

# faith

May • June 2008 • Volume 40 • Number 3

**The Heythrop Study and Evangelising Modernity**  
Editorial

**Heythrop's Prescription: Post-Modern Catechesis?**  
Paul Watson

**Modern Theology and Modern Catechesis**  
David Barrett

**Abolishing Fatherhood – Modernity's Final Folly?**  
Jamie Bogle

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Road from Regensburg on **calling Islam and Modernity to reason**  
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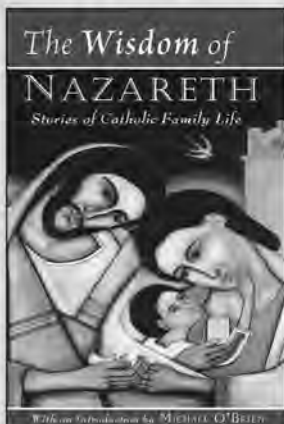
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### Editor

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

### Editorial Board

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

### Book Reviews

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

### Advertising Manager

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

### Subscriptions and Faith-Keyway Trust Publications Office

Paul Butcher  
16a off Coniston Way,  
Reigate RH2 0LN  
Tel 01737 770016  
Fax 01737 770016  
subscriptions@faith.org.uk

UK £25/year,  
Europe (inc. Eire) £29/year  
Surface Mail overseas £28/year  
Air Mail overseas £33/year  
Single copies £5 inc. p&p,  
Bulk orders £3.50 plus p&p  
Student rate £17/year

Published by the Faith-Keyway  
Trust registered charity No. 278314

Printed by Tudor Printing  
01772 633098 ISSN 1356-126X

# Evangelising as well as Evaluating Modern Man

*"I thank you Lord for revealing these things to mere children and hiding them from the learned and the clever."*  
(Matthew 11:25)

*"The evangelisation of modernity calls for a realist reclamation of the concept of human nature, fulfilled in Christ. ...The de-naturing of reality, which has sadly been a concomitant of the modern 'turn to the subject', has undermined the very fabric of human community as well as Christian soteriology."*

In a characteristically engaging commentary on the Heythrop study "On the Way to Life" by Frs James Hanvey and Anthony Carroll (OTWTL), Fr Timothy Radcliffe gives this story and related question:

*"I have had almost no contact with schools since I was a pupil myself. When I mentioned this to a friend of mine, who is a teacher in a non-denominational school, he suggested that I come over and have lunch with some of his pupils. It was enjoyable; we talked about films and novels, holidays and sport. I felt at ease in their company. After they had gone, my friend suggested that the next time I could talk to them about my faith. I had a feeling of panic. What words could I find that would engage with the experience of these bright young people?"*

This is an important question which needs to be carefully pondered. But the situation is not as hopeless as is implied. It is quite possible to go into a non-denominational school and speak about science and religion, about the nature of the human person from a Catholic perspective, about the historicity of the gospels, or indeed about why we venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints. Many of us have engaged in just such an exercise with a gratifyingly positive reception, offering something that is both fresh and a challenge to the culture in which our young interlocutors are immersed. St Paul did something similar in Athens when he Christianised the Greek verse "In Him we live and move and have our being" with a result that is likely to be repeated: some mock, some are uninterested, and some wish to "hear more about these things." (Acts 17:28 & 32)

We would see the need for some qualifications and corrections to the response to Radcliffe's challenge offered by the Heythrop study. The study sets out to offer a framework for religious education and catechesis. As a serious sociological and philosophical analysis of modernity commissioned by the Bishop's Conference of England and Wales it is a significant project. Over recent decades this magazine has often attempted discernment and critique of the theology behind modern catechesis. The study brings out and develops such theology and so gives us a good opportunity to discuss ideas which have made and are likely to continue to make a big impact upon the Church. In this issue Fr David Barrett offers a "constructive critique" of such theology. We also carry a paper critical of OTWTL by Fr Watson and others of the Maryvale Institute which *Faith Magazine* is happy to endorse.

## A Careful Approach

Culture is a difficult term to pin down and OTWTL offers an engaging and thought-provoking attempt to analyse how best the Catholic community can respond to what it frequently calls "modernity", now conceived in post-modernist terms as a society that has both privatised spirituality and championed the "needs" of the individual for such things as freedom, autonomy and self expression. Rightly, the



study points out that religious education and catechesis take place within ecclesial, secular and personal contexts that intersect: religious education will not be successful if it ignores the language that pupils speak and the assumptions that they make, based on the world around them.

OTWTL takes great care not to fall into any of the pitfalls that await the unwary in this field. It looks at various ways in which the community of the Church can engage with modernity and dismisses none of them outright. There is a clear recognition of the possibility of a critique of modernity together with an intelligent assessment of how the culture of modernity interacts with the community of the Church which can itself be analysed in terms of its own changes of culture.

Nevertheless, some themes emerge which form part of the overall thrust of the study and its suggested responses to modernity with which *Faith Magazine* would not only wish to take issue but would also criticise as harmful to the project of the new evangelisation called for by Pope John Paul and addressed by Cardinal Ratzinger as a theologian and Pope Benedict XVI as the supreme Pastor.

### The Culture Itself in Crisis

Overall, OTWTL examines the culture of modernity as a given phenomenon. Certainly the study is not uncritical; but we would say that it is far from critical enough. Key beliefs that are supposedly validated by modernity include “‘freedom’, ‘objectivity’, ‘rationality’, privacy, the authority of conscience, and freedom of self-expression.” (p.13). Peter Kreeft, Michael O’Brien, Richard John Neuhaus and others have eloquently addressed these “key beliefs” of modernity in terms of the “Culture Wars” that are more evident in North America because there are more Christians there willing to engage in the discussion with confidence.

In the UK, we are less fitted to engage with these key beliefs because, as the Pope recently said to the Pontifical Council for Culture, “Secularisation ... has been manifest for some time in the heart of the Church herself.” We have allowed these beliefs to corrode the Church’s ability to define her own key beliefs and to offer a rational critique of the counterfeit versions of such things as human nature, autonomy and objectivity which are part of the culture in which we live. This inability is particularly lamentable because it is evident that the culture itself is in crisis. Now, more than ever, our world needs the Church to articulate its own key beliefs in a frank dialogue with those of the culture which have not proved adequate to task of fostering humanity. As our *Road from Regensburg* column in this issue brings out, the Pope’s recent Easter Vigil baptism of a prominent Muslim has been a symbolic expression of such an approach.

It is true that the Church has not been successful in influencing public policy. This is at least partly due to her uncertain voice concerning key beliefs which go to the heart of the cultural malaise. *Humanae Vitae*, widely rejected both within and outside the Church, is undoubtedly the key to reaffirming the place of the family at the heart of the culture and yet few Catholic catechists or teachers are equipped to give a positive account of its teaching. OTWTL mentions the widespread dissent from the teaching only as an example of the modern crisis in authority. As the Maryvale critique observes, not only is *Humanae Vitae* left “hanging in the air” but the relevant magisterial teaching of Pope John Paul II is simply not mentioned.

### The Turn to the Subject

The major philosophical trend within the culture of modernity discerned and described by OTWTL is the “turn to the subject”. It is well captured but, we think, ineffectively qualified by Christian revelation.

OTWTL speaks of an “epistemological shift” since Vatican II which, if harnessed appropriately, can Christianise the modern ‘turn’. In this context it praises Paddy Purnell’s *Our Faith Story* as well as arguing for a more explicit re-positioning of the human subject in the context of the transcendent and the Church (e.g. p.27) to avoid the “danger that values and presuppositions of secular modernity predominate” (footnote 79, p.35). It completes this proposed inculturation through a sacramental vision of creation inspired by Karl Rahner’s theology of nature and grace.

The assumption of OTWTL that “grace is integral to nature (such that) all nature has in some way the capacity to disclose grace and be a vehicle of it” (p.40) has been a part of school religious education for some time now. The pedagogy of the *Here I Am* programme, based on the philosophy and theology of *Our Faith Story*, is to begin with the child’s experience of, for example, journeys or ‘special people’ and then engage with this experience by a process of “*Recognise, Reflect, Respect, Relate, Rejoice, Remember and Renew.*” *Faith Magazine* (Sept. 1992) carried a critique of *Here I Am* shortly after its publication. A Vatican official at the time offered the opinion that the critique’s negative remarks about the theology of Karl Rahner were akin to “attacking granny.” Fifteen years on perhaps granny may now be open to polite criticism, especially in the context of the reappraisal taking place under Pope Benedict. Fr Barrett takes up the challenge in this issue.

The turning away from the objective truth of words (and from authority) which has been so much part of the modern

*continued overleaf*

'turn to the subject' is caused by, among other things, a particular idea with a long intellectual pedigree. This idea is that there is a dichotomy between the supposedly non-conceptual experience of the individual subject and its universal, conceptual articulation. This dualistic epistemology has in various forms been present in Indo-European thought, from before its particular formalisation by Plato. It came to prominence in post-Enlightenment existentialist philosophy, through which it has had a particular influence upon twentieth century German theology. In this context it affirms a dialectical opposition between personal experience and objective intelligibility which is anti-realist and so undermines the essential and enduring validity of propositional doctrinal teaching. It also fatally undermines the concept of universal human nature. It means that the subject is ultimately a stranger to the world in which he seems to find himself. For all these reasons it is not in harmony with Catholic teaching.

## Truth and Language

The perennial paradox of existentialist epistemology is to be definitively against the realism of definitive statements. In OTWTL it comes out as "The rhetoric of either/or is the rhetoric of power that divides and *falsifies* ... For Catholicism, truth is *not* either/or ..." (p.49, our emphasis). Moreover we are told that the "Christian understanding of truth is not something that can be reduced to propositions" (p.64). This emphasis upon propositions as mere 'reductions' which fail accurately to refer to their object, is supported by a quotation from Thomas Aquinas to the effect that "all our speech, even those elements which are normative and binding, is in some sense always incomplete" (p.62). As we attempt to show in our Appendix St Thomas was actually arguing in the other direction, namely for our need of propositions which express "an indivisible truth concerning God, binding us to believe".

The modern affirmation of a dialectical relationship between conceptual proposition and existential experience which Fr. Hanvey and colleagues are championing represents, they claim, "a significant and hard won movement from scholastic rationalism which for all its virtues of clarity, precision and structure, was difficult to translate into the culture of modernity." (p.38) Whilst we do not doubt the need for some such "movement" we do not accept the loss of that central scholastic virtue, realism, which loss is entailed by the OTWTL implicitly existentialist vision.

## Truth and Authority

In this context OTWTL rules out the apparent pre-Vatican II predilection for labelling people as either "obedient" and "faithful" or unfaithfully "satisfying oneself" (p.49). If such distinction is never acceptable with regard to particular actions or beliefs then little room is left for the concept of disobedience. As Fr Watson powerfully brings out in his

response the study refuses even to dally with the concept of formal dissent when considering the negative reaction to *Humanae Vitae*.

The magisterium of the Church is relegated through OTWTL's too easy adoption of modernity's 'turn to the subject' as well as through the paucity of their reference to relevant magisterial documents. They seem to be trying too hard to balance ecclesial magisterium and subjective authority in order to avoid the ('pre-Vatican II' again) ultramontanist "attempt to conjure certitude out of doubt by the assertion of an ecclesial authority" (pp.43 and 38).

It is from this perspective that OTWTL, in footnote 79, supports the relegation of ecclesial magisterium below that of subjective "authority" which is found in the influential catechetical text *Our Faith Story*. The Maryvale critique powerfully challenges this endorsement. In trying to develop upon the emphasis of *Our Faith Story* the most that OTWTL can affirm of the Church's role is this: "conversion is essentially a response to an encounter with Christ as truth mediated in the community of witness, that is the Church ... (such that ) we are 're-narrated' as we take on an identity which is conferred by grace. This will also have an ecclesial character, so that the deeper conversion does not turn upon one's own self-understanding but the way in which the community comes to narrate one's identity." (p. 27 and cf. p67)

It is not clear whether, in the dialectic between subject and 'community with ecclesial character', when say papal teaching does not 'speak to me', there is a place for Vatican II's call for the human subject to offer a "religious assent ... of mind and will ... according to (the Pope's) manifest mind and will" (*Lumen Gentium*, 25). Nor is it at all clear that this new vision would be enough to turn around the modern catechetical approach that has now produced two generations largely ignorant of basic doctrine.

The study rightly highlights the importance of reclaiming the proper value and place of authority in the light of the cultural 'turn to the subject' and the wise post – 1968 preference for teaching which is "persuasive not just decorative". It attempts to reposition the post-modern subject within a community that defines his identity. But this is hamstrung by its inability to redefine this subject as by nature in real self-conscious contact with objective, intelligible reality.

## Another way – the Concept of Environment

The Maryvale critique points out that there is no acknowledgement of Catholic attempts at keeping the 'turn to the subject' realist through Bernard Lonergan and John Paul II. As ever we would give Edward Holloway an important place on this list. We think he takes account



**St Paul articulates the nature of Christ “in Whom we live and move and have our being” to the Athenians, with mixed reactions.**

of the ‘turn to the subject’ and the need to develop our understanding of the relationship of nature and grace in a uniquely coherent and integrally Catholic manner. Holloway suggests that the concept of environment is a helpful way in which to preserve the relevance of the subject without losing its realistic objectivity because a subject is inherently related to its environment whilst at the same time distinct from it.

I am by very definition, that which is related to an objective environment. And ‘my environment’ has the existential relationship of impacting upon me. An object is that which has the relationship of being known by a subject- which Knower in the final analysis is the Mind of God, in whose image our own minds are made.

This vision draws out the very semantic of the fundamental concepts of identity and distinction from this undeniable, primary fact, that the human subject exists in a complimentary environment. Objective intelligibility is something known immediately and actively by the spiritual mind – in the image of God’s creative *fiat*. Upon this Holloway develops a relational metaphysics that uses contemporary scientific observation (upon which Aristotle and Aquinas based their metaphysics) and rebuilds the universal concept of ‘the nature’.

In grounding the universal concept in the individual subject’s immediate experience Holloway’s approach offers a way through to a harmony between modernity’s ‘turn to the subject’ and traditional ‘Catholic realism’. It involves a

relational and hierarchical vision of matter as that which, in its very being, is known and organised, controlled and directed, by spiritual mind.

We would propose it as a sort of medium between OTWTL’s adoption of the post-modern subject and what it calls “scholastic rationalism”, as well as between Lonergan’s recognition of the importance of reflecting upon the *a priori* knowing subject and Gilson’s counter-affirmation of the necessity of maintaining the knower’s immediate grasp of being.

If then we further understand the human person as being within a *personal* environment, that of the living God, we can understand the autonomy of human nature without depicting grace and nature as in a “dualistic opposition” of the sort feared by OTWTL (p.40). We can affirm that human nature is intrinsically ordered to God, and that there is a dynamic interaction between grace and nature without having to say at the same time that we can never think of human nature independently of grace. We can think of a creature independently of its environment because the two are distinct. Yet the creature always exists within its environment. In the case of the human person and God, the relationship is a personal and fundamental one implying that grace is given gratuitously and is something supernatural: that is to say, it is not something that is constitutive of human nature but transcendent whilst at the same time being what human nature was made for. This vision is

*continued overleaf*

centred upon the “Word made flesh”, “In Whom we live and move and have our being”.

## “Revealing to Mere Children”: Not a Dialectical Tension

**A**uthoritative propositional revelation has an inherent and privileged place in this vision of God as the personal ‘Environer’ who takes flesh in order to ‘environ’ us. This does deny the metaphysically foundational place of the subject’s experience in his grasp of any meaning, and in his hunger for the Bread of Life.

We can understand authority in terms of the family model of the Church in which the heavenly Father’s divine authority is mediated through the priesthood which is true to itself insofar as it faithfully lives up to its own fatherly character in teaching and sanctifying. Such a role is complementary to the questionings and yearnings of the minds and hearts of the children – that is of the human subject.

## The Key: Articulating Human Nature

**T**he evangelisation of modernity calls for a realist reclamation of the concept of human nature, fulfilled in Christ. The reduction of the traditional concept of human nature was at the heart of the nominalist rationalism which characterised the Enlightenment, with roots at least as far back as the Reformation’s exaltation of the individual and of fideism. Post-modernism, for all its powerful puncturing of the messianic rationalist conceit, has the same deracinated view of the human subject at its heart. The de-naturing of reality which has sadly been a concomitant of the modern ‘turn to the subject’, has undermined the very fabric of human community as well as Christian soteriology.

The supplement to OTWTL actually gives what we would consider to be an excellent account of how the “modern sciences ... took over from theological accounts of nature and the universe and gradually pushed religion into the non-cognitive sphere” (note 155). The body of the study seems to accept these limits to natural knowledge as established. The supplement itself goes immediately on to miss the key point by emphasising Lyotard’s suggestion that the Enlightenment project “died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz” (p.76-7). In reality the enlightened man stripped of his nature lives on in the atomised community that produces the anarchic teenagers taking over our town centres each Saturday night and the busy abortuaries of our state of the art hospitals.

The study makes an attempt at reclaiming the concept of human nature, through relating it to grace, which is seen as “constitutive of” and “integral to” human nature. We are told that this “analogical relationship” “grounds human freedom” and that “the metaphysical form of the relationship” is *not* “established” without it. The nature-

grace dynamic is thus “framed within a Christological context *rather than* drawing upon metaphysical categories developed in independent philosophical systems.” (pp.63 & 40, our emphasis). In this context OTWTL proposes “Sacramental Imagination” as the key to Catholicising the philosophy and culture of modernity.

But this seems to have a fideistic tendency, using a non-metaphysically founded theology of the Incarnation to plug the holes of nominalist philosophy. It is certainly not the renewal of reason to which Pope Benedict is calling all, including those who do *not* accept the Incarnation whether secularists or Muslims.

It is this nominalistic individualism that must urgently be challenged. This means a reaffirmation of the holistic and intelligible nature of matter and of man, matter and spirit, made in the image of God, and a concomitant defence of the perennial validity of propositional expressions of faith, not least in *the Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

## Proclaiming Christ and the Call to Conversion

**W**e could agree that the “analogical relationship” created by God “finds its complete expression in the Incarnation and the gift of the Spirit, whereby all things are reconciled in God without ceasing to be themselves” and “that through participation in the grace of Christ and the Spirit all things are reordered to their own essence: they can genuinely become that which they are created to be by being ordered to that for whom they exist” (p.63). Properly founded this does indeed provide the foundation on which the Church can speak with genuine authority to the modern world.

Her voice will be heard by some and rejected by others. OTWTL poses a choice between dialectical and dialogical strategies for survival in the culture of modernity. In modern Britain we will need both. Dialogue, particularly with people of other faiths, holds out the possibility of conversion in many ways: conversion of others to the fullness of the faith, conversion of ourselves to a deeper living of our own baptismal grace, conversion of the culture to a nobler vision of the human person encouraged by the many examples of virtue to be found within and outside the Church.

But the call to such conversion can never abandon dialectical strategies. They have not been made redundant by Vatican II. We should not expect to escape the intensifying of the persecution that has already begun in various low-level ways through legislation and social policy. The Catholic sacramental imagination can indeed mediate between faith and culture but we should not always expect to find the process, nor the words which must be used, affirming or soothing.



## APPENDIX: *On The Way to Life's* quotation of St Thomas on propositions and truth

There is a telling quotation from the works of St Thomas Aquinas which is used by *On the Way to Life* (OTWTL) to hint at a certain approach to religious truth: "As Aquinas says, we tend towards the truth itself but we do not capture it in all its fullness." This is used to support the statement that "all our speech, even those elements which are normative and binding, is in some sense always incomplete."<sup>1</sup>

The citation is from St Thomas's *Commentary on the Sentences* where he discusses the definition of "articulus"<sup>2</sup> and, in particular, whether "Richard of St Victor" was correct to define it as "an indivisible truth concerning God, binding us to believe."<sup>3</sup> Among the objections to this is one which cites the definition of St Isidore of Seville quoted in OTWTL which is translated more precisely by the Dominicans as: "an article is a taking hold of divine truth that leads us to that truth in itself."<sup>4</sup>

In the *Commentary on the Sentences*, St Thomas accepts the first definition as etymologically correct and does not allow that St Isidore's definition will disprove it. In the *Summa Theologica*, however, the same quotations are used for a different purpose, in answering the question whether matters of faith *should* be divided into different articles.<sup>5</sup> The answer of St Thomas to this question is important. He points out that things that are one in God are made plural in our minds – he illustrates this by referring to the Passion and Resurrection of Christ.

St Thomas therefore offers an excellent answer to the assertion that "the Christian understanding of Truth ... is ultimately not something that can be reduced to propositions because it is God's self and our knowledge of all things in Him."<sup>6</sup> Although "ultimately", Christian truth is partial and incomplete in comparison with the fullness of the truth which is God himself, it would be wrong to consider propositions or articles of faith as a failure, a mere "reduction" because that is the way that God has condescended to provide for us in the limitation of our human minds. We know "indivisible truths" and in the image of the way God knows, but still in a creaturely manner. As St Thomas says, those things that are to be believed should be expressed as articles or propositions – and precisely because we are human and God provides for us as human persons.

<sup>1</sup>OTWTL page 62

<sup>2</sup>St Thomas Aquinas *Scriptum super sententiis* lib. 3 d. 25 q. 1 a. 1 qc. 1

<sup>3</sup>"*articulus est indivisibilis veritas de Deo, arcans nos ad credendum*" (St Thomas is mistaken in attributing the quotation to Richard of St Victor.)

<sup>4</sup>"*articulus est perceptio divinae veritatis tendens in ipsam*"

<sup>5</sup>St Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* 2a 2ae q.1 art.6

<sup>6</sup>OTWTL page 64

## PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE KEY TO OVERCOMING SUCCESSFUL SECULAR EVANGELISATION

Pope Benedict to Pontifical Council for Culture  
Saturday, 8 March 2008

**S**ecularisation, which presents itself in cultures by imposing a world and humanity without reference to Transcendence ... is not only an external threat to believers, but has been manifest for some time in the heart of the Church herself. It profoundly distorts the Christian faith from within, and consequently, the lifestyle and daily behaviour of believers ... (which) impresses contradictory and impelling models regarding the practical denial of God: there is no longer any need for God, to think of him or to return to him. Furthermore, the prevalent hedonistic and consumeristic mindset fosters in the faithful and in Pastors a tendency to superficiality and selfishness ... The "death of God" proclaimed by many intellectuals in recent decades is giving way to a barren cult of the individual. In this cultural context there is a risk of drifting into spiritual atrophy and emptiness of heart ...

... The intellectual sensitivity and pastoral charity of Pope John Paul II encouraged him to highlight the fact that the Industrial Revolution and scientific discoveries made it possible to answer questions that formerly were partially

answered only by religion. The result was that contemporary man often had the impression that he no longer needs anyone in order to understand, explain and dominate the universe; he feels the centre of everything, the measure of everything.

... The light of reason, exalted but in fact impoverished by the Enlightenment, has radically replaced the light of faith, the light of God (cf. Benedict XVI, Address, La Sapienza University, 17 January 2008). Thus, in this context the Church has great challenges with which to deal. The commitment of the Pontifical Council for Culture to a fruitful dialogue between science and faith is therefore especially important. This comparison has been long awaited by the Church but also by the scientific community, and I encourage you to persevere in it. Through it, faith implies reason and perfection, and reason, enlightened by faith, finds the strength to rise to the knowledge of God and spiritual realities. ...



# Revelation and modern culture: Comments upon *On The Way To Life*\*

The Maryvale Institute

*In this piece Fr Paul Watson and colleagues offer balanced and incisive comments upon the On The Way To Life.\* This response argues that the Christian call to conversion is missing. It is a developed extract of a piece which Maryvale Institute, Birmingham, submitted as part of the consultation. Fr Paul is director of that Institute.*

*"Underlying this analysis is the judgement that the nature of man is essentially one and the ultimate thrust of human nature is essentially the same – the pursuit of truth and of living in accordance with it. Thus both Faith and Culture have the same principle goal."*

## INTRODUCTION

Much that is said in *On The Way To Life* (OTWTL) is of value and represents a significant attempt to analyse the modern situation in which the Catholic Church in England and Wales finds itself. In the light of this analysis, the authors of OTWTL have presented what they describe as an alternative account of Catholic modernity. This account, or this tradition, the authors claim, has its seeds in the Catholic Reformation and flowered in the sacramental vision of Vatican II. By reclaiming and reactivating this account of Catholic modernity, the Catholic voice in late modernity/post-modernity can be found and can thus be a basis for leadership in Catholic education, formation and catechesis.

The crucial question then is to evaluate the contribution that this report makes to the Catholic voice in modern England and Wales and to leadership in education, formation and catechesis.

OTWTL presents a structured and in-depth theoretical analysis. As such, it is not an easy read. Also, it is not easy to grasp the overall theological, philosophical and sociological framework and pre-suppositions with which the authors are working. The danger then is that one begins to respond to particular ideas and /or statements within the report without necessarily understanding the broader framework within which these ideas or statements have their place.

Within each section of the report it appears that the authors have chosen certain thinkers as the basis for their analysis. The Introduction states that the authors have used conceptual tools, presumably the concepts of the chosen thinkers. However, the authors maintain that they have essentially tried to identify certain themes: questions of meaning and identity, the emergence of the 'new religious subject' in late/post modernity, the 'theological subject' that is described as being 'implicit' in the vision of Vatican II. Thus,

In Part I, "Significant elements in Contemporary Culture", the notion of "webs of significance" (Geertz) is taken as the point of departure for the analysis of culture.

In Part II, "The Theological Context", the authors have described the adaptive changes within the community of the Church since Vatican II. A key concept here is that of the possibility of a Catholic modernity, and this concept is linked to the notion of "sacramental imagination". Theologically, the authors describe three forms that these changes have taken: a shift in the understanding of grace and nature; Christological humanism; the repositioning of the Church in relation to modernity.

In Part III, "Resources and Responses", in reflecting upon the theological rationale for Catholic education, Catechesis and Formation, the authors consider four essential elements in the Church's educative rationale: transmission; the universal vocation to mission; the good of the person; and the good of society. They then go on to sketch a theology underpinning Catholic Modernity – a theology which is rooted in "the Catholic sacramental imagination". Finally, there are a number of suggestions for further study.

*On The Way To Life: Contemporary Culture and Theological Development as a Framework for Catholic Education, Catechesis and Formation* by the Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics and Public Life, published by the Catholic Education Service in 2005. This study, which can be seen on the CES website, was commissioned by the Bishops conference of England and Wales which has encouraged response.



In the Supplement on “Mapping the Social and Cultural Context of Catholic Education and Catechetical Formation”, the work of Charles Taylor, who identifies two theories of Modernity – described as cultural and a-cultural theories, is taken as the conceptual framework.

### Overview of our response

It is important, first of all, to applaud the extensive work that the authors of this report have undertaken. Also, to thank them for the innumerable insights that the report contains. The basic structure they have set out in three parts is a useful one in the task of evaluating the present situation of the Church’s educational mission in England and Wales.

Notwithstanding the initial comments of general applause and gratitude for the work done in this report, there are a number of ways that the report could be seen to be inadequate, or at least incomplete in the light of the task it undertakes. Taking the three parts separately:

### Part I

#### Discernment

Bearing in mind that the brief asked for a critical analysis of the significant features of contemporary culture that may have a bearing on the context of Catholic religious education and catechesis, the report has given a wide ranging analysis. However, the question remains as to how critical this analysis has been. Underlying the request for this study is the broader question of the relationship between Faith and Culture. This is not a new question for the Church, but it is one that needs to be posed in every era and with every shift in a cultural scene. One of the things that is lacking in this report is any significant discussion of what might be the appropriate criteria for making a critical analysis of the cultural context. In other words, what would have been helpful, is a much wider historical treatment by way of introduction. In choosing to focus exclusively on the culture of late or post modernity without a more historical perspective on the relationship between Faith and Culture, the report begs the question or makes certain assumptions regarding the ways in which the Catholic Faith can and should engage with contemporary culture. It appears that the basic assumption is that the Church should adapt itself – by way of Catholic Modernity – to the modernity of contemporary times. While it is true that the report also indicates that such a Catholic modernity remains faithful to Catholic tradition, the question remains as to whether Catholic Modernity is in fact the solution.

A more historical approach would indicate certain important facts about the way in which culture develops and the ways in which culture and faith interact in this process of development. Such is the approach found in the encyclical of John Paul II “Fides et Ratio” and in a number of papers produced by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, published under the title “Truth and Tolerance” (Ignatius Press, 2004). The historical surveys in both of these documents indicate that the basis for the positive engagement of faith and culture lies in the nature of man and the fundamental quest for knowledge, truth and the right way to live. The history of the development of thought and of religion has always had this fundamental basis. Progress and

development in both faith and culture, either separately or through their interaction has always been understood in terms of greater enlightenment and therefore of greater freedom for human beings and for human society. Whenever a cultural or a religious change takes place which represents a lessening of enlightenment or of freedom, such a change is judged by history to have been a setback, a time of decadence or of darkness. Underlying this analysis is the judgement that the nature of man is essentially one and the ultimate thrust of human nature is essentially the same – the pursuit of truth and of living in accordance with it. Thus both Faith and Culture have the same *principle* goal. Historically, the developments of Culture have been discerned both in the growth of rationality or enlightenment and also wherever the pursuit of truth also includes as part of its reality the realm of the Divine and man’s relationship with the Divine. This is the basis for the hope that Faith and Culture can interact for mutual benefit. Thus, for example, the interaction with the philosophical world of Greece was a time of great cultural progress. This interaction that flowered in the patristic period of the Church’s history, in fact, had its origins in the Old Testament interaction in the Greek diaspora and the development of the Wisdom literature.

On the other hand, throughout history there have been backward movements where truth has been turned away from in favour of more utilitarian goals, where truth is sacrificed for political, or social or even religious motives. Thus, for example, the Sophist movement, and more recently Marxism. In such times of decadence and backward movement, the only hope lay in those individuals and /or moments when a breakthrough could take place – the moment of enlightenment when the captivity and loss of freedom and truth began to be recognised. Cultural development could then again take place, and indeed, the possibility of interaction with Faith once again provides the opportunity for even greater progress.

It is this sort of analysis that perhaps should inform any critical analysis of the contemporary situation, not least because the present situation is one that could be described in terms of a crisis. The crisis is not simply for the Church, but also for the culture itself. In the light of history, it would be hard to describe the trend of secularism in wholly or even largely positive terms. It may indeed be the case that the real hope for the Church and for Faith in the present situation with regard to engagement with the modern culture is to be found in those places within our culture where the present trend is beginning to be challenged, where it is being recognised that both truth and freedom are being compromised, and where a breakthrough is being sought.

In the light of all of this, it would appear that the OTWTL report is somewhat inadequate in taking Greetz’ definition of culture as “webs of significance” as the starting point. This seems to imply a rather neutral description and also implies that no judgement can be made about it. In fact, it is a definition that belongs within the realm of relativisation – a realm that places one culture alongside another without any criteria of judgement, and simply invites discourse between them. The crucial issue of truth is thereby avoided.

*continued overleaf*

Part I of the report, for all of its study and its insights, should be seen therefore primarily as an invitation to a further and rather more comprehensive (historical) and critical study of the whole issue of culture. For the Catholic community, while the insights of particular theologians are helpful along the way, an essential resource for study must be key magisterial documents, such as *Fides et Ratio* and documents from the Pontifical Council for Culture.

## Part II

### (i) Interpreting the Council

In the first place, it would appear that what the report takes to be the meaning of the “contemporary situation of faith” is not only the statistics regarding practice and non-practice among Catholics but also the reception and interpretation of Vatican II. With regard to the latter, taking account of the limitations of space, the presentation of the report of its assessment and interpretation of Vatican II can be regarded only as one attempt to summarise the Council’s orientation and theological foundations. This attempt, it must be said, is, at best, one view. In a number of ways, highlighted later in this piece, the presentation could be said to be controversial. Perhaps this is inevitable so soon after the event. However, one would want to take issue with a number of elements of this section of the report. The whole question of the interpretation and reception of the Council was one with which John Paul II was concerned throughout his Papacy, a concern no less shared by Benedict XVI. Little reference to either of these interpreters of the Council is evident in the report.

One of the issues highlighted by Pope Benedict regarding interpretation of the Council is what he describes as the “hermeneutics of discontinuity”. While the report is obviously aware of this issue and avoids directly falling into this trap, at the same time, it can sometimes appear that the emphasis is on the difference between pre- and post Vatican II perspectives. It is an easy step from here to oppose as either /ors, rather than both /ands, various aspects of Catholic faith such as propositions /faith experience, hierarchy / communion, what is unchanging / the grace of faithfulness through change etc. The danger, and one that has not been absent in the years since the Council, not least in Religious Education and Catechetics, is superficially to caricature one side of an aspect of Catholicism (eg. Faith as an assent to a formula). The report can at times seem, if not to promote, at least tacitly to accept the status quo. Little is done to produce a deeper synthesis. As we shall see the notions of Catholic Modernity and Sacramental Imagination are at best ambiguous, and at worst, are capable of being hijacked into particular interpretations of the Council.

In general, while there are a number of positive and insightful elements regarding the interpretation of the Council, at the same time, perhaps inevitably, in such a short space, one would hardly describe it as comprehensive, or even completely adequate. At least it points towards the need for more discussion, and study of the documents of the Council, especially the four constitutions.

### (ii) Magisterium

A deeper issue, especially for the sake of Education and

Catechesis (or Transmission, as the report likes to describe it), is the relationship between doctrine and theology. Is it not the case, that the Church has one common doctrine, but receives also a diversity of theologies? The vital issue here again is the matter of Truth. While it is recognised that the Church has not achieved the fullest possible expression of the Truth, at any one point in history, the expression that it has achieved is reliably the Truth. There is a view which, basing itself on the fact that God is the ultimate truth and is ultimate mystery, proposes that we are simply on a journey towards truth and have not yet reached the goal. This view comes close to the relativist position, so dominant in our culture. It can lead to scepticism about doctrines which the Church proposes (for example, in the Catechism) on the one hand, and on the other, to teaching as truth various theological opinions, held to be truth because they are proposed by theological experts. Surely, this is an example of the way that relativist culture has succeeded in transforming the culture of the Church. The alternative is not simply to oppose the magisterium of theologians with the magisterium of the Church, although one actually is magisterium with a divinely appointed role. The issue is fundamentally an issue of truth and where it can be reliably found.

## Part III

In many ways this is the least satisfactory part of the report. Given the centrality of the proposals of Catholic Modernity and Sacramental Imagination, while a number of important things are said regarding the breadth of resources and the retrieval of Catholic memory, the fundamental meaning of both of these terms remains somewhat ambiguous and little reference is made to actual resources such as the documents of Vatican II, the Catechism and the General Directory for Catechesis. With regard to the precise educational and catechetical implications, it would be hard to conclude that the report offers any further contribution to the vision contained, with distinctively greater clarity, in a number of recent documents on education beginning with the Vatican II document on education and a number of others published by the Congregation for Catholic Education. It is an unfortunate omission that there is little or no reference to them in the report. The study and discussion of these documents still remains an important challenge.

Perhaps the ambiguity of ‘Catholic Modernity’ is rooted in the lack of historical background in the analysis of contemporary culture. There seem to be two fundamental issues needing to be articulated even more clearly: one is the issue of engagement with contemporary culture, which first needs an assessment of what is leading to greater truth and what is leading backwards to decadence; where are the points in our culture where there are signs of breaking through to a re-engagement with the basic human pursuit of the fullness of truth as opposed to the reduction of truth to scientific enquiry. Within this debate, the issue of the “turn to the subject”, which is flagged up by OTWTL as an important aspect of modernity, has received significant Catholic articulation by philosophers such as Bernard Lonergan and John Paul II. It is not only in the secular world, where such a turn has been taking place. The second issue is the development of the Catholic community with a view to transmission. A key element here is the way we need to address the extent to



which Catholics have actually been formed by the relativist, secular agenda. Without directly addressing this and changing (*challenging*) it with a contrary vision of truth, culture, revelation, and faith, the concepts of Catholic Modernity and Sacramental Imagination can themselves be simply absorbed by the secular relativist mind that they are seeking to engage with and ultimately overcome.

In the light of these general comments, it is important to say that encouragement by the Bishops Conference of England and Wales to engagement with this report has been extremely valuable. It has provided the opportunity to us to reflect more deeply on a number of important issues. This was surely the intention. However, it must be said that this must be only the beginning of a process. It would be a mistake if there was any attempt to canonise or promulgate this report as the primary means of shaping the future of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, especially in its mission. There are too many unresolved issues. The value of the report is largely in stimulating us to highlight some of these issues and to encourage further study, discussion and not least to focus with greater intensity on key magisterial documents in order then to articulate a clearer programme and strategy for the future.

## 1. SCOPE AND ADEQUACY OF THE THEOLOGICAL, ECCLESIOLOGICAL AND EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS

### A hermeneutic of discontinuity

The theological arguments presented in this document are in general continuity with the main liberal theological approaches of the last forty years. In its principles, arguments, and emphases, it well represents certain heterodox theological trends, especially in relation to nature, grace, and authority, which emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s. Though over two generations have passed since the 1960s, there is still a certain fixation on what they call the 'pre- and post-Conciliar Church'. The former is, once again, spoken of as a negative point of reference whose tendencies and attitudes are still the main stumbling block to be overcome, whilst the latter represents the inauguration of a kind of new age 'still being worked out' (p. 45), but now 'in a *new phase* of reception' (p. 49). Absent here are the warnings of Pope Benedict XVI regarding our response to Vatican II, the 'hermeneutic of rupture' versus 'the hermeneutic of continuity'. As if writing 40 years ago, the authors of *On the Way to Life* present the Second Vatican Council in a manner neither in keeping with the true doctrine of doctrinal development, the purpose of Councils, or the nature of the Tradition.

### Lack of key ecclesial sources

Throughout this document, with its many footnotes and citations, there are virtually no references to sacred Scripture, no mention of its importance in the transmission of the Faith, nor to the witness of the great saints and doctors of the Tradition. It is a document founded more upon the conclusions of modern sociologists and contemporary academic theologians.

There is a surprising and unjustifiable neglect of relevant Papal and Magisterial teaching. For example, the Pontifical

Council for Culture is not even mentioned, even its seminal document *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture* or the more recent and very intelligent report on New Age, *Jesus Christ: Bearer of the Water of Life*. Pope John Paul II is quoted twice, principally on the 'spirituality of communion' in *Novo Millennio Inuente*, and some relevant documents of his are footnoted, but there is no reference to his writings about the gap between faith and culture, or indeed to his concepts of the 'new evangelisation' or to his interpretation of the evangelising of culture. It could be argued that such notions should assume central importance in any pastoral strategy for the Church dealing with contemporary culture.

### Ecclesiology

1) The position taken regarding the interpretation of the teaching of Vatican II is extremely odd (page 36). The idea is put forward that because Vatican II defined no infallible dogmas, therefore we can give no standard interpretation to what the Council taught. This is a strange idea for a number of reasons. Where and when in the theology of the reception of teachings of the magisterium does one come across the idea that non-infallible magisterial teaching is non-interpretable whereas infallible teaching is? Such an idea contradicts the constant practice of the Church in which subsequent teachings of Popes, Councils and the Catechism reiterate, sometimes using different words and expressions, prior non-infallible teachings of Popes (in encyclicals) and other documents to be accepted and authoritatively binding at the appropriate level. If one does not understand and cannot interpret the meaning of a non-infallible teaching of the magisterium, given by Vatican II or in, say, an encyclical, one cannot give the assent asked for in the Church's own *Profession of Faith* and *Oath of Fidelity* required of candidates for Holy Orders and of others. Further, there is no suggestion in the official records of the debates of Vatican II or any hint in the documents themselves that those involved could not interpret, understand what they are saying. If one is talking about further understanding of and investigation into a truth taught by the Church in the process of the development of dogma then the hermeneutic criteria given by the Church herself apply in the case of infallible teaching and non-infallible teaching: genuine further understanding must retain the same meaning and judgment regarding the teachings put forward by the Church (cf. *Dei Filius*, Vatican I).

It is also not quite correct to say that Vatican II taught nothing infallibly. Since, according to the criteria set out in *Lumen Gentium* 24-25, the Second Vatican Council was a clear expression of the universal magisterium of the Church anything proposed for belief or assent by such a gathering is an identifiable case of the exercise of the universal infallible magisterium. A case in point, which one can follow in the official account of the debates, is the wording of *Dei Verbum* Chapter 2 on the historical reliability of the Gospels. The choice of the word '*firmitur*', 'firmly' regarding the way the Church's teaching on the matter is to be held is a case in which the universal magisterium, present in the Council, reiterates that which the Church believes she has always held about the basic historicity of the Gospels.

*continued overleaf*



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2) The authors refer to the book by Daniel S. Thompson, *The Language of Dissent*, (University of Notre Dame Press, 2003) in footnote 55 page 19. The reference in its wording could be taken to suggest that this book expresses a legitimate Catholic viewpoint on the nature of dogma and the degrees of assent required of the faithful regarding magisterial teachings. However, the clear and unambiguous thesis of this work is that theological dissent is a good and a value insofar as through this means the development of dogma occurs. This thesis is flawed epistemologically as a matter of fact with regard to the history of Catholic dogma and is contrary to the magisterium's constant view of heresy, dissent from infallible teachings of the second order, and dissent from non-infallible magisterial teachings. While the Church makes no judgment about the inner state of the heretic, and while good is brought out of the evil of *dissension* and heresy through the formulation and definition of dogmas, the idea that heretics such as Valentinus, Arius and Nestorius were right to reject the decisions of councils and popes against them, and that their dissent was in fact nearer to the truth is unacceptable from a Catholic perspective.

It may be the case that the authors do not know the content of this book, or that they are merely recommending it as an example of a theological viewpoint contrary to Catholic faith. However, their opposition to it as Catholic theologians should be made manifest in the text, otherwise it could appear that they condone the book's thesis and that any ecclesiastical authority recommending this report for study could appear complicit in this apparent 'recommendation'.

### Inadequate focus on the call to conversion

In continuity with the general endorsement of modernity is the absence of the call to conversion, that man reject sin and turn to the good, which is the first and fundamental invitation of the Gospel. Amos, Hosea, proto-Isaiah, Jeremiah and many other Prophets had to call their own culture to conversion, warning it that it was heading to disaster. We have to do the same. We have to be 'leaven in the lump' – but also Martyrs, Witnesses, before the world. The presentation of Martyrdom on page 59 of *On the Way to Life* focuses attractively on self-giving, but neglects the challenge the Martyr throws down. Yet England needs conversion more than ever before!

### Inadequate understanding of Grace

On pages 40-41, we are told that 'all nature has in some way the capacity to disclose grace and be a vehicle of it'

and that people should 'understand the sacramental nature of their ordinary lives.' As it stands, this passage *does not clearly give a central and indispensable role to the divine Word's Incarnation*. The Incarnation and the Resurrection of course shed a blessing on the whole material universe and on human nature. But we need a vision of grace, the Holy Spirit, breaking into the world because of Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection, and being channelled thence to people of all times and places – but most richly, most typically, most satisfyingly, through the Sacraments. Everything else is to be understood in the light of what 'comes to the surface' in the Sacraments; to suppose that nature is *intrinsically* sacramental is to play down the need for Revelation.

*On the Way to Life*, then, plays down the sense of God breaking in with specific Good News. This fits with its theology of grace, which on page 33 is more-or-less attributed to Vatican II, whereas on page 35 we are told it is part of the theological vision *underlying* what the Council said, and on page 41 we are told this theology of grace was *implicit* in the Council.

The theology in question is basically that of De Lubac, who revived the Augustinian and Thomist conviction that we have a natural thirst for God, and of Rahner, who put forward the theory of the 'supernatural existential'. Rahner's theory implies that 'our life will always have a 'dramatic' form' (page 38) since any important decision anyone ever makes is always at least implicitly a decision for or against God. This corresponds to Augustine's vision of the two cities that have lived alongside each other since the time of Cain and Abel. It corresponds to the teaching of John Paul II's *Redemptor Hominis*, that the Father has sent the Son and the Spirit to all human beings to awaken a thirst for truth and goodness.

It is important to bear in mind that the great theologians of Grace held a 'nuanced' view of Grace. They preserved a sense of 'drama'. For Augustine, although our hearts are restless till they rest in God, they can only reach that rest by the grace of conversion. The image of the Trinity that we are has been spoiled by pride and can only be healed by the humility of the incarnate and crucified Word. For Thomas, we are *capax Dei* yet can only be aware of the offer of knowing, loving, possessing and enjoying Father, Son and Spirit through revelation. For De Lubac, the natural thirst for God typically went wrong, until its true nature and source were revealed at Bethlehem. He wrote his *Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace* against those who had taken his earlier work in a one-sided way and blurred the distinction between nature and grace, whereas he only wanted to overcome the artificial separation between them. Rahner's theory of the supernatural existential was designed to preserve the absolute gratuity of grace. By nature we do *not* have any real 'pro-active' thirst for God; the existential thirst which all human beings at least implicitly experience is itself a gift and comes only through Christ. It does not guarantee that all human beings are God's friends; it ensures that they must decide whether to be friends or enemies (and if enemies, they condemn themselves to inner frustration).

This leads us to analyse one statement in particular: '**Grace is constitutive of Human Nature**'.



According to the authors of *On the Way to Life*, 'Grace is constitutive of human nature' (pp. 33, 35, 40). It is a doctrine claimed by Frs Hanvey and Carroll to be the precise teaching of Vatican II (p. 33, 44). However, they do not refer to any source, nor precisely where in the documents of Vatican II this is taught. They intend not to support their claim that 'grace is constitutive of human nature' with any reference to a Magisterial source on the principle that 'it is not so much what Vatican II had to say that was transformative but the underlying theological vision that it expressed' (p. 35). On such a fundamental question as the relationship and essence of nature and grace, recourse to 'the spirit of Vatican II' is inadequate and irresponsible.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, if something 'is constitutive of' something else, 'it makes a thing what it is', is 'essential to it', or 'goes to make [it] up'. So the sentence repeated by the authors of *On the Way to Life* should be understood to mean that 'Grace makes human nature to be human nature', that grace is 'essential to the meaning of the term 'human nature'', that 'grace is part of the definition of human nature' (along, therefore, with being composed of soul and body).

Accordingly, it would have to be held that without divine grace human nature ceases to be precisely human nature. There is, therefore, no such thing as a man without divine grace. A human being without grace can no longer be said to have a human nature.

This statement, 'Grace is constitutive of human nature', made at least three times in the document, is false in every respect. In order to understand how this is so, let us remind ourselves of some of the basic truths of our Christian faith.

i) In defining divine grace, and its effects, one of the words used by the Church in her Catechism is 'supernatural' (CCC 1998). If grace is super-natural (i.e. in itself above the natural order) it cannot, by definition, constitute human nature. It does, of course, elevate, heal and perfect human *nature*, but it cannot ever be said to constitute it. If it were to *constitute* human nature, our definition of divine grace would have to be naturalised, or our definition of human nature be supernaturalised.

ii) The Catechism also insists upon the *essential* specific gratuity of grace (gratuity being part of the etymology of *gratia*), CCC 1996; in other words, if it is not understood to be something which comes as a special further favour from *outside and above* our nature, then it can no longer be called *grace*. Therefore, if we hold that grace is constitutive of human nature, then we cannot at the same time hold that it is gratuitous, that it comes from above and as a *favour*.

iii) The Catechism also insists on the strictly supernatural character of grace and its effects (CCC 1997). It effects in human nature what human nature is incapable of effecting by its own power and abilities. If grace were constitutive of human nature, then all of the effects of grace would lie in strict and essential continuity with human nature's intrinsic powers.

### The question of authority

Part of Heythrop's brief was to evaluate Purnell's *Our Faith Story* (1985). We read in their report the following statement:

'the language of *Our Faith Story* marks a significant and influential shift. It is written in a highly personal way, thus modelling the approach it proposes. This is more than just an engaging, unthreatening style; it represents the 'turn to the subject' ... positively used to engage faith. The source of authority here is not a teacher or a Magisterium but one's own experience and narration' (note 79).

We wish to highlight the idea that 'the source of authority is not a teacher or a Magisterium but one's own experience and narration'. This is manifestly incompatible with all Catholic teaching on the nature and purpose of the Church, as well as to the truths of man himself as a created and therefore receptive being (i.e. his not being God). It is contrary to the doctrine of a divinely instituted Church, founded by Jesus Christ on the rock of Peter, and endowed with an infallible teaching office through the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

If one reads further one sees that this particular thesis is not only accepted uncritically by the authors of *On the Way to Life* but is regarded positively by them. It is stated that this 'person-centred approach ... allows for very considerable sensitivity to circumstances, allowing people to find their own place and pace'. The authors wish to 'acknowledge these very considerable strengths' of Fr Purnell's teaching, affirming that these kind of teachings show *Our Faith Story* to be 'a rich, significant work of considerable insight and methodological wisdom'. Frs. Hanvey and Carroll, in other words, admire the thesis that 'the source of authority is not a teacher or a Magisterium but one's own experience and narration'.

Later in their analysis on authority in its relation to personal experience, Frs. Hanvey and Carroll quote a section from Hannah Arendt's book *On Revolution* (p. 42). They do this in reference to the angry reaction by some members of the Church to the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Here is the citation they choose to help clarify their argument:

'... that all authority in the last analysis rests on opinion is never more forcefully demonstrated than when, suddenly and unexpectedly, a universal refusal to obey initiates what then turns into a revolution... Unlike human reason, human power is not only 'timid and cautious when left alone', it is simply non-existent unless it can rely on others; and the most powerful king and the least scrupulous of all tyrants are helpless if no one obeys them, that is supports them through obedience; for, in politics, obedience and support are the same'.

This is a most sinister and disturbing application of a perfectly reasonable secular analysis of authority to the divine authority of the Church. Frs Hanvey and Carroll accept that it cannot be applied 'completely', but it surely cannot be applied *at all*, if one accepts the claims of the Church and the teaching authority of Jesus Christ. Because of the unique nature of the Church's authority, unique by virtue of her divine origin,

*continued overleaf*

unique by the guaranteed presence of the Holy Spirit ensuring her infallibility, *not a single line* in Arendt's analysis can or should be applied to the Church (and neither did she intend any of them to). Yet according to Frs. Hanvey and Carroll, this citation 'eloquently makes the point about the *relationship between authority and obedience that surfaces with the Encyclical*'. How does it do this? How, and in what sense? Moreover what role does the perennial phenomenon of disobedience to legitimate authority have in the reception of *Humanae Vitae*? Frs. Hanvey and Carroll choose not to develop this point at all, nor unfold the full implications of this statement. Arendt's citation is simply presented in the context of *Humanae Vitae* and left alone. Neither do Frs Hanvey and Carroll reassure the reader as to their own positions. Leaving themselves out of the matter, they only state that the idea that 'the Church's teaching [on contraception] was not a matter of opinion but of truth' was the '*position of the Encyclical*' (43).

## Anthropocentric vision of the Church

The document displays an anthropocentric study. The emphasis throughout lies on man: man in his subjectivity, man and his uniquely modern ways of thinking, man in his response to authority, man and his pilgrimage. Here, the Church, very much *not* the bride of Christian revelation, seems to gaze obsessively upon herself. This study is so imbued with modern, sociological concepts, that the Church frequently appears as a circular, self-sustaining community, whose good seems to be simply herself: formation 'comes forth from the Church and returns to it' (p. 59). At one point, the authors have to go out of their way to stress that the 'transmission of faith is not just about the survival of the community' (p. 60). (By 'community' here is meant the Church). Was it ever conceived that the Church seeks to transmit the Good News of Jesus Christ in order to ensure her survival? For whom, and by whose power, does the Church exist? And why does she exist? This is such an insufficiently Christocentric and Theocentric understanding of the Church that a reader of this document would not find the answers to these questions. Rather, he is informed how we 'all must experience the Church as a place of encounter, a home' (p. 59). It does not point beyond itself. This vision of the Church is, we might say, a fruit of the modern 'turn to the subject'.

## 2. COMMENTS ON THE TRANSMISSION OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST IN THE LIGHT OF THE DOCUMENT

### General Comment

Reading of the Report raises some key issues for catechetics. However, this was less the result of deliberate proposals of the Report than of a sense of its omissions. How could it be that such a Report, aimed at providing a 'framework' for religious education and catechesis, could ignore *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Catechesi Tradendae*, the *General Directory for Catechesis* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*? In exploring the context for catechetical work in the contemporary Church and culture these seminal documents need to be seen as major resources.

Moreover, the document as a whole is characterised by an exaggerated sense of the difficulties in conveying the gospel

to the 'modern mind', as though the 'modern mind' were something unique in human history, especially impervious to the truth of Christian Revelation in all its simplicity and joy. This fixation with the problems presented by 'the contemporary situation' seems to forget the important fact that we who endeavour to transmit the Faith are not first century Christians, or medievals, but contemporary men and women formed within the ambit of modern culture.

### The wrong framework

*On the Way to Life* helps us understand Modernity and how it has led to 'post-modern' irrational relativism, but fails to criticise it with due vigour. The brief for the study 'asks that we place the direction of Catholic religious education, catechesis and formation within the context of contemporary culture' (page 9). We need to show up the foolishness of Modernity; *On the Way to Life* asks for 'a Catholic Modernity' (pages 33, 51, 63...). It does not want this to be simply a Catholic version of Modernity (page 51); it does want us to incorporate many of the central values of Modernity (page 63) – but these include 'commitment to rational discourse', which in fact has always been properly Catholic! Despite that commitment, *On the Way to Life* seems in places too sympathetic to a pluralism that would be cool towards objective truth and the power of reason to discover it. Only in the Supplement (on pages 80-82) does a really sharp critique of Modernity appear – a critique which implies we can only reject it as a perspective and culture radically different from the Catholic.

### The question of truth

There is an apparent embarrassment shown in this document towards the intrinsically definitive nature of Christian revelation. What does it mean to say that we must 'avoid a fundamentalist assertion of the Catholic truth'? (p. 51). Truth must not be transmitted through violence and force, for this would be to contradict truth itself. Is this violent possibility what the authors mean by a 'fundamentalist assertion', or are they implying something more? The implication is that they are implying something more, but they refrain from stating it clearly. The problem we face lies not in the absence of some arcane marketing skills, but in the fact that Christian doctrine, in its purity, simplicity and power, is not being taught. And furthermore, it is not being taught in accordance with its intrinsic Catholicity and in deference to divinely instituted authority. The theses proposed in this document are not solutions to the problem but a clear and unequivocal manifestation of it.

### Science, religion and truth

It is increasingly clear that the human mind can understand and to some extent harness the complex structures within the natural world; yet there has been an upsurge in dabbling with the irrational – magic, 'healing crystals', even neo-paganism, the worship of forces created to be enjoyed and respectfully mastered. *On the Way to Life* does not identify this problem with sufficient sharpness. *On the Way to Life* could have more vigorously urged us to present the Church as the upholder of reason and the friend of science. The Church sees St. Thomas Aquinas as the great exemplar of



how to do theology: he followed Aristotle in wanting to see the world as it really is. We need to say that we are on the side of reason and not on the side of superstition. We need to say that we are the friend and supporter of science – admittedly a *critical* friend, since we have a wisdom that can help us judge what technologies are humanising, what dehumanising. If the reason why many people dabble today in irrational superstition is that modern technology does not satisfy our ‘affective’ side, we need to say that the Catholic Church has the only viable answer: a coherent synthesis of careful theology that takes philosophy seriously, with impressive ritual that fulfils art, and personal prayer. *On the Way to Life* is clear that we validate art, but could have said more strongly that we validate reason. On page 29 it speaks of truth’s beauty and goodness, and on page 38 of Thomas’ integration of reason with faith; but it is cool towards ‘an assent to formulas,’ is wary of ‘a fundamentalist assertion of the Catholic truth,’ and fails to refer to John Paul II’s *Fides et Ratio*, or to *Veritatis Splendor* which validate the place of careful, informed thought in making ethical decisions. There are plenty of scientists today who are Christian, quite a few who write in favour of Christianity – but we need to pull the rug from beneath the feet of people like Richard Dawkins who can still argue that the Catholic Church is on the side of irrational prejudice.

### Catholic culture

It is odd that a document concerned with the cultural context for religious education and catechesis should neglect the idea that the Church has a Culture to transmit. *On the Way to Life* is more concerned to dialogue with late-modern and post-modern culture than to say that we have a Culture worth preserving and presenting – yet Vatican II affirms the call to *ressourcement* that emerged during the 20th Century. We have to explore afresh the great riches of Scripture, the Liturgy, the Fathers, and make those riches available today.

Page 37, which admits the Council’s emphasis on *ressourcement*, is chiefly at pains to explain that the essence of Tradition is God’s faithfulness, and to play down any sense of *unchanging contents*.

The fear of ‘a Catholic parochialism, in which Catholic culture... simply projects its theoretically naïve biographical perspective onto the social and cultural map of the present’ (page 76) seems to weigh more with the authors of *On the Way to Life* than a confidence in what we have to offer.

*On the Way to Life* has itself a curiously ‘rootless’ feel. Its interesting account of the *poiesis* of Christian life (pages 61-68) does not focus on the challenging but rewarding hard work of reviving authentic Christian Culture as service-and-challenge to the contemporary ‘cultural desert’. Fundamentalism and nostalgia are decried (pages 39 and 46); but a Scripturally-informed, truly Catholic *ressourcement* is not vigorously plugged. The valuable discussion of the sacramental imagination has an ‘abstract’ feel; in place of the recovery of ‘perennial values’ the document breathes a strange timelessness – reinforced by the idea on pages 37 and 62 that in some sense we need to learn from the *future* as well as from the past!



The Heythrop Institute

## CONCLUSION

*On the Way to Life* has identified some of the features of Modern and post-Modern culture that we need to take account of in revitalising our religious education and catechesis, but the document is insufficiently critical towards Modernity, insufficiently aware of our need to challenge its pretensions. Perhaps because they share some of our contemporary rootlessness and subjectivity, the authors pay little attention to the content of the Tradition we must hand on – and virtually no attention to Scripture. The Incarnation is an important theme, but serves more as a ‘perspective’ than as an historical event; the Passion is hardly mentioned. The Liturgy as a counter-cultural school is neglected, and the ‘sacramental imagination’ – while properly lauded as a privileged Catholic contribution – is more a timeless perspective on nature and human life than an awareness of how we continue to hear, see, feel and taste the Word spoken into our world 2,000 years ago.

All in all, there is little enthusiasm for a *ressourcement* that would draw deeply on the actual contents of our Scripture-based, Sacramental-Liturgical Tradition, and would use these resources to challenge our contemporaries and ourselves to a conversion that would be not only a widening and deepening, but also a change of perspective. This reluctance to call for conversion goes with a somewhat slanted reliance on the recent theology of Grace, which emphasises the gentleness and welcoming side of Grace, but neglects the theme of Jesus breaking in with a call to repentance, the theme of the Spirit as refining fire and rushing wind.

By contrast with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *On the Way to Life* would only really affirm the work of certain Catholic philosophers, theologians, liturgists and sociologists. We need something that can fire contemplatives and other religious, priests, preachers, teachers, catechists, theologians, parents, youth leaders, ‘the men and women in the pew’ and the youth of today’s Church as they all do their bit to learn from God’s Word and announce the Good News revealed by Jesus Christ in His words, miracles, Passion and Resurrection. We therefore need a different framework, rooted in the key sources of the Christian Faith, ecclesial, and transmitting the fullness of Catholic culture and life, as well as in a realist philosophy adequate for proposing the word of God (cf *Fides et Ratio* 81-83).

*Fr Paul’s delineation of the appropriate character of modern catechesis is in our The Truth Will Set You Free column p. 26.*

## THE CATECHISM ON THE HARMONY OF NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL REVELATION

In our correspondence column we have published a letter from Jim Allen which focuses upon a common objection to the intellectual inspiration of *Faith* movement. We think that the section of the Catechism below offers an appropriate response to such worries in a comprehensive, nuanced and refreshing manner.

**283** The question about the origins of the world and of man has been the object of many scientific studies which have splendidly enriched our knowledge of the age and dimensions of the cosmos, the development of life-forms and the appearance of man. These discoveries invite us to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator, prompting us to give him thanks for all his works and for the understanding and wisdom he gives to scholars and researchers. With Solomon they can say: "It is he who gave me unerring knowledge of what exists, to know the structure of the world and the activity of the elements... for wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me." (*Wisdom* 7:17-22)

**284** The great interest accorded to these studies is strongly stimulated by a question of another order, which goes beyond the proper domain of the natural sciences. It is not only a question of knowing when and how the universe arose physically, or when man appeared, but rather of discovering the meaning of such an origin: is the universe governed by chance, blind fate, anonymous necessity, or by a transcendent, intelligent and good Being called "God"? And if the world does come from God's wisdom and goodness, why is there evil? Where does it come from? Who is responsible for it? Is there any liberation from it?

**285** Since the beginning the Christian faith has been challenged by responses to the question of origins that differ from its own. Ancient religions and cultures produced many myths concerning origins. Some philosophers have said that everything is God, that the world is God, or that the development of the world is the development of God (Pantheism). Others have said that the world is a necessary emanation arising from God and returning to him. Still others have affirmed the existence of two eternal principles, Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, locked in permanent conflict (Dualism, Manichaeism). According to some of these conceptions, the world (at least the physical world) is evil, the product of a fall, and is thus to be rejected or left behind (Gnosticism). Some admit that the world was made by God, but as by a watch-maker who, once he has made a watch, abandons it to itself (Deism). Finally, others reject any transcendent origin for the world, but see it as merely the interplay of matter that has always existed (Materialism).

All these attempts bear witness to the permanence and universality of the question of origins. This inquiry is distinctively human.

**286** Human intelligence is surely already capable of finding a response to the question of origins. The existence of God the Creator can be known with certainty through his works, by the light of human reason (cf. Vatican Council I, can. 2 § 1: DS 3026), even if this knowledge is often obscured and disfigured by error. This is why faith comes to confirm and enlighten reason in the correct understanding of this truth: "By faith we understand that the world was created by the Word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear." (*Hebrews* 11:3).

**287** The truth about creation is so important for all of human life that God in his tenderness wanted to reveal to his People everything that is salutary to know on the subject. Beyond the natural knowledge that every man can have of the Creator (cf. Acts 17:24-29; Rom 1:19-20), God progressively revealed to Israel the mystery of creation. He who chose the patriarchs, who brought Israel out of Egypt, and who by choosing Israel created and formed it, this same God reveals himself as the One to whom belong all the peoples of the earth, and the whole earth itself; he is the One who alone "made heaven and earth" (cf. *Isa* 43:1; *Ps* 115:15; 124:8; 134:3).

**288** Thus the revelation of creation is inseparable from the revelation and forging of the covenant of the one God with his People. Creation is revealed as the first step towards this covenant, the first and universal witness to God's all-powerful love (cf. Gen 15:5; Jer 33:19-26). And so, the truth of creation is also expressed with growing vigour in the message of the prophets, the prayer of the psalms and the liturgy, and in the wisdom sayings of the Chosen People (cf. *Isa* 44:24; *Ps* 104; *Prov* 8:22-31).

**289** Among all the Scriptural texts about creation, the first three chapters of Genesis occupy a unique place. From a literary standpoint these texts may have had diverse sources. The inspired authors have placed them at the beginning of Scripture to express in their solemn language the truths of creation – its origin and its end in God, its order and goodness, the vocation of man, and finally the drama of sin and the hope of salvation. Read in the light of Christ, within the unity of Sacred Scripture and in the living Tradition of the Church, these texts remain the principal source for catechesis on the mysteries of the "beginning": creation, fall, and promise of salvation.

## GOD'S GRACE: OUR LIFE-LAW

**Meditation by  
Edward Holloway**  
*from a 1980's parish newsletter*

I always got into trouble at this time of year, as a boy, for pulling up Grandad's runner beans to see if they had roots on yet, and if they had, I made a progress report. There was war between us until he gave me a patch of my own – somehow Grandad's came up first, and much more often.

We all love the Spring 'though, season of light and love, and of life more abundant. A time of grace. I once heard a missionary who had worked all his life in the East say that they could find no word in Japanese to translate what we call "God's grace" until somebody hit on an expression which meant the lushness of the grass in the springtime, and that was it!

Of course it was, the deepest meaning of what a Christian calls the Grace of God is a life within that bursts out in charity, joy, peace, patience, sweetness, purity. There is nothing fusty in a life like that. Christ came to give it, and said so.

He said much the same thing in St. Mark's Gospel, where Our Lord says that the Kingdom of Heaven – which is *within* you, remember – is like a farmer who sowed his fields and went away, and the seed sprang up while he knew not, first the blade, then the ear, and last the ripe corn in the ear... for the earth of itself brings forth fruit. Now the seed lives by

the earth and the sunshine and the shower. It is made for them, they are the Law of its nature, they make it live and grow. And that, just that, God is to us. The contact of his Mind and Heart and Teaching is the sunshine and the shower and Law of life of our souls. We are made of him, and only he can control and direct our destiny.

Nothing else in material creation can do this for us, and nothing in the universe except men, or beings like them, can need it either. That is why God became Man at the end of the ages, when men could take it in, so that he might be all this for us in the fullest possible way. So Jesus Christ is the Master Mind of the world, the greatest and purest of Lovers, the utterly authoritative Truth – sometimes hard to hear – who alone can command by right the clever, powerful minds of men of the scientific age.

We have to let him touch our minds and hearts within, we have to help him not hinder, and we have to know him, love him, listen honestly to him. For "He came unto his own and they received him not. But to as many as did receive him, he gave power to become children of God. And the Word (the Mind who is God) became Flesh and dwelt among us ... and of his fullness we have all received, and *grace upon grace*".

## Tower of Siloam David Walshe

*non perditio est iniquo et alienatio operantibus iniustitiam? (Job 31:3)*

Like a coagulated clot in the vessel of memory  
They articulated their dread of an event taken as a pretext.  
Were these Galileans surgeons of their own misfortune,  
whose blood Pilate had mixed with the Temple sacrifice?  
The scrubbed-down blood from the cobbled asphalt  
Coalescing in time through the act of brute Roman soldiery.  
Were they worse offenders than any others?  
Were they? Because they suffered this?

Questions, like a fleet of eighteen ships orbiting into port,  
Under the lengthening shadow of the leaning tower,  
The death toll squared in the market courtyard, about the rigging  
And the wind whipped ropes . silence, stillness,  
There where the stacking eagles gather and circle with intent  
Out of the sun, signs in time that lead men to repent.



Ruins of the Tower of Siloam  
in the old city of David



# The sacramental theology behind contemporary catechesis: Towards a constructive critique

David Barrett

*In Fr David Barrett's September 2007 article in this Magazine "The Church and Sacramentality", he explained Edward Holloway's definition of a sacrament as "the enfleshing ... of an objective gift of God, ... in Christ, enwrapped in matter as befits ... the economy of God who became enwrap with a human soul and body for the perfection and the beatification of His creature." In a continuation of that reflection Fr Barrett proposes this sacramental theology as the much needed foundation for modern catechesis for which thinkers such as Rahner and Kasper have been searching. He is a doctoral student in Rome.*

*"Because God is man's personal Environment ... the sacraments cannot be the manifestations of what man already is, they are a gift of something he does not possess fully from conception, a gift he could never ... dare claim as his rightful possession."*

## Doubts About Theological Underpinnings of Modern Catechesis

Having tried to explain the main thrust of Holloway's thinking on the Church and Sacraments in the September 07 issue of *Faith*, it seems appropriate to examine some tendencies found in the Church today which, in one way or another, have their source in the work of certain theologians.

A committee for the United States Bishops Conference has recently become conscious of the fact that many catechetical texts used in teaching and instruction do not match up to the real Faith of the Church, as expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup> This is a confirmation of what has been said in many editorials of this publication over the last thirty years.

In the areas of the sacraments and the Church we find the Bishops articulating concerns that all of us have faced when we have come into contact with the so-called 'new catechesis'. They state that many do not clearly present "the Church as established by Christ to continue both His presence and His work in the world." Coupled with this, there is little attention given to the Church's teaching authority. As for the life of grace, the emphasis is first of all on human initiative and experience as "the prerequisite for divine action". Grace is not seen as God's work of leading mankind into Trinitarian communion. The sacraments are viewed as "representative of events in human life of which God becomes a part, rather than signs and reality of divine life of which man becomes a part."

## Rahner

For many this catechetical approach had its impetus from the reflections of a number of theologians broadly belonging to the transcendental school. One such is Karl Rahner. His writings are vast, and sometimes views of his to which we might object are curiously placed side by side with seemingly opposed views, with no obvious resolution between them. Many of his ideas have been used and developed by people in the 'modernist' catechetical movement.

In *Foundations of Christian Faith*, Rahner deals with the sacramental life in the second part of chapter eight. Much of what he writes has at first sight a good deal that would not be objectionable: his treatment of the sacraments in some ways is rather simple. He tries to show how the sacraments flow from the Church's nature as the primal sacrament, the "ongoing presence of Jesus Christ in time and history." This may sound agreeable. However, he goes on to make a fundamental statement whose content most of us could recognise from many a religious education syllabus today:

*What we call church and what we call the explicit and official history of salvation, and hence also what we call the sacraments, are only especially prominent, historically manifest and clearly tangible events in a history of salvation which is identical with the life of man as a whole.<sup>2</sup>*

Further on Rahner states this idea in a slightly different way:

*...it is clear, as the sacraments show, that a Christian does indeed live a tangible and ecclesial life, but that the ultimately Christian thing about this life is identical with the mystery of human existence....To be a Christian is simply to be a human being, and one who also knows that this life which he is living, and which he is consciously living, can also be lived even by a person who is not a Christian explicitly and does not know in a reflexive way that he is a Christian.<sup>3</sup>*

Here I believe that an orthodox Catholic vision must walk a different path. While it is true that Rahner's presentation of man as a 'supernatural existential' does aim to maintain some kind of nature of man such that it cannot be absolutely identical with his supernatural vocation, the texts quoted above appear to indicate that the supernatural life that is given to the believer is something already possessed by the non-believer in equal measure. All that distinguishes them is that the Christian has come to explicit awareness that the source of this is God in Jesus Christ, an awareness which thereby implies his own appropriation and willed acceptance of this fact.

#### God as Envioner

Holloway's book, *Catholicism: A New Synthesis*, does not present the self-communication of God as something that actually constitutes the human person as such. For him it is not true that the supernatural life is fully imparted with existence, even though it needs to be categorically affirmed by the individual. Rather, because of man's real historical nature, as a spiritual and corporeal being in a history of being, man's identity is not from the first moments immediately imbued with the fullness of this life. True, he is made in the self-giving love of Christ and so naturally and dynamically seeks the Lord who Himself desires this creature as a son. Nevertheless, the structure of man's nature implies growth and stages of increase in wisdom, stature and grace. In a strange kind of a way, Rahner's view of man being dynamically constituted in a permanent existential of supernatural life is actually rather static and in the end a-historical, despite his insistence on the need for categorical instances that open this existential up.

For Holloway man needs to grow into this unique filial relationship with God in a manner suitable to his nature. No creature in nature has its potential fully developed with the initial moments of its existence; it needs to be deployed and actuated in relation to other beings. With man this is particularly true and so the fullness of the supernatural life that God gives is not given *a priori* in an 'athematic' transcendental act but effected through, with and in words, signs and actions – ultimately in Jesus Christ.

Only thus through a truly personal encounter in space and time can man come to know and love the God who calls to his heart. The Incarnation and the sacramental economy fit in with man's structure as a being. In keeping with an evolutionary universe, a universe of space and time, of growth and passage, man, who relates to others in moments and places, who

relates to them through the flesh, and whose relationships with them can never be fully constituted from the beginning but admits of stages, will need the sacramental economy to grow in his relationship with God. At the same time, from God's angle, as it were, if He creates matter with its aspects of space and time then in His communication with man He will not ignore the structure of what He has created but will take it seriously when He gives His divine life. Holloway's view of the sacraments takes full account of these perspectives which are those of the one Unity-Law. Hence man although initially influenced by the touch of God upon Him at the creation of the soul will need stages in His relationship with God. These stages will need to be concrete actions of personal giving to man as material as well as spiritual. They will therefore be ritualised and involve some visible expression and will respond to the different aspects and needs of man's present existence. They will not be the construction of man searching for the best possible relationship with God; like all other creatures who receive their life not from themselves but from their environment, man will not be able to actualise his own fulfilment. Because God is man's personal Environment these stages will be the deployment of God's gifts and grace to man in and through Christ.

#### Nature and Grace

As a result the sacraments cannot be the manifestations of what man already is, they are a gift of something he does not possess fully from conception, a gift he could never attain on his own nor dare claim as his rightful possession. They are instead the promise of what man will be when fully transformed into glory and they are the bestowal upon man of a life into which he is growing and at which he has not yet fully arrived. This is a life revealed and given in the most historical, tangible and hence also universal terms. Christ, God made man, brings to man a fulfilment which of his own nature he could never obtain for himself. The human creature looks for its provision from the One to Whom he is relative and it is provided in a manner that is suitable to his nature.

Consequently, it is clear that the sacraments cannot just be categorical instances of what man is already: they are a giving of something that he is not yet and a summons to an eschatological fullness which will only be attained in the final Resurrection. This also means that the Christian is indeed something *more* than just a human being. By the sacraments and through them alone is man divinised and becomes truly a son of God and dwells in a spiritual *and corporeal* union with Him. Any touch of the redemptive love of grace in an unborn child is indeed an entitative draw, but a draw is not the plenary communication of the gift!

#### Where From?

Rahner's thought on the sacraments sees them as the actions of the Church or rather the expressions of the Church as she interprets herself as the primal sacrament, the efficacious sign of salvation in the world. This is not to reduce them as actions of grace. However the sacraments are seen as the unfolding of the sacramentality which

*continued overleaf*

characterises the Church's identity.<sup>4</sup> Coupled with this, he sees the sacraments as actions of God and of man:

*A sacrament is a tangible word and a tangible response. It comes from God and from man.<sup>5</sup>*

As a result, he presents the sacrament as a partnership between God and man, even though there is a radical difference between Creator and creature. In each sacramental action the Church actualises its own identity "as the ongoing presence of eschatologically victorious grace".<sup>6</sup> This in Rahner's mind does not reduce the grace-giving nature of the sacraments, nor God's involvement in them, since the Church is the most concrete expression and continuation of God's triumphal presence in the world in Christ:

*To this extent it is theologically legitimate to understand the sacraments as the most radical and most intensive instance of God's word as a word of the church when this word represents an absolute involvement of the church and is what is called opus operatum.<sup>7</sup>*

## Who is the Primary Agent?

Holloway's approach as we have seen would not view the sacraments as effective expressions of the life-giving relationship between God and man, summed up and brought to completion in Christ. They are not just actions of God and man. The relationship is not one of God and man relating to each other (even if for Rahner man's ability to relate is itself a grace from God) but it is unified in Christ who is God and man: He is the principal agent of the sacraments and He acts directly in each of them. The nature of the sacraments does indeed reflect something of the relationship between God and man; but more properly we can say that the Sacraments reflect and flow from the identity of Christ, God and man, our way, our truth, our life and our bread of life. They involve the co-operation of a human being in their performance. However their nature as word of God and word of man does not primarily derive from the minister's own personality but from Christ who in Himself is the perfect gift of God to us, God as man. It is He who designates (sometimes through the Magisterium which is His mind, teaching with his authority and guarantee in the Church) the sign that shall be the instrument of the giving of His life and it is this sign that becomes the means by which the finality of His identity as our life is brought to completion.

The minister simply "extends through [his] own...status and character participated with Christ, the Personality of the Lord."<sup>8</sup> So the minister has a real task but the sacrament itself should not be seen as his word or that of man or the Church, deriving from them, in relation to a word that comes from God: rather it is the "enfleshing...of an objective gift of God" that follows through from the structure of the Incarnation and so it is Christ's own action as God and man, in the sacrament itself and in the minister who administers it. It is an action of God and of man in this sense therefore: it is the action of God made man. It should be obvious

therefore that the primal sacrament is not the Church but Christ Himself: he is the original, so to speak, from which all the sacraments derive their nature and so they are His mediations to us of who He is and what He does for us. This does not reduce the Church's role but rather reinforces it as "the fullness of Him who fills the whole of creation" (Ephesians 1:23), His own Body in the world and not just some ongoing human convention: she is the vessel or Ark of salvation.

## The Institutional Church

Finally, we know that today very often there is much discussion of the outward institution of the Church and its relation to its real inner nature. I use these words advisedly because the question often implies a kind of polarity and separation between the two. Walter Kasper sees the problem as that of explaining "the relationship of the visible form of the Church to its hidden nature, which can only be grasped in faith", the relationship between its spiritual reality and its institutional form.<sup>9</sup> Often many characterise the visible elements as outward appearances that can be replaced and have various degrees of relationship to the real core. They are seen as relative and so it is not infrequent that one hears the idea that if they can be changed then they ought to be changed.

Holloway's perspective does not appear to differentiate these relationships so starkly. Rather they can be integrated. Here I believe that his notion of the relative substance is helpful. The appearance of the substance is not separate from its actual identity: it is the substance in action, in relation to its environment, changing and adapting to it but only insofar as its formal unity, given in its relationships, permits. This is true also for the Church. Its outward, visible nature is not incidental but the substance in action. It is true that occasionally certain forms, institutions and practices no longer have a meaningful value and the substance or the Church expresses herself in a different way more suited to its evangelical encounter with the world around. Those parts that are no longer meaningful die away but not without having helped in the growth of the whole. In the encounter with the world and with sin it can take on certain values that are dissonant with its real nature; the substance asserts itself and slowly discerns the alien character of these things and as necessary rejects them or modifies them so as to adopt them purified. Therefore visible forms in the Church are not absolutely relative but manifestations of its life as a life in Christ, an overflow of the workings of the Holy Spirit.

It is true that we cannot see or perceive the Trinity with whom the Church has communion, nor can we actually see the Holy Spirit acting in the sacraments. However this does not invalidate the analogy with the relative substance because the Incarnational structure of the Church and sacraments entails that what is spiritual is only manifested in a concrete, visible and hence material way. In the sacraments we do see God in action in a world of space and time; the Church visibly manifests communion with the Trinity through its hierarchy, its sacraments and the life of



faith, hope and charity. Rather than oppose in any way the visible and the invisible nature of the Church, as if the visible form of the Church were a problem, we see that the outward manifestation of the Church is to be expected from the structure of matter, of man and of the Incarnation. Its growth, its renewal, its pruning are to be expected of something that grows organically like any other living body in the world, except that it is living in a social form not its own life but that of Christ. As a result some things will remain ever necessary, even if their manner of deployment will change as the Church seeks to proclaim more effectively the message of salvation. A good example is in the growth and manifestations of the papacy in the Church: the essentials were there in the beginning but their active manifestation has evolved and the understanding of the full meaning of these essentials has grown. We see the modern papacy abandoning the trappings of secular kingship. At the same time we find the present Pontiff clearly developing the role of his office. For example, in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* he seems to express a further aspect of the role of the Pope: the Pope by his own authority not only teaches the Faith as the head of the College of Bishops but is also able to discern clearly what teachings are indeed infallibly taught by the Ordinary Magisterium of the Church. This appears to be nothing more than a natural development of the charge of Christ to Peter, "You in your turn must strengthen your brethren." (Luke 22:32)

### Conclusion

In conclusion, Holloway's vision should principally recall all of us to a true renewal of our own life in Christ. The necessity of the Church and of the sacraments, through which flow the graces that those outside the Church receive,

is vindicated. However, this also invites us to make them substantial to our lives and in no way merely incidental to them. This necessity is a source of renewal for the whole Church, whose members so often today have lost a sure grasp of her identity and of her unity with Christ, and therefore too often do not see the need not only for the sacraments but also for any kind of missionary endeavour at all. This corrosion of faith can be answered and reversed but in order to do so we must, as Holloway says, realise "the need for personal prayer, penance, humility, and union with God by meditation and mystical communion,"<sup>10</sup> so that thereby the Word of God will be manifested in our world not as "the breath of any imaginary pale Galilean, but the splendour and dynamism of God in the power of the Spirit," Jesus Christ "the bringer in of the enormous vision that is splendid, the majesty of the Intellect of God and of Man, the fullness of the Kingdom on Earth which God has made for Man, and can bring to consummation only in and through His creature, Man."<sup>11</sup>

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The quotations that follow are taken from the printed extract found in *The Sower*, April, 1998. With it is an interesting article by Michael J. Wrenn and Kenneth D. Whitehead entitled "Teaching a Different Faith".

<sup>2</sup>Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (Crossroad, New York, 1989), 425-426.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 430.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 412-413.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 427.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 428.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 427.

<sup>8</sup>*Catholicism*, 312.

<sup>9</sup>Walter Kasper, *Theology and Church* (SCM, London, 1989), 112.

<sup>10</sup>*Catholicism*, 501.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 491.

## I WANT MY DAD

Editorial from The Salvation Army Newspaper *The War Cry* for 5th April 08

HEADLINES of a prime ministerial change of mind on allowing Labour MPs a conscience vote when the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill goes before the Commons next month have focused on one issue – animal-human hybrid embryos.

Last September *The War Cry* noted that the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) had agreed in principle to allow the mixing of animal and human genetic material for research into incurable diseases and that the resultant 99.9 per cent human mixture would be human bits, not human beings.

The Bill will give legal backing to the HFEA's go-ahead. But it also includes another controversial but less-publicised issue – fatherhood.

Under a section dealing with assisted reproduction (through IVF or artificial insemination), a sperm donor is not regarded as the father. In the case of married couples where third-party sperm has been used, the husband will be regarded as the father. If, however, he says he doesn't want to be regarded as the father, the child will be fatherless. Where two women are in civil partnership, the non-impregnated partner will be regarded as a parent, unless she formally objects to being regarded as such. In either instance the child will be fatherless.

The Bill, though, does not describe the importance of fatherhood. The Government has long since established that children who are brought up by a mother and father are less likely to fall into crime and are more likely to succeed at school and be emotionally stable.

Of course, some fathers – feckless and footloose – are little more than incontinent sperm donors. Many mothers don't want the father of their kids around. But children see life differently. They want to know their dad. That want the love of a dad. They want to be proud of their dad. They want the identity and security that a dad gives.

# The abolition of fatherhood: The final folly of secular fundamentalism?

**James Bogle**

*James Bogle looks at the historical roots of the current undermining of fatherhood and the family by means of experimental laws and jurisprudence, the latest manifestation of which is the government's Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill which goes so far as to try and eliminate legal fatherhood for children in certain circumstances. Mr Bogle is a barrister of the Middle Temple and Chairman of the Catholic Union of Great Britain.*

*"The further consequences of widespread fatherlessness may well dwarf all current, and even imaginable, ills associated with family breakdown."*

Fatherhood, motherhood and the family, as used oft in better times to be recalled, stand at the centre of our much-heralded post-war international declarations on human rights and freedoms.

*"Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family... The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State."*

So states Article 16 of the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

Article 12 of the *European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* states similarly:

*Men and women of marriageable age have the right to marry and to found a family, according to the national laws governing the exercise of this right.*

For Christians, fatherhood is a reflection of the eternal fatherhood of God and a profound reality. For Catholics, in particular, it is so profound a reality that we see it incarnate in marriage, which is a sacrament re-presenting the union between Christ and the Church, and even in our clergy who are considered to be joined in a kind of spiritual matrimony to the Church, which, in turn, is considered to be our "Holy Mother" and the Bride of Christ. Hence the common usage of the expression "Father" for a cleric and "Holy Father" for the Supreme Pontiff. The title especially reflects the First Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Father Himself, as well as the nuptial and familial meaning of Christian love.

Modern Feminism, among other creeds, has demonstrated a rather different outlook. In so doing it often looks back to past ills and their supposed remedy.

*"'Educate women like men' says Rousseau, 'and the more they resemble our sex the less power they will have over us.' This is the very point I aim at. I do not wish them to have power over men, but over themselves."*

So wrote Mary Wollstonecraft in 1796, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, when the revolution that Rousseau and his ilk had helped to create was in full flight, crushing not only the prospect of education for men and women alike but their very heads under the unforgiving blows of the revolutionary militia.

She later wrote:

*"Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison."*

She seems to have missed her mark a little, since, today, many modern women, despite the widest possible encouragement to re-educate themselves, nevertheless still desire to “adorn the gilt cage” as much as ever. No amount of “re-education” can eradicate what is simply natural, it seems.

Despite envisaging marital contentment in the *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft’s two novels criticised marriage as a patriarchal institution harmful to women. Nevertheless, in the twelfth chapter entitled “On National Education”, she argued that men and women, whose marriages are, she resolutely states, “the cement of society”, should be “educated after the same model”.

Although she later married her paramour, the radical republican anarchist and atheist, William Godwin, we know from his later indiscreet memoir of her, that she had had other amours including the painter Henry Fuseli and Gilbert Imlay, by whom she had a daughter, Fanny. She wrote to her sister Everina in 1787 that she was trying to become “the first of a new genus” of women – what some today might call “liberated”. Nevertheless, both she and her daughter, Fanny, later attempted suicide, sadly successful in Fanny’s case.

This is the woman whom Feminists of the 1960s and 70s rediscovered and extolled as a foundress of Feminism. She might perhaps equally be called a co-foundress of that Secular Fundamentalism and moral libertarianism that is fast becoming the new state religion in modern Britain. Godwin seemed a suitable companion for her. He had advocated the abolition of marriage in his philosophical treatise *Political Justice*. Nevertheless, they married on 29 March 1797, but moved into two adjacent properties, called jointly “The Polygon”, to preserve their independence.

Wollstonecraft was widely deprecated in the 19th and early 20th century but was resurrected in the 1960s and 70s. Today, Mary Wollstonecraft’s demand for recognition of the rights of women has been largely realised in the law of the land wherein she once lived and died. But has the egalitarian utopia that she envisaged been realised? Few would own it, I suggest.

### The Contemporary Situation

What do we see in our society as regards these influences upon the institution of marriage and its incidence? We see a society in which something like 40% of marriages end in divorce and no sign of a reduction therein. We see a far greater desire for co-habitation outside marriage so that it is now no longer considered fashionable to refer to “husbands” and “wives” but rather to “partners”.

Although the legal definition of a partnership is “a joint venture for profit”, I doubt that even the most detached of such domestic arrangements could be regarded as chiefly a profit-making venture. The fashionable commentators, usually morally libertarian in outlook and hostile to religion, and sometimes amusingly termed the “chattering classes” (or, even better, the “commentariat”), seem to refer now to any but the most fleeting of sexual encounters by the equally coy euphemism of “relationships”. One can no longer be said to have a “relationship” with one’s bank manager or solicitor or accountant without the prospective suggestion of sexual overtones.

Concurrently, we have seen a huge increase in illegitimate births, single-motherhood, sexually-transmitted disease, crime, serious misconduct in schools and rapidly decreasing educational standards. Some will say this is mere coincidence. Well, perhaps, but it is a rather exact coincidence, is it not? Then, with that eternally self-deluding wishful-thinking that so characterises them, the moral libertarian, the Secular Fundamentalist and the utopian will tell us that all we need is more of the same.

One might fairly ask at what point our Secular Fundamentalists and moral libertarians might feel disposed to concede that their prescriptions for society have not achieved their aims and have, instead, failed – and failed dismally with the most damaging consequences for the stability of society and the happiness of the generality of its members. Perhaps they will only aver that their ideas did not fail but were never properly implemented, as utopians so often do.

In our divorce courts, all now conducted in secrecy so that neither the media nor the general public are aware of what goes on, the Feminist bias is virtually complete. Husbands and fathers are assumed to be dishonest and struggle to prove the contrary; less than honest affidavits and statements are regularly sworn by vengeful parties; and wives and mothers are encouraged to demand to the full the use of the very liberal and ample powers that the courts now have to oust fathers from their own homes and deprive them of any but the most minimal contact with their children.

What began as a reasonable enough reaction against the Victorian tendency to disbelieve the wife and deprive her of her children upon divorce, has transmogrified itself into the very reverse, where husbands and fathers, even those of otherwise good reputation and position, are assumed to be the villains of the piece.

continued overleaf



All too often, upon a falsely presented allegation of harm designed to cloak a wife's desire to start a fresh "relationship" with another man, a father who has provided everything for his family can find himself ousted from the property he brought to the marriage, alienated and separated from his children with very limited rights of fortnightly contact, and can then see his hearth and home occupied by another man to whom, at the front door of his own former home, he must now apply to see his own children on his infrequent contact days. Often enough, the new boyfriend simply tells the father that he is no longer wanted and to leave – and that from the front door of the home that the father himself struggled hard to acquire.

Such a huge disincentive to marriage is little known and understood by the general public who have no access to the Family courts and are unaware of what happens within them unless and until they experience its tender mercies for themselves.

In the case of *Whiston v Whiston* (1995), Robert Whiston was divorced from his Filipino wife who, secretly, had a previous husband living, sought and became Whiston's inheritor and then made several attempts upon his life so as to inherit his whole estate. They divorced before she succeeded in her plan but she nevertheless sought a substantial share of his property in the divorce proceedings. She was granted it. Whiston appealed all the way to the Court of Appeal which, at last, overturned the decision and greatly reduced the sum to be paid to her but the costs were as heavy as the original sum and so outweighed any benefit to Mr. Whiston. His former "wife" had, by then, turned her attentions to another whom she married and so stood to inherit his estate upon his death.

She succeeded in doing so by again by becoming his inheritor and then killing him. She was discovered by her own indiscretion and is now serving a life sentence for murder.

In the case of *Kyte v Kyte* (1988), another husband, of frail health, was persistently goaded into attempting suicide by his wife so that she could marry another man. She provided him with the means to kill himself and, in a state of severe depression, he even attempted it. Upon divorce, the wife, despite her shocking misconduct, sought a substantial portion of his property and, moreover, was granted it by the courts, albeit somewhat reduced upon appeal.

A scan of the so-called "Rich List", published intermittently by some tabloid papers, readily shows a regular increase in the number of ex-wives who have become rich purely through divorce. Few will need to be reminded of the very large sums of money that the wife of ex-Beatle,

Paul McCartney, recently sought and obtained from him in her divorce settlement, even though they were not married for very long.

Few fathers, though, have McCartney's wealth. Many are unable to house themselves after divorce and so end up with even less opportunity to see their children. Small wonder, then, that 55% of men lose all contact with their children within five years of divorce.

## The Effect upon Children

However much Feminists may consider that such is no more than the ex-husband's due, what, one must ask, is the effect upon the children who are so deprived of their fathers?

A consequence of Feminism may be, in the end, that "liberating" women from the supposedly patriarchal institution of marriage leads to an increasingly fatherless society. We are already well on the way to such a supposed ultra-Feminist *nirvana*. Many will deny this because their reductive understanding of fatherhood sees it as virtually a purely biological phenomenon. Such a perversely impoverished understanding of the meaning of fatherhood is barbaric, not least for children.

Such is the consequence of supposedly "enlightened" "rationalism" and, perhaps, reflects, in its own self-deluding and self-destroying manner, those same paradoxes that lay at the heart of the life of Mary Wollstonecraft.

It can only cause harm to children to belittle or undermine the importance of fatherhood. The deep influence of Feminism upon the family courts has, however, tended to have this effect. Yet our family court system claims to put children first.

Now we see a further, and even more self-contradictory development in the *Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill* (2007) currently making its way through our Parliament. This Bill takes the matter to the ultimate extremity and even proposes to exclude the biological father from the definition of fatherhood under certain conditions<sup>1</sup>. Fatherhood is then abolished and obliterated altogether.

Even some Feminists, like Baroness Deech, former head of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, think this is going too far.

The further consequences of such widespread fatherlessness may well dwarf all current, and even imaginable, ills associated with family breakdown.

## Christian Europe

In ancient times, the Church and its monastic institutions had protected and nurtured the poor, had protected women and children and endorsed a creed of chivalry that enjoined the same as a supreme obligation for all Christians whether of high or low degree.

Women were to be educated as much as possible and according to their state in life. Queens and princesses, abbesses and prioresses held positions of wealth, power and influence in Church and State which they were solemnly adjured to use for the benefit of the common good. This was reflected all the way down the various grades of society in a series of relationships binding each to his neighbour in duty and charity.

The aim was a society that, despite its disparities and differences of state and wealth, nevertheless was co-mutual in obligation, founded upon a supernaturally inspired solidarity. It sought, at its best, to be a civilisation predicated upon love and not self-interest and greed. That, at least, was the aim.

Above all, such a vision recognised that society is founded first and foremost not upon a Socialist collective, nor indeed upon a collection of atomised selfish individuals, but upon that small collectivity, the family, wherein the individuality of each is neither to be swallowed up nor obliterated.

The Church itself was organised like a family and those who suppose that the monastic system of welfare provided a kind of state or Socialist welfare are sorely mistaken. The monasteries were all private institutions, independent of the state, until Henry VIII expropriated and "nationalised" them all.

Not surprisingly the church he founded became the servant of the rich and powerful and abandoned the poor. Equally unsurprising is the objection that many had to such an abandonment. Indeed, it was an objection that both Wollstonecraft and Godwin shared. In that, at least, they were right. But they fell into even greater toils and began to reject marriage and the family altogether, preparing the way for yet greater evils.

This little society called the Family is much more than a mere social organism. It flows from the Divine Life. It imitates the love of God, the Holy Trinity, as He, the source of all Fatherhood, gives His Son as Bridegroom to the Church, His Bride, in the love of the Holy Spirit, to bring forth life. The Family is uniquely designed to foster the best welfare of each of its members, when rightly ordered and appointed. There can be no substitutes for it. Everyone has a mother and a father or, if they do not, feels that lack of them keenly.

It is a simple fact that those who seek to foist upon society and upon children alternative forms of social organisation rarely, if ever, were deprived of a father and mother themselves. Still less do they foresee any ill consequences in deliberately depriving children of a mother and a father.

This institution – the family – is, as even Mary Wollstonecraft in her better moments recognised, the "cement of society" and without it no society can long survive.

Pope Leo XIII wrote in 1888, in his encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*, on the condition of the working class, these prophetic words:

*"A family, no less than a State, is, as We have said, a true society, governed by an authority peculiar to itself... provided, therefore, the limits which are prescribed by the very purposes for which it exists be not transgressed, the family has at least equal rights with the State in the choice and pursuit of the things needful to its preservation and its just liberty. We say, 'at least equal rights', for, inasmuch as the domestic household is antecedent, as well in idea as in fact, to the gathering of men into a community, the family must necessarily have rights and duties which are prior to those of the community, and founded more immediately in nature. If the citizens, if the families on entering into association and fellowship, were to experience hindrance in a commonwealth instead of help, and were to find their rights attacked instead of being upheld, society would rightly be an object of detestation rather than of desire. The contention, then, that the civil government should at its option intrude into and exercise intimate control over the family and the household is a great and pernicious error."*

Shall we, as a nation, recognise these truths now, or shall we wait to learn the hard way by continuing to attack and destroy the "cement of society" that holds it together?

Will militant atheism and Secular Fundamentalism, in its obscene rush to abolish God the Father, seek also to try and abolish fatherhood itself?

Time, I suppose, will tell but with the government's present plans for fathers, the omens are not good.

# THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE

## MAGISTERIAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF THE PERSON AND TEACHING OF CHRIST

*Fr Paul Watson and colleagues at the Maryvale Institute, Birmingham, elucidate catechetical principles which must ground transmission, according to the catechetical documents of the Church since the Second Vatican Council, Evangelii Nuntiandi (EN), Catechesi Tradendae (CT), the General Directory for Catechesis (GDC) and the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), documents largely ignored by the Heythrop Study, On the Way to Life – cf. our editorial and main article. Italics are added for the purpose of this paper.*

### Realist Catechesis of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

A realist catechesis is the only catechesis that fully allows the truth of the reality of the Word of God to be communicated. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is realist in that it links man's actual, historical and personal experience into the larger patrimony of the Church, integrating the existential insights of the last 100 years of catechesis with the essential, universal and everlasting truths of revelation. It provides a catechesis that is neither polarised nor reactive but deeply real. One of the most important and least studied factors of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is that it provides a catechesis in content and method that is remarkable in its philosophical and anthropological foundations.

### Evangelisation as context (cf EN 18)

Three stages of Evangelisation:

- Initial proclamation,
- Catechesis
- On-going formation

'Evangelisation means the carrying forth of the Good News to every sector of the human race so that by its strength it may enter into the hearts of men and renew the human race. 'Behold, I make all things new'. (EN 18)

### Catechism as reference text for catechesis

'The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and The *General Catechetical Directory* are two distinct but complementary instruments at the service of the Church's catechetical activity.' 'Both instruments... are mutually complementary.' (GDC 120).

'The Catechism of the Catholic Church offers a clear response to the legitimate right of all the baptised to know from the Church what she has received and what she believes;' (GDC 130)

### Truths of faith are essential, not alone experience

'Education in faith is more than merely 'experience', 'existential concern', and 'emotional awareness'. Faith has first of all to do with realities, with facts, not with notions or concepts. But facts can be asserted in propositions. Faith without propositions is faith without facts. Newman said: "Christianity is faith, faith implies a doctrine, a doctrine implies propositions".' See also CCC 170.

### Faith is found firstly in doctrine, not theology

The Church speaks of the one doctrine of the faith that is at the root of all the different Catholic theologies. It is the one doctrine, given and received, that needs to remain the core of catechesis and formation. This is not the place for giving or exploring any particular theology, or theologies.

### 'Saving truths'

Theologies and methodologies will come and go and it is vital at higher levels that these be explored and challenged, but the baptised have a right, and the bishop as chief catechist has the duty, not to provide theology but to pass on the one, salvific, doctrine (teaching) of the faith to future generations. 'The Father's self-communication made through his Word in the Holy Spirit, remains present and active in the Church' (CCC 79).

### 'Doctrine is not opposed to life.' (Schönborn)

Faith, hope and love overcome orthopraxis/orthodoxy (CT). 'There is an organic connection between our spiritual life and dogmas. Dogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure' (CCC 89).



### There are two tendencies to avoid:

- 'those who are unable to appreciate how profound is the proposed renewal, as if it were merely a matter of eliminating ignorance of doctrine... and...
- those who tend to reduce the gospel message to its effects on people's temporal lives' (GDC 63).

### Double pedagogical commitment

The catechist has a double commitment: to the message and the man. (GDC 238).

#### a. Method depends on what is taught (message)

*The manner of teaching and learning depends primarily on the nature of the subject.*

- 'Pedagogical instructions adequate for catechesis are those which permit the communication of the whole word of God in the concrete existence of people.'
- 'A good catechetical method is a guarantee of fidelity to content.' (GDC 147-149).

#### b. Method depends on who is taught (man)

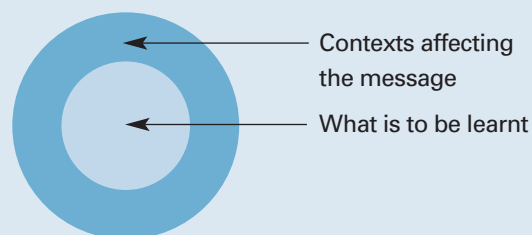
*Ways of teaching and learning depend on the nature of the learner.*

In catechesis we are always involved with human beings – beings who all have 'human nature' in common, that is those living, dynamic characteristics of our being that we all share. The Christian sense of the person is distinctively different to most of the prevailing secular beliefs. Our methodology needs to be in accordance with the Christian vision of the person and the Christian view of the human person depends on:

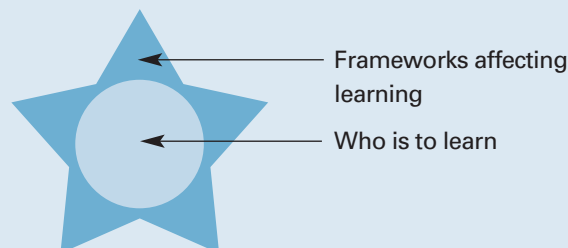
- The fact that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God and that, therefore, we are all from God and for God, for ever.
- Christ's act of redemption whereby human beings are *all* destined for life in Christ.
- The strong belief in God's grace whereby *all* have divine help at all times to live and grow in truth and love.
- 'Formation seeks to enable catechists to transmit the Gospel to those who desire to entrust themselves to Jesus Christ.'
- 'The summit and centre of catechetical formation lies in an aptitude and ability to communicate the Gospel message.' (GDC 235).

### Key Themes accompanying the Framework

#### PRINCIPLE 1



#### PRINCIPLE 2



cf. Francis Kelly, *The Mystery We Proclaim*

### Catechesis: A fundamental ecclesial service for the realisation of the missionary mandate of Jesus (GDC 59)

- 'Catechesis is an essentially ecclesial act'
- 'The true subject of catechesis is the Church which, continuing the mission of Jesus the Master and, therefore animated by the Holy Spirit, is sent to be the teacher of the faith.'
- 'The Church imitates the *Mother of the Lord in treasuring the Gospel* in her heart.'
- 'She *proclaims* it, *celebrates* it, *lives* it, and she *transmits* it in *catechesis* to all those who have decided to follow Jesus Christ.'
- 'This transmission of the Gospel is a living act of ecclesial tradition' (GDC 78).

### The role of the Parish

- 'The Christian community is the origin, locus and goal of catechesis.'
- 'Proclamation of the Gospel always begins with the Christian community and invites man to conversion and the following of Christ.' (GDC 254).
- 'The parish is, without doubt, the most important locus in which the Christian community is formed and expressed.'
- 'This is called to be a fraternal and welcoming family where Christians become aware of being the people of God.'
- 'The parish must continue to be the *prime mover and pre-eminent place* for catechesis;' (GDC 257).
- 'In many countries of established Christian tradition ... there exists an intermediate situation, where entire groups of the baptised have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel. Such situations require a new evangelisation.' (GDC 58c).

*continued overleaf*

## The role of the priest

'The catechetical tasks proper to the presbyterate and particularly to parish priests are:

- to foster a sense of *common responsibility* for catechesis in the Christian community, a task which involves all, and a recognition and appreciation for catechists and their mission;
- to care for the *basic orientation of catechesis* and its planning by giving emphasis to active participation of catechists and by insisting that catechesis be well structured and oriented ;
- to promote and to discern *vocations* to the service of catechesis and, as catechist of catechists, attend to their formation by giving the greatest attention to this duty;
- to integrate catechetical activity into his programme of *community evangelisation*; and foster the link between catechesis, sacraments and the liturgy;
- to secure the bonds between the catechesis of his community and the *diocesan pastoral programme* by helping catechists become active co-operators in a common diocesan programme.

Experience bears out that the quality of catechesis in a community depends very largely on the presence and activity of the priest.' (GDC 225)

## Parish priorities

'In order that the parish may succeed in activating effectively the mission of evangelisation, some conditions must be fulfilled:

- Adult catechesis* must be given priority. This involves a post-baptismal catechesis, ... presenting again some elements from the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults with the purpose of allowing a person to grasp and live the immense, extraordinary richness and responsibility received at Baptism .
- With renewed courage, *the proclamation of the Gospel* to those alienated or who live in religious indifference must be planned. In this task, pre-sacramental meetings (preparation for Marriage, Baptism and First Holy Communion of children) can be fundamental.
- As a solid reference point for parochial catechesis it is necessary *to have a nucleus of mature Christians*, initiated into the faith, to whom different pastoral concerns can be entrusted
- While the preceding points refer mainly to adults, at the same time *catechesis for children, adolescents, and young people* which is always indispensable will also benefit greatly.' (GDC 258)

## The importance of catechists

- 'The quality of any form of pastoral activity is placed at risk if it does not rely on truly *competent and trained personnel*.'

- 'The resources provided for catechesis cannot be truly effective unless well used by trained catechists.'
- '*Adequate formation of catechists cannot be overlooked* by concerns such as the updating of texts and the re-organisation of catechesis.'
- 'Diocesan pastoral programmes must give *absolute priority* to the formation of lay catechists.'
- 'A fundamentally decisive element must be the catechetical formation of priests.'
- 'Bishops are called upon to ensure that they are scrupulously attentive to such formation.' (GDC 234)

## Family catechesis

- 'childhood religious awakening which takes place in the family is irreplaceable.'
- 'family catechesis precedes... accompanies and enriches all forms of catechesis.'
- 'Parents *receive in the sacrament of Matrimony* 'the grace and the ministry of the Christian education of their children.'
- 'By means of personal contact, meetings, courses and also *adult catechesis directed toward parents*, the Christian community must help them assume their responsibility – which is particularly delicate today – of educating their children in the faith.' (GDC 226)
- 'The role of *grandparents* is of growing importance. Their wisdom and sense of the religious is often times decisive in creating a true Christian climate.' (GDC 255)

## The role of centres for higher learning

- *At diocesan and inter-diocesan levels it is most useful when there is an awareness of the need to form people at a higher level* (GDC 252)
- *Attendance at a school for catechists is a particularly important moment in the formation of a catechist* (GDC 248).

## 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

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

### THOMISTIC MATTER

Dear Father Editor,

William Charlton ('A Question of Matter', Letters, Jan/Feb issue) supports the view that modern science is in opposition to the account of physical reality given by Thomas Aquinas, or at least by his disciples. In response, I would like to indicate some of the areas where I think agreement may be found between the two.

Firstly, there is a methodological similarity, at least in this important respect: that scientists in their theories and Thomas in his philosophy both start from the real, existing physical entity. Science today in fact has some of the traits of a metaphysical system, since it postulates entities, forces and causes that are not objects of immediate or even mediate experience, but which are seen as necessary to explain those which are. And this is said pejoratively neither of metaphysics nor of science, since the quest for coherent explanation is intrinsic to the nature and dignity of human reason itself. In this way, modern science treads the same path that Aquinas, and others like him, trod many centuries ago.

Then, there is common ground with regard to the nature of our physical world. Often Thomas is accused of a "static" view of reality, where unchanging forms are somehow fused with formless matter – precluding the possibility of evolution among other things. I believe this does not do him justice; it ascribes to him a Platonic mindset which he was in fact keen to reject. The study of Aristotle endowed him with a vision of a cosmos in perpetual movement, a dynamic 'macrosphere' that emerges out of dynamism and exchange in the 'microsphere'. Aristotle (and certainly Thomas) taught that forms, rather than "coming into" matter from outside, are actually "educated" from the inner dynamism of matter itself at a lower

level of complexity, all the way down to the interchange of the "elemental qualities" (which appear almost as primal 'tendencies' rather than anything substantial). Animal life, for example, appears as a decisive advance in a cosmic process of actualisation of the real potencies inherent in matter at lower levels: an advance, however, which is not simply reducible to the tendencies (ultimately thermodynamic: form is like fire, which "tends towards the limit", says Aristotle) that gave rise to it. We must of course make a special exception for human life, which transcends this evolutionary process in a far more radical way.

This process of incrementation of form and of order cannot explain itself, as Aristotle correctly observes: a process displaying such finality and regularity must have some principle of order outside the process itself. This is understood by Aristotle as the sun, a perpetual movement which causes perpetual change. For Thomas, though, the sun too is a creature: its real causality is only understood with reference to the One who "made heaven and earth", the only true source of unity and finality in the cosmos.

In this cosmology, allowing for the 800- year development of vocabulary and knowledge, we can see openness to biological and cosmic evolution, complexity, emergence, matter as density-of-energy – all cherished by modern science – as well as metaphysics, finality and theology, which the Church seeks to uphold and defend: all of which, incidentally, your magazine seeks to bring together, too.

One of the things Dr Charlton took issue with was prime matter. This is not an "alternative view" of the ultimate *substratum*, which "competes" with the view described briefly above: Thomas never saw it that way. Instead, it represents a deepening of the same view. However, the point of this letter is principally to draw attention to the common ground between classical Thomistic and modern scientific visions of the world. Having done this as well as I could, let me leave the complex subject of prime matter for another time!

Yours Faithfully  
John Deighan  
Pontificio Collegio Scozzese  
Via Cassia  
Rome

**EDITORIAL COMMENT:** We thank Mr Deighan for his constructive contribution to this debate. *Faith Magazine* is of course in no sense "against" Thomas. We only argue the need to develop and update his metaphysical perspective to meet the new discoveries and insights into matter that science has uncovered. It would not surprise us at all to find that the seeds of such development can be found within his own work. The important thing is to make the necessary developments in both philosophy and theology which will allow us to present the Catholic faith to the modern world again in an orthodox and intellectually convincing way – not least to defend the realistic concept of 'human nature', as did St Thomas, and does our current editorial.

### SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE

Dear Father Editor,

I greatly admire the intellectual quality of your articles but, as a simple Bible and Penny Catechism man, let me make a few comments about Christian thinking in general and thinking about origins in particular.

The confident expectation of a lot of your writers is that the creation process will eventually be made plain by science. This is gross presumption and quite untenable by Catholics. What guidance does the Bible give here?

The words 'science', 'intelligence' and 'reason' do not find any place in sacred scripture which puts the source of human knowledge in the 'heart'. Truth has to be comprehended holistically and resonate with the whole being, not just the brain and its science.

In my Bible concordance the word 'heart', including when preceded by a pronoun, is used no less than 640 times approximately! It is introduced by the following preamble: 'The word heart is used in Scripture as the seat of life or strength; hence it means mind, soul, spirit, or one's entire emotional nature and understanding ...' The word 'thought' does have about 110 entries but close inspection reveals that these are 'thoughts of the heart'. Descartes with his 'cognito ergo sum' is seen here to be only half alive.

*continued overleaf*



If anyone were to be given the grace to understand the 'how' of creation it would be, not a scientist, but a mystic of a very high order indeed and the only one in this category we have so far is Moses. His testimony constitutes our entire evidence.

The Lord's question to Job when cutting him down to size was, 'Where wert thou when I laid the foundations of the Earth?' How tinny and shallow would any theory of 'evolution' sound in such an encounter.

*Yours Faithfully*  
Mr. Jim Allen  
Seymour Drive  
Torquay

**EDITORIAL COMMENT:** Please see the catechism quotations on page 16.

## KNOX'S TRANSLATION

*Dear Father Editor,*

It was with particular interest that I read the comments by Mgr. Cormac Burke (letters, Jan. 2008) concerning the Knox translation of the Bible, because I had been wondering about the advantages and disadvantages of continuing to use 'thou' and 'thine'.

But whether or not it was a mistake, as Mgr Burke concludes, for Ronald Knox to keep to the outdated 'thou' form, a different question arises when reading the Knox account of the wedding feast of Cana. According to earlier translations into English, including the 1582 Rheims, the 1611 King James and the 1845 Douai, at Cana the Mother of Jesus says to her Son, 'they have no wine' (Jn.2.1-3), but in the 1945 Knox version Mary says 'they have no wine *left*'.

Replacing outdated words is one thing, but adding to the biblical text an extra word with a distinct meaning of its own is a different matter, and some later translations into English, including the Revised Standard Version (1952), the Jerusalem Bible (1966), the New American Bible (1969) and the New Revised Standard Version (1989), have kept to the earlier 'they have no wine'. But others, among them the Revised English Bible (1970), the Good News Bible (1976) and the New Revised English Bible (1989) now include the word 'left', even though doing so limits the ways in which Mary's words to her Son might be interpreted.

The only reason for adding this word seems to be that it 'sounds better', but is that reason enough for inserting a new word into the gospel text? Or is there evidence of similar wording in any ancient text in any language?

*Yours Faithfully*  
Moirá Shea  
Kendal, Cumbria

## OUR'AN AS UNCREATED WORD?

*Dear Father Editor,*

Having read the January/February issue I am reminded of a recent comment by Dr Patrick Sookhdeo that love is not central to Islam as it is to Christianity.

In Islam love seems to be an optional extra which was introduced into its mainstream by the Sufis. In contrast, the Wahhabis – the puritan tendency represented by Saudi Arabia and al Qaeda – insists that the judgment that God ought to be loved is a Christian and pagan intrusion.

Another important point your magazine made is that it is of orthodox Islam that the Qur'an is uncreated. This orthodoxy is universally held by Sunni Muslims, but not by Shi'a. The only identifiable Sunni school of thought which believed that the Qur'an was created were the Mu'tazilah who were definitively suppressed by the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawwakil during the ninth century.

To be fair to the Muslims, it is important to clarify that they believe that the spoken sounds of the Qur'an, the paper, cover and bindings of its earthly copies and the written words and letters are themselves created. What is uncreated, having existed with Allah from eternity, is the ideas which these express.

This doctrine simply will not do. According to St Thomas (ST Ia Q15 A3) ideas such as those in the Qur'an are types, or archetypes. The archetypes of all things merely possible are present in the Divine Intellect from eternity, not that they exist, but that they are present to God as objects of knowledge. The only idea which can rightly be said to exist is the uncreated Word of God which has the same existence as God and proceeds from Him by eternal generation.

*Yours Faithfully*  
Michael Petek  
Balfour Road, Brighton

## DISCERNING DISCOMFORT AT POLISH WORSHIP

*Dear Father Editor,*

I read with interest William Oddie's comments on the recent phenomenon of Polish immigrants to England and their demonstrably evident devotion to their Catholic faith. The same situation exists in Scotland.

It is a conundrum to tease out why such evident devotion and implicit belief in what the Church teaches, should make the indigenous Catholics feel not a little uncomfortable. This is borne out in the comparison that is evident in the approach to the celebration of the Eucharist by Polish Mass goers, as opposed to that shown by increasing numbers of Catholics in Scotland. The contrast is obvious and sadly, embarrassing. In Masses attended by the Polish faithful, the silent, prayerful attitude before the celebration, and the rapt oblivion to everything else during it, invites us to glimpse our lost childhood's faith.

Is it any wonder then, that the Polish incomers would feel more fulfilled when attending "Polish Masses"? Indeed, there are those non-Polish among us who are attracted to these Masses by reason of the difference we find there.

Converts, after much heart searching, who left fine Protestant churches in the last twenty years, lured by the very mystery of the Eucharist, that dimension to faith like no other; enraptured by the discovery of the Saints, the Rosary, Eucharistic adoration, and all the kaleidoscopic depth and colour promised, too often have found themselves in a church ill at ease with these beliefs. Such beliefs, whose very mystique has rendered them too uncomfortable to be proclaimed, contend with our need to be accepted in the smart world. Instead of these mysteries of our faith being cherished, they have often been neglected at best; at worst, openly ridiculed.

So, when Catholics appear among us, who still hold dear these sacred treasures, because the vulgar requirements of a materialistic society have not yet diluted their faith, it affects the onlookers in different ways. There is a defensive reaction from some; others feel relief and even hope.

The old educational theory of "regression to norm" will not take place, God willing, before our Polish friends have exerted an influence upon us that is for the good of the Catholic Church here.

*Yours Faithfully  
Nancy Clusker  
Bathgate  
West Lothian*

## WORRIES ABOUT THE MENTAL CAPACITY ACT GUIDE

*Dear Father Editor,*

Might I encourage a careful review of the "Practical Guide" to the Mental Capacity Act recently published by the Catholic Bishops' Conference through the CTS.

On a cursory reading I was concerned. Archbishop Smith's introduction sets the tone of what I consider to be a document which misleads in its

interpretation of the law. The description on page 6 of the ambiguous phrases incorporated into the Act by the government following Catholic lobbying as "important safeguards" seems questionable. In particular the document places great stress upon the Act's affirmation that "decisions about life-sustaining treatment must not be motivated by a desire to bring about the person's death", which is seen as curing most of the Act's ills.

Much pressure is put upon this by what the document calls the "problematic features" that "The Act unfortunately retains a feature of recent English Law ... acceptance of certain decisions to bring about death", namely intentional killing by "omission", even and especially "of food and water" (p.19).

Section 2.2 on the Act's "Key Principles" makes no reference to the relevant principle of transferable autonomy, and this is not discussed in the guide at all as far as I can see.

On the plus side, the glossary of terms at the end seems good, but I think this is still misleading in that a reader could think that these terms have those meanings in the Act, whereas the major point is that they do not. The appendix on character and conscience contains some helpful things, although I doubt whether the illustration at the end, concerning the possibility of working to make implements used in an abortuary, would have been as acceptable to the Bishops if the subject were torture rather than abortion.

*Yours Faithfully  
Frances Levett  
Eastfield Ave  
Melton Mowbray  
Leicestershire*

## The Woman

It is significant that, as he speaks to his mother from the Cross, he calls her "woman" and says to her: "Woman, behold your son!" Moreover he had addressed her by the same term at Cana too (cf. Jn 2:4). How can one doubt that especially now, on Golgotha, this expression goes to the very heart of the mystery of Mary, and indicates the unique place which she occupies in the whole economy of salvation?...

...The words uttered by Jesus from the Cross signify that the motherhood of her who bore Christ finds a "new" continuation in the Church and through the Church, symbolised and represented by John. In this way, she who as the one "full of grace" was brought into the mystery of Christ in order to be his Mother and thus the Holy Mother of God, *through the Church remains in that mystery as "the woman"* spoken of by the Book of Genesis (3:15) at the beginning and by the Apocalypse (12:1) at the end of the history of salvation. In accordance with the eternal plan of Providence, Mary's divine motherhood is to be poured out upon the Church, as indicated by statements of Tradition, according to which Mary's "motherhood" of the Church is the reflection and extension of the motherhood of the Son of God.

John Paul II *Redemptoris Mater* Chapter 24



## comment on the comments



by  
William Oddie

### A MOMENT OF TRUTH

The biggest moral issue for Catholics in English politics during this year of grace 2008 will surely, in the perspective of history, turn out to have been the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, introduced into Parliament by the Government in November, with the intention that it will become law early in 2009. So far it has been debated only in the Lords: but what has so far been said gives no confidence that what has surely to be seen as a major step towards the radical de-Christianisation of English culture will come up against any opposition that has a chance of success.

The government's original intention was (and may still be) to steam-roller this Bill into Law by imposing a three-line whip on its own supporters. Its key proposals, as explained by the Health department in a list of brisk bullet points, are as follows:

1. Ensuring that all human embryos outside the body – whatever the process used in their creation – are subject to regulation.
2. Regulation of “inter-species” embryos created from a combination of human and animal genetic material for research.
3. A ban on sex selection of offspring for non-medical reasons.
4. Retention of a duty to take account of the welfare of the child in providing fertility treatment, but removal of the reference to “the need for a father”.
5. Recognising same-sex couples as legal parents of children conceived through the use of donated sperm, eggs or embryos.

6. Altering the restrictions on the use of data collected by the regulator to make it easier to do follow-up research.
7. Increasing the scope of legitimate embryo research activities, subject to controls.

The dismantling of the two-parent family based on marriage is, of course, now well advanced; the glib expression ‘removal of the reference to “the need for a father”’, in article 4, assumes in its casual way that here is a battle that has already been long won and lost. The signs are that the Catholic Church will at least make its voice heard when the Bill comes to be debated in the Commons: but any hope that the C of E will come up to scratch seems, on the evidence so far available, dubious to say the least. The Cardinal kicked off with a letter to *The Times* (widely reported in other papers) to coincide with the Bill's second reading in the Lords, a contribution which contrasted remarkably with the Archbishop of Canterbury's, made from the dark red benches on the same day the Cardinal's letter appeared. A comparison of the two is instructive: they are worth reproducing in full to make the point. Here is the Cardinal's letter:

*Sir, The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, which receives its second reading in the House of Lords today, raises three issues of particular importance.*

*One is the quality of regulation. New research techniques, and most recently licences for research on human-animal hybrids, have been pushed forward with inadequate attention to the long-term ethical problems they pose. The Bill does nothing to remedy this. It should be used to create a statutory national bioethics commission bringing together a broad spectrum of experts with a clear mandate and an independent role. Only such an authoritative and independent body can ensure that serious ethical scrutiny is no longer an afterthought but a precondition of such research.*

*Secondly, the Bill proposes to remove the need for IVF providers to take into account the child's need for a father when considering an IVF application, and to confer legal parenthood on people who have no biological relationship to a child born as a result of IVF. This radically undermines the place of the father in a child's life, and makes the natural rights of the child subordinate to the desires of the couple. It is profoundly wrong.*

*Thirdly, this Bill can and will be used by all sides to seek a change in the abortion law. Debates about this will easily generate much more heat than light unless the energy of both sides is focused on the right question, which is: “Given that 200,000 abortions a year is far too many, how can a deliverable change in the law most effectively reduce that number?” Of course the law is only one aspect of what needs to change if that number is to come down significantly. But it would send a powerful and necessary message if Parliament were to amend the abortion law with the clear intent not of making abortion easier, but, as a first step, of making it rarer.*

*The many serious ethical issues raised by this Bill require that Members of both Houses are given a free vote in accordance with their conscience, not only on the abortion issue but the Bill as a whole. Opposition parties are already allowing this, and I urge the Government to do likewise.*

*Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor*

The excellent Fr Bryan Storey, in a typically terse four word comment on *The Times*'s blog, called it ‘light in the darkness’: and certainly, it was a serious and – in only 369 words – a remarkably meaty contribution, clear and not mealy-mouthed: the simple sentence ‘it is profoundly wrong’ is in a different moral universe from the kind of thing we have come to expect from Dr (I nearly said ‘Professor’) Rowan Williams. Here, if you can credit it, was the entire contribution of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Lords debate. He is referring to the question of human-



animal hybrid embryos; and he does not, it will be noted, utter anything so obvious as 'it is profoundly wrong':

*I want just to echo some of the anxieties that have been raised in the past few minutes. I share entirely the unease of the noble Lord, Lord Tebbit, about the phrase, 'the human end of the spectrum', which seems to introduce a very unhelpful element of uncertainty. Given that some of the major moral reservations around this Bill, which have been expressed broadly both in the country and in your Lordships' House, pivot upon the concern that this is legislation which is gradually but inexorably moving towards a more instrumental view of how we may treat human organisms, any lack of clarity in this area seems fatally compromising and ambiguous. I hope that we can have some further clarity in this afternoon's discussion.*

That was it. The Archbishop of Canterbury's big chance to make a substantial contribution to the debate on the Bill's second reading: an extempore intervention (that it was unprepared is indicated by the barely coherent assertion that 'any lack of clarity in this area seems fatally compromising and ambiguous') of 124 words. If the archbishop had already made any other contribution on the issue I have at the time of writing been unable to find it: perhaps he is keeping his powder dry (though the martial metaphor will almost certainly turn out to be comically inappropriate).

A Christian case against these developments seems unlikely, on present evidence, to be put with any coherence or conviction by anyone but Catholics: so of course, it will be thought that 'religious objections' are obscurantist and irrelevant. The Anglicans either do not seem to be clear what the issues are or are wholly convinced by 'progressive' arguments. Lord Harries, formerly Bishop of Oxford, gave an interview to Helen Rumbelow and Alice Miles from *The Times*, which began, with excruciating coyness, 'it isn't often that you get to meet God.

Happily, we can report that He turns out to be a charming, sandy-haired grandfather with more than a passing resemblance to an ageing Gregory Peck.' 'What if', they asked him, 'a part-rabbit, part-baby turned up at the Gates of Heaven: would it have a human soul? Lord Harries instinctively brought his hand to his dog collar, and kept it there at his throat while trying to answer. "I'd rather not say if it is human, rather that it is seen to have predominantly human genetic make-up. From a religious point of view it is impossible to say.' So there you have it. As for experiments on human embryos, 'I don't regard that very early embryo, which is just a small bundle of multiplying cells, as having the rights of a human being'. He was also clear enough about the removal of the reference in the existing legislation to 'the need for a father': as he put it, 'That should go. I don't think it's very useful because I think studies have shown that two people of the same sex together can be good parents.' Bishops of Oxford don't usually get a peerage on their retirement: but you can see why the government gave one to a useful chap like Richard Harries.

Catholics are going to be, if not entirely on their own, not exactly part of a united Christian front either. That there are huge moral issues involved here seems, all the same, obvious enough. Nevertheless, the government is (or was when we went to press) determined not to allow its own backbenchers any freedom of conscience when it comes to the main vote in the Commons. According to the *Telegraph*, 'A Government source said last night (i.e. on March 2): "This is a vital Bill and the Prime Minister has taken a close interest. That means we have to get it through. But when you are talking about people's religious beliefs, particularly among Cabinet ministers, then it creates problems".' The *Telegraph* claimed that Gordon Brown was 'facing a rebellion by Roman Catholic Cabinet ministers'. According to this account, 'three senior Cabinet ministers Des Browne, the Defence Secretary, Ruth Kelly, the Transport

Secretary, and Paul Murphy, the Welsh Secretary threaten[ed] to resist the order because of their religious beliefs,' though 'Andy Burnham, the Culture Secretary and another Catholic, is understood to have raised no objections.' Brown was reported to be looking for a way out of this impasse: the *Telegraph* claimed that 'the Cabinet revolt has forced him to think again' and that 'One solution now being considered is giving MPs the option of abstaining in the key vote on the Bill': but, 'Some staunch Catholic MPs say even being allowed to abstain is not enough and instead want to be free to vote against the Bill, or amend it to remove some measures'. We shall see, and perhaps we already have. Downing Street allowed onto its website a petition for a free vote: this may turn out to be an excuse for Mr Brown to back down, though petitions in the past have looked more like an opportunity for Downing Street to demonstrate its absolute contempt for public opinion: there were, after all, several petitions for a referendum on the Lisbon treaty (one of them with over 108,000 signatures) and they were ignored precisely *because* there was overwhelming public opinion against the government for a referendum and against the treaty. All the same, if there is a good vote on the Downing Street petition, it might embolden Labour members to defy the whips (the Tories and Liberals, of course, already have a free vote). The petition reads as follows: 'We the undersigned petition the Prime Minister to allow free votes on the embryology and fathers components of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill when considered by the House of Commons'. You can 'sign' it by going to <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/embryovote/>. The deadline is May 13.



## The road from Regensburg

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



### Promising compromise agenda forged

Following the recent vigorous debate concerning whether the agenda for future official Catholic-Islamic discussions should be primarily theological (as argued by signatories of the Islamic Open Letter "A Common Word") or primarily anthropological (as argued by prominent orthodox Catholic commentators), in which we sided more with the Muslims (see our previous *Road from Regensburg*) a wise compromise has been reached at a March meeting at the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, with the Muslim position having slight preeminence. The first day of a new "Catholic-Muslim Forum" next November in Rome will be on "Theological and Spiritual Foundations" which, as we have argued, is the essential foundation to what will be discussed on the following day, namely "Human Dignity and Mutual Respect". Twenty-four religious leaders and scholars from each side will participate in the seminar in Rome whose overall theme will be "Love of God, Love of Neighbour". Watch this space.

### Easter Vigil baptism and the Regensburg idea

Pope Benedict's Easter Vigil baptism of the Muslim Magdi Allam has sparked a vigorous debate concerning the Papal approach to the truth of Catholicism and the significance of his Regensburg reflection on faith and reason. Mr Allam, the deputy editor of the leading Italian daily *Corriere della Sera*, who took the baptismal name 'Cristiano', has written of the violent potential of the Islamic faith, the weakness of secular multiculturalism and the wisdom of the Pope's Regensburg address.

Aref Ali Nayed, a key co-ordinator of the post-Regensburg Islamic Open Letters, who has made some important

contributions to the debate and finds Mr Allam's view objectionable, has renewed his biting critique of that lecture which critique we have chronicled in this column. Papal spokesman Federico Lombardi has penned an articulate reply.

**Mr Allam's** Open Letter proclaimed that "The miracle of the Resurrection of Christ has resounded through my soul, freeing it from the darkness of the preaching (of) hatred and intolerance toward those who are 'different'" He explained that "undoubtedly the most extraordinary and meaningful encounter in my decision to convert was with pope Benedict XVI, whom I admired and defended as a Muslim for his mastery in presenting the indissoluble bond between faith and reason as the foundation of authentic religion and of humane civilisation..."

"...His Holiness has launched a clear and revolutionary message to a Church that until now has been excessively prudent in the conversion of Muslims ...For my part, I say that it is time to put an end to the presumption and violence of Muslims who do not respect the freedom of religious choice."

**Aref Ali Nayed**, the director of the Jordanian Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, suggests that "it is not far fetched to see this" whole episode as "another way of reasserting" the "message of the Byzantine Emperor quoted by the Pope in his infamous Regensburg Lecture", which anti-Islam message ex-Muslim Mr Allam seems to be sympathetic to. This scenario, he rightly points out, would be in contrast to what "the Vatican keeps insisting" upon, namely that the lecture was not an attempt to insult Islam. Rather, as we have tried to bring out in this column, it called for the renewal of Western and Islamic approaches to reason, to which the story about the Emperor was an interesting historical introduction.

**Federico Lombardi's** response mentioned the basic fact that "Welcoming a new believer into the Church clearly does not mean espousing all of his ideas and positions, in particular on political or social topics ... As for the debate over the Pope's lecture in Regensburg ... some of the topics addressed at the time, such as the relationship between faith and reason, between religion and violence,

naturally remain the object of reflection and debate, and of varying positions, since they refer to problems that cannot be resolved once and for all...."

He concluded his remarks by suggesting that "Perhaps the Pope accepted the risk of this baptism also for this reason: to affirm the freedom of religious choice which derives from the dignity of the human person."

**Sandro Magister** had drawn attention to some relevant articles in *L'Osservatore Romano* in the days after Easter. One was about Ramon Lull, a 13th century Franciscan, who "struggled to promote a peaceful form of missionary preaching, entirely founded on understanding between the two faiths, on the power of conviction and on the rational argumentation of truth."

Another highlights the November '07 meeting of the Pope with King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia which considered collaboration between Christians, Jews and Muslims. Perhaps as a fruit of this, immediately after Easter (and Allam's baptism) the King's government announced refresher courses for 40,000 Imams encouraging moderate Islam. At the same time the King himself issued the following words:

"...The world is suffering ... We have lost faith in religion and respect for humanity. The disintegration of the family and the widespread atheism in the world are frightening phenomena that all of the religions must take into account and overcome. ... I have thought of inviting religious authorities to express their views of what is happening in the world, and, God willing, we will begin to organise meetings with our brothers who belong to the monotheistic religions, among representatives of believers in the Qur'an, the Gospel, and the Bible."

Magister comments that "it is increasingly evident that both (the Pope's) lecture in Regensburg and his decision to baptise a convert from Islam at the Easter vigil in St. Peter's are not gestures of rupture, but, on the contrary, are precisely that which makes intelligible and unequivocal – for Muslims just as for Christians – his desire for dialogue."

Texts at [www.chiesa](http://www.chiesa)

## The Tablet's take

Under the headline "Benedict XVI distanced from Muslim convert's comments" *The Tablet's* Rome correspondent Robert Mickens reported the pointing out, by Fr Lombardi, that baptising someone doesn't mean necessarily accepting everything they believe. The report emphasised that Dr Nayed had demanded such a distancing.

Any reader who might get the impression that the Pope was on the back foot would not be helped by the fact that the news report goes on to juxtapose two hardly related comments.

In addition to Professor Nayed's Regensburg point mentioned opposite he also made two other distinct complaints. He argued that Allam's conversion had been turned into a "triumphalist tool". He further suggested that, given that Allam once received Holy Communion at his Catholic school, the conversion could well be an example of that "proselytising" by "some" Catholic schools, which is "an abuse of trust" and an attack on "human dignity".

The *Tablet* report mentions the former of these complaints but not the latter. It presents part of the papal spokesman's answer to the latter complaint as if it were his answer to the former. The report thus presents Fr Lombardi avoiding the "triumphalist" accusation in this way:

"(Dr Nayed) criticised the high-profile nature of the former Muslim's conversion. He accused the Vatican of making it a 'triumphalist tool'. Fr Lombardi responded that in countries 'where the great majority of students in Catholic schools and universities are non-Christians' they 'have happily remained so, while showing an appreciation for the education they received'."

***The Tablet 5th April***

## Reason purifying the Islamic Tradition

Turkey's highest religious authority, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, has commissioned a re-interpretation of the Hadith, a collection of the Prophet Mohammed's sayings, which is regarded as Islam's "second source", an essential supplement to the Qur'an.

The Turkish Islamic commentator, Mustafa Akyol, whose interesting pieces we have covered on numerous occasions in this column, has explained that this is a further "big step" in the resurgence of reason in Islam, tentatively begun in the 19th century. The late first Millennium Mutazilite school emphasised reason as a tool for contextualising the Qur'an in addition to using the sayings of the prophet. This school was eclipsed in the second Millennium by the Sunni ('People of the [Hadith] Tradition') distrust of reason.

Akyol suggests that Pope Benedict "might find (the Mutazilite) tradition worthy of considering, because in his famous, and controversial, Regensburg speech, he only referred to the 'voluntarist' line of thinking in Islam, which is the exact opposite of the Mutazilite tradition, and which says that God does whatever He wills and there is no point in questioning it," notwithstanding, it seems, the relatively brief first millennium influence of the Mutazilites.

***The Week 8th March, Turkish Daily News***

## Relativism versus Moderate Islam

Charles Moore, ex-editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, has added his voice to those arguing that multi-culturalism plays into the hands of fundamentalist Islam (see also our March '08 column). He makes an interesting analogy between two types of leadership in modern Britain: contemporary Extremist Muslims and 1980's Trade Union militants. Both have involved frightening the majority of moderate and peaceful rank and file followers whilst also tapping into some real grievances and tiredness with traditional leadership. Moore suggests that we should challenge rather than take seriously such extreme leaders, as Mrs Thatcher did with Arthur Scargill.

He points out "the interesting fact that tens of thousands of Muslims volunteered – they were not conscripted — to fight for the British Empire in two world wars. In the first, they fought against the Ottoman Empire, to which, in theory, they owed spiritual allegiance. Why did they do so? Not, surely, because they were offered multiculturalism, but because they felt themselves respected and secure in the self-confident British political culture of that time...."

"In Islam, the word 'honour' does not have to go with the word 'killing', but can have a real meaning which it has too often lost in our secular society. So can ideas of dignity, of obligation to elderly parents, of community. ...' Our broken society ... has need of (these)."

***The Spectator, 18th March***

## American Pluralism better than European Relativism for Muslims

Marcia Pally, who teaches Multi-cultural Studies at New York University, has recently argued that Muslims in America have participated in the USA economy so much more significantly than in the European one because of the former culture's radical respect for their freedom to practise their religion. This pluralism contrasts with European multi-culturalism which doubts the relevance of dogmatic religion in the public square. In the USA there has been a Muslim prayer group in the Congress building before and after 9/11. In Europe the Muslim headscarf is increasingly banned from the public arena. In the USA, even after 9/11 Muslims have developed their mainstream political involvement. In Britain where Muslims remain poor, over 50% of non-Muslims express fears about their future role.

***Islamica Magazine***

## Relativism not good for pluralism

In a recent *Islamica Magazine* Review, also carried by Cardinal Scola's *Oasis* newsletter Isla Rosser-Owen has praised a collection of essays by "star-studded" writers from different perspectives: *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace* (Edited by Roger Boase, Ashgate Publishing, 2005).

She reports that "... Diana Eck argues that pluralism is the most challenging 'ism' for the world today, more so than secularism, the success of which is now being progressively questioned.

"... Is there more than one path to salvation? ...Who is "more right", and whose "right" to practice their religion supercedes that of others? like it or not, ... these are questions that will become increasingly important".

***Islamica Magazine***



# Rosary Meditations from the Psalms

By a Benedictine Sister of St. Cecilia's Abbey, Ryde.

Paintings by Bradi Barth (who died last October. *May she rest in peace*)

## THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES



### 1. The Annunciation

Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline your ear;  
And the king shall greatly desire your beauty;  
For he is the Lord your God, and him they shall adore.

*Ps.44:11a+12*



### 2. The Visitation

By thee have I been confirmed from the womb;  
from my mother's womb thou art my protector.

*Ps:70:6*



### 3. The Nativity

The Lord said to me: thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.  
Ask of me and I will give thee the Gentiles for my inheritance,  
and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession.

*Ps.2:7:8*



### 4. The Presentation

Light is risen to the just, and joy to the upright of heart.

*Ps.96:11*



### 5. The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

I have understood more than all my teachers,  
for thy testimonies are my meditation.  
I have understood more than the elders,  
for I have sought thy commandments.

## THE LUMINOUS MYSTERIES



### 1. The Baptism of Jesus

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters.  
The voice of majesty has thundered;  
The Lord is upon many waters.

*Ps. 28:3*



### 2. The First Miracle at the Wedding Feast of Cana

The Lord is near to all who call upon him,  
to all who call upon him in truth.  
He will fulfil the desire of those who fear him;  
he will hear their prayer and save them.

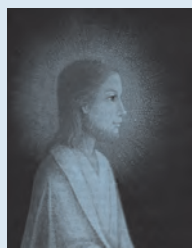
*Ps. 144: 18-19*



### 3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the Call to Conversion

Direct me in thy truth, and teach me;  
for thou art God my saviour;  
See my objection and my labour;  
and forgive me all my sins.

*Ps.24:5,18*



### 4. The Transfiguration

O Lord my God, thou art exceedingly great,  
thou hast put on praise and beauty,  
and art clothed with light as with a garment.

*Ps.103:16-2a*

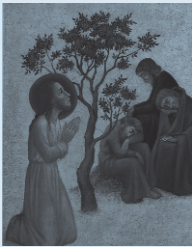


### 5. The Institution of the Eucharist

He has made a memorial of his wondrous deeds,  
gracious and merciful is the Lord,  
he has given food to those who fear him.  
He will be mindful forever of his covenant.

*Ps.110:4-5*

## THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES



### 1. The Agony in the Garden

My spirit is in anguish within me,  
my heart within me is troubled.  
Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord,  
to thee have I fled. Teach me to do  
thy will, for thou art my God.

*Ps.142:4, 9, 10a*



### 2. The Scourging at the Pillar

Sinners have wrought upon my back,  
They have prolonged their evil-doing.

*Ps.128:13*



### 3. The Crowning with Thorns

I am a worm and no man;  
the reproach of man, and the outcast  
of the people.  
All who saw me derided me,  
they mocked at me and wagged  
their heads.

*Ps.21:7-8*



### 4. Jesus carries his Cross

Depart not from me, for anguish is very  
near, for there is no one to help me.  
My strength is dried up like a potsherd.  
and my tongue has cleaved to my jaws  
and thou last brought me down into  
the dust of death.

*Ps.21:12,16*



### 5. The Crucifixion/Jesus dies on the Cross

Into thy hands I commend my spirit.

*Ps.30:6a*



## THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

### 1. The Resurrection

The Lord's right hand has triumphed;  
The Lord's right hand has raised me,  
The Lord's right hand has triumphed.  
I shall not die, I shall live and proclaim  
the Lord's deeds.

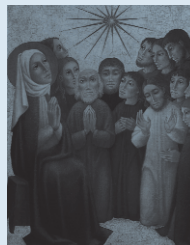
*Ps.117:16-17*



### 2. The Ascension

Lift up your gates, you princes  
and be lifted up, eternal gates,  
and the King of glory will enter.  
Who is the King of glory?  
the Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

*Ps.23:9-10*



### 3. The descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost

Thou shalt send forth thy spirit, and they  
shall be created,  
and thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

*Ps.103:30*



### 4. The Assumption

Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades  
nor let they holy one see decay.  
Thou hast made known to me the  
ways of life,  
thou shalt fill me with joy with thy face,  
at your right hand delights for ever.

*Ps.15:10-11*



### 5. The Coronation of Our Lady

Thy throne, O God, stands forever and ever..  
the Queen has taken her place at thy right  
hand in golden attire.

*Ps.44:7a, 10b*

**7th Sunday of Easter/(Ascension Sunday in England and Wales) 04.05.08**

On Passion Sunday, we witness the disciples leaving the Upper Room and heading to the Mount of Olives where Jesus instructs them to keep watch and pray. Heavy with sleep, they are unable to fulfil Our Lord's instructions. Today's first reading sees the disciples heading in the opposite direction, from the Mount of Olives back to the Upper Room, where this time they join together in "continuous prayer". The nine days which the disciples spent in prayer with Our Lady forms the basis of our modern-day practice of keeping a novena – nine days of prayer for a specific intention.

Following on from the Ascension, the ministry of the Incarnate Jesus passes into His Mystical Body. "I am not in the world any longer, but they are in the world" proclaims the Gospel. These nine days of prayer are the Church's period of gestation before she is born at Pentecost. The Upper Room becomes the womb in which the members of Christ's Mystical Body are knit together in prayer under the action of the Holy Spirit. The disciples are once again listed by name, along with the "Mother and brothers" of Jesus. *Who is my mother and my brother and my sister?* – those who do the Will of God; this becomes the defining characteristic of the family of God.

Just as the Mystical Body of Christ shares in the ministry of the Incarnate Jesus, so also must it share in His Passion. The First Letter of St. Peter and the Gospel remind us that God's glory is revealed in the Passion of Christ. Christ's Passion glorifies God because it reveals the extent to which Christ obeys the Father's Will. It is on the Cross that God is revealed to human eyes, provoking the Centurion's profession of faith in Christ's Divinity. Christ glorifies God in His suffering, because He reveals to us the depths of Divine love.



By Fr Ross Crichton, Parish Administrator of the Isle of Benbecula, in the Western Isles

**Pentecost Sunday 11.05.08**

The Mystical Body of Christ is brought to life by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the animating principle of that Body – the very soul of the Church. For all the differences of culture, language and background its members may display, the Church is bound together by the Holy Spirit; "In the One Spirit we were all baptised, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as citizens..." Bound together by the Holy Spirit, the Church's diversity becomes the very instrument of its mission. God uses each member of Christ's Mystical Body to accomplish the Church's mission.

As the psalm reminds us, the Spirit of the Lord renews the face of the earth. With the birth of the Church, a new era dawns upon the world. Just as the Spirit was present in Genesis at the Creation of the World, so also is He present at the birth of the Church. It is not by accident that St. John tells us in His Gospel that Christ came to His disciples on the "first day of the week". The Word, through whom and for whom all things were created, breathes His Spirit upon the disciples on that symbolic first day of the New Creation.

Christ received the Holy Spirit at His Baptism – anointed for the ministry He was about to undertake. Likewise, He anoints His disciples with the Spirit before they continue that same ministry as members of His Mystical Body. Just as Christ forgave sins, so also does He charge His Church with that task. Scripture is quite clear that Sacramental Confession is the ordinary means by which our sins are forgiven, according to the will of Christ Himself. "Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven."



**Trinity Sunday 18.05.08**

The union of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is a communion of divine love. We have discovered that divine love does not simply exist in and for itself. His love overflows and bears fruit. God has established a communion of love with mankind through the Incarnation of Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. "God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not be lost, but may have eternal life." The love of God has been poured into our own hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rm.5:5) and it is that love which binds the members of Christ's Body together. Says St. Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians, "Be united, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you."

The Mystery of the Trinity provides the model of our own Christian fellowship. Something of the nature of God is revealed to Moses in our reading from the book of Exodus. "Lord, Lord, a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in kindness and faithfulness." This encounter with the living God moves Moses to imitate these qualities and thus he intercedes for the headstrong and rebellious Israelites showing forth the same tenderness and compassion found in God.

The Christian community is not called simply to imitate the characteristics of God as if by its own feeble efforts. Rather, the Church is called to become the very dwelling place of God so that it is God Himself who shines forth in the life of the Church and its members. As Father, Son and Spirit are bound together in love, so also the members of the Church are bound together by divine love. As the love of the Trinity overflows and bears fruit in us, so also must that love which marks the Christian faithful flow out beyond the bounds of the visible Church, bearing fruit in the world around us. In his encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI quotes St. Augustine saying, "You see the Trinity when you see Charity." (*Deus Caritas Est*. n.19).





### Corpus Christi 25.05.08

On their journey through the desert to the Promised Land, God fed His people with bread from heaven. The very name that the Israelites give to that miraculous bread reveals their attitude towards God's gift; Manna – which sounds like the Hebrew for "What is it?" They failed to recognise the great gift before them – a foretaste and prophecy of the true Bread of Heaven, Jesus Christ.

Once again, in the Gospel of John, we encounter that same attitude: *"The Jews started arguing with one another, 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat?' they said."* Once again, they fail to recognise the gift of God in Jesus Christ. Time and time again, even in our own age, people fail to recognise the gift of God that is before them, even under the humble forms of bread and wine. It is Christ Himself who is with us in the Eucharist! He who promised to be with us, *"even to the end of the age"* (Mt. 28:20). *"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him"* – Pope Benedict explains the effects of communion, *"It is not the Eucharistic food that is changed into us, but rather we who are mysteriously transformed by it. Christ nourishes us by uniting us to Himself."* (Sacramentum Caritatis 70)

A central element in the Eucharist is the act of anamnesis – recalling or remembering. Moses' discourse in the first reading contains the imperatives, *"Remember...!"* and *"Do not forget...!"* But that remembering is not simply a calling to mind of a past event. The act of anamnesis implies that each generation enters anew into the mystery of redemption and lives it as its own. At each Mass, Christ is truly present to us in the Sacrament of the Altar; but we too, by our 'remembering' are made present at Calvary where we partake of the Bread of Heaven, the Lamb of God, who liberates us from our slavery to sin and feeds us on our pilgrim way to our true homeland in heaven. *'Behold the Bread of Angels, sent for pilgrims in their banishment'* (Sequence).



### Ninth Sunday (A) 01.06.08

Our religion must be deeply rooted in the heart. It is not enough for us to outwardly conform to an expected pattern of religious behaviour. *"It is not those who say to me, 'Lord, Lord' who will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."* Even the performance of miracles in Christ's name is not sufficient to guarantee a place in His Kingdom. The route from hearing the Word of God to putting it into action must, of necessity, pass via the heart. *"Let these words of mine remain in your heart and in you soul."* In other words, the very essence of who we are, symbolised by the terms 'heart' and 'soul' must be profoundly affected by our faith. External conformity is not enough!

The media images of the gales and floods which battered the country have revealed to us the havoc that can be wreaked on what appears to be the strongest of buildings. When extreme weather conditions hit, a building's internal weaknesses and structural flaws are laid bare. Nevertheless, strong foundations will enable a building to weather the storm, no matter what damage is done around and inside. A strong building is one which is inseparable from its foundations.

The commandments of God provide a foundation of rock for our own lives. The storms will no doubt come and we will be buffeted by trials and temptations, but if our hearts and souls are inseparable from their foundation on the rock of God's Word, then we will come through unscathed. Christ describes the sensible man as one who *"listens to these words of mine and acts on them."* Listening, as understood by the great masters of spirituality, is listening with the heart. The opening words of the Rule of St. Benedict put it succinctly, *"Listen, O my son to the precepts of the Master, and incline the ear of your heart..."* Such deep listening will ensure that the practice of our faith is more than skin deep.



### Tenth Sunday (A) 08.06.08

The theme of deeply-rooted faith is continued in this Sunday's readings. The external rituals of offering sacrifice and holocaust are not of the essence of true religion. These rituals are meaningless if love and knowledge of God do not accompany them.

It is their attachment to the mere external practice of their faith that has blinded the Pharisees to the meaning of Christ's mission. Christ tells them, *"It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick."* The Pharisees objected to Christ's mingling with sinners. In so doing, they were placing themselves among the 'righteous', but there is a certain irony in their question, *"Why does your master eat with tax-collectors and sinners?"* They may have been blissfully unaware of it, but they themselves are numbered among the latter, only they were not aware of their sin-sick souls.

Those who do not know they are ill cannot know that they need a doctor. The process of healing can only begin when the sick person recognises that he or she is ill. The Pharisees, unaware of their spiritual malaise, would not recognise their need of Christ. In our own society, the proclamation of the Gospel must begin with the diagnosis of society's ills. We must talk about sin! A society unaware of its sinfulness will not be aware of its need of a Saviour. And if society doesn't need a Saviour, it doesn't need the Sacraments or the Church. Hearts hardened by sin will remain closed to God. Even within the Church, there is the danger of taking refuge in empty externals of Pharisaical ritual, while our hearts remain far from God. As those who sit at the Lord's Table, let us have the humility to count ourselves among the tax-collectors and sinners rather than the Pharisees.



continued overleaf

## Eleventh Sunday (A) 15.06.08

One of the themes in today's readings concerns God's choice of His "flock". It is not through any merit of their own that God chose the sons of Israel to be His own. God's relationship with humankind is enshrined within the framework of the Covenant. All that is asked of His people is that they show themselves to belong to God by *"obeying my voice and holding fast to my covenant."* God's election of Israel is an act of His own sovereign choice, but it imposes obligations on those who are chosen.

God never revokes His choice or calling. Israel still remains the chosen people of God. Christ's primary mission was to those very people in another attempt to recall them to their covenantal relationship with God. *"Do not turn your steps to pagan territory," says Jesus to the Twelve, "go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel."* God's election of the Gentiles is a similar act of His own sovereign choice and we forget that at our peril. As Christians, we have been grafted onto the vine of Israel – the New Covenant has its roots in the more ancient covenants established with the Jews.

The Covenant and the Commandments exist only for our good. Failure to live up to the commandments of God only leads to the flock being *"harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd."* Time and time again, when Israel strayed, God used faithful individuals to restore His covenantal relationship with His people. From Moses in the first reading, through the prophets to the Twelve in the Gospel, God sends labourers into His harvest. Those labourers are equipped with the graces necessary to accomplish their mission – *"He...gave them authority over unclean spirits, with power to cast them out."* Those whom God calls, He also equips. The labourers have always been few and the harvest has always been rich. God's choice of a people or of an individual is an act of His unmerited grace. Awareness of God's generosity to us should provoke a generous response in our own hearts. *"You received without charge, give without charge."*



## Twelfth Sunday (A) 22.06.08

In a 'tolerant' secular society, it is tempting to want to keep the peace by keeping our mouths firmly shut. It seems so much easier to soft-pedal the more difficult teachings of the Church and go with the flow rather than create problems between family members, work colleagues or friends and ourselves. Christ's words at the end of the Gospel are a stark reminder of our primary duty of faithfulness to Him. *"But the one who disowns me in the presence of men, I will disown in the presence of my Father in heaven."*

The Twelve Apostles were to become public figures. Their successors, the Bishops of today, are also public figures with the same responsibility to stand up for the teachings of the Church in what is very often a hostile environment. The Church's teachings are not mere theory or ideals to be debated and discussed; they are given to be lived! Every Catholic, Bishop or layman, has the responsibility to live the faith, whatever the opposition. *"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul."*

The experience of opposition is a mark of Christian discipleship. Jeremiah and all the prophets experienced opposition – *"I hear so many disparaging me...Denounce him! Let us denounce him!"* Christ Himself experienced opposition as did the Twelve to whom He entrusted His ministry. It should come as no surprise that our 'tolerant' society displays similar opposition when Catholics – cleric and lay alike – proclaim the Church's teaching in word and in action. But in the midst of opposition, we are assured that God supplies strength to those who commit their cause to Him. *"But the Lord is at my side, a mighty hero."* Truth, even if it is only now 'heard in whispers', will one day be 'proclaimed from the housetops' as long as there are bold apostles to proclaim it.



## St.s Peter & Paul 29.06.08

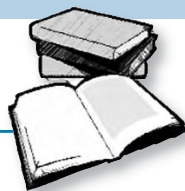
The story of St Peter's rescue is far removed from the experience of most Christian martyrs. Rather, their experience is more like that of St. Paul, *"my life is already being poured away as a libation."* Nevertheless, the martyrs are always aware that what they are undergoing is not in vain. They are participating in the sufferings of Christ, confident that the *via dolorosa* of their passion will lead them to the *via gloriosa* of the Resurrection. Centuries on, the Church still remembers and celebrates the martyrdoms of St. Peter and St Paul, along with countless other saints who shed their blood for Christ.

Martyrs are not made by the Church; they are made by those who oppose what the Church stands for. The word 'martyr' comes from a Greek word meaning 'witness'. A Christian martyr is one who gives his or her life in supreme witness to the Truth. Our world is less concerned about the truth than individual opinions. Truth binds us; opinions free us to follow our whims. In today's Gospel, Christ asks His disciples a question which rings down through the centuries to our own generation. *"Who do you say I am?"* The disciples begin by citing the various opinions about Christ, but there is only one correct answer and it is St. Peter who gives it. *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

It is only after St Peter's confession of the faith, that Our Lord confers on St Peter the Petrine ministry, whose essential characteristic is the proclamation of the truth. Only the truth can unite us; opinions divide us. In every age, each generation must answer Christ's question, *"Who do you say I am?"* and various opinions exist even now as to who Christ was. But the truth proclaimed by St Peter two thousand years ago has not changed and his successor, Benedict XVI, faithful to the Petrine ministry, has given that same answer in his book, *"Jesus of Nazareth"*. This is the truth for which all the martyrs shed their blood; the truth which we proclaim and celebrate today.



# Book reviews



## Divine Action: Examining God's Role in an Open and Emerging Universe

By Keith Ward, Templeton Foundation Press, 286pp, \$19.95

The increasing success of modern science in providing a detailed account of all physical phenomena poses a serious problem for Christians. If all is determined and follows precise mathematical laws, if effects invariably follow causes, then how can we continue to believe that God guides our lives and responds to our prayers?

The Anglican philosopher-theologian Keith Ward, well-known for his extensive theological writings, tackles this and associated problems. In his own words, 'This book is a defence of a strongly supernaturalist idea of God as a purely spiritual creator and personal agent in the cosmos, who was incarnate in the person of Jesus, who answers prayers and performs miracles. I aim to show that this idea of God is not only philosophically coherent and wholly compatible with the findings of modern science but that it provides a more plausible account of the nature of the universe than does materialism'.

He begins by defending 'the view that God exists by necessity and is the most adequate explanation of the universe'. This raises a whole host of questions: if God is self-sufficient, then why did He create the universe? How did He decide what sort of universe to create? Did He do it just for fun? Is it the best possible universe, and if so by what criteria? One of the difficulties in answering such questions is that God is timeless and unchangeable, whereas we are immersed in time and so picture His actions as a temporal sequence: 'His creation is not one timeless act or one

act at the beginning of time; it is a series of acts which continually bring into being new states of the universe by His positive or permissive willing'.

A particularly agonising problem is the presence of evil in the world. If God is infinitely good and infinitely powerful, if all He created is good, then why is there so much pain and suffering? This is a necessary consequence of our free-will: we are free to choose evil and cause suffering.

It is of great interest to see how classical theism is affected by modern physics. Ward believes that 'many of the conclusions of modern physics delineate a picture of the universe which ever more clearly helps one to understand how suffering and destruction are necessary features of a universe'. The universe is now understood to be a tightly integrated system based on a few elegant mathematical equations. What we see as "nature, red in tooth and claw" is the inevitable consequence of those equations. Successive hierarchies of order emerge. 'The laws of physics remain operative' yet (quoting Peacocke) 'the laws of the higher-level processes are not fully determined by the laws of processes (of a different kind) at the lower level'. Certainly we cannot predict the behaviour of higher-level processes, but this is due to mathematical difficulties and we cannot know that they are not fully determined.

Ward invokes the Heisenberg uncertainty principle as showing that 'unpredictability enters into the structure of things' so that gives a world 'which quantum physics would support, in which the future is truly open'. Thus 'God constantly and continually sustains and guides the universe by purposive choices among alternative pathways'. This is an attractive idea, but it depends on the belief that quantum mechanics describes all that can ever be known about each individual system so that all we have is the probabilities of various outcomes. If, however, one believes, following Einstein, that quantum mechanics describes the behaviour of an ensemble of similar systems, then not only do the well-known quantum paradoxes vanish, but it leaves intact the possibility of a fully

deterministic substratum. It is indeed obvious that quantum mechanics is incomplete, since it cannot in principle account for many measurable events. The so-called indeterminacy of the quantum world is thus the consequence of an unproved philosophical view and so provides no firm basis for theological speculations. The Heisenberg uncertainty principle, on which Ward relies, is indeed inherent in the formalism of quantum mechanics, but the physical phenomena it describes is susceptible to a fully deterministic interpretation. Indeed Ward later admits that it is possible 'that hidden variables exist that will impose a tight causal grip upon sub-atomic particles'. It is impossible to prove by science either that the world is fundamentally deterministic or indeterministic, and so science provides no way to solve the problem of God's action in the world.

This leaves us with the problem of how we can have free-will in a determined universe. Many attempts to explain this are described by Ward.

Miracles provide instances of God's action in the world, and Ward discusses the ways to recognise them, but without mentioning the authority of the Church as the final arbiter. It would have been instructive to have considered specific possible examples, such as the cure of Peter de Rudder and the events at Fatima.

Ward discusses the beliefs of other world religions, recognising that logically at most one of these religions can be true, but does not apply the same logic to the various bodies calling themselves Christian. As he remarks, 'this is not intolerance but a necessary consequence of taking truth seriously'.

God's action on the world, and indeed our own action on the world, remain profoundly mysterious. It is important to wrestle with these problems, and Ward does so most clearly and cogently, removing many misunderstandings and false views. Inevitably, we see as in a glass darkly, for who has known the mind of the Lord or has been his counsellor?

P.E. Hodgson  
Corpus Christi College  
Oxford

*continued overleaf*



## Mary for Time and Eternity : Essays on Mary and Ecumenism

*Edited by William McLoughlin & Jill Pinnock, Gracewing, 366 pp, £20*

In her foreword, Professor Frances Young commends *Mary for Time and Eternity* to "all who seek deeper communion among those who claim to follow Jesus Christ". Her wish would surely be shared by each contributor to this volume, which contains twenty-one papers given at conferences of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The ESBVM maintains that Mary can stimulate and be a focus for work for Christian unity, and in the present volume that conviction sustains various reflections on Mariology, ecumenism and interfaith dialogue.

Perhaps the most striking feature of these papers is the evidence many of them offer for growing appreciation among non-Catholics of the two dogmas declared infallible by papal authority, namely the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. The received view has long been that such definitions are huge obstacles to ecumenical progress. Here, however, we see signs that these articles of faith may be gaining wider understanding, even if their dogmatisation remains problematic for many.

Eamon Carroll quotes Canon Howard Root, who in 1987 stated that Anglicans might develop greater sympathy for "the definitions of 1854 and 1950, if they are ... allowed to do so *in their own way*" (p.58). The way chosen by Nicholas Sagovsky is that of reflection on Romans 8:28-30, in which Paul defines God's action in man as a sequence of predestination, calling, justification and glorification. Sagovsky sees that this pattern "is beautifully exemplified in the life of Mary" (p.12). He further acknowledges that this insight and others have convinced him that the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption have a natural (rather than contrived) place in the body of Christian doctrine.

Orthodox approaches to Marian doctrine are inspired as much by the axiom "Lex orandi, lex credendi" as by Scripture itself. Bishop Kallistos Ware finds support for belief in the bodily Assumption in some (though not all) Orthodox liturgical texts, but rejects

explicit dogmatic formulas in favour of celebrating Mary's glorification in prayer and thanksgiving. Nevertheless, his conclusions about the eschatological and anthropological significance of the Assumption (see p.243) are ones with which those committed to the dogmatic definition might readily concur.

Such positive developments help distinguish between good and inadequate interpretations of the 'hierarchy of truths' principle, which Vatican II urged on Catholics involved in ecumenical dialogue. There is some consensus among contributors that a crude application of the hierarchy of truths, according to which some truths are seen as central and others as merely peripheral, is best avoided. A different approach is suggested by Thomas Thompson, for whom "the Catholic understanding of the hierarchy of truths is that there are 'mutual connections' between the mysteries" (p.327). Where the interconnectedness of all truths of faith is thus asserted, there is little danger of Mary's place in ecumenical dialogue being viewed as unimportant and dispensable. Instead, time and space are created for agreement on Mary's significance to mature, and for the relationship between Marian doctrine and the fundamental truths of salvation to be clarified.

What results from this approach is irenic dialogue which nonetheless avoids false irenicism. Frankness informed by charity, or mutual challenge governed by mutual respect, are evident as Mary's place in God's salvific plan is explored across the broad range of articles in this volume. In a sense, the editors' choice of contributions is perhaps too broad. One would expect all entries in a book entitled *Mary for Time and Eternity* to centre on Marian themes, yet several contributors make no mention of Mary. An example is Thomas Bruch, in his otherwise illuminating article on ecumenical dialogues with Lutherans (pp.141-58). Including such articles gives a fuller impression of the nature of papers presented at ESBVM conferences. But a more streamlined selection, taking the prominence of Mary as chief criterion, may have enhanced still further the overall impact of the collection.

On the whole, though, *Mary for Time and Eternity* does much to dispel the notion that Mary must remain a barrier to agreement in crucial areas of ecumenical exchange. Despite real and persisting confessional differences, one can sense in these pages Mary pointing patiently towards a closer union among her Son's disciples: a union which may prosper because of her, not in spite of her.

Fr David Potter  
Aintree  
Liverpool

## Catholic Social Teaching and the Market Economy

*Edited by Philip Booth, The Institute of Economic Affairs, 273pp, £20*

Does Catholic Social Teaching support free market economics? Most of the contributors to this book of essays argue that it does. It is an odd claim, both in theory and in practice.

The theoretical arguments which support free markets are not explicitly anti-Catholic, but they come close. To start with, proponents praise a morally impoverished sort of freedom – the ability to choose, whether or not the choice is good. The rich Catholic sense of freedom – the ability to will the good – is hardly recognised. Indeed, the concept of the good is largely left aside in favour of a non-moral 'self-interest'.

Catholics should also be wary of the free marketers' idea of a 'market' – a collection of impersonal transactions set in a culture of pure competition. So-called 'perfect' markets have no room for the guidance and discipline that governments provide. Nor is there much room for love, sacrifice and community.

The contributions by Philip Booth (the book's editor), Denis O'Brien and Andrew Yuengert argue that Pope John Paul II approved of free markets. They are correct, but only relative to Communism. The Pope said that such arrangements provide an "efficient instrument" for "effectively responding" to the limited set of needs which are "solvent", that is which are appropriately bought and sold. (*Centesimus annus* 35).

John Paul II, however, was much more wary than enthusiastic. In the same encyclical, he emphasised that private property, a near-divine concept for free marketers, must be constrained by the obligations inherent in the "universal destination of goods" (19). He held that the market's "logic of a fair exchange of goods" should always be secondary to "*something which is due to man* because he is man, by reason of his lofty dignity". Thus, the market must be "appropriately controlled by the forces of society and by the State" (35).

The Pope did praise entrepreneurial energy and businesses directed to the good, but he also praised labour unions and criticised "capitalism" for its preference for impersonal capital over labour. He was distressed by "consumerism", which seemed to be prized in modern economies.

*Catholic Social Teaching and the Market Economy* is published by a leading British "free market" think tank, so it is not surprising that the authors prefer to let their economics shape their Catholic thinking, rather than the reverse. The writers uncritically rely on the claim that, in Booth's words, "rigorous economic analysis tends to lead in a pro-market direction". That claim runs into the practical problem with "free market economies", one which John Paul II himself seems only partially to have recognised: free-markets don't really exist. True, market-style competition plays a role in the economies of all rich countries, but hardly a dominant one. Governments and other not-for profit organisations account for as many as half of all jobs. Even in profit-seeking companies, regulation and cooperation play at least as important a role in shaping the economy as any sort of market action. To praise the free market as a sole guide to economic organisation is in practice to endorse a utopian dream.

Such utopian economics undercuts the book's much more realistic and solidly Catholic arguments against the excesses of the Welfare State. Here John Paul II is clearly on the anti-State side. "Malfunctions and defects in the Social Assistance State are the result of an inadequate understanding of the tasks proper to the State." (*ibid*, 48)

For a century, popes have consistently endorsed the principle of "subsidiarity", that social problems should be dealt with as directly as possible – by families, small communities and the Church rather than by the impersonal State. Samuel Gregg, in what is probably the book's best essay, explains that, "The very nature of the Catholic Church's own self-understanding therefore means that it cannot accept a state that purports to have no theoretical or practical limits..."

In a more querulous contribution, Denis O'Brien laments that the bishops of England and Wales are so keen to endorse government programmes that they seem to have forgotten the principle of subsidiarity. The complaints have merit, although O'Brien might have admitted that the modern Welfare State does much good through the provision of universal education and health care, not to mention some relief from misfortune. He might also have praised the bishops' opposition to restrictive government policies on immigration.

It is not clear how authors would wean modern societies away from government welfare programmes. The title and tone of the collection suggests a belief that a good dose of free markets would be enough to roll back the bossy State. If so, the writers are dodging the challenge. Competitive free markets are a mistaken utopian ideal, unheard of in economic history and are too socially abrasive to play more than a limited role in a trust-dependent complex industrial economy.

Catholic Social Teaching is a valuable gift of the Magisterium to the modern world. This book unwittingly shows the danger of trying to combine it with ideas that come from an alien intellectual tradition.

Edward Hadas  
London

### **The Roman Catholic Church. An Illustrated History**

*By Edward Norman, Thames and Hudson, 192pp, £22.50*

Those who are familiar with the work of Dr Norman will look forward to his history of the Catholic Church. They will not be disappointed. His usual

scholarship, acute observation and breadth of vision are here joined with a deep sympathy for the subject. It is however a short book. The 186 pages contain such a quantity of illustration as to leave about 100pp of text. It reads more like an extended essay.

He sets himself two tasks, first to provide a compact, accessible and accurate history of the Church and this he does admirably. He also sets out to dispel some of the misapprehensions that for centuries have clouded the understanding of the Church in the English speaking world. This is necessary for these prejudices are so ingrained and so deep that the average Englishman will not hear, simply will not hear, of any questioning of them. I need only mention such words as "the Inquisition", "the Jesuits" and even, "the Middle Ages". Dr Norman will not be successful in eliminating these prejudices but even to face them with reasoned facts is much to be applauded. The necessity distorts the balance of the book.

The first chapter on Christian origins covers roughly the first five or six centuries. Traditional histories give much attention to the rise of doctrine, with accounts of heresies and the Councils that opposed them, as well as something on the geographical spread of Christianity. Norman touches on these but detail must be looked for elsewhere. Instead he concentrates on the rise of the Papacy and monasticism.

The next chapter brings the gradual separation and eventual division between eastern and western Christianity. Western feudalism brought about a very different style of thought from the subtle Hellenism which survived in the east. I have heard it implied that the Greek mind is more mystical and avoids blunt definitions. But as Dr Norman says "The early councils were characterised by formulations of doctrine which were redolent of the Greek inclination to categorise the truth in subtle and exact renditions of meaning". He also points out some of the distinctive features of the Celtic Church: that it was based not on towns, nor secular structures, nor on the cult of martyrs, but on missionaries, monasteries, and monastic saints.

*continued overleaf*

The Middle Ages is probably the most misunderstood period of our history. Ignorance supposes it to be a time of repression, uniformity and lack of progress. In fact, in the arts and architecture, in formal philosophy and popular devotion and in ideas of government, including Church government, there was a freedom and exuberance rarely matched, especially today. But the big Bogeymen of English education are the Crusades and the Inquisition. Norman is forced to spend a disproportionate amount of time on these as they are so widely misunderstood. He treats both in a fair and measured way. Let me chose some quotes:

"Moorish Spain comprised a series of autocracies which failed completely to develop anything like representative institutions, the judicial system, or concepts of individual liberty that evolved in medieval Europe."

"Late in the twelfth century this led to the institution of Islamic courts to punish heresy, and also to the introduction of extremely severe methods of torture used to extract confessions... there is a sense in which the notorious Inquisition is a Moorish legacy."

Other important developments are sidelined. Medieval monasticism merits only a few lines.

There are chapters (of course) on the reformation and the Church in the modern and contemporary world. But I would like to mention the chapter on the huge missionary push of the Counter Reformation. By any standards this was an heroic chapter for the human spirit. From before the reformation and for the next 300 years Catholic missionaries went out to the most remote and inhospitable places fired by the love of God and concern for man. From the frozen wastes of the Arctic to the torrid rainforests of South America and the desert of China, from the huts of aborigines and the igloos of the Eskimos to the palaces of the most advanced civilisations, priests, friars and nuns, came to bring the word of God. It is a disgrace that these adventures are still so little known, even amongst Catholics. Much of what he says here will be entirely new to the average reader.

I hope this gives a sense of the contents of Dr Norman's book. In style it is reliable, sensible, free from jargon, but not simple. It is short enough to be read more than once. Obviously it could have been several times longer. The book is lavishly illustrated and the illustrations are generally remarkably well chosen. I do have three reservations. The whole area of art, architecture and music is omitted. There are very few dates, and these are not always helpful. There are no maps, which is inexcusable. Despite this I would recommend the book without hesitation.

Fr Francis Lynch  
St David Lewis  
Usk

## A Cairn of Small Stones

By John Watts, Mungo (Ovada Books), 193pp, £10.95

There is a little-known part of the western Scottish Highlands known as the Rough-Bounds (na garbh chriochan in the native Gaelic tongue). Its epithet is indeed a fair description of the area – rocky, mountainous and barren, bound on its west side by the cold Atlantic and the Minch. This area is of great historical importance to Scottish Catholics because along with the Enzie in north-eastern Scotland, its people remained loyal to the Catholic faith through the political and religious upheavals of the 16th-18th centuries. The so-called 'road to the isles' from Fort William to the port of Mallaig runs through part of this district, but those in a rush for the ferry to Skye are liable to miss the most beautiful and interesting places, some of which are described in the book edited by John Watts, *A Cairn of Small Stones*.

In this historical novel, John Watts has skillfully presented the memoirs of Ian More MacLellan, a native of North Morar, whose original reminiscences, we are told, were written down by Fr Reginald MacDonnell in 1793. With Ian More being nearly ninety years of age at the time, the book covers the entire 18th century – a period which saw among other things two failed Jacobite rebellions. For those with little knowledge of Scottish history or

Highland culture, John Watts provides useful notes at the end of the book. It is worth consulting them as one reads, in order to complete the picture painted by the text itself. The text retains what would have been the original style and spelling of English orthography at that period and this adds significantly to the charm of the book.

Ian More MacLellan's life was colourful. Given that the area in which he lived was even more remote and inaccessible than it is today, his life story is fascinating. His description of his experiences on Eilean Bàn in the second chapter of the book bring the place to life and provide a rare and fascinating insight into priestly formation during a period of persecution against the Church. There are detailed descriptions of the day to day life of the people of North Morar, but there are also accounts of Ian More's chance meeting with Bonnie Prince Charlie and then with the famous Gaelic poet, Alasdair MacMhaighstir whilst working in the mines at Strontian (whence the element Strontium takes its name). Chapter by chapter, we follow the joys, woes and adventures of a very ordinary Catholic soul from North Morar, but the life of this ordinary soul was not unconnected to the major historical events of his time. Moreover, in every chapter the centrality of Ian More's Catholic faith shines through, a faith which informed and affected his day to day living.

My maternal grandparents both have family connections to the Rough Bounds. My great-great grandfather was involved in building the picturesque little Church of Our Lady and St Cumin which stands not far from the shore of Loch Mòrar and almost within sight of Eilean Bàn, the islet upon which the first pre-reformation seminary in Scotland was founded. The district in which *A Cairn of Small Stones* is set, is one with which I myself am familiar and indeed fond of. Although the period and lifestyle described are now long since gone, the book evoked for me memories of places and individuals whom I have known and in which the identity and spirit evident in the life of Ian More MacLellan are still alive today.



John Watts' book is worth reading purely for the insight it provides into a way of life long gone. However, it also stands as a historical monument (hence the title 'a cairn of small stones') to the heroic loyalty of those who kept their faith in a time of social change brought about by the political and religious turmoil of the period. For those familiar with the western Highlands, *A Cairn of Small Stones* opens our eyes to the history attached to this remote part of the world. For those as yet unfamiliar with the Rough Bounds, John Watts' book should provide no little inspiration to make a long and lingering visit to this area outstanding for its natural beauty and Catholic identity.

Fr Ross S. J. Crichton  
Benbecula  
Scotland

### The Quotable Saint

By Rosemary Ellen Guiley, Checkmark Books, New York, 368pp, \$16.95.

This very simple idea of a book of quotations from the saints belies substantial research by Dr Guiley.

It contains 'words of wisdom from Thomas Aquinas to Zita' according to the cover – although I could not find any words from Zita. What it does provide is a treasure-trove of gems for homilies and lectures. It also is invaluable for *lectio divina*.

Divided into topics from Abortion to Worthiness it draws on the riches of the Eastern fathers as well as the lesser known saints of the Roman calendar. Here for instance is Arsenius (355-450) "Enfeebling the body by nightwatches

and fasting is only acceptable to God if it can claim some virtue; it is done with due discretion and curbs our passions without overburdening our nature."

The author helpfully provides a brief biography of Arsenius and all the other saints mentioned. St John Chrysostom is quoted on grief, "To grieve to excess over the failings for which we must render an account is neither safe nor necessary. It is more likely to be damaging or even destructive."

There is a comprehensive index and I only wish I had come across this earlier. It would be available on Amazon : ISBN 0-8160-4376-0.

James Tolhurst  
Chislehurst  
Kent

## Notes from across the Atlantic

by Richard John Neuhaus



### TAKING GOOD FROM BAD

The comedian Bill Maher recently delivered himself of some rather decided views on religion in general and Catholicism in particular. On a late-night talk show he said, "You can't be a rational person six days of the week and put on a suit and make rational decisions and go to work and, on one day of the week, go to a building and think you're drinking the blood of a 2,000-year-old space god. That doesn't make you a person of faith. That makes you schizophrenic." He added that anyone who is religious is schizophrenic, "sort of". As might be expected, Bill Donohue of the Catholic League blasted Maher for his "twisted mind" and "hatred of Christians". That's Dr. Donohue's job. He likes to describe himself as a street fighter with a Ph.D., and the Catholic League is as inevitable as it is useful. Those of us with different vocations, however, might ask whether the Mahers, at least at times, do not, however inadvertently, render a service in pointing up the astonishing nature of Christian truth claims. Astonishing if

they are not true, and more astonishing if they are. We are not schizophrenic, but we are keenly aware of the tension and, at times, the conflict between the gospel and culturally conventional understandings of reality. Christianity is indefatigably dialogical but never without an edge. Matthew Lickona puts it nicely in his memoir of a young Catholic, *Swimming with Scapulars*: "Let's be open and clean. Let's drag this out into the light and discuss. Let's not be shocked and resentful; let's love the lonely. Perhaps, coming from a fanatic, the message of God's love will regain some of its wonderful outrageousness. 'Listen. I have a secret. I eat God, and I have His life in me. It's the best thing in the world; it leads to everlasting life. But first, you have to die to yourself.'"

### RELIGIOUS CONSUMPTION

Here is a report on a new study of Americans that finds "very low levels of religiosity in terms of actual behaviour". The researchers, using time-use data from the Bureau of Labour Statistics, found that the average American spends a total of three minutes on "religious and spiritual activities" in the normal weekday. In ranking activities, "personal care, including sleeping, was first, while religious and spiritual activities were last". Oh dear. Leaving aside whether sleeping is an activity, the finding does not surprise. Apart from

Catholics who attend daily Mass, and others who set aside a period of the day for Bible reading or some other discipline of meditation, it is not entirely discouraging that the average American spends three minutes a day in what they identify as "religious and spiritual activities". I suppose that most of the respondents mean by that time devoted to prayer. And I expect a very large percentage of them would say that the entirety of their "actual behaviour" is religiously informed or inspired. You know there is something deeply suspect about a study that claims to measure "the consumption of religion". How much religion did you consume today? I hope that whoever paid for this study gets their money back.

### STRAIGHT ANSWERS

It comes too late for Terri Schiavo, who died in March 2005, but the timing is not bad for a Church that thinks in terms of centuries. In fact, Catholic teaching was firm and clear, but some Catholic academics and a few bishops shamelessly waffled on, and a few expressed support for the decision to kill Terri Schiavo by starvation and dehydration. So the American bishops' conference asked for guidance from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). Question: "Is the administration of food and water (whether by natural or artificial means)

*continued overleaf*

to a patient in a 'vegetative state' morally obligatory except when they cannot be assimilated by the patient's body or cannot be administered to the patient without causing significant physical discomfort?" The CDF's answer, explicitly approved by the pope: "Yes. The administration of food and water even by artificial means is, in principle, an ordinary and proportionate means of preserving life. It is therefore obligatory to the extent to which, and for as long as, it is shown to accomplish its proper end, which is the hydration and nourishment of the patient." The bishops asked if such support might be discontinued "when competent physicians judge with moral certainty that the patient will never recover consciousness?" The answer: "No. A patient in a 'permanent vegetative state' is a person with fundamental human dignity and must, therefore, receive ordinary and proportionate care which includes, in principle, the administration of water and food even by artificial means." William Cardinal Levada, prefect of the CDF, added, "The provision of water and food, even by artificial means, always represents a 'natural means' for preserving life and is not a 'therapeutic treatment.'" The CDF response says nothing new, but, as Dr. Johnson observed, we – including also bishops and moral theologians – have a greater need to be reminded than to be instructed.

## ATHEIST TACTICS

Perhaps you can put up with one more word on a subject that has been beaten to death. The headline in *Religion Watch* reads: "What's New About the 'New Atheism'?" Well, the spelling of *atheism* for one thing. Typo aside, this is a thoughtful reflection on the significance of the spate of militantly atheistic books by Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris and others. The article quotes George Weigel, who notes that the new atheism is so very angry. Dawkins, for instance, argues that early religious formation is a form of "child abuse". Says Weigel, "In the early 19th century, it was thought that an atheist could not be a gentleman; today the atheists argue that religious conviction is for slobs and morons." The RW article opines that atheists (who often preferred to be called freethinkers or secular humanists) are frustrated by "the failure

of progressive secularism" and are now seeking a niche for themselves among the unchurched and "secular seekers" in order to build a new community of support. They are also becoming more overtly "evangelistic", in admitted imitation of assertive Christian witness. And they are into "identity politics", increasingly presenting themselves as a minority whose rights are threatened and making an explicit connection with the women's and gay-rights movements. For instance, atheists frequently speak about "coming out of the closet". The article concludes that "the anger, energy and new strategies of the new atheists" may turn out to do more for their cause "than the older and faded dream of building a secularist society". I expect that there is more than a little to that analysis. Contrast Harris, Dawkins, et al. with the "Humanist Manifesto" of 1933, in which distinguished intellectual and cultural leaders, with the venerable John Dewey at their head, confidently predicting the demise of religion and the triumph of what was frankly described as secular humanism. So which is the oppressed minority atheists or believers? Activists in both camps lay claim to the title. Among the asymmetries, however, is that there is a constitutional guarantee of the free exercise of religion, while the free exercise of atheism consists chiefly in attacking the free exercise of religion. Proving that you *can* fight something with nothing. Winning is another matter.

## TRENDS AMONG THE YOUNG

Contempt for the tradition that one would renew is lethal. Clergy and lay leaders do well to keep in mind an observation of Martin Luther King Jr.: "Whom you would change you must first love, and they must know you love them." It is an encouragement that the many youthful renewal movements in the Church today, although sometimes marked by elitism in the pejorative sense of that term, are typically devoted to the Church's tradition in faith and morals, and respectful of popular devotions. More or less self-consciously rebelling, as youth will rebel, against two generations that equated progress with the jettisoning of the past, they want the Church to be *more* not *less* Catholic. Of even greater importance, they refuse to conform to the notion that rebellion is the normal mode of being

young. One might say that they are rebelling against the imposed disposition of rebellion. (This phenomenon is insightfully addressed by Joseph Bottum in "When the Swallows Come Back to Capistrano," *First Things*, October 2006.) These young people know that there is much they do not know and they are not embarrassed to acknowledge that their disposition is that of learning. Perhaps some of them have even read the words of Goethe:

*What you have as heritage  
Take now as task;  
For thus you will make it your own.*

I do not want to exaggerate, but such is my impression from the young Catholics I encounter on campuses around the country, in our international summer seminar in Poland, and, not least, on our staff at FIRST THINGS. You may object that they are not representative, that they are the elite. Yes, I suppose so. Which means they are the leaders who are redefining the meaning of renewal and reform. Which means they are very much unlike the elitists of, say, Catholic Action in Quebec and their counterparts here in decades past who, in their no doubt well-intended efforts, precipitated spiritual and institutional devastation.

## NEW TWIST TO AN OLD TALE

Can you get a divorce without a marriage? The Supreme Court of Rhode Island says not. Cassandra Ormiston and Margaret Chambers live in Rhode Island but were wed in Massachusetts in a same-sex ceremony that the Bay State calls marriage. A year later, citing irreconcilable differences, they applied for a divorce in Rhode Island. That state has this odd law that says you have to be legally married to get legally divorced, and a marriage is between a man and a woman. Moreover, because of a residency requirement, they can't get divorced in Massachusetts either. They're not interested in living together in Massachusetts, or anywhere else. So it seems they're in a fine pickle of their own making. *Cassandra* in Greek means "she who entangles men". Homer might not believe what Cassandra is up to today.

# cutting edge

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

## EVIDENCE FOR EVOLUTION: CONVINCING AND THEISTIC

In a series of articles in his *Credo* column of *The Catholic Times* between 30th December 2007 and 3rd February 2008, the insightful Fr Francis Marsden tackled the big questions of science and faith. In the earlier of those pieces he well brought to the attention of his readers the unavoidable inference that the law and order in the universe itself manifests the rational Mind of its Maker. He illustrated his words with the great examples from Catholic history of priest-scientists whose work was revolutionary in terms of a scientific understanding of the world, such as the 16th-century Pole, Copernicus, whose astronomical observations demonstrated that the earth orbited the sun, and the 20th-century Belgian, Georges Lemaître, who was the first to propose a 'Big Bang' start to the universe. In the later pieces Marsden proceeded to deal with the rise of life on earth, an outcome seemingly against all the odds. He reminds us that science is still ignorant of the chemical pathways that wonderfully allowed the inert chemicals of the earth's early history to form the more complex chemicals needed by even the simplest living organisms.

In the last two articles of his series, however, he makes three arguments which each seem to fall into the "God-of-the-gaps" trap. This type of theism grows out of the sensible idea that where we rationally need causal explanation, but it cannot be given materially, we need to look for a non-material cause. But it confuses 'cannot' with 'has not yet been grasped in the current state of our knowledge', often through an unwitting empathy with atheistic, reductionist philosophy of modern science.

We agree that evolutionary theory is not 'totally sewn up' – and Fr Marsden is right to point that out – but it is also to

be expected that at some future date the gaps in our knowledge of evolutionary processes may shrink. This is, not least, because we should expect all the works of God to be intelligibly and harmoniously inter-related, across time (which is at the heart of the insight concerning evolution) as well as across space (which is hardly doubted today).

1. Fr Marsden sees mileage in the 'Intelligent Design' idea that some biological organs or bio-molecular structures are 'irreducibly complex', such that they 'could not possibly have evolved.' As we have argued before in this magazine, metaphysically speaking, contrary to fashionable reductionism, *all things* are irreducibly (and wonderful) complex, or 'holistic', and that certainly does not stop them being causally related across time with other things (e.g. by evolution). Apparent difficulty in capturing the laws which historically relate chemicals to the eye does not mean that this relationship is qualitatively different or more wonderful than that between an apple and the ground towards which it falls.

2. Marsden also emphasises the lack of a fossil record for all the intervening species in evolutionary history. One significant and scholarly response is referred to below.

3. He places "unguided random processes", "the mindless material processes of Darwinistic evolution" in a category beyond those processes which can be understood as being immediately 'God-guided'. As we argued in our November 2005 editorial we need not and should not accept the description of low-level physics as 'intrinsically random'. A better interpretation is that of the pioneering physicist De Broglie that low-level physical interactions have an intrinsic lack of unitary intelligibility. Every single particle in the universe – and hence every cosmic ray which may initiate a genetic mutation in an organism's DNA – falls under God's control and direction: every mutation, that is, will follow the laws of science and therefore at the very same time fulfil the sustaining intention of the Creator. They are not 'mindless' because they are following the plan of the Mind of which natural laws are a partial description.

Furthermore Fr Marsden, usually so adroit, did not take proper account of the

massive evidence for evolution from genetics. As the Science and Religion debate grows in importance for diagnosing our society's increasing ills, it continues, we think, to remain a strangely tricky minefield.

## MISSING FOSSILS?

Donald Prothero, a professor of geology at Occidental College in Los Angeles, and a lecturer in geo-biology at the California Institute of Technology at Pasadena, has recently had a book published by Columbia University Press, *Evolution: What the Fossils Say and Why it Matters*. It is his contribution to countering the creationist argument that the fossil record is too patchy to support the theory of evolution. In a very clear article in the 1st March issue of the *New Scientist* journal, he details ten important examples of 'transitional' species – from the fossil record and from surviving species – to dispel the myth that intermediate organisms are missing in palaeontological studies. To give one classic example, which in fact answers Fr Marsden precisely (see his article in the January 27th *Catholic Times* in which he said, "There should exist thousands of blind alleys and dead ends in the fossil record. Think of the neck of the giraffe"). Prothero writes: "Until recently, there was no fossil evidence linking the long-necked giraffes to their short-necked relatives. But as my book went to press, news emerged that Nikos Solounias of the New York Institute of Technology had described a fossil giraffe from the late Miocene and early Pliocene. Its neck is a perfect intermediate between the short-neck ancestors and their long-neck descendants." (p. 40).

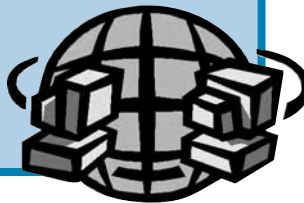
## TEMPLETON WINNER

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. His statement on receiving the award can be read at [www.templetonprize.org](http://www.templetonprize.org) and we will probably devote the next *Cutting Edge* article to his work and thought.



# Faith online

A guide to Catholic resources on the World Wide Web



The links to all the websites mentioned in Faith online are available on the Faith website at [www.faith.org.uk](http://www.faith.org.uk)

## The Pure Love Club

The site gives "blunt, honest, and uplifting reasons for why you're worth waiting for. No fear tactics. No guilt trips. Just the demands of authentic human love." All the major issues are confronted head on: dating; 'How far is too far?'; pornography; homosexuality; how to stay pure; STDs and the link between the pill and breast cancer. It is a sensitive task to present the full Catholic vision of sex and love; there will always be a little more that could be said. This site is to be commended for its pastoral realism, confident orthodoxy and practical wisdom. P.S. Have a look at the linked video clips where contraception and natural family planning get a sort of Mitchell and Webb treatment.

[www.pureloveclub.com](http://www.pureloveclub.com)

## Church Latin for all

It seems that the resurgence of Latin is occurring even outside what is happening in Catholicism; there are now more state schools in the U.K. than independent ones teaching it. But this American site has some good resources for learning and enriching Church Latin. Works of reference are being reprinted for ordering – from dictionaries and concordances to the Latin of St Patrick. There are many decent links offered for the various liturgical texts, several of which are downloadable free. You can subscribe to the 'Latin Nerd Warriors' Newsletter.

[www.churchlatin.com](http://www.churchlatin.com)

## Seeking a fifth Marian Dogma

At the start of the year, five cardinals wrote to all the bishops of the world, inviting them to join in requesting a papal definition of Our Lady's rôle. *Vox Populi Maria Mediatrici* is an organisation that also specifically gathers prayers and petitions throughout the world for this end. As well as providing theological foundations for the dogma, this site offers insights on areas of debate – from the timeliness of the dogma to ecumenical concerns. The controversial *Czestochowa* commission is critiqued and there are powerful testimonies on hand – from Mother Teresa to papal theologian Cardinal George Cottier.

[www.voxpopuli.org](http://www.voxpopuli.org)

## To boldly go...

Microsoft has gone one better than Google Sightseeing; here is a virtual telescope. Pan anywhere across the night sky and zoom in where you like.

[www.worldwidetelescope.org](http://www.worldwidetelescope.org)

## Dominicans in Ireland

This is a confident online presence. Given the regular gloomy announcements on the state of Irish vocations, the Dominicans appear to be buoyant and healthy. They run several different apostolates as well as four periodicals, the new biblical and theological institutes and two retreat centres. The marvellous free newspaper *Alive!* is now even making its way across the waters.

[www.dominicanfriars.ie](http://www.dominicanfriars.ie)

[www.alive.ie](http://www.alive.ie)

## Sharing Catholic videos

This is a sort of Catholic you-tube. The videos are of varying quality but all seem orthodox. The catechetics and vocations sections are now quite extensive.

[www.lovetobecatholic.com](http://www.lovetobecatholic.com)

## Padre Pio devotions

As well as a short biography, there are prayers, inspirational words and photos. A series of testimonies confirms this saint's continuing universal appeal.

[www.padrepiodevotions.org](http://www.padrepiodevotions.org)

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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](http://www.faith.org.uk)*