perceive" it directly. That which can be understood by the intellect must therefore be the result of some form of processing.

The faculty that processes the sense data into something which is intelligible to the mind Aquinas calls the 'active

intellect'. The 'active intellect' works upon the incoming data of sensation, "the phantasm", like a light shining upon it. The "passive intellect" receives the form like a shadow falling upon the ground. In its "abstracted" manifestation in the passive intellect the universal form can be understood. But to understand the proper object in the light of this universal form the intellect needs to refer back to the sense image ("*conversio ad phantasma*") and so to the objective particular thing that is being understood. "The understandable impression is not that which is understood but that by which the understanding understands." (*Species intelligibiles non est id quod intelligitur sed id quo intelligit intellectus. Summa Theologica*, I, 85, art.2) Knowing is a (cognitive) relation not a mechanism.

The faculties and mechanisms that Aquinas describes here cannot be empirically verified and the work of the active intellect is not something of which one is conscious. Thomas' abstraction process is a hypothesis posited to explain our ability to classify particulars without letting go of the common sense view that what we come to know is real. This in itself is not a criticism since such theories rest precisely on their ability to explain, but it does provide for a certain room for manoeuvre.

We can seek to develop Aquinas on this particular issue or we can present an alternative view that will in its turn stand or fall on its ability and power to explain the human person and the world in which he/she lives. Holloway, in his *Perspectives Volume One*, and *Faith* magazine, in its September 2006 editorial, each in their own way, seek to do both.

Yours faithfully
Roger Peck
Oscott College
Birmingham

TERTULLIAN, THE FLESH AND ORTHODOXY

Dear Father Editor

While I can only share your Carthusian correspondent's enthusiasm for the Catechism of the Catholic Church as a sure guide to the Church's teachings, I read – with some surprise – in his comments on the letters I wrote to you in 2007 that I am supposed to hold suspect, or even possibly unorthodox, "any text" that cites Tertullian.

Since not only the Catechism but even the Roman Rite itself, in the Liturgy of the Hours, uses Tertullian (Thursday of the third week of Lent; the feast of St Philip and James), this would clearly be an impossible position.

But the points I was making in my letters of November and December were quite other. The first letter was to correct the erroneous statement of your editorial that Tertullian was a Latin Church Father; the second was to dissent from the editorial comment (oddly enough, echoed by your correspondent) that the phrase "*caro cardo salutis est*" is taken from Tertullian's "catholic writings". Nothing else.

Tertullian is highly quotable but as St Vincent of Lérins said of his writings "*quot verba, tot sententiae*": his phrases strike us; his writings have to be treated with circumspection and an awareness of their historical context.

Yours faithfully
Gerard McKay
Piazza della Cancelleria
Rome

EDITORIAL COMMENT

We thank Mr McKay for his concern about clarity, accuracy and orthodoxy in our publication. In the same spirit, and notwithstanding the fact that the *Catholic Encyclopedia* includes Tertullian in a list of "early Fathers", we would accept that such an unqualified designation may not be the most appropriate in the context

of our discussion. We would simply want to point to him as a long accepted literary witness to the common theological outlook of the patristic period on this and other vital points.

We hope that there remains no quarrel with the orthodoxy of our central affirmations that "The fathers maintained the sacredness of matter and its share in God's saving plans"; that the flesh is central to the plan of salvation; that the Incarnation takes place in order to bring about eternal communion between the Godhead and humanity, and thereby the whole of the physical creation which is summed up in Christ. This is the almost universal patristic perspective written about, preached and taught by canonised Fathers of the Church in both Greek and Latin. Tertullian expresses this thought so succinctly that the Magisterium has adopted his phrase from the *De Resurrectione Carnis* and used it in the Catechism. We humbly seek to develop and deploy this insight once again at the service of re-evangelising our scientifically sophisticated but spiritually impoverished age.

As to whether the *De Resurrectione Carnis* comes from his "Catholic" works or not, scholars agree that Tertullian formally seceded from the Church – when he declared himself a Montanist – either in 211 or at the end of 212 at the latest. He wrote the *De Resurrectione Carnis* most probably around 209. This places this particular work in a time when he was a still Catholic in communion with the Church, even though some of his opinions were becoming extreme, especially in moral and disciplinary matters.

LANGUAGE AND THE SUBSISTENT SOUL

Dear Father Editor

I read with interest the piece by Father Francis Selman 'On the Soul' in your March '08 issue.

I felt that his treatment of my work *The Human Person*, 1992, was unjust.

In that book, I purported to demonstrate that the human being has operations, described as linguistic thinking and linguistic understanding, which have no bodily organ through which they operate, and no neural correlate, in any way comparable to the way in which perception and imagination have bodily organs through which they operate (pp. 447-474). Language and thinking to oneself in the medium of words (pp. 434-445) express thought and understanding, rather than embody them.

Any subsistent being with an operation which is in this way not essentially bodily has an *esse* which is independent of the body. The person who thinks and understands is an example of this, as I emphasised in Chapter XV, pp. 539-540, since 'person' is not a term which restricts its subjects to being of a bodily or body-dependent character.

Nothing with such a subsistence ceases to exist by the perishing of the body, and therefore there is in the human being that which thinks and understands which does not cease to exist at death, and which I have proved in Chapter XIII-XIV to be the principle of unity of the whole human being, the soul. It remains the form of the body, and has hope of resurrection. This I laid out in my book.

By God's power, by its resurrection, the whole person is restored and resurrected.

The only places in which a general account of the coming to be of the human being is implicit are in pp. 290-296, and 528-531, extending my remarks to other living things, none

of which do I believe to be intelligible either in their nature and behaviour or in their origin in purely physicalistic terms. The peculiarity of the coming to be of the human being is that it involves the coming to be of a principle of understanding and will which is not essentially dependent upon the body for its existence.

Clearly since it has operations of the kind I indicate it is beyond powers of the material by themselves to educe, so that in order for the order of nature to continue in its regular fashion, God has to create this soul in synergism with the necessary parts played by the parent(s). Both I and St Thomas consider that the soul continues to exercise thought and understanding (and indeed will, which is intellectual appetite) after death, and, as St Thomas explains, this cannot be in synergism with the imagination in the way it is during human life, but is made possible in ways God provides, and in this way the life of purgatory allows the purification that most people need, while the Saints pray for the living and the dead of whom God gives them knowledge through their vision of Him.

In a work recently completed, but not yet published, I have explained how the adaptability of animal bodily systems, especially the brain, which Meredith and Stein have remarkably demonstrated in respect of the senses in their *The Merging of the Senses* and which is seen in infant language-learning in a way discussed by Meltzoff, Butterworth and others, reaches a peak in the case of the human use of language so that it is solely semantic and communicational constraints which determine grammar and nothing universal in grammar is determined by neurology. It is as if God creates man when the bodily system has become so malleable in its operation as to be capable of the expression of thought and understanding.

My approach shows what is wrong with Locke's flight of fancy that an

unstructured material body might think, or Kenny's suggestion that our ways of speaking are compatible with our heads being full of sawdust, so that indeed bodily function is internal to normal mental function (pp. 336-339), so that thought and understanding while integrated with the imagination nonetheless transcend it, and transcend the body.

There are lots of features of human life which exemplify the transcendence of intellect and intellectual appetite over the body, e.g. certainly the experience of someone like St. John of the Cross (whose poems express an appetite which is intellectual, even if in St. Thomas's phrase there may be some overflow into the sensible), along with other prayer involving a loving knowledge and attention to God, and on a more common plain some musical experience. But it is only from the semantic and communicational structures of language that we can get an argument to demonstrate human transcendence philosophically.

Yours faithfully

David Braine

Honorary Research Fellow

Department of Philosophy

Aberdeen University

KNOX'S PHRASEOLOGY

Dear Father Editor

Moira Shea is quite right that Ronald Knox introduces a new nuance in Jn 2:1-3 when he has Mary say at Cana, "they have no wine left", instead of the more usual and literal, "they have no wine".

I imagine that Mgr. Knox intended to clarify more than to change the meaning of the phrase; and here I am inclined to go along with him.

Let's suppose that the comment was made at the very start of the feast (it would be typical of Our Lady to arrive early so as to help in preparing things),

because Mary had discovered that the family had not laid in any wine at all... Unlikely? Yes, that is what I think. Yet nothing in the text precludes such an interpretation. Nevertheless, (as far as I know), all commentators have interpreted the situation as a simple but embarrassing running out of that element which (in the words of the Psalmist) can so gladden the heart, precisely when the celebrations were still in full swing.

Whatever one thinks of these hypotheses, Mgr. Knox's translation has the advantage of exonerating the bridal families of thorough ineptitude in preparing a feast, and perhaps of shifting the blame (if blame has to allotted) to the unexpected number or the excessive joviality of the guests.

Actually, one could argue from other passages that Knox had a certain penchant for expressing a lack or an absence, in terms of something "not being left". For instance, "such a crowd gathered that there was no room left even in front of the door" (Mk 2); "There would have been no hope left for any human creature, if the number of those days had not been cut short" (Mt 24); "These must stay on board, or there is no hope left for you" Acts 27; "if you can see your neighbour's faults, no excuse is left you" (Rom 2).

I have my own objections to some of Ronnie's idiosyncratic phrases (for instance his frequent use of "have a mind to", instead of simply "want to"); but overall I still find his English magnificent.

Yours faithfully

Fr Cormac Burke

Lavington

Nairobi

JUSTICE AND PEACE FOR SOME

Dear Father Editor

The Daily Telegraph recently published a short letter of mine the gist of which was that I had recently "visited the website of every Roman Catholic diocese in England and Wales, to see what its Justice and Peace Commission was saying about the Embryology Bill and abortion. Not one mentioned the Bill nor had a word to say about abortion." Perhaps I might furnish your readers with a slightly fuller description.

The purpose of these commissions is "to stimulate awareness of the need for justice both at home and abroad." In my investigations the most frequent issue raised was coffee; then there was much about the needs of travellers; other concerns included immigrants, poverty in Britain, and a multitude of relatively trivial issues, most of them addressed from a far left-wing perspective. Several dioceses, such as Portsmouth and Hallam, had recently had special Justice days but never a mention of abortion. The Archdiocese of Liverpool's Justice and Peace Commission does "conscientisation training" but that does not include abortion. Northampton has an advertisement for a special day soon on "Climate Change". The diocese of Westminster Justice and Peace section has no mention of abortion but does give special attention to "Care for the Earth".

Our Bishops will not need me to remind them that justice, like charity, begins at home.

Yours faithfully

Eric Hester

Somerdale Avenue

Heaton

Bolton

cutting edge

A special feature keeping us up to date with issues of **science** and **religion**

TEMPLETON WINNER, MIND AND MATHEMATICS

In mid-March it was announced that this year's winner of the Templeton Prize – an extremely valuable prize awarded annually in recognition of, and promotion of, work for “research or discoveries about spiritual realities” – is Fr Michael Heller, a 72-yr-old Polish priest and physics professor. He received the prize on 7th May from the Duke of Edinburgh at a ceremony at Buckingham Palace. At a reception after the award was given, Dr John Templeton, the founder of the Prize, said of Heller's work that “his most creative writings can be concisely characterised as a meditation upon the miracle of the ‘mathematical essence of nature’.”

Fr Heller, of the Faculty of Philosophy in the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Krakow, is a mathematical physicist whose background also involved a training in philosophy and theology. His current area of research is non-commutative geometry, a branch of mathematics which is likely to provide solutions in the mathematical treatment of ‘singularities’ such as in the physics of the ‘Big Bang’ beginning of the universe. He was ordained a priest in 1959 in Communist-controlled Poland, and after a period working in a parish, returned to academic studies in the Catholic University of Lublin, where his research focussed on general relativity and cosmology. When Karol Wojtyla, the future Pope John Paul II, became Archbishop of Krakow, in 1963, he began to encourage the activities of intellectuals and priests in their interdisciplinary quest in science and philosophy, and Heller's work flourished in this atmosphere, despite an ongoing repression from the Communist authorities. When

eventually permitted to travel outside Poland he also pursued research in the universities of Leuven, Oxford, Leicester, Catholic University of America, and also the Vatican Observatory. He has written more than 30 books and almost 400 research papers.

Heller holds to a robust thesis of the compatibility of faith and science. His basic position comes in the consideration of the question, ‘Does the universe itself need to have a cause?’ It is a question he addressed at length in his statement on receiving the Templeton Prize. It is worth quoting him on this matter: “It is clear that causal explanations are a vital part of the scientific method. Various processes in the universe can be displayed as a succession of states in such a way that the preceding state is a cause of the succeeding one. If we look deeper at such processes, we see that there is always a dynamical law prescribing how one state should generate another state. But dynamical laws are expressed in the form of mathematical equations, and if we ask about the cause of the universe we should ask about a cause of the mathematical laws. By doing so we are back in the Great Blueprint of God's thinking the Universe.”

In the same statement, he addressed the crucial issue of ‘randomness.’ “And what about chancy or random events? Do they destroy mathematical harmony of the universe, and introduce into it elements of chaos and disorder? Is chance a rival force of God's creative Mind, a sort of Manicheistic principle fighting against goals of creation? But what is chance? It is an event of low probability which happens in spite of the fact that it is of low probability. If one wants to determine whether an event is of low or high probability, one must use the calculus of probability, and the calculus of probability is a mathematical theory as good as any other mathematical theory. Chance and random processes are elements of the mathematical blueprint of the universe in the same way as other aspects of the world architecture.” Or, as he is reported elsewhere to have said, “God is also

the God of chance events. What from our point of view is chance, from God's point of view is His structuring of the universe.”

In the same vein, he is also vociferous in his opposition to so-called ‘Intelligent Design’ for reasons that he explains in his award statement. “Adherents of the so-called intelligent design ideology commit a grave theological error. They claim that scientific theories that ascribe the great role to chance and random events in the evolutionary processes should be replaced, or supplemented, by theories acknowledging the thread of intelligent design in the universe. Such views are theologically erroneous. They implicitly revive the old Manicheistic error postulating the existence of two forces acting against each other: God and an inert matter; in this case, chance and intelligent design. There is no opposition here. Within the all-comprising Mind of God what we call chance and random events is well composed into the symphony of creation.”

Before he knew of winning this year's Templeton Prize, Fr Heller had already been planning with colleagues the establishment of the ‘Copernicus Centre’ in conjunction with the Jagiellonian University and the Pontifical Academy of Theology, both in Krakow. He now intends to use all the £820,000 prize money to help create this new institute, which will be an interdisciplinary research group in science, philosophy and theology, an integration of study which is close to his heart. He sees that there is so much need to bring philosophy back into science, to help address the key questions of time and space, determinism and causality, which modern physics throws up.

His statement on receiving the award can be read at www.templetonprize.org.

The road from Regensburg

Ecumenical and inter-religious developments in the search for a modern apologetic



POPE BENEDICT ON THE SPECIFIC NEED OF OUR AGE

- To Iranian Shi'ite representatives – see opposite.

"Faith and Reason are the two things that the world needs today more than any other time and it is our duty to provide this need for society."

April 30th 2008

- To U.S. representatives of other religions, Washington D.C.:
"The broader purpose of dialogue is to discover the truth. What is the origin and destiny of mankind? What are good and evil? What awaits us at the end of our earthly existence? Only by addressing these deeper questions can we build a solid basis for the peace and security of the human family ... We are living in an age when these questions are too often marginalised. Yet they can never be erased from the human heart.

"Confronted with these deeper questions concerning the origin and destiny of mankind, Christianity proposes Jesus of Nazareth. He, we believe, is the eternal *Logos* who became flesh in order to reconcile man to God and reveal the underlying reason of all things. It is he whom we bring to the forum of interreligious dialogue."

April 17th 2008

REFLECTION ON POPE'S FAITH AND REASON AGENDA in the *Catholic Herald*

- The American Catholic writer George Weigel has suggested that Pope Benedict's Regensburg speech may prove to be his pontificate's defining moment, comparing it to Pope John Paul II's June 1979 visit to Poland.

"Consider the possibility that his 'June 1979' has already happened and that, just as in the real June 1979, most observers missed it ... In June 1979 a pope challenged the ideological

orthodoxy of a sclerotic communist system in Poland and the rest of the Warsaw Pact; in September 2006 a pope challenged the shopworn conventions of inter-religious dialogue ... and may have set in motion a process of intellectual and spiritual awakening that could help resolve the centuries-old question of whether Islam and pluralism can co-exist, and in such a way as to safeguard the religious freedom on all ... The Pope's courageous exercise in truth-telling at Regensburg has already begun to reshape the debate within Islam and between Islam and 'the rest'."

As we have noted in this column over the last year, other commentators and reactions have given us reason to think a similar assessment may eventually be made of the Regensburg address with regard to the foundations of secular rationalism.

18th April

- The *Corriere della Sera* assistant editor Magdi Allam, whose controversial Easter Vigil baptism by the Pope we reported upon in the May edition of this column, has stated that "the person who influenced me more than any other in determining my conversion to Catholicism was certainly the Pope, Benedict XVI, in indicating that the indissoluble union of faith and reason is fundamental to authentic religion." The prominent ex-Muslim went on to say that the Pope "has put himself above the fray; that is to say he has put faith and reason before other diplomatic and political considerations."

11th April

THE MULTI-CULTURAL TENSION DEVELOPS

The Canadian Human Rights Commission has been investigating the publication of Catholic teaching concerning homosexuality by *Catholic Insight* as possibly "homophobic".

Cases such as these have received little publicity until the prominent newsweekly *Maclean's Magazine* was recently taken to the British Columbian Human Rights Commission by the Canadian Islamic Congress accused by them of "flagrant Islamophobia". The main giving of offence was the publication of an extract of Mark Steyn's

book *America Alone* two years ago. This included a quotation of a Norwegian Imam suggesting that Muslims are "breeding like mosquitos". Steyn was emphasising the fact that Muslim birth rates in numerous countries are significantly higher than that of non-Muslims.

The Islamic suit against the alleged fostering of hate came after *Maclean's* refused to give in to a demand to make space for a reply, save in the letters' column, where a lively debate had already ensued. *Maclean's* said they would "rather go bankrupt".

The Province, June 2008

RECENT INITIATIVES highlighted on Sandro Magister's website www.chiesa

- At the end of April Cardinal Tauran and other Vatican representatives had two days of discussion on Faith and Reason with top representatives of Shi'ite Islam from Tehran.

Their conclusions affirmed that:

- Faith and Reason do not contradict each other and are intrinsically non-violent.
- Religious traditions cannot be judged on the basis of a single verse or passage present in their respective holy Book. A holistic understanding as well as an adequate hermeneutical method is necessary for a fair understanding of them.

Further meetings are planned.

- Among numerous non-Catholic constructive responses to last Year's Islamic Open Letter "A Common Word" the Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow and Russia, Alexy II, has suggested that future dialogue be "on the doctrinal level, on important questions like God, Man and the world ... and (on the practical level) on the defence of the role of religion in social life, the opposition of xenophobia and intolerance (and) the promotion of common initiatives for peace"

- Top of the agenda for an October conference in Hungary for Catholic, Protestant and Muslim leaders in Europe will be "the role of religions in secular society" and relations between Christians and Muslims.

comment on the comments



by
William Oddie

TAKING LEAVE OF OBLIGATION

I begin with the excellent Pastor Juventus column in *The Catholic Herald*. This quiet but compulsively readable column is about the spiritual life, written from the point of view of a working Parish Priest; it is, for me, the most unmissable regular contribution to the Catholic Press (I have an interest to declare here: it was I who in my days as editor of *The Catholic Herald* installed it as a weekly event). It isn't normally contentious or controversial; only when something happens that is destructive to the writer's or to his people's spiritual life. And in May he put his finger on an issue that has disturbed – even distressed – many of us: the moving of some Holy Days of obligation from a weekday to Sunday (thereby effectively reducing the number of such days). He begins quietly enough:

"The celebration of the Feast of the Ascension falling on a Sunday felt odd and out of kilter. The feast undoubtedly loses something by being shifted to a Sunday. What that something is is hard to define, but it is real nevertheless."

He goes on, however, to define rather well a good deal of why this is not merely a disturbing change – (after all, disturbance might do us some good, might shake us up in some spiritually productive way; religion isn't just about feeling comfortable) – but one which is for many people futile and wholly unproductive:

"Ironically, it is the fact that [the Ascension] has been transferred to a Sunday, which means that no extra effort is required to celebrate it and therefore no special sense attaches to it. It becomes less significant for being absorbed into the weekly routine."

That last sentence bears repetition, for it is fundamental to why there is such a widespread feeling that in some way our religious observance has by these changes been diminished and devalued: the day 'becomes *less significant* for being absorbed into the weekly routine'. Not only that: the fact that the feasts of the Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday and Corpus Christi are all now a week apart means that 'their particular significance will be crammed into the shortest possible time, leaving little sense of being able to savour them individually and fully'. Another compulsive reason against these disturbances, one which makes one wonder whether our bishops ever seriously think about the consequences of their bright ideas (or even if they care), is the effect on Catholic schools: I know, says Pastor Juventus, 'that Catholic schools are still feeling the sense that the bottom has fallen out of their liturgical year with the removal of these feasts, which shaped the landscape of their celebration of the Christian mystery as a faith community'.

Speaking personally, it means the grievous loss of something about Catholic observance which always used enormously to impress me as a non-Catholic: the spectacle of Catholics keeping their weekday obligations, often at enormous inconvenience to themselves: as an Anglican, for whom any liturgical obligation was essentially a matter of my own whim, this was immensely attractive: there was the sense that Catholics were under obedience, and that their religion was a real force in their lives, one not to be diverted by secular pressures or values. They were 'signs of contradiction': as Pastor Juventus powerfully expressed it:

"Moving these 'holydays' (how the etymology of that word says so much about what they were to our culture) represents a symbolic retreat of huge proportions; conceding the notion that the secular world and the imperative of its ephemeral commitments must now be considered more real than the way in which the divine has entered our history and shaped it."

That is strong stuff: but the sense of distress and outrage it conveys was widespread, and flowed over into the secular Press. If Pastor Juventus is the best columnist in the Catholic Press, Charles Moore (in my opinion) is the best columnist in the secular Press: his column in the *Saturday Daily Telegraph* is the best reason for humping home the vast weight of all those colour magazines and other weekend sections; and his diary column in *The Spectator* is usually the first thing I turn to. The same week that Pastor Juventus delivered himself on the subject of the Ascension, so did Charles Moore in *The Spectator*:

"As a convert to Roman Catholicism, I find myself surprisingly distressed by the decision of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales to declare Ascension Day, Corpus Christi and the Epiphany to be no longer Holydays of Obligation. The faithful will now not have to attend Mass on those days, but only on the nearest Sunday (which is always obligatory anyway). 'Obligation' is a strong word and, except for two occasions when I forgot, I have always fulfilled it on Holydays."

This attendance has taught me more about the particular feasts, and about the Mass, than I would otherwise have learnt. It is true that I could (and should) go to Mass without it being an obligation, but I know that, for the most part, I won't. It is particularly unhappy to shift the days of celebration because Epiphany and Ascension Day mark precise spaces of time (the 12 days of Christmas and the 40 days after Easter mirroring the 40 days of Lent). Faith needs these props.

Charles Moore's was not the only reaction which homed in on that loss of the particular point of the traditional day for celebrating the Ascension. A.N. Wilson 'went to church on Ascension Day and found that the feast had been abolished – or rather, moved to the following Sunday, thereby destroying the symbolism of 40 days separating the Ascension from the Resurrection. Whose bright idea was this? The Pope's? How the clergy love tinkering.' Well, it wasn't the Pope's bright idea in England, but confusingly

enough his diocese of Rome also transfers these feasts, though the Vatican doesn't. As Fr Finigan explained in his blog 'The Hermeneutic of Continuity':

"Technically, there is uniformity in that in Italy the Holydays are transferred to the Sunday but in the Vatican territory, they are observed on the traditional days. In practice, it means that you can go to the Ascension Mass at St Mary Major's or the non-Ascension Mass in any one of a number of Churches within a few minutes' walking distance..."

Fr Finigan goes on to touch on a related controversy; in England, he writes, 'it is becoming clearer that if there was an attempt to prevent traditionalists from celebrating the feasts on their traditional days, it seems to be failing. Mark Greaves has written an article for this week's *Catholic Herald* ('Bishops insist on uniformity for Masses on Holy Days') in which he quotes "an official" from *Ecclesia Dei* who dutifully says of traditionalists "They're obliged to keep to the Holy Days that have been agreed upon" but then goes on to say that there is "no problem" with them also celebrating them during the week.'

Well, up to a point. The attempt to argue that the extraordinary rite could be celebrated on the traditional holy days is in fact causing 'problems': and there seems to be a certain amount of creative disobedience going on. Damian Thompson summed up both the general situation and the particular question of the attempt by traditionalists to argue for the traditional days for celebrations of the 'old' mass. The bishops hate Thompson's blog and you can see why (apart from anything else, the fact that it's an official *Telegraph* blog means that they can't ignore it):

"The Bishops of England and Wales appear to have scored a point in their mean-spirited campaign against Catholics who use the old Latin liturgy. They have secured a ruling from Rome forcing traditionalists to follow the new practice of celebrating great feast days such as the Ascension and Corpus Christi on Sundays instead of weekdays. The

English and Welsh bishops abolished these ancient midweek Holydays of Obligation last year without consulting ordinary churchgoers, many of whom felt insulted. And now critics say they have moved against traditional Catholics in a similarly sneaky fashion.

"The news was broken in a press release on the bishops' politically correct website, which normally ignores traditionalists (and the Pope's decision to remove the power of bishops to block the old Mass). But when there is bad news to impart to traddies – well, that's different.

"Following a request for information, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales submitted a dubium (a query) to the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*, which confirmed that in the Roman Rite, whichever Form of the liturgy is being celebrated, the Holydays of Obligation are held in common. Where the obligation has been removed and the Holyday transferred to the Sunday, the Epiphany of the Lord, the Ascension of the Lord and Corpus Christi, this is to be followed in both Ordinary and Extraordinary celebrations of Mass.

"And that's it. The text of the bishops' request and the Vatican ruling is not given. Why not? You might expect that this development came after consultation with the Latin Mass Society – aren't the bishops supposed to be big on consulting the laity? Nope. The first the LMS knew about it was a blunt communication from Martin Foster, the bishops' liturgical "expert" and a seasoned opponent of traditionalists.

"It's hard to overestimate the anger this has caused in English Latin Mass circles. If ever there was a move designed to drive lovers of the old Missal back into the arms of the Lefebvrists, this was it. One very well-known conservative Catholic has described the announcement as 'Cormac's parting gift to the Latin Mass Society'. I couldn't possibly comment."

The effect in English 'Latin Mass circles', however, isn't the most important issue on which we need to focus, though

I agree that it does show that there is something remarkably 'mean-spirited' in the air, a fact which also emerged strongly in widespread attempts to frustrate the *motu proprio*; it also shows that although that many-faced and mysterious entity we tend simply to call 'Rome' can sometimes be relied on to defend us from reductionist tendencies in the English and Welsh Church, it is also the case that all too often it can't.

The real point is that the moving of these holydays of obligation to the following Sunday has had possibly unintended but nevertheless damaging consequences, which outweigh any conceivable gain (I accept that for a very small number of people it does mean that they will be able to celebrate these feasts – in however reduced a way – when previously they couldn't). I end by returning to Pastor Juventus's very strong piece in *The Catholic Herald*; and I italicise what seems to me the central point in all this:

"In these days of vigil Masses and evening Masses, it can never have been easier to attend Mass on a Holy Day. If people were not attending, the problem is scarcely resolved by moving the feasts to a Sunday, for as we know the percentage of those who see the Sunday obligation as always binding is ever decreasing. For the sake of those who do make the effort to attend, and as a reminder that the obligation to worship is imposed on us by God himself and is not subject to our convenience, it is my opinion that this universally unpopular change should be reversed forthwith."

It won't be, of course. Reversing it will involve a long and laborious campaign, and success if it comes may be years ahead. But we must not lie down under this. Perhaps the most cynical aspect of these changes is the insolent claim that they took place after a process of full consultation. The fact is that we were *not* consulted: but now we must make our voices heard.



Book

reviews



John Henry Newman Doctor of the Church

Foreword by Cardinal Avery Dulles, edited by Philippe Lefebvre & Colin Mason, Family Publications, 319pp, £12.95.

This is a handsome volume with a healthy content; and it is very timely since, now that the Boston miracle has been accepted in Rome, it is likely that Newman will be beatified very soon, then canonised and declared "Doctor of the Church".

This is a companion volume to *John Henry Newman in his time*, which the same team produced in 2007, but this book is more important because it is theologically substantial. It has fifteen essays divided into four main sections: Faith and Reason, The Church, Conscience and Development of Doctrine. In the Introduction to the volume Fr Keith Beaumont provides a useful and lucid summary of each of the contributions. Then in his Prologue he draws us into "Newman as theologian and spiritual guide". This is an excellent essay. Anyone who is puzzled by the Newman phenomenon and wonders why anyone is drawn to him would do well to read this. To fall under Newman's spell is more than appreciating his literary skill or his clever ideas. It is to be drawn personally and intimately into the realities of God and His revelation in Christ. My one little quibble with the Prologue is that Newman's Anglican spirituality has to be interpreted in the light of his becoming a Catholic. There was an anxiety and spiritual

striving in his Anglican writings which disappeared in 1845 – "It was like coming into harbour after a rough sea."

Newman was the promoter of a *liberal* education and the sworn enemy of liberalism in religion. Fortunately, in the Appendix the editors provide us with the complete text of Newman's Biglietto speech on being made a cardinal in which he defines *liberalism* in *religion* and explains its dangers and viral spread. Anyone who has not read it should start here because most of the essays in the book presume knowledge of it.

In the Faith and Reason section, Arnella Francis Clamor, explains Newman's "no medium... between Atheism and Catholicity", and then engages developments in atheism since Newman's time. Jane Rupert writes on "the tyranny of method in contemporary education", comparing and contrasting Newman and Rousseau. While it may be a caricature, I could not help but think of a degree course inspired by Rousseau in which you set your own subject, design your own course work and assess the result yourself! Fr Robert Barron then provides an overview of Newman's treatment of liberalism in religion.

The second section has six essays: on the Church (David Grea), on the Church and the world (Andrew Nash), on the sense of the faithful (Edward Miller), on reception (Richard Penaskovic), on the Magisterium (Austin Cooper) and on Vatican II (Jean Rencki). The recent attacks on Cardinal Keith O'Brien and Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor made me think of Newman's remark, "When the Church and the world make peace, the world has won." These essays on the Church give clear exposition of his views, but I am hesitant about the application of the *sensus fidelium* and reception. The authors do not touch the matter, but sometime someone is going to have to bite the bullet and treat the present

stand-off between the *sensus fidelium* and reception of teaching on the one hand and *Humanae vitae* on the other.

In the third section Luc Terlinden provides a lucid and important exposition of Newman's teaching on conscience. This is followed by Bernard Mahoney on Newman and moral liberalism.

The fourth section treats the development of doctrine. James Pereiro expounds Newman on tradition and development. Edward Enright takes up the same matter and compares and contrasts Newman with Schleiermacher and von Harnack. Charles Talar treats Newman in relation to the Modernist crisis at the beginning of the last century; and Thomas Ryba discusses Newman's theory of development in theology and sees strong similarities with Imre Lakatos's description of change and development in the natural sciences.

These are solid essays, well researched and well written. Only two of the authors are based in this country. The others are from North America, Australia and continental Europe – another sign of Newman's universal appeal. The team which produced the book should first be congratulated on it and then shot because there is no index. Cardinal Avery Dulles, who wrote one of the best books on Newman, has provided a kind Foreword to this volume, noting the need for such essays to put Newman's work in perspective, but "One cannot sufficiently recommend the reading of Newman's own writings."

Mgr Michael Sharkey

Holy Cross

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Mind, Brain and the Elusive Soul: Human Systems of Cognitive Science and Religion

by Mark Graves, Ashgate, 256pp

The dialogue between neuroscience and theology began under duress. Neuroscientific research in the '90s seemed to provide explanations for mental phenomena (like memory, emotion etc.) in a purely neurobiological framework. It seemed to many that progress in neuroscience would do away with the need for 'mind-talk' and replace it with 'brain-talk'. This process of reductionism appeared to threaten the theological idea of the soul (insofar as 'mind' is synonymous with or a faculty of 'soul'). From this difficult beginning, there have developed several distinct positions in the dialogue. Some, mainly on the scientific side of the table, have been labelled *physicalist reductionists*: they hold that the project of science does indeed involve eliminating any 'mystical' notions we have of mentality – the brain, for them, is the mind. Opposed to these reductionists are *dualists* of various varieties, who hold that one may in fact speak of two different entities making up the human person: soul/spirit and flesh. The mind is associated with the former, and the brain is part of the latter. Neuroscience, according to the dualists, merely *correlates* mind-activity and brain-activity – it does not reduce one to the other. Finally, there are those who hold to *non-reductive physicalism* (NRP). This group rejects dualism (for both theological and scientific reasons) but refuses simply to identify mind with brain. Nancey Murphy, a leading proponent of NRP, wrote that its central belief is that "the person is a physical organism whose complex functioning, both in society and in relation to God gives rise to 'higher' human capacities such as morality and spirituality". The two major questions that NRP must answer are 1) If humans are purely physical, why reject reductionism? and 2) How do these 'higher' human

capacities (which traditional theology would associate with the soul) arise?

Mark Graves' book is an admirable attempt to answer these two questions, which he does largely by drawing upon his professional acquaintance with systems theory. He gives examples of complex systems of relationships that are made up of several different levels, in each case attempting to answer the question, "how is the whole greater than the sum of the parts?" (65). This property, known as 'emergence', is the focus of much of the book. An example used by Graves is water: on the one hand, one can study water at the molecular level, discovering both its molecular makeup and shape, and the laws that govern individual molecules. On the other hand, one can study water at the macroscopic level, at which level the laws of thermodynamics apply (allowing us to predict the phase of water under given conditions, for example). The author notes that one cannot predict the properties of water at a macroscopic level on the basis of knowledge of water molecules. On the higher level, new properties seem to have emerged that are not simply reducible to those of the lower level:

"Emergence grounds everything in the constituents (i.e. lower-level entities), but nevertheless the interaction between constituents results in the gradual appearance of properties or substances that cannot be reduced to the component parts." (103)

The usefulness of this concept to the non-reductive physicalist is clear: it offers hope that the mind/soul can be described as an emergent property of the brain/body. A physicalist description of the person as a 'mere' body, then, is seen to leave out essential information which can only be accounted for with 'mind-talk'. At the same time, one avoids the dualism that is so unfashionable at present: the mind/soul is not held to be a separate, inserted entity, but a phenomenon that emerges naturally from the brain/body.

There is much of interest in this book – it is one of the few in the field that brings computer science (and particular, systems theory) to bear on theological questions. It offers a comprehensive account of the notion of 'form', and the problems posed to it in the scientific age, and could also act as a useful introduction to the idea of emergence (it includes enough complex 'relationality' graphs to make the editor of a certain magazine weak at the knees...). Most tantalisingly of all, the author proposes an analogy between the way the soul/self is shaped by the decisions we make, and the way constraints in a system shape that system.

However, it fails on several fronts. Firstly, and most importantly, it fails to engage with the rich tradition of Christian theology in any thoroughgoing way. While the author is clearly conversant with recent trends in 'Science and Religion', he betrays little acquaintance with medieval or patristic theology. In a book which offers a radical rethink on the nature of the soul, this is a fatal flaw. Secondly, the style of the writing is somewhat inconsistent: some chapters are overflowing with examples, others are far more abstract.

Finally, the book lacks 'form' itself: too often, the author merely acts as a conduit for the opinions of other scholars without drawing his observations together into a coherent conclusion. A major problem with the field of 'Science and Religion' is that the literature consists largely of the repetition of already-stated ideas by a few major figures, and it seems to this writer that it would benefit from thinkers with a certain distance from (and therefore freedom from) the present coterie of writers. Graves' book promises originality, but it is too much of a resumé of recent discourse to count as a genuine contribution.

Conor McDonough
Ampleforth College
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What do Catholics Believe?

by Leonie Caldecott, Granta Books, 110pp, £6.95p

This is a persuasive, gently written, thoughtful paperback aimed at the non-Christian reader and is part of a series. Others in the series include 'What do Druids Believe?' 'What do Greens Believe?' and 'What do Astrologers Believe?' as well as more conventional offerings from Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim writers.

Leonie Caldecott writes in a style and with assumptions that make her offerings interesting and acceptable to people who have been brought up to believe in a market-place idea of religion, that it's 'all about choice' and that we need to evaluate belief-systems in the light of our own knowledge and skills, or what we imagine to be our own knowledge and skills. She succeeds because she does not take anything for granted by way of goodwill or sympathy in her audience – she assumes, in a very realistic way, that there will be assumptions made about a Church which most people will know only through the prism of today's TV cameras and commentaries.

I use the expression 'gently written' because that is what emerges from the book – here are no forceful debating-points, brilliantly scored, written with glee, and supported by footnotes. Rather, there is a systematic tackling of Church doctrine and history, with a good glossary (everything from "altar" and "Assumption" through "Liberation theology" to "Ressourcement" "Transubstantiation" and "theology of the body"), useful recommendations for further reading, and an excellent index. The tone throughout is not argumentative or even particularly emphatic. It is courteous and explanatory, rather as if the author is talking to a good friend whom she has known for years and is aware carries certain anti-Catholic prejudices and considerable ignorance

but also goodwill and genuine interest in the subject of the Church.

Certain topics are tackled early on, including the hideous subject of priests' sexual abuse of minors, and this gives the reader a sense of being present at a conversation which is real and open, not a rant or a monologue.

Specific doctrines are tackled well – the section on the Mass is excellent, with a quote from Justin in the second century chiming in well with the author's words on the reality of Christ's presence and the practice of Eucharistic adoration. I like the section on saints. It starts in an almost New Age-ish sort of way: "The saints are the ecosystem of the Church, all interconnected in their marvellous diversity..." and goes on to explain the process of canonisation and the way in which Catholics understand Heaven and earth to be deeply interconnected "...Catholics believe that good people who have died are never completely cut off from the rest of us. Being in God, they are still aware of us and our needs. They are in Christ and in him we can touch each other...Saints are not VIPs on a red carpet: they are a working body of souls with special responsibilities for those who come after them. They are the most mysterious and glorious way that God shares his very being with his own creatures."

If I were a University chaplain, or a priest giving talks to schools about the Faith, I would use this book and pass it on to enquirers. It is an honest introduction to the huge reality of God and his Church, and speaks in a way that is likely appeal to today's generation. Its cover, showing a chalice with a rosary lying alongside, speaks of Catholicism and invites the reader to open the book and learn more. I hope many do.

Joanna Bogle
New Malden,
Surrey

In the Footsteps of Joseph Ratzinger

by Alessandra Borghese, Family Publications/Catholic Herald, 111pp, £7.95p

I wanted this book the moment I saw its cover – a reprint of that picture of Pope Benedict XVI as a small boy, school satchel on his back, wide eyes with merriment in them, a sweet smile, an old-fashioned home-knitted jersey, a life's adventure before him.

The author's name vaguely rang bells from gossip columns. And it's the most famous surname in Italy, carved in stone across the front of St Peter's, built in the reign of a Pope from the Borghese family.

But be warned – the book is charming and enjoyable, but will also disappoint. The author tells us enthusiastically about a journey made with a friend, Gloria Thurn und Taxis, around the places in Bavaria associated with Pope Benedict XVI: his birthplace, the scenes of his boyhood in Tittmoning and Altoetting, and the cities of Munich and Regensburg. But she never really let us get as near to them as we would like, because somehow she is there in front of us, getting in the way! We get a great many of her thoughts – sometimes helpful, sometimes banal – and it is difficult not to feel patronised.

Some of the writing is clumsy and ponderous: "Gloria explained that I was witnessing a typical Bavarian scene and pointed out an interesting fact..." Some is just a bit too pious. And we get rather a lot of descriptions of how well treated they were on their pilgrimage, which is jolly nice to know, but also just a little irritating: no waiting in queues to visit places of importance, or munching home-made sandwiches in makeshift picnics for this pair, and we are told of every Mayoral greeting, tasty meal, and private tour of lovely places. "The mayor, whom we had met only a few weeks previously, invited us to sit in the seats that had been reserved for him..."

The illustrations show no scenes from the Pope's childhood, but simply views of the churches and towns visited, and the only pictures of the Holy Father are those with – yes, here they are again – our author and her friend well to the fore.

But for all that, I enjoyed this book. It is redeemed by an obviously huge respect and admiration for the Pope, a genuine faith, and an enthusiasm for both of these things that give the whole project an almost schoolgirl quality which makes it rather endearing. And there are some nuggets of information that I enjoyed discovering: the font in which Joseph Ratzinger was baptised now has a fresh rose placed beside it daily, the village school that he attended celebrated its 120th anniversary the year he became Pope, the farmhouse where he lived as a boy dates back to 1726 and the road leading to it is now *Papst Benedikt XVI Weg*.

The comments about liturgy and related issues – a frustration with intrusive front-facing altars in the naves of baroque churches and so on – express in coded language the author's passionate preferences in this area, and will strike a chord with some Catholics. For this reason the book is likely to have something of a cult readership – but why not? In a bleak world, a bit of solidarity with like-minded folk doesn't do much harm.

In the Footsteps helps to bring alive the strong Bavarian Catholic culture – mountain shrines, local traditional foods, beautiful music, glorious baroque churches – that shaped the mind and lifted the heart of the man who is now our Pope. And it did strengthen my respect and affection for him, and help me to understand what a glorious thing it is to belong to the Church. It also made me want to visit Bavaria.

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St Francis of Assisi and the Conversion of the Muslims

by Frank M. Rega, *Tan Books and Publishers*
(available from Southwell Books), 152pp, £6.95

In the wake of the furore over Pope Benedict XVI's lecture at Regensburg and the more recent uproar over the remarks made by Rowan Williams on Sharia Law, this book by Frank Rega on the approach made by St Francis of Assisi towards the Muslims is both timely and relevant. He previously authored a fascinating book on Padre Pio, and is a long time student of all things Franciscan.

Islam presented a challenge to Christianity in the thirteenth century, and it is an even more pressing challenge in the twenty-first century, one destined, it would seem, to grow ever more serious, and thus one which will increasingly demand a response from both the Church and the West. The question is: how do we respond to Islam? Some people seem to want to do very little, for fear of antagonising Muslim extremists, while others talk of a 'war on terror' as a way of eliminating these same extremists. However, it is certain that neither appeasement nor violence is going to solve the problem of how the West can really deal with Islam, and so it is sensible to look at the approach taken by St Francis, to see what we can learn from him.

Frank Rega has done this in this appealing book, which is split into three main parts. The most important of these is the middle section dealing directly with St Francis's encounter with Islam and Sultan al-Malik al Kamil, the ruler of Egypt, Palestine and Syria, during the Fifth Crusade in the early thirteenth century. The other two parts deal with his earlier life and then his experiences as a stigmatist, respectively, leading up to his death in 1226. The main interest is clearly in the meeting with the Sultan, but the other sections give us an engaging outline of the main events of the Saint's

life, based in many cases on first hand sources, one of which is full of detail and colour.

To understand what St Francis was trying to do in meeting with, and possibly converting, the Sultan, we have to appreciate that he was fully prepared to sacrifice his life in the attempt – to endure martyrdom – if necessary. But he also had a more general aim of establishing a Franciscan presence in the area, and the fact that the Franciscans are still the custodians of the Holy Places is an eloquent testimony to lasting power of his influence.

Thus, St Francis and a small group of his followers found themselves with the Crusading army before the city of Damietta on the Nile Delta, in Egypt, in July 1219. If Damietta could be taken, it would lead to the fall of Cairo and thus of all Egypt. However, the siege of Damietta was proving unsuccessful. The Crusaders impetuously decided to attack the Sultan's main force further up the Nile, despite the fact that it had been prophetically revealed to St Francis that they would be defeated – and he had informed them of this. The result was a terrible disaster for the Crusading army, but it gave Francis the opportunity he had been looking for, that of contacting the Muslims directly to speak to them of Christ, and hopefully convert them, thus ending the hostilities.

Some people are uneasy about the idea of trying to convert others to the Faith, and particularly the idea of trying to convert Muslims. But in all this, St Francis was doing nothing more than Ascension commandment of Christ, that his followers should go out into the whole world and make disciples of *all* nations.

A truce was arranged between the exhausted opposing forces, and so St Francis and a companion, Brother Illuminato – who was probably able to act as translator – were able to cross the lines separating the armies, and enter the Sultan's camp. Miraculously – since it was reported that all captured Christians would be beheaded – and despite some ill treatment, the two eventually found themselves in the tent of the Sultan.

With astonishing boldness, Francis immediately announced the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Sultan, while emphasising that his own concern was for the eternal salvation of the Muslim leader, who was apparently deeply moved by the Holy Man's courage, enthusiasm, and steadfastness. He desired to hear more, and the important point to note is that St Francis did not directly attack the tenets of Islam, but rather focused on expounding the Christian Gospel. The Sultan called his religious advisors, the *Imams*, to debate with the Christians, but, in accordance with Islamic Law, they refused instead insisting that Francis and Illuminato be killed.

The Sultan, however, refused to do this, and so the Franciscans were able to stay as his guests, and he apparently listened to what Francis had to say with a great deal of attention, frequently calling him so that they could converse. It's hard not to be reminded of the parallel with John the Baptist before Herod, or St Paul before Felix. In all this, the Sultan was undoubtedly influenced by the great personal holiness and magnetism of St Francis, and also by the fact that there were some similarities between Franciscan spirituality and that of the Sufis, Muslim mystics with whom the Sultan was well acquainted.

Francis offered to prove the truth of Christianity by submitting to trial by fire, along with the Imams, to see who would emerge unharmed by the

flames, but the Sultan politely refused, realising that his religious advisors would probably not be keen on the idea. The Saint then offered to enter the flames alone, on condition that the Sultan and his court should become Christians if he emerged unscathed, but again the Muslim leader refused, fearful that his followers would revolt if he renounced Islam.

After further disputations, and a failed attempt to give Francis money and presents, the perplexed Sultan was even more inclined to admire the *Poverello*, as a "man different from all others." But his followers were growing restive, and the Franciscans finally decided to return to their camp, accompanied by a contingent of Saracen cavalry. However, it does seem that Francis had a very positive influence on the conduct of the Sultan, in that he behaved with considerable moderation in his future dealings with the Christians, and there is even a pious legend to the effect that he was converted on his deathbed to Christianity.

So what can we learn from St Francis as regards how we, as Christians, can relate to the Muslims of today? The answer to this crucial question, as Frank Rega points out, is found in Chapter XVI of the Franciscan *Rule of 1221*, a chapter which focuses on two possible ways that Friars could conduct themselves in Muslim lands. Firstly, they were to lead an exemplary Christian life, so as to proclaim the Gospel effectively, but without words. Secondly, though, the majority of the chapter is devoted to the idea that they are to proclaim the Word of God openly, with a view to conversion and baptism. Crucially, Francis insisted on prudence, and that the Islamic religion should never be denounced or criticised, aware that martyrdom was a distinct possibility for any Friar who was courageous enough to preach the Gospel in Muslim lands – as was the case for many Franciscan missionaries in the years to come.

The message for us seems to be that if we are to truly be able to influence Muslims then we should hope to emulate the holiness of St Francis, to preach the Gospel to them boldly but humbly, to be truly inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that our words and actions are not merely empty sounds and gestures.

St Francis of Assisi and the Conversion of the Muslims is a great encouragement in this important task.

Donal Anthony Foley
Castle Donington
Leics



Notes from across the Atlantic

by Richard John Neuhaus



SCIENCE AND CONSCIOUSNESS

John Searle, professor of philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley, has been writing for years and years on the quandaries of the brain-mind-consciousness connections. We have what I expect are basic disagreements, but he is always instructive. His most recent book is *Freedom and Neurobiology* (Columbia University Press), and it is reviewed by David Papineau, a philosopher at King's College, London, in the *Times Literary Supplement*. A strength of Searle's approach is that he is attentive to thinking and consciousness as we experience thinking and consciousness. This is sometimes called a commonsensical approach, and Papineau doesn't think much of it. "Common sense is all very well," he writes, "but it has many strands, and they aren't always internally consistent, especially when they need to be squared with the findings of science." Ah yes, the findings of science. Searle is critical of the vulgar reductionism by which mind is exhaustively explained by reference to neural synapses in the pound of thinking meat that is the brain. He says that consciousness is "causally reducible" to the physical world but is not "ontologically reducible". Papineau thinks this comes close to talking nonsense. "Quantum mechanics," he says, "tells us that the probabilities of physical effects are always fixed by prior physical circumstances." Apart from the problems with the idea of "fixed probabilities", one might think that Papineau's readiness to surrender to the physicists the last word on human thinking imperils his employment as a philosopher. The chief difficulty is

with the idea of science as the study of that which is under our control and can be subjected to examination and experiment. In this definition of science, the scientist seeking to understand consciousness by studying the brain is not studying consciousness. More specifically, he is not studying the consciousness of the scientist seeking to understand consciousness by studying the brain. John Searle hasn't figured out how we think and why, and perhaps nobody ever will, but he is suggestive and instructive because, unlike David Papineau and many others, he refuses to define science down.

DIALOGUE WITH ATHEISTS

Marx, Freud and, above all, Nietzsche are atheists for whom one can have a measure of intellectual respect. They, says John F. Haught in his book *God and the New Atheism*, understood that when God and religion are eliminated life does not go on as usual. Haught calls them the hard-core atheists. It's quite a different matter with the new crop of soft-core atheists. Haught writes: "Dawkins declares that the biblical God is a monster, Harris that God is evil, Hitchens that God is not great. But without some fixed sense of rightness how can one distinguish what is monstrous, evil or 'not great' from its opposite? In order to make such value judgments one must assume, as the hard-core atheists are honest enough to acknowledge, that there exists somewhere, in some mode of being, a realm of rightness that does not owe its existence completely to human invention, Darwinian selection or social construction. And if we allow the hard-core atheists into our discussion, we can draw this conclusion: If absolute values exist, then God exists. But if God does not exist, then neither do absolute values, and one should not issue moral judgments as though they do. Belief in God or the practice of religion is not

necessary in order for people to be highly moral beings. We can agree with soft-core atheists on this point. But the real question, which comes not from me but from the hard-core atheists, is: Can you rationally justify your unconditional adherence to timeless values without implicitly invoking the existence of God?"

CHRISTIAN AMERICA

In late February, much news attention was paid the "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey" released by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, and deservedly so. A landscape survey is just that, however. The methodologies of survey research cannot tell us what is happening on the ground, never mind what is happening in people's hearts. Researchers set up categories and then ask people to identify themselves in relation to them. The survey describes the American religious scene as "very diverse and extremely fluid", which is undoubtedly true. That has always been the case, but it is perhaps more so today. Almost 80 percent of Americans identify themselves as Christians, with, despite all the talk about growing religious pluralism, no more than 5 per cent claiming other religions. (And perhaps no more than 1 per cent identifying as Muslim.) The 16 per cent who say they are religiously "unaffiliated" includes a large majority who say they believe in God, pray, and are more or less like their mainly Christian neighbours, except they don't identify themselves with a specific religious tradition or community. For Protestants, Pew offers three categories: evangelical, mainline and historically black. If by *evangelical* one means someone who has had a conversion experience, believes in the authority of the Bible and tries to share the faith with others, there are millions of evangelicals in "mainline" churches such as the United Methodist, ELCA Lutheran and Presbyterian Church USA,

as well as the Catholic Church, although most of them would not call themselves evangelicals. The loose use of *evangelical* also results in frequent headlines declaring that evangelicals divorce, engage in extramarital sex and do other un-evangelical things at more or less the same rates as the general population. To which *real* evangelicals say that such people are not really evangelicals. With Catholics, it's different. There are no experiential or behavioural tests for being a Catholic. "Once a Catholic, always a Catholic" and all that. Being a faithful Catholic is something else. The Pew data do suggest an alarming rate of Catholics who no longer identify themselves as such. It seems that one out of ten adult Americans is a lapsed Catholic. I'll await the results of other number-crunching analysts before commenting further on that. The finding that received most attention is that 44 percent of Americans have changed religions or denominations at least once in their lifetime. With few exceptions, these are changes within the Christian tradition, broadly defined. The new Pew survey, like all such projects since the beginning of modern survey research in the 1920s, indicates that America continues to be a confusedly and, it would seem, incorrigibly Christian society. So one might say there is nothing new in the study, except that increased "fluidity" might be bad news for those traditions, such as Catholicism, with a strong connection between religious identity and ecclesial adherence.

THAT HIERARCHY THING AGAIN

The former editor of *America*, a Jesuit weekly, offers his response to the Pew data to the readers of the *Washington Post*, many of whom probably found his analysis plausible. The reason so many Catholics have lapsed, he said, is that Catholic loyalty was once "based on family pressure, ethnic neighbourhoods and lack of competition rather than personal

commitment". They also stuck with the Church "out of fear of damnation", but people don't believe that kind of thing any more. Catholics "became educated, got better jobs and moved out of their ghettos and into the suburbs". One is reminded of the *Washington Post* description of evangelicals as poor, uneducated and easily led. The Jesuit father repeatedly blames the hierarchy of the Church, which he describes as "overanxious" and "authoritarian". Appeal to authority on questions such as birth control, divorce and women priests "did not satisfy an educated people who wanted to be convinced with arguments". On those and other questions, one might note, the Jesuits have not been conspicuous in providing supportive arguments. The "creative ideas" of theologians were respected at the Second Vatican Council, he writes, but since then such theologians have been "attacked and silenced by the hierarchy". As a result, he writes, theologians have been alienated. I expect that theologians comprise a very small portion of lapsed Catholics. "A secular comparison would be to see the church as a company where the management and research division were not on speaking terms. Would you invest in such a company?" Probably not, but, if the problem is that the research division is sabotaging the business the company is in, the answer might be to get a new research division. Under the oppressive hierarchy, "liturgical experimentation was forbidden". That will come as news to innumerable Catholics in parishes that have had to endure the liturgical creativity of Father Jim and Sister Trixy. "Most Protestant services are more interesting and moving than Catholic services." I don't know how many Protestant services father has attended, but is there something more interesting and moving than the Real Presence of Christ in the Mass? But enough. There is not a wisp of self-criticism in this wearily familiar complaint of

adolescence coming upon its sunset years in unrelenting resentment that its "creativity" in destabilising, confusing, obfuscating and undercutting Catholic faith and life has not received uncritical parental approval. Just imagine what might have been accomplished were it not for that authoritarian hierarchy and mean father figure in Rome.

ALL ABOUT SAVING SOULS

Inner-city ministry, as it was called, was all the rage when I was a young Lutheran pastor. That had everything to do with my exulting in my call to a very poor, black and depressed parish in Brooklyn. Later, I considered but finally declined an invitation to head up the Urban Institute in Chicago, which was an ecumenical training school for urban ministries. One of the heroes of that time was Chicago's Monsignor Reynold Hillenbrand, who inspired countless priests as rector of the Mundelein Seminary. The *Chicago Sun Times* reports on an exhibit featuring Catholicism in Chicago and quotes Monsignor Hillenbrand, who died in 1978, as telling priests "to get out of the rectories and stop just saving souls and start saving neighbourhoods and people". All these years later, one cannot help but be ambivalent about that exhortation. Certainly priests should get out of the rectory, and saving neighbourhoods is a good cause. But when priests stop believing that their premier mission is to save souls, it is unlikely that they'll be very good at saving anything else. And, of course, Chicago's neighbourhoods were not saved. As for the number of souls saved, we await the final report.

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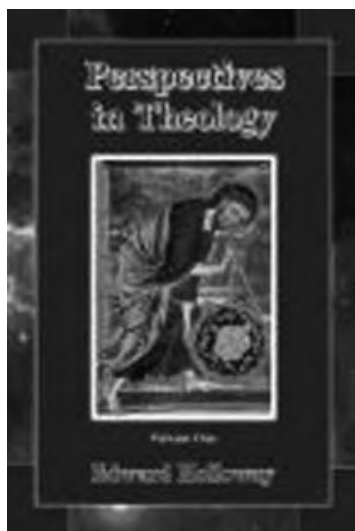
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Faith Movement offers a perspective of creation through evolution by which we can show clearly the transcendent existence of God and the essential distinction between matter and spirit. We offer a vision of God as the true Environment of men in whom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

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

www.faith.org.uk