

faith

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Body and Soul – Rediscovering Catholic Orthodoxy
Editorial

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Kevin Flannery

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Francis Selman

The Goodness of the Human Body
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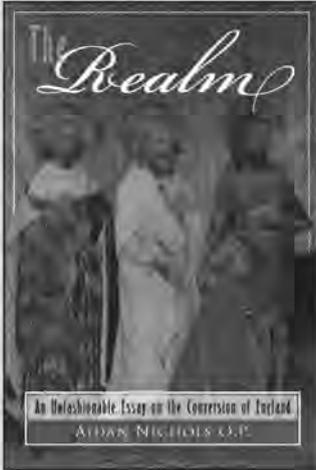


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Body And Soul – Rediscovering Catholic Orthodoxy

“Yet you have made him little less than God ... you have given him dominion over the work of your hands”

Ps (8: 5-6)

“The theology and philosophy of Edward Holloway stands alone as a contemporary synthesis which on the one hand rejects any dialectical tension at the heart of being and at the same time upholds the real distinction between matter and spirit”.

The Renewal of Doctrinal Education

In December, Bishop Patrick O’Donoghue of Lancaster issued a document - *Fit For Mission? Schools* - which sets out with doctrinal clarity and pastoral concern the Catholic principles and standards he expects the Catholic schools in his diocese to follow. Please God, it will gradually bring about real change and revival of Catholic education in that diocese and beyond.

Some commentators have picked up on certain practical outcomes specified in the document, such as the instruction to display crucifixes in all Catholic classrooms, encouragement of the Rosary, regular Confession and Eucharistic devotion in Catholic schools. These are important provisions to be sure, but they are not recommended in a vacuum. The core of this document is about the renewal of religious education along with wholehearted commitment to ongoing conversion through the sacramental life, personal prayer and Christian action.

Bishop “POD”, as he is affectionately known by his domestic church, sets out the essential topics which must be addressed in any presentation of the Catholic faith as follows:

- God and Creation
- The Spiritual Person
- Sin and Redemption
- The Divinity of Jesus Christ
- The Church
- Eternal Life in Christ.

Catechesis on the Soul Essential

Of these six themes, it is arguably the second that is most likely to be neglected, simply because teachers and catechists are likely to be particularly ill informed and ill equipped to explain the Church’s teaching on this vital point. Lest anyone doubt that it is a vital point of Catholic teaching, under the heading *The Spiritual Person*, the Lancaster document gives the following quote from the Catechism:

“The Christian vision of the human person made in the image of God with a spiritual soul as well as a body is of central importance. The soul, the seed of eternity we bear in ourselves, irreducible to the merely material, can have its origin only in God (CCC 363)”.

Could the average Catholic teacher in the UK give a reasoned account of the teaching that each of us has “a spiritual soul as well as a body”, and that the soul is “irreducible to the merely material”, to our scientifically aware but deeply secularised young people? Are most of them even aware that that this teaching is “of central importance”?

If not, they can hardly be blamed for their ignorance. Over recent decades the overwhelmingly dominant view in Catholic academic and educational circles has been

heavily weighted against the traditional account of body and soul. In fact any form of “dualism” with regard to the constitution of human nature has frequently been sneered at as philosophically dated and theologically distasteful. Later in this issue Fr Francis Selman provides some significant examples of this.

We have often remarked on the widespread influence of Teilhard de Chardin and Karl Rahner, both of whom portray matter and spirit as twin, dialectical, aspects of a common universal energy and metaphysical category. It has to be said too that, for all the beauty and depth of much of his theology, Hans Urs von Balthasar holds much the same philosophical presumption on this point, although he is less systematic in applying it throughout his works. The theology and philosophy of Edward Holloway stands alone as a contemporary synthesis which on the one hand rejects any dialectical tension at the heart of being and at the same time upholds the real distinction between matter and spirit. Both stances are presented as vital to Catholic orthodoxy and to a vision of creation and salvation as a ‘garment woven without seam’.

Definitive Teachings about the Soul

Of course we do not teach that the soul is in any way a separate entity, only inhabiting the body as a temporary resident, so to speak. Dualism in that sense is indeed alien to the Catholic faith. The human person is a single entity defined by material and spiritual components such that the spiritual soul is metaphysically the “form of the body” (cf. CCC 362-368).

This phrase is defined by the Church. As we shall bring out below it means that a human body can only exist as a holistic and functional reality in the cosmos through the spiritual soul. And by corollary, it means that the spiritual soul holds all the material powers of the body in integral unity as human and personal.

And yet we must not be afraid of the “dualist” tag, rightly understood, when speaking about human nature. For it is also Catholic doctrine that body and soul do not share the same genesis because matter and spirit are not one common order of existence. This need not imply any opposition between matter and spirit. Both matter and spirit are ultimately from God’s creative hand. Both, therefore, are “good” in their essential definition and both are intrinsically ordered towards fulfilment in the glory of God.

In fact matter is only intelligible through relationship to spiritual mind that controls and directs it. In the case of matter below man this is through relationship to the Mind of God that frames the whole of creation, and in the case of human nature through direct integration with the individual and personal centre of control and direction (intellect and will) that we call the “soul”. Nonetheless it remains true that while the body originates from the interdependent material processes of Nature through parental generation, the “...the spiritual and immortal soul is created immediately by God” at the moment of individuation at conception (CCC 382). Soul and body, therefore, are correlative but distinctive orders of being within the one entity that is Man. This means

that they can potentially be, and are actually separated at death.

It has been common in recent years for scripture scholars to tell us that the idea of the separation of body and soul after death – indeed that any systematic distinction between body and soul – was alien to the Hebrew vision of the Old Testament. Not only is this untrue to the carefully nuanced, symbolic text of Genesis, it is a blatant contradiction of more explicitly developed doctrine found in the book of Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth), “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Qoh 12:7). It is true that death as we know it was not God’s intention for human beings. Death in this manner is a result of the Fall which will eventually be reversed. But the fact remains that the soul is immortal by nature and endures while the body decays into dissolution.

That the souls of the just enjoy the Beatific Vision while yet awaiting the resurrection of their bodies is also solemnly defined doctrine (*Benedictus Deus* (1336): DS 1000; cf. *Lumen Gentium* 49). This teaching simply cannot be maintained in an unequivocal sense on a fundamentally monist view of matter and spirit. Rahner illustrates this point in his final work *Foundations of Christian Faith* when he concludes that his approach to the unity of the human person implies that it is “superfluous to ask what a person does while his body is in the grave and his soul is already with God” (Chapter nine, Part two).

Pastoral Presentation of the Issue

How then do we present the Church’s teaching to the modern world in its orthodox meaning, yet without introducing any sense of arbitrariness or incoherence into God’s works, which is what the thinkers named above were all rightly keen to avoid?

The continuity between man and the animals on the bodily level has become increasingly evident in modern times. A degree of kinship between human beings and the rest of physical creation has always been clear to an extent, but the depth and detail of our interrelationship with the rest of life on the planet is being confirmed over and over again in breathtaking detail by new scientific advances such as genetic studies and molecular biology. We should not try to downplay or deny this, especially since the very unity of the laws of Nature can point the modern mind so powerfully towards recognition of God as Creator, the Supreme Mind that frames the vast Unity of Meaning and Finality that is the material universe.

Yet we must also make a convincing case for the uniqueness and transcendence of the human personality within the scheme of material life. There are indeed clear signs of transcendence over the material order in the human personality; not just higher refinements of animal behaviour – although of course these are also present – but factors that operate on a truly novel principle. Unlike the animals, we are not satisfied with living within a single ecological niche. The biological framework of survival based behaviour and social stimulus is not enough for us.

Our brains no doubt work on the same patterns as other brains in nature, but the human quest for knowledge is not just bounded by the needs of survival. We indulge in pure speculation and seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Our minds delve far beyond the things we can reach directly with the physical senses. We reach out to the very boundaries of creation and beyond. This is both the wonder and the burden of being human.

We also yearn for more than just the satisfaction of bodily needs. The human will and creativity faculty are a further witness to our freedom from the environmental harmonics of animal urge and instinct. We actively shape and develop the environment itself based on our own insight into the structure and patterns of Nature. At our best we do this in harmony with the laws of creation, enhancing the world with our own creative developments and inventiveness. Tragically, we can also break the laws of our own well being and perhaps even the natural harmony of the planet we live upon. We are not supposed to do this, of course, but the fact that we can do so still demonstrates the transcendent power of the human spirit. No purely material creature could break the material laws of directional control that shape and define its very essence.

All of this shows that we are not just creatures who are controlled and directed. We are creatures who exercise control and direction. That is to say, we are not just matter we are mind as well. Our fairly constant and active consciousness of our physical environment furnishes the foundational experience of what such mind and matter are.

Is Infusion of the Soul Arbitrary?

But how did we come by this awesome power? By what logic and from what need were we given the creative faculty of mind or spirit at the core of our being? It will not be enough simply to assert that God 'gave us' souls, as if He arbitrarily chose to create this animal life form with a spirit. Even bright ten year olds can sense something childish and magical in a faith so expressed.

This is how the *Faith* pamphlet *What Makes Man Unique?* presents the issue:

"If it is true that evolution produces more and more powerful brains as it progresses, and this requires more and more control from the environment to ensure its meaningful and balanced behaviour, then, somewhere along the line, things must reach a natural limit. Nature could produce a supreme brain that was still within its control, but if things were to develop one step beyond that, then it would indeed have created something that was out of control and could not be given a programme of life - an animal that had no place or meaning in Nature.

"Such a creature would be un-natural by definition. So, *in fact, such an event could never happen - at least not on its own.* Everything in the universe, including our own brains, is built up on this principle of control and direction, and Nature cannot break its own fundamental law without the whole process of the universe being undermined and coming to grief.

"And yet evidently something has given us power over the physical environment, power to work out the laws of nature themselves and control them for our own ends, power even to destroy Nature itself with our technology if we are foolish enough. It looks like the impossible has actually happened. How do we explain this?...

"This 'new power' cannot be something material, something which arises from the organisation of atoms and molecules and electrical energies of the universe... Therefore it can only come from one other source. It must come directly from God. The human body comes about from the seed and egg of parents in common with other animals, but the soul is created immediately by God's loving command and wise, eternal will. Whenever a new human life is conceived the soul must also be there. This is because *the formula or pattern that makes up the human body makes no sense and has no place in Nature without the spirit to hold it together and give it a meaning and a purpose.*

"God will always create the soul at the instant the body begins, because he honours his own creation and therefore he constantly provides what is needed for it to make sense and come to its completion. It's not as if God is caught by surprise with the arrival of the first human being, or by any of the rest of us! God's creative wisdom and loving will for his creatures is ever present and always perfect".

Body and Soul Co-created as a Single Nature

So there is no question here of the body being created before the soul such that the spirit is somehow added onto an already formed creature. Neither is there any suggestion that the soul pre-exists the body.

In *Catholicism, A New Synthesis* Edward Holloway wrote:

"There is nothing arbitrary about the soul of man, either in Nature or in the process of evolution. Man is, through the soul, both continuous with the evolutionary process and also a special creation. ... the soul must be co-created with the forming and organisable matter of this animal which is going to be Man. The matter cannot be intelligible and rational - i.e. harmonic in nature - without the personal co-existence in it of spirit. It is through this immediate ... principle which is the 'better half' of its being and which gives it self conscious intellect and fully reflective self-aware will, that man is defined as a new species within ... Nature". (p.83)

And the same *Faith* pamphlet goes on to expound this point in more pastoral language:

"So the human soul is something *new* in creation, in the sense that it does not evolve or arise from the potential of matter/energy, but it is not something arbitrarily 'stuck on' to Nature, an *intrusion* into the process of evolution. In any case 'matter' in evolution is always controlled and directed by the Mind of God from the beginning. That's how it all makes sense,

and how it all works. In the case of human beings, the matter of our body is now controlled and directed by a mind which is individual and personal to each of us. This is something that was foreseen and planned for in creation, and it only happened when matter had been brought to the peak of its natural development with the finest brain in Nature.

“The soul does not exist as something in its own right before coming into union with the body. It is created simultaneously with the body and only makes sense in terms of the whole human nature of the individual who comes into being. What is created at that moment is a single new creature – a human person – with the capacity to become conscious and free ‘in the image and likeness of God’.”

The Soul as ‘Form’ of the Body

But how does this catechetical perspective fit with the Church’s definition of the soul being the “form” of the body? The “form” in traditional Aristotelian thinking is the principle of the intelligible organisation of matter. This concept was adopted and adapted very effectively to serve Catholic theology by St. Thomas Aquinas. In that “realist’ tradition the intelligible actuality of a thing is not a projection from the mind of the observer – as in Kant and the subjective schools that come from him – but is an intrinsic aspect of the thing itself. This is true of the soul and the body in man.

In other words the spiritual soul is not merely a name for the subjective arena of human consciousness. The soul is an objective reality. In fact it is the very ground of our reality as living organisms of human form. For the “form” is also the power through which what is potential becomes actual reality. It is not an arbitrary or external addition to an entity that already has a coherent form of existence. The soul is therefore the body’s principle of existence, its breath of life and identity. Without the soul the body has no power to cohere as an organism or even a meaningful entity within creation.

In his philosophical works Edward Holloway suggests a slight realignment of detail within the realist tradition in the light of modern insights into material reality. But this does not mean that he rejects that tradition. In fact quite the opposite. He sought to preserve it by authentic development and vindicate the Church’s defined teaching in the modern world.

In place of accepting a basic ontological dualism between “act” and “potency” as distinct metaphysical principles at the root of being, he suggests that for material existence the concepts of “act” and “potency” or “matter” and “form” can be seen as two aspects of just one single complex of contingency.

In Holloway’s vision there is indeed a formal principle of unity and intelligibility which makes the material being more than just a reductionist assembly of its parts. But we need not have recourse to abstract “universals” intervening on a separate material potential to bring about entities in their various kinds.

**“Edward Holloway suggests a slight realignment of detail within the realist tradition in the light of modern insights into material reality...
...He sought to vindicate the Church’s defined teaching in the modern world.”.**

Soul [sol] noun

the spiritual or immaterial

part of a human being [or animal],

regarded as immortal.

Seeing the soul through the eyes

spirit, psyche, [inner] self, inner being,

life force, vital force;

individuality, makeup, subconscious.

Rather the formal identity of organic beings arises from the layered patterning of elements and energies within the vast unfolding formula of matter. The Universe, which constantly subsists in relationship to the Mind of God, is the matrix of meaningful actuality that specifies and interrelates creatures in their interlocking natures. So it is ultimately God's Mind and Will framing all things through the Law of universal Control and Direction that shapes and bestows the dynamic "forms" of nature.

This is what determines, delimits and identifies the 'nature' of material things. The template of their being is nothing abstract at all. It is the living fact of their place within the laws and layers of meaning embedded and embodied in creation as set out in God's great purpose which is to be fulfilled in Christ. This is what defines all the potentialities and the actualities of matter in cosmic development.

One of the advantages of this small but significant realignment of realist metaphysics is that it takes away any need to speak of "animal souls" or "plant souls", even if they are carefully and somewhat oxymoronically qualified as "material souls". Such language always was an inelegance in Christian philosophy, but in today's world it is a potential source of confusion which we are better off without.

However, when it comes to Man, the principle of intelligibility that integrates, actualises, orientates and is the driving force of human nature as a going concern in the universe has to be of a different order from matter. This, as we have seen, is in order to make sense of Man's intentional consciousness, creative behaviour and organic brain, as well as his destiny in Christ.

With human beings, the principle of meaningful integration as a specific unity, the principle therefore of individuation and existential actualisation, must be distinct in operational power and hence in origin from the material body. And yet, because this situation is demanded by, and indeed prepared for by, the deepest Law of creation itself, there is perfect continuity in God's works and perfect unity in the nature so created. The body cannot even begin to exist without the soul. The soul is truly the "form" of the body as defined by the Church, for in this the unique and supreme case matter and form must be really distinct within the unity of the one being.

Human Identity and Our Current Cultural Crisis

We are aware that there are those who will dismiss this whole debate as being of only academic interest, with little pastoral and social relevance. Yet the body/soul question in one manner or another underlies almost every aspect of our contemporary crisis of faith and culture.

In November 2006 Cardinal Carmillo Ruini, the Vicar General of the Diocese of Rome and at the time the head of the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI), gave a keynote address to an international conference entitled "University and The Social

Teaching of the Church" (*Università e Dottrina Sociale della Chiesa*, Rome 17.11.06). He said that at the root of the social and moral upheavals of our times is a "new anthropological question". Not only have "recent scientific and technological developments ... given man a new power to intervene on his own identity" but the dominant intellectual culture of our times "refutes that anthropological dualism which conceives of man as constituted by body and soul" and portrays "the unity of existence in a radically reductionist manner". Human nature is "brought down to the level of the bodily dimension alone".

He pointed out how, because of the dominant reductionist view of human nature, scientists are increasingly tempted to treat the human individual as "an object to be investigated, measured and experimented upon" rather than as an "irreducible subject". For this reason he spoke of the urgent need to counter the "naturalistic interpretation of man" with its inherent "negation of transcendence" that "puts an end to hope".

Cardinal Ruini spoke of "false interpretations" of cosmic and biological evolution which "contribute more than a little to a purely naturalistic understanding of man" and which also lead to "the denial of the existence of a personal God distinct from the world" and the denial of "the transcendence of the human subject, made in the image and likeness of God". In order to answer these false interpretations the Cardinal called for a rediscovery of the legacy of Christian anthropology. At the same time he also called for a new rapport between "science, philosophy and theology".

The question of human identity, he said,

"...can only be confronted constructively by means of a multidisciplinary approach that summons together the empirical sciences, philosophy, theology, history, law, literature and art. We are not just talking about a convergence of disciplines, but of an authentically global synthesis in which the various forms of knowledge ... find common ground in a shared personal and social vision... We must not imagine that the socio-cultural challenge of today can be met with theological thought that specialises in the content of doctrine or concentrates on religious experience. It is necessary to collect the questions posed by contemporary human knowledge, especially scientific, and respond to them, showing the reasons for the faith and the plausibility of believing and living as a Christian. This fundamental theology, which insofar as it is reasonable may be publicly proposed to all, must become the base for the cultural formation of the new generation of priests... I would call rather for a great synergy of creative thought in various fields".

Needless to say we enthusiastically agree with His Eminence. We pray that we and others in the Church may be inspired in taking up the challenge.

OTHER ANGLES

BEING IN THE CREATOR'S IMAGE

by Roger Peck

Seminarian for the Archdiocese of Birmingham

Why did God make us? The Penny Catechism tells us that God made us to know, love and serve Him and to be happy with Him in Heaven forever. This is certainly true. This is clearly and precisely why God *did* make us – and yet as rational beings with enquiring minds we just can't stop delving. I mean *why* did God make us to; "Know Love and Serve Him in this life and be happy with Him in the next?"

There is a good reason to suppose that there may not be an answer to this further question. The reason why we should "manage our expectations" on this one is that God does not *need anything* and God created *freely*. How can there be such a "why?" for an omnipotent, necessary and free being? As "free" God was not compelled, as "omnipotent" God was not constrained and as a "necessary being" God did not "need to". Is there any other way we can respond to the question?

One possible way is that of defining the limits of our own knowledge, discerning what we can and cannot know. According to Socrates there are two types of people in the world: the fools who think they are wise and the wise who know they are fools – and whenever we define the limits of our own competence we are like the wise man who knows that he is a fool. A perfectly rational (profoundly rational) response to the "why" question is "I don't know". "Why did He?" "Who knows – but He clearly did!"

Another possible response, the one being advocated here, is to emphasise that "God is Love" (1 John 4:8, 16). A somewhat mystical response – and one based on analogy – but the contention here, perhaps echoing Augustine's "Vestiges of the Trinity", is that our existence is a revelation of this profound truth. "God is Love" and, as we all know, "Love is not self-seeking" (1 Cor 13:5). True Love desires the object of its affection simply to "be". Good parenting is not a process of "holding on" – it is a process of gradually "letting go". Attempting to "hold on" – to live one's children's lives vicariously usually ends in tears. "God is love" and Love is not selfish. God's creation of a being with freewill, God's creation of a being able to say "yes" or "no", God's creation of a creature able to turn against its creator, is God's way of "letting go".

All of creation is suffused with this principle. God did not just create a universe – He created a universe that would create itself! The formation of the stars, the creation within those

stars of the periodic table of elements and the formation of the planets and planetary systems can be seen as the "free will principle" of the material dimension of the universe. Evolution is the "free will principle" of the animal and vegetable dimension of creation and free will itself is the ultimate manifestation of this principle within the human (moral and spiritual) dimension. To quote George Macdonald "every fact in nature is a revelation of God, it is there such as it is because God is such as he is"¹

The formation of the planets and the evolution of life could be seen as God the Father "letting go"; a revelation of God's unselfish Love. Echoes of this can perhaps be heard in the *bara/asah* (create/make) distinction of Genesis chapter 1. The word *bara* (create) is used only three times; for the creation of heaven and earth, the creation of the first animals (the fish and the birds) and the creation of man (i.e. the big bang, the creation of life and the creation of the human soul). The word used elsewhere – *asah* - is usually translated as "make" and the implication generally inferred from the distinction is that "make" is not a creation *ex nihilo* but a creation out of existing matter. The proposal here is that for "*asah*" one could also read "form" or "evolve".

God is not overbearing. God does not tinker. God is love, and true love is not grasping. True love desires only for the object of its affection to "be". The correlative of this desire for us is the fact that man, as a person, is the only thing in the physical universe (of "all that is seen") whose nature is not simply a thing to be received but is, rather, a thing to be realised. Triangles can be nothing but triangular, dogs can be nothing but "doggy", rocks can be nothing but "rocky" – but humans can be inhumane. Human beings can become less than human. The lazy man is a sloth, the greedy man is a pig, the scheming man is a snake. A chivalrous person, on the other hand, is a *man* of honour, a brave person is a man of courage and a truthful person is a *man* of integrity². God desires that we simply "be" – but it is up to us to realise His desire.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

NOTES

¹George MacDonald, Unspoken Sermons Series III; "The Truth".

²From Peter Kreeft talk "Identity" – available online at www.peter.kreeft.com

The Incorruptibility Of The Subsistent Soul According To Thomas Aquinas

Fr Kevin L. Flannery

Fr Kevin L. Flannery, S.J., Professor of Philosophy at the Gregorian University in Rome, illustrates Thomas Aquinas' primary manner of defending the spirituality of the soul. He brings out Thomas's careful delineation of a transcendence of physical interaction in our knowing.

"...even if Thomas's physiology is wobbly, we can acknowledge that he is ... on to something: understanding colours is different from sensing colours. There is a sort of distance which would not be there if the operation of the intellect were tied essentially to a physical organ".

In question 75 of the first part of the *Summa theologiae* [ST 1.75], Thomas Aquinas puts forward an elaborate argument for the incorruptibility of the human soul, interweaving ideas from Aristotle's *Categories* [*Cat.*], *De anima* [*De an.*], and *Metaphysics* [*Metaph.*], and possibly also from Plato. But although the argument is elaborate, Thomas's basic thesis can be stated succinctly: the soul is by nature incorruptible since it is both subsistent and its operation is ultimately independent of the body.

Defining Subsistent

Thomas takes his conception of subsistence from *Cat.* and *Metaph.* v,8. In chapter 2 of the former, Aristotle says that some things are "in" things and some things are "said of" things, the former being accidental properties (as when white is found in Socrates), the latter essential properties (as when 'man' is said of Socrates). Sometimes accidents are in other accidents, as when we say that Socrates is a ghastly white; and sometimes essential properties are said of other essential properties, as when 'animal' is said of 'man'. But a substance, says Aristotle in chapter 5 of *Cat.*, in the proper sense is neither in, nor is it said of, another thing; it is, so to speak, at the bottom of the stack of things "in" or "said of". Substances in this proper sense are "separate". Unlike accidents and essential properties, which cannot exist without an ultimate subject, they *are* ultimate subjects in their own right. If we want to indicate a white thing or a man, we have to point to something like Socrates; but if we want to indicate Socrates, we point to Socrates. He is a concrete object of reference.

In Thomas's way of speaking, this is to be subsistent; and, as we have seen, he maintains that the human soul is subsistent. But a soul is not subsistent in quite the way Socrates is. Although a soul is subsistent in the sense that, when we refer to Socrates's soul, we refer to *him*, a soul is just a part of the composite thing, that is, a part of the composite of soul and body, which is, for example, Socrates. To many people, this will smack of "dualism," often associated with Plato. But Thomas's approach has a solid foundation in Aristotle, as he himself points out in ST 1.29.2. In both *Cat.* v (3a29-32) and *Metaph.* v,8 (1017b12-13), Aristotle acknowledges that a part of something can be substance: a part of something (such as a hand) is not "in" a body in the way white is but in a way that allows it to be found at the bottom of a stack of accidental and/or essential predications, as when we say that a hand is a limb or an instrument or whatever. In other words, also a part can be subsistent.

In the second book of the *De anima*, in a remark that anticipates his claim in Book three that a part of the soul (the intellect) is separable and immortal, Aristotle appears to allude to the sort of Platonic dualism that he would reject. He has been setting out his basic position that the soul is the actuality of a body and that, therefore, certain functions ("parts") of the soul are inseparable from its body, such as, its nutritive function. But then he says: "Yet nothing prevents some parts from being separable since they are not the

actualities of any body. Moreover, it is unclear whether the soul is the actuality of its body in the way that a seaman is of a ship" [*De an.* ii,1,413a6-10]. In his commentary on the *De anima* (and also elsewhere), Thomas interprets this as a reference to Plato. The idea would be that Aristotle is suggesting that a subsistent and separable part of the soul is a possibility (this would be the intellect) but that its presence in the composite person need not be like that of a seaman in a ship. Although Plato nowhere employs that exact image, he does speak of the soul as residing in the body as if in a prison and of the body as the sepulchre of the soul (see *Phaedo* 62B3-4, *Gorgias* 493A2-3, and *Cratylus* 400B11-C10).

In ST 1.75.2, which asks "whether the human soul is something subsistent," the first objection argues that any subsistent thing is a "certain something" [*hoc aliquid*] and that, since a certain something is a composite of soul and body, the soul cannot be a certain something. Thomas's reply is that something can be a certain something in two ways: either as a complete subsistent individual of a species (as Socrates is of the species man), or in a more generic sense that does not exclude parts, incomplete as they may be, from subsistence. A hand, he says, is subsistent in this latter way; so also is the human soul. Thomas is treading the middle way he sees in *De an.* ii,1, maintaining that a part of the soul might be subsistent, without failing to be a *genuine* part of the soul that is the form of its body. Sometimes he speaks of the soul using the body as if using an instrument – not an extrinsic instrument, however, as when a seaman steers a ship, but as an intrinsic one. This is to say much the same thing as that the soul is subsistent but as a genuine part: the directing part of the complete person, who is made up of soul and body.

Is it Subsistent?

But what are Thomas's grounds for maintaining that the soul – that is, the rational soul – is subsistent even in this mitigated sense? He maintains this on the grounds that the soul as *such* has its own operation. Even this idea Thomas takes over from Aristotle, who says in the first chapter of the *De anima*, "If there is something among its actions or passions that is proper to the soul, it [i.e., the soul] will be capable of a separate existence" [403a10-11]. Aristotle is here anticipating his discussion of the intellect (active and passive) in *De an.* iii,5. Thomas holds that, when Aristotle speaks in *De an.* iii,5 about separability, he is speaking about the whole intellect: that is, the so-called "active intellect" and "passive intellect".

The arguments that Thomas offers for believing that the rational soul's operation is intelligible in itself – that is, without introducing anything extraneous such as the body or the senses – almost all derive from Aristotle; and they are not, on first reading, terribly convincing. One of them – in fact,

the lead one in the article arguing for the soul's subsistence – is quite inextricably bound up in Aristotle's very crude physiology of perception. Thomas follows Aristotle in maintaining that the intellect becomes all things, which is to say (among other things) that its object is not limited in the way the sense of sight is limited to the visible, hearing to the hearable, and so on. It must be allowed, Thomas says, that the intellectual operation of the soul is both incorporeal and subsistent.

For it is obvious that man, by means of the intellect, can know the natures of all corporeal things. Now whatever is capable of knowing certain things cannot have any of them in its own nature, for that which is present in it naturally would impede the knowledge of other things. And so we observe that the tongue of a sick man that is infected by a choleric and bitter humour is incapable of sensing anything sweet, but everything seems to him bitter. So, if the intellectual principle contained in itself the nature of some body, it would be incapable of knowing all bodies [ST 1.75.2].

So Thomas, following Aristotle (see *De an.* ii,10,422b8-10), thinks that the cause of all things tasting bitter to the sick man is itself bitter. Obviously, this cannot stand and Thomas's position receives no support from that quarter.

But pointing out that Thomas's physiology is antiquated does nothing to impugn the basic insight that there is a difference between the intellect and the senses that has to do somehow with the intellect's being less directly linked to the physical world than are the senses. When a man grows ill (in the relevant way), something physical does affect the way his tongue tastes things. When something physical (such as fatigue) affects the intellect's operation, it does so in a different manner, for the intellect can still know *that* it is being affected in this way, thereby showing that its operation is independent of the physical factors. Or, if it is not completely independent, it certainly has the ability to stand over and even to rise above the physical factors that is absent in the senses. The tongue has no choice but to go on tasting all things as bitter; this will only change once the physical situation has changed.

In ST 1.75.6 Thomas explains that the intellect is not subject to contraries, as are physical things: a stone, for instance, becomes cold if warmth is driven away, warm if cold is driven away. Although contraries enter into the intellect (it "becomes" them), they do not do so as contraries, for a contrary always drives out its counterpart. As Aristotle says often and as Thomas repeats in ST 1.75.6, there is "one science of contraries" – which is simply to say that the intellect stands above such physical processes. It can grasp both cold and hot precisely because it will never have either of them in its nature as contraries. Its operation is intellectual, not physical.

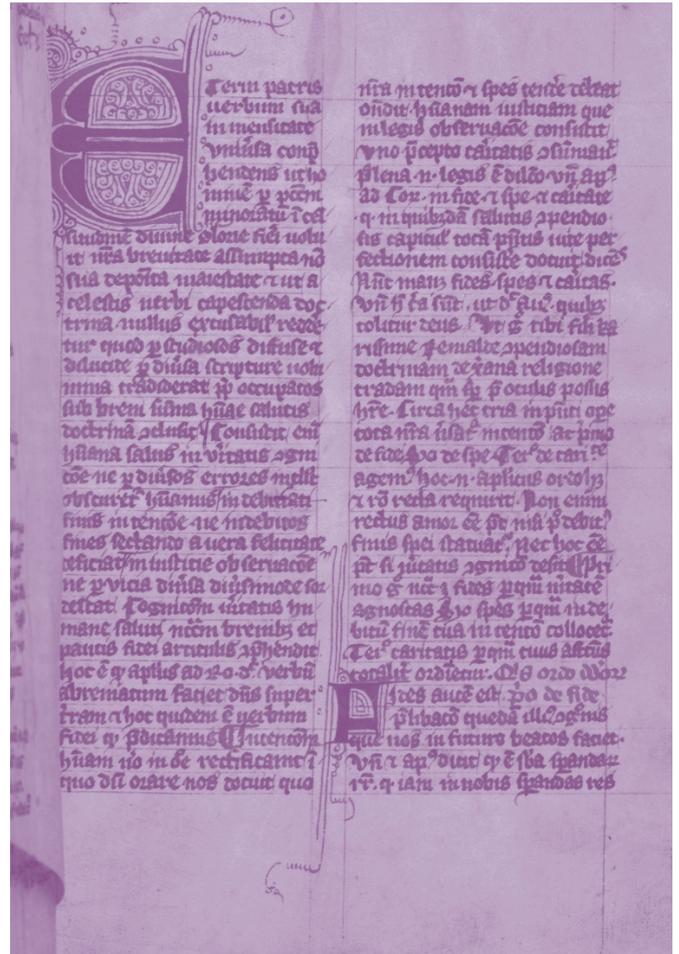
Is it a non-physical principle?

Returning, though, to *ST* 1.75.2, just after discussing the sick man's tongue, Thomas argues that the intellect does not even make use of a physical organ [*ST* 1.75.2]. His argument proceeds analogically. Presupposing that the pupil of the eye when it sees a colour becomes that colour (i.e., becomes coloured), Thomas notes that, if its object is a coloured flagon, the flagon's colour will impede the pupil's picking up certain colours. Water poured into a red flagon, for instance, will appear red. Similarly, if the intellect (which "becomes all things") depended on a physical organ, like the red of the flagon, that organ's physical characteristics would impede the intellect's ability to "understand" certain physical characteristics of things. But this would mean that the intellect was not capable of understanding all the physical characteristics of things; and so, Thomas concludes, the operation of intellect is not tied to a physical organ.

This argument bears with it a familiar problem: because he is following Aristotle (see *De an.* ii,7,418b27-29, iii,2,425b22-25), Thomas's physiology is suspect, for he supposes that, when sensing a colour, the pupil of the eye becomes that colour; and that presupposition vitiates the force of the argument. Perhaps one could argue that, in so far as certain light waves get to the retina and are there processed, etc., in a *sense* the eye does become coloured; but the damage has already been done: the Aristotelian theory sounds a bit too much like the theory of bitter humours infecting the tongue. But even if Thomas's physiology is (from our perspective) wobbly, we can acknowledge that he is again on to something: understanding (for instance) colours is different from sensing colours. There is a sort of distance which would not be there if the operation of the intellect were tied essentially to a physical organ. Changing the physical characteristics of a sense organ might change *what* we perceive, but it seems right to say that changing something physical could not change *how* we see – it could not, that is, change the operation of the intellect itself.

Dependence upon the Physical

Or could it? We know that injuries to the head can affect one's capacity to think and that changes in dopamine levels in the brain can have bizarre mental effects. In *De an.* i,4, Aristotle in fact anticipates such objections, at least in principle. Thomas's interpretation of Aristotle's remarks gives us a good idea how he would answer objections about blows to the head and dopamine levels. In *De an.* i,4, Aristotle argues against those who maintain that the soul can be in movement. These people argue that the soul itself is pained and pleased, perceives and thinks [408b1-3]. Since these are ways of moving or being moved, the soul too must be moved. Aristotle replies that it would be better to say that it is the *man* (i.e., the composite of soul and body) who is pained and pleased,



perceives and thinks, even though there is a certain sense in saying that the soul does these things since the movement originates in the soul [408b7]. He mentions in this connection changes in the body that affect the way we think, such as old age and the consumption of drink. Such things do not affect the soul, he says, but "its vehicle" [408b23], the composite man. He finishes this section by remarking that intellect is "a more divine and impassible thing" [408b29] – that is, than the composite in which it is found. That is his usual prelude to saying that it is capable of separate existence.

Thomas is not entirely comfortable with all the ideas expressed in this section of the *De anima*. An objection in *ST* 1.75.2 maintains that, if, as Aristotle says, the soul does not feel and think, it has no proper operation and so it cannot be subsistent. Thomas's first reaction is to say that Aristotle is not speaking in his own voice but in the voice of those with whom he is in dialogue. But he then relents and acknowledges that sense can be made of the remarks in their own right. He notes once again that there are two ways of being subsistent, only one of which – the properly subsistent – excludes being a part. He readily acknowledges that it is the composite, and not the soul, that is subsistent in the primary sense, so that it is also to the composite that the operation of the intellect is properly

attributed. But still, the soul (the rational soul) *does* have its proper operation since it is the origin of the thinking done by the composite whole.

Thomas does not apply this set of ideas to the problem of old age and drunkenness; and, indeed, in his commentary on that section of Aristotle, he again argues that Aristotle is speaking in the voice of his interlocutors. But it would be consistent with his overall approach to say that any changes to the operation of the intellect effected by old age or drunkenness – or, for that matter, altered dopamine levels – ought to be attributed not to the operation of the rational soul itself but to the operation of the composite man. When Thomas does discuss the type of thought engaged in by the separated soul, he acknowledges that it is different from that of the soul when it was part of the composite man; moreover, it is different *because* it is no longer a part of the composite man (see ST 1.75.6 ad 3; also ST 1.89).

Is it Incorruptible?

This brings us to a final, but central, question: But how do we know that a subsistent thing is not corruptible? Thomas's answer to this question (in ST 1.75.6) sounds occasionally like the position Plato sets out in the *Phaedo*, where the character Socrates argues that the concept of the soul – and, presumably, also its being – is so tied up with life as not to admit of its opposite, death [105C8-E10]. Does the fact that a position is found in Plato necessarily mean that it could not have been held also by Aristotle? Aristotle's statement at *De an.* i,1,403a10-11 that, if a part of the soul has its own operation, it is capable of separate existence, requires an explanation of some sort; something like the position in the *Phaedo* fits the bill.

In any case, Thomas argues that something which is in itself (*per se*) subsistent, if it is to perish, must perish in the same way: in itself. He has already argued (in ST 1.75.2) that a concrete man is subsistent in himself: he is a whole independent thing, not dependent on any other thing, as an accident is dependent on the subsistent thing in which it inheres. When a man dies that whole thing dies; that is to say, that subsistent thing, made up of body and soul, perishes as the soul is separated from the body. But the soul is also subsistent in itself, although in a different way – or ways. For one thing, it is subsistent as a part of the composite man, but it is also subsistent *in so far* as its operation is independent of the body. This gives a man's soul a type of subsistence not enjoyed by a brute animal's soul since the operation of a brute animal's soul is inextricably tied up with its body and so ceases not only to operate but also to be when the composite animal perishes. This cannot happen to the human soul, says Thomas, since it is just form and you cannot take form away from form. For something to perish is for something to be separated from

something, but in this case there is only form – and nothing to take it away from, or to take away from *it*. Being, therefore, is intrinsically bound up with a subsistent form, since there is nothing in the latter – or linked to it – that could possibly cause it to cease to be. This is the bit that sounds like Plato; but, whether it is Platonic or Aristotelian or both or neither, it is Thomas's primary basis for asserting that the human soul is incorruptible.

One point needs to be added, however, before finishing – a point that some may find surprising. Although Thomas does (obviously) hold that the human soul is incorruptible, he does not deny that it could go out of existence. In his answer to the second objection in ST 1.75.6, he acknowledges that God could simply cease to sustain a soul in being. But this would not be for the soul to perish (or to corrupt) since to perish means to go out of existence because of something in the nature of that which perishes. When we say that something is perishable or corruptible, we are speaking about its nature. When a brute animal perishes, it does so because its nature is such that, when its body corrupts, it perishes. We have seen that a subsistent form such as the human soul has nothing in it that would allow such an event. But when God ceases to sustain something in being, the cause of its not being is not in itself but in God. Such an event is not a perishing or a corruption but, as Cardinal Cajetan says in his commentary on ST 1.75.6, an annihilation. And the annihilation of even a subsistent soul is well within the power of God.



THE INCORRUPTIBILITY OF THE SUBSISTENT SOUL ACCORDING TO THOMAS AQUINAS

POSTMODERNITY AND AFRICA: IN THE BALANCE

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POSTMODERNITY: CHANCE OR THREAT FOR NON-WESTERN CULTURES?

Is postmodernity a chance or a threat for non-Western cultures? Does the apparently irreversible and forceful trend deconstructing modernity and some of its abuses (colonialism, rationalism, individualism, deism, naturalism, authoritarianism, the contractual mentality, a flawed approach to "sovereignty" and so on) mean that the hour of once colonised countries has come and that they will be given a real voice and be able to realise their aspiration to determine themselves freely? Is the global crisis of modern government and institutions an opportunity for non-Western cultures to draw from their own traditions to govern themselves? Or is postmodernity another Western cultural imposition in an anti-Western disguise? To what extent is the radicalism which is driving the deconstruction of the Judeo-Christian tradition threatening to deconstruct non-Western cultures as well?

In my previous piece in this magazine (November, 2007) I drew attention to the importance of attentively monitoring the current convergence of Western postmodernity and the rise of non-Western cultures under the influence of globalisation in all its forms. The two processes feed into each other. The "global ethic", initially drawing mainly from Western postmodernity (which is already, in and of itself, highly complex, and far from stable), will become a yet more complex phenomenon. Such complexity may eventually make post-modernity self-evidently incoherent. It may be that people will then be compelled to go back to reality, truth and common sense. Such a trend could be a positive opportunity for both Western and non-Western cultures alike.

ARE POSTMODERN PARADIGMS LIKELY TO SEDUCE NON-WESTERN CULTURES?

Words, concepts, values or practices such as consensus-building, governance, diversity, sustainability, peer learning, gender equality, win-win or solidarity belong both to "Western postmodernity" and, to some extent, as we shall discuss below, to African traditions and contemporary African aspirations. Both are "anti-Western" in different ways: postmodernity, as we have seen in my above mentioned article, reacts against modernity, which has been the hallmark of the West for centuries. And non-Western cultures have resented modern paradigms, which they have experienced as an imposition from outside deconstructing their cultures and traditions. Yet people living in the non-Western world do want growth, progress, social order, security, which were supposed to result from the putative establishment of modern democracy.

Aware of the cultural decline of the West and of the weakening of Western civilisation, non-Western cultures are sitting on the

fence: seduced by modernity, wanting to participate in the process of globalisation, they also want to remain faithful to their identity. Against this backdrop, postmodernity comes in, surfing on globalisation, originating from the West but appearing anti-Western, deconstructing modern tenets on the one hand whilst seeming to offer non-Western cultures opportunities on the other. Postmodern paradigms are arriving in the non-Western world at a time when they seem to correspond to what people aspire to. The convergence of these factors creates a situation of confusion and incoherence which will sooner or later become explicit. Do Africans want to build representative democracy and legitimate government institutions? Why then does the West now pressure them to partner with Western NGOs and impose "governance" as a new condition for development aid?

Let us give a few examples of the ambivalence of the current situation in Africa:

Regional integration and the construction of the African Union (which imply the deconstruction of the modern paradigm of national sovereignty): they appeal to Africans who have suffered from the colonisers' imposition of borders they often consider artificial and they seem to respond to their desire to recover their African character and unity. But it threatens their own culture insofar as regional integration is largely instrumentalised as a step towards global governance with a postmodern (and therefore neo-Western) global ethic.

Partnerships (which imply the deconstruction of hierarchies and authority): Africans desire a relationship of fraternity with their Western development counterparts and they hope for genuine manifestations of Western solidarity. The reality is, however, that Western "partners" are not disinterested and often have ideological agendas: Western partners are not the brothers that Africans hope to find in them. Partnerships threaten to tie Africans with postmodern strings to a decadent Western civilisation.

Governance (which, as explained in my previous piece, implies the deconstruction of modern-style government, of the social contract and of the value of representation): Africans want to be treated as equals; they are not sure that "democracy" is the way to go: democracy tends to break their traditions and so far hasn't delivered order and socioeconomic progress. The idea of "reinventing government" appeals to Africans. But "governance" is in practice itself governed by Western NGOs even if it more directly co-opts Africans at the grassroots. And the post-modern idea that "the world is flat", that there is no hierarchy, no authority, no given order, no truth, is leading Western civilisation to self-destruction.

Consensus and consensus-building (which imply the deconstruction of the winner-looser or majority-minority binary opposition, but also of search for the truth): it appeals to Africans who have a deeply rooted traditional sense of community and of participation and who have been taking decisions by consensus for centuries. But in practice “consensus-building” has proven to be a new, Western way of imposing a deconstruction agenda on all.

Freedom to choose (which implies the deconstruction of “norms”, whatever they be): naturally Africans want to determine themselves freely. But in postmodern radicalism, the freedom to choose has become a right used against nature, the anthropological structure of man and woman, further deconstructing conscience and the notion of good and evil.

Gender equity or equality: generally speaking there is a desire in Africa that the equal dignity of man and woman given to them by the creator be more fully honoured on that continent. But the gender ideology deconstructs motherhood and the anthropological complementarity between man and woman, turning the woman into a mere “citizen” with rights she must learn to claim.

Postmodernity (which implies a deconstruction of modernity): it appeals to Africans who have suffered from Western interests, rationalism, intellectual abstraction, selfish individualism and colonialism and wish for authentic “solidarity”, a postmodern value. But postmodernity hides a post-Judeo-Christian agenda and a culture of irrationality.

Africans should be aware of these new dangers and of the need to distinguish their aspirations and postmodern paradigms.

TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE HOUR OF NON-WESTERN CULTURES COME?

The void created by postmodern deconstruction in the West calls humanity to a new start. So far western civilisation, on its own, seems to have proved incapable of finding a way out of its crisis, which is in the process of being globalised. Below we list some of the West’s needs and why we think non-Western cultures might well provide for them:

There is a need for a certain return:

– *to a sound anthropology:* Postmodernity reacts against modern paradigms such as power and against the primacy long given to reason over the conscience and the heart, which has led to rationalism, a Western abuse. Rationalism and its lopsided anthropology have left a deep imprint on Western cultures, sterilising them, marring them with abstraction and constructivism, even affecting negatively the notion of “universality” and what we used to call “values” and “universal values” (isn’t the concept of “values” itself a construct?). While postmodernity reacts against “philosophy” and intellectualism, exalting the “freedom to choose”, it does not search for the truth and in fact thrives on the mere “possession” of “knowledge” and on individual “empowerment”, thereby retaining perverted

elements of Western cultures that many in Africa have rightfully resented. In Western cultures, human reason has largely stopped being at the service of love. African cultures have not radically divorced reason from conscience (the search for what is real, good and true), or from the heart (love). African rationality, “wisdom” and “intelligence of the heart” open a path towards a rediscovery of a sound anthropological approach to reason as connected to conscience and the heart, and away from both modern rationalism as well as postmodern irrationality.

– *to reality and common sense:* Postmodernity claims human reason is unable to access reality as it is. By contradistinction, most African traditions have a deeply rooted sense of reality, of what is concrete, and their aspirations, we would argue, are healthy and born of common sense. As postmodernity on the one hand, and technological developments on the other, threaten to enslave humanity to a world of dream and virtuality, people more than ever feel a longing for what is real. They are disposed to welcome African common sense as a gift that they themselves want to receive.

– *to the sacred and to the sacredness of life:* In the West, rationalism, deism and naturalism have led to a humanism without God and to a form of atheism which does not exist in non-Western cultures. “Empowered”, autonomous and self-sufficient individuals have lost their sense of the sacred. In indigenous African cultures, nature is seen as coming directly from God. It is called “creation”. Rediscovering a sense of the sacred is critical for the West.

– *to gratuitousness and to the disinterested character of love:* The contractual mentality and its multifarious products, such as the notion of “interest”, have deeply perverted Western cultures, which now find it hard to rediscover the selfless, gratuitous nature of love. Cultures which more readily speak about “alliances” than about “contracts”, such as African cultures, have a greater sense of the gratuitous nature of love in human relationships. They have a chance to share this gift with the rest of humanity thirsting for a re-introduction of love in culture.

– *to brotherhood, fatherhood and motherhood:* In Western cultures, individualism and “Republican” values have reduced the individual person to a “citizen” with “rights”, seeking his or her own “empowerment”, a citizen who is not first and foremost a member of a family. In African societies, the neighbor is treated primarily as a brother, as a father, as a mother. The family is recognised as the basic cell of society. In some parts of Africa, each woman, even unknown, even unmarried, is called “mother” and each man “father”. Will the West come back to these fundamental anthropological dimensions, or will Africans turn into western-style “global citizens”?

This piece is a development upon a report issued last October by the IIDD.



On The Soul: Aquinas *Contra* Modern English Christians

Fr Francis Selman

Fr Francis Selman brings out some salient features of a Thomistic and a rational view of the spiritual soul, in contradistinction to the views of some modern Thomists and others. Fr Selman is director of Philosophy at Allen Hall Seminary, London. His book The Soul – An Inquiry, was published by St. Paul’s Publishing in 2004.

“When authors leave out the soul in order to avoid what they see as an arbitrary dualism, they often run into difficulties as great as those they seek to overcome”.

In his editorial ‘Pro-Life Strategy and Arguments for the Soul’ (*Faith*, March – April 2007), the editor of this magazine noted that documents of the Church usually rest her rejection of abortion on the argument that it ‘undermines the inalienable dignity of every human being’ without saying where we get this dignity from. He thinks that these documents do not pay sufficient attention to ‘the denial of the spiritual soul in each person’ as a cause of the climate of thought which permits abortion, and adds that

‘many pro-life advocates unwittingly allow this flawed anthropology (of our contemporaries) to prosper because they do not offer any proof or argument for the existence of the spiritual soul, which is the only rational ground for uniquely human personhood’.

This article is a response to the editor’s call for a reconsideration of the soul. In it I want to do three things: firstly, to overview Roman Catholic positions on the spiritual soul, secondly to mention some of the reasons for the present virtual silence about the soul and, thirdly, to provide the beginning of a positive argument for the human soul.

The Catholic Position

As the editor, I think correctly, believes that the soul is the key to explaining why we are persons, I first ask: What is a person? The late Elizabeth Anscombe pointed out that a person is not a kind of thing but an individual of a particular kind, namely of rational or intelligent nature. ‘For a person is a substantial individual of a particular species’. ‘A human being is a person because the kind to which he belongs is characterised by rational nature’.¹ Fr Dylan James supports this when he asks, in the same issue of *Faith*, why beings with rational nature deserve respect.² His answer is: because of the image of God in human beings. The editor too points to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which says that we are in the image of God especially because of the soul and that the body shares in this image.³ It is at least likely that we are in the image of God, which no other creature is said to be, because that which makes us human comes directly from God in the creation of each individual soul, singly as each human person is conceived. It is this which explains the uniqueness of every person, that our individual human nature is not simply transmitted by the parents but God has an especial role in the generation of every human being. This will also explain the transcendence of human beings. But as a person is an individual of rational nature, what makes us rational?

As reason sets human beings apart from all other animals, it seems that our rational nature cannot be explained by evolution alone, for we do not find stages of lesser reflective self-consciousness before the human species but evolution requires only gradual changes at a time. Evolution may account for our physiology but, as Aristotle discerned, the mind, because it is immaterial, is not passed on by generation but ‘comes in from outside’, as he put it.⁴ Of course, it follows that if the soul ‘comes in from outside’, because it is created and infused by God, it is something substantial and certainly a reality, because it must be something that comes to the body which has been conceived.

To say that the soul is something substantial seems to imply that a human being consists of two substances: a body and a soul. It is understandable that writers want to avoid dualism, as I do myself, but I do not think that it is necessary to discard the soul as well in order to do this. I would first point out that the body is not a living substance at all without its soul. The Church clearly still wishes to retain talk of the spiritual soul as was evident at the Second Vatican Council and has been confirmed more recently by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 'The human person, though made of body and soul, is a unity'.⁵ The best explanation of the unity of the body and soul has been Aristotle's, adopted by St Thomas Aquinas, that the soul is the form of the body. Aquinas, however, developed Aristotle's idea by saying that it is a special kind of form – a subsistent form. Such would be necessary for the soul to exist on its own when separated from the body at death. The human soul is a special kind of form because human beings have a special position in the universe. St Thomas argues that they alone are on the border (*in confinio*) between the material and immaterial, as their knowledge begins with sense-perception but they can also think of things in a general way.⁶ If the mind were material, it would only know things individually as the senses do but would not know them as belonging to kinds of thing. As the mind is immaterial, it follows that it cannot be the power of the body, or therefore passed on by physical generation alone, but must be the power of something else – the soul, which is created by God. As Peter Geach has pointed out, the rational does not arise from the irrational (matter).⁷

Omitting the Soul

When authors leave out the soul in order to avoid what they see as an arbitrary dualism, they often run into difficulties as great as those they seek to overcome. The editor mentions the late Fr. Herbert McCabe O.P., who left all reference to the soul out of his catechism, *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*. Fr. McCabe had already said in an earlier talk on 'The Immortality of the Soul' that 'the subsistence of the soul has no more content' for Aquinas than that 'a man has an operation by his soul which is not an operation of the body'.⁸ He assured his listeners that Aquinas did not think the soul is immortal because it is immaterial. But he could not tell them why Aquinas thought the soul is immortal, as Aquinas undoubtedly did, and his paper ran out with a discussion of understanding, not the soul.

Fr. McCabe may have been influenced by Anthony Kenny who calls the mind 'a capacity for capacities' (the capacity to learn language, do mathematics etc.). But as he leaves out the soul, he is unable to explain what the mind is a capacity of, because at the same time he admits that 'in the present life there are intellectual and volitional activities which do not involve any bodily activity, such as silent thought'.⁹ As the mind is not a

power of the soul in Kenny, he finishes up in the very dualism he sets out to avoid, for the mind is as isolated in Kenny as it is in Descartes.

In likewise dispelling the dualism of Descartes, Fr. Fergus Kerr O.P. speaks of 'the ancient religious myth of the soul'.¹⁰ It is not clear whether he thinks the soul is just a myth, but one would hardly think that Aristotle was writing about a mythical concept of the soul in his *De Anima*, since he argues for the soul quite scientifically: what distinguishes all living from all non-living things in the world we see must be some primary principle of life which he says is the soul. In the same way, we can then go on to say that what distinguishes human beings, who have self-reflection, understanding and general concepts, from all other animals must be a different kind of soul: an immaterial soul which is not tied to the senses and bodily organs for the exercise of all its powers, like the souls of other animals. This immaterial soul, then, does not arise from the body, as it has a higher power, but comes from above, from God. This also explains our transcendence.

McCabe and other Dominicans present the soul-body dynamic in a way which resonates with a remark of Wittgenstein's: 'The human body is the best picture of the soul'.¹¹ This may signify: If you want to know what we mean by the soul, just look at the human body. If, however, you take it in conjunction with another argument which Wittgenstein uses from Socrates earlier in the *Investigations*, this saying supports a quite different view of the soul. Socrates argued that just as, if someone is thinking he must think something and if he thinks something, it must be something real, so someone who paints must paint something and someone who paints something must paint something real.¹² So, if the body is a picture of the soul, it is a picture of something real and the soul is not just a way of talking about beings with typically human behaviour but is itself something real. This is true even if, in Wittgensteinian terms, one might say that the soul, in its own nature, is not something picturable. Unless the soul is something real for Aquinas, it is hard to see why he called it substantial and devoted a whole question in the *Summa* to how the soul is united to the body (ST 1a q.76).

Peter van Inwagen, who has become a Christian, is also motivated by the overriding desire to avoid dualism but only considers two alternative views of human beings: physicalism and dualism. Although he initially rejects physicalism because he thinks that a human person is not just an organism and mental changes are not simply physical changes, he concludes 'physicalism is the most reasonable theory about the nature of human beings'.¹³ He makes no attempt to discuss the soul: he could have avoided his inconsistency if he had considered the view that the soul is the form of the body.

Let us move on now to two Anglican authors. Keith Ward thinks that the most important thing about the human soul is 'its capacity for transcendence'.¹⁴ Nonetheless he thinks that the rational soul began to be when the brain reached a certain "degree in complexity" (through evolution). He states that the soul "is distinguished not by being quite different in kind from its material environment, but by reflecting and acting in that environment in a more conscious, goal-oriented way". He is surely inconsistent in holding that human beings possess a quite distinct capacity from animals but the human soul has, in effect, evolved, for evolution can only account for gradual and physical changes. How could we transcend physical nature, as Ward rightly thinks we do, if we have merely been generated by it? Ward then runs into difficulty, because he believes in an after-life, but as the soul is 'truly material' for him, he is left without a subject of our conscious states in the next life. This difficulty could be overcome by recognising that the human soul is not generated from the body (of the parents) but is immaterial and so can also be immortal. The logic of Ward's position was spelled out by Aquinas: if the soul is not directly created then it depends on matter, and if it depends on matter, it cannot be immortal.¹⁵ For Aquinas the immortality of the soul goes with its immediate creation. We have already mentioned the Thomistic argument that the immediate creation by God of the human soul follows from the fact that it does not arise from matter, which is shown by the fact that the mind which can think of things generally is not a power of matter.

We find the same difficulties with the next life when we turn to the Rev. Prof. John Polkinghorne, who holds that the Christian hope is death and resurrection, not an intrinsic immortality. In Polkinghorne's view, 'We are a complex information-carrying pattern which persists through all the changes of material constituents and which by its very persistence expresses the true continuity of my person, that pattern is the meaning of the soul'.¹⁶ Although he thinks that his view is like Aquinas' of the soul as the form of the body, Aquinas did not think that this pattern is dissolved with the death of the body as Polkinghorne does. To call the soul 'a complex information-carrying pattern' seems to be closer to the harmony theory of the soul described by Plato in the *Phaedo*. As Polkinghorne requires the continuity of something through all the changes of our material constituents in this life, so he should require the continuity of something between this life and the next if the same person is to survive.

It seems to me that the immortality of the soul requires the resurrection of the body and, conversely, the resurrection of the body also requires the immortality of the soul. If only the soul survives, then I do not survive, for a human person is someone who is a unity of body and soul, as we noted in the quotation from *Gaudium et spes* 14 above. But, as the same thing only has one beginning of existence, the same person is not raised

up, rather a new one is, unless something of me carries my existence in between death and the general resurrection which, as Martha said, happens on the Last Day (Jn 11:24). The soul can carry my existence, because it is anyway the soul which gives existence to my body as a living thing. There is no identity of person raised up unless there is continuity of existence of something: as the body dies, this must be of the soul.

There are two ways of overcoming the difficulty which those who do not believe the soul is immortal have in explaining the gap between death and the resurrection of the dead in the traditional Christian belief. One is to say that there is no gap but we are raised up immediately. This seems to leave no room for Purgatory, which is generally believed to have some duration. The other is to say that we, or our memories, are kept by God. This second way out is taken by Fr. Simon Tugwell O.P. who, like Polkinghorne, thinks that the Christian hope, as expressed in the New Testament, is of resurrection rather than immortality. In Fr. Tugwell's view, the resurrection of the body does not require the immortality of the soul: all that matters is that the dead are in some way alive to God, he says, appealing to Luke 20: 38: God 'is not God of the dead but of the living, for all are living to him'. Even for God, something or someone is only living if it is a subject of activity in some way, but memories cannot act by themselves. Tugwell says that we have no need to appeal to some 'Deep Fact', by which he presumably means a subsistent soul. His view of the soul as 'the contents of someone's mental life'¹⁷ seems close to that of the philosopher David Hume.

Similar difficulties with immortality recur in the theory of the Catholic philosopher David Braine that human beings are psycho-physical beings. Braine rightly says that we need to consider the whole human being. On the one hand he combats dualism by presenting a view of human beings 'shorn of its dependence of speaking of the soul', because he thinks that the soul brings in dualism.¹⁸ On the other hand, he maintains against materialists that we are also spirit. What makes us spirit is that we have language. Language shows that we have a transcendent existence, because the understanding of words is not a state of a material system. But Braine has not gone back far enough, because our words express concepts of the mind. The reason why we have language, when other animals do not (certainly not with grammar), is that we have reason and thought. Braine does not, however, explain these.

Without the soul, Braine has difficulty in explaining how we continue to exist in some way after death; but unless we do survive we cannot properly be said to have a 'transcendent' existence. Our existence is transcendent precisely because we are not completely limited to the body and so can exist beyond it. At best Braine shows *that* human beings have an existence that transcends the body because they have language, but he

does not show how or why only human beings and not other higher animals possess transcendence when they are all alike psycho-physical beings, because animals are not to be explained mechanistically either. Without the soul surviving, Braine has to say that we are 'deprived persons', but a deprived person is still something and it is hard to know what when the body no longer exists unless it is the soul.

A Positive Account

As the editor says that 'we need to return to the essential outlines of the Thomistic tradition', in the light of modern science, I shall limit myself here to a brief outline of the stages of St. Thomas's theory of the soul.¹⁹ First, he says that the soul is the form of the body. Secondly, he says that the human soul is a special kind of form: a subsistent form. Victor Brezick has illumined this point for us by remarking that forms either depend on matter and are not subsistent or they are independent of matter and are subsistent. Forms that depend on matter do not have an operation of their own but the human soul is subsistent because it has an activity of its own.²⁰ I have shown above that the human soul does not depend on matter because the mind is immaterial, as it can think of things generally. The mind is therefore a power of the soul, not of the body. The third stage is that, as the human soul has an independent activity, it can exist independently of the body. It is therefore immortal.

I would like to add that the human soul transcends the body because it is raised above the body, as shown by the fact that we can reflect on our actions. We can also reflect on our bodies, as though from above. Even William James, who thought that our thoughts are explained by brain processes, said that no

material thing can grasp itself, as the mind does when it thinks of itself.²¹ As no material thing can reflect on itself, the ability to reflect on ourselves, which sets us apart from all other animals, must be a power of something immaterial – the immaterial soul, of which the mind is a power. The soul also has other powers, of sensation etc., which are powers of something joint, as Aquinas says. This flows from the unity of body and soul in a human being.

I have tried to be as brief as possible. I would concur with some words of this magazine's editor: 'We urgently need a reasoned and reasonable defence of the inalienable value of the human person based on sound, contemporary arguments for the spiritual soul'. Benedict XVI commented in his inaugural sermon as Pope in 2005, we are not just casual products of evolution. We can only show this if we can show that we have a quite different kind of consciousness (understanding and self-reflection), which cannot be explained materially and, therefore, requires the immaterial soul, created by God, to explain this power. There is further work to be done in this area.

Another reason why it is important to demonstrate that we have souls is that the Council of Chalcedon explicitly said that 'the same (Jesus Christ) is perfect in his humanity, truly God and truly man, the same of a rational soul and body, consubstantial with the Father in his deity and consubstantial with us in his humanity, 'like us in all things but sin''.²² If Christ has a human soul *par excellence*, as the Catholic faith requires us to believe, so do we. Apart from Christ, who is an eternally existing divine person who took human nature, a human being is a human person and what makes someone such a human being is the human soul.

NOTES

¹ *Human Life, Action and Ethics. Essays by G.E.M. Anscombe* (edd. M. Geach and L. Gormally). Charlottesville, Imprint Academic 2005, pp.267f.

² *Faith*. March – April 2007, p.9.

³ CCC 363-364

⁴ *De Generatione Animalium* II c.3, 736 b 28.

⁵ *Gaudium et spes*, 14. Cf. CCC 365

⁶ Aquinas, *Quaestiones de Anima*, 1.

⁷ *Truth and Hope* (Indiana, Notre Dame 2001), c.2.

⁸ Aquinas. *A collection of Critical Essays* (ed. A. Kenny). London, Macmillan 1969, p.302

⁹ *The Metaphysics of Mind* (Oxford 1989), p.31.

¹⁰ *Theology after Wittgenstein* (Oxford, Blackwell 1986), pp. 43,93.

¹¹ *Philosophical Investigations* II iv, p.178.

¹² *Ibid.* I 518.

¹³ *Metaphysics* (Colorado, Westview 2000), p.201.

¹⁴ *In Defence of the Soul* (Oxford, One World 1992), p.142.

¹⁵ *Summa theologiae* 1a 118,2.

¹⁶ *Science and Creation* (London, SPCK 1988), p.72.

¹⁷ *Human Immortality* (London, DLT 1990), p.160

¹⁸ *The Human Person* (London Duckworth 1993), pp. 9, 541.

¹⁹ For a short, ordered account of Aquinas on the soul, see F. Selman, *Aspects of Aquinas* (Dublin Veritas 2005), c. 6.

²⁰ *Thomistic Papers* vol. I (ed. V.B. Brezick). Houston, Texas 1984, p.90.

²¹ *Principles of Psychology* I p.343.

²² Neuner – Dupuis, *The Christian Faith* 614 (=DS 301).

THE SECULARISATION OF A CATHOLIC INSTITUTION: A CONTEMPORARY PARABLE

Extracts from the January Press Release from the Restitua Group "Campaigning to restore the Hospital of St John & St Elizabeth to Catholicity". Secretary - Nicolas Bellord

January 14th 2008 was certainly a black & shameful day for the Hospital of St John & St Elizabeth with the St John's Wood Medical Practice aggressively moving in to provide referrals for abortion and the full range of family planning services...

RECENT EVENTS

For the November 7th 2007 Board Meeting Lord Bridgeman, the architect of these developments, put forward three proposals:

1. Secularisation of the Hospital's constitution by removal of the "ethics clause" from the Hospital constitution.
or
2. Sale of the Hospital of which a "Management Buyout" was a possible option or
3. Approve the revised Code of Ethics and face economic dissolution.

In the event the Board voted in favour of accepting the revised Code of Ethics – 5 in favour, 3 against with 2 abstentions. ...the revised Code of Ethics was adopted but not "just yet" and there was no mention of the entry of the St John's Wood Medical Practice (SJWMP).

In the Press this was hailed as "Catholic hospital orders ban on abortion referrals" (Daily Telegraph), (etc. etc) ... and finally in the Catholic Herald a leader appeared entitled "A Catholic hospital is saved" which went on to say "But the fact remains that, at last, an important Catholic institution in this country has managed to resist the pressure of secularisation – thanks, in part, to the leadership of the Cardinal".

...We were told that members of the Order of Malta who had opposed the secularisation of the hospital regarded this as a satisfactory outcome and had plans for the future of the Hospital now that a majority appeared to be in favour of Catholicity.

But all this was a cruel deception.

BEYOND THE SMOKES AND MIRRORS

On December 12th the Board met again and decided to go ahead with the admission of the SJWMP and to sign the sub-lease so that they were able to start in the Hospital on January 14th 2008. This decision was kept secret...

...We were later to discover that the SJWMP registered the agreement for the sub-lease (signed a year previously) with the Land Registry on that same 12th December...

We immediately (Monday 31st December 2007) contacted the Charity Commission ... and on 3rd January 2008 they told us that they were opening an inquiry under section 8 of the Charities Act 1993 ... into both the SS John and Elizabeth Charity and the Brampton Trust...

Quite what the Charity Commission will do we do not know and we can only speculate. Our understanding is that previously they had told both the Brampton Trustees and the Hospital that the proposed sub-lease to the SJWMP with the clause exempting them from the Code of Ethics was a breach of trust and that they must either renegotiate the lease or apply to the Charity Commission for an order removing the Ethics clause from the Hospital Constitution and allowing the Brampton Trustees to use their money for non-Catholic purposes. We know that attempts to renegotiate the lease were unsuccessful as the SJWMP were determined to be able to breach the Code of Ethics as they were under contract with their Primary Care Trust to do so. We further assume that no application has been made to the Charity Commission to vary the constitutions of the two Charities in this way and therefore in signing the sub-lease both Charities were deliberately flouting what the Charity Commission had told them to do – hence the very serious step of announcing an inquiry.

We are astonished at all this; we are particularly astonished at Charles Fitzherbert, a Brampton Trustee, stepping up to be Chairman of the Hospital and allowing these very serious breaches of Trust...

AN APPALLING SITUATION.

Just how has this appalling situation arisen? We now have a situation where a Catholic hospital will be seen as condoning referrals for abortion and approving the full range of family planning services including abortifacients such as the morning-after pill. If Government proposals have their way we may yet see abortions being carried out on the premises. The Catholic Church will be seen as saying one thing and doing another in not only allowing this but also allowing Catholic money to be used to finance it. A charge of hypocrisy may well arise but more damaging is the scandal created in suggesting that the teachings of the Church can be quietly ignored when it comes to the crunch.

It is more than four years since the Linacre Centre followed by others and ourselves raised the unacceptability of having such a practice within the precincts of the Hospital. Why did those who had the power and the responsibility to stop this do nothing either in time or effectively despite being pleaded with over and over again to act as prescribed by the law? Once again unlawful behaviour has not been reported in a

timely manner to the civil authorities – in this case the Charity Commission – who could have taken action to stop it...

To take just one example: the Board took an unlawful decision to admit the SJWMP on 12th December 2007. Why did not somebody make this public? There is no confidence in iniquity. If we had been able to tell the Charity Commission on 13th December 2007 about this decision they might well have been able to stop the signing of the sub-lease.

Where have the Order of Malta been on all this as protectors of the Hospital since its foundation? They always said, "We will follow the Cardinal's instructions"...

Lastly a united front against these developments would have been helpful.

The press release goes on to make constructive suggestions concerning maintaining and developing the Catholicity of the hospital proper.



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The Goodness of the Human Body

Jeffrey Kirby

Fr Jeffrey Kirby presents classical Christian wisdom concerning the human body and exposes some enduring gnostic attitudes towards the body's dignity and identity. He throws some very helpful light upon Christian asceticism. Fr Kirby is a young assistant priest in the Diocese of Charleston, South Carolina.

"The humane and Christian view ... sees the human person as including a spirit which needs a body as a complement and mediator to fulfil his destiny as a traveller to God, the Ultimate Good, through the goodness of the material cosmos."

The Human Person as a Source of Unity

In his first celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, Pope Benedict XVI preached on the culture of life. Officiating at the baptism of ten children, the Pope exposed the lies of the culture of death, which makes the human being a "thing". It does not recognise him as "person", but only as "merchandise".¹ The culture of death denies the fundamental dignity of the human person.

Rather than mere merchandise, the human person stands as a wonderful existent. He is the most admirable being in contingent reality, because in him are joined the depths of matter and the transcendence of spirit. Interestingly, he is not at the summit of the created order, but he holds the mysterious centre-place in the hierarchy of being. Through him, the various levels of existence can be found in personal unity, when they would otherwise exist only separately. The unity of things so distinct in nature arouses a profound sense of awe in the human person. How does the human person benefit from such an existence?

As a source of unity for contingent reality, the human person is not estranged from the world, but has an innate openness to each part of it, as a portion of his own existence. He not only possesses in his own nature the organic and intelligible realities, but also shares in the particular perfections of each of these different dimensions of being. The human person, as an embodied spirit, exists as a type of bridge, a source of authentic unity, between spiritual and material ways of existence. This unique position provides the human person the opportunity to express the two great dimensions of reality, matter and spirit, as complementary elements which enrich each other and form a single whole.

The human person is not a stranger to the realms of being around and within him. As a being consisting of matter and spirit, he has the sole privilege of consciously existing both here and now. Living in time and space through his body, he can surpass these realities through the functions of his spiritual soul. The angelic persons must marvel at the peculiarity of the human person, of a spirit wedded to a body. Christian angelology provides an example of this marvel-turned-rebellion. Gregory of Nyssa wrote that Lucifer, who was the guardian angel of earth, revolted because he saw that the human person, who was a part of the physical world, would one day surpass him in greatness.² What effect does this union of matter and spirit have on the human person himself?

The Gnostic Attack on the Dignity of the Body

For the human person, the union of his body and soul has been a source of bewilderment and sanctification since the Fall, which introduced a clashing discord into the harmony of the human person. The Fall introduced the paradox of a being with both a body subject to death and an immortal, spiritual soul. Before the Fall, there existed no such paradox. The human person's body and soul were harmoniously united and his body would have naturally shared in the immortality of his soul. How has the human person attempted to resolve the tension, caused by the Fall, within himself and the world around him?

The human being, and various cultures of death created by him, have unrealistically sought to solve this paradox through an attack on the dignity of the body. Rather than discovering the goodness of the body and thus seeing it as a part of his redemption, Man has attempted to disgrace this essential dimension of his own existence, thereby epitomising the effects of the Fall. This indignity, which has been termed gnosticism, has expressed itself in human history in two major campaigns against the human body.

The Gnostic Attempt to Escape through Spiritualism

The first expression of gnosticism hid in the spiritual nature of the human person and focused on meditation and sacrifice. It sought to elevate the human person to the exclusion of his body, renouncing it and denying its value through neglect and abnegation. This was the view of Epicurus and his Roman disciple Lucretius. They overly emphasised the spiritual and refused the co-existing material reality of the person. In the century before Christ Lucretius wrote: "Of course, to think that mortal and immortal could live, sense, act, in mutual partnership is nonsense".³

This approach expresses a desire for escapist deliverance or extinction. It can be observed in eastern mysticism. Buddha taught a man who was suffering: "If you make for yourself an island of the True Self ... though the body may be sick, the True Self is never sick, and you may take refuge in that, an island amid the storms of life's suffering".⁴ This wayward view has become the rallying assertion of the New Age movement with its implicit refusal of the body's dignity, and its unguided emphasis on the human spirit.

The Gnostic Attempt to Escape through Materialism

The second expression of gnosticism rejected the existence of the soul and wallowed in the base materiality of the human body, centring solely on empty self-pleasure and raw power. It denied the body's value through hedonism, seeking only self-centred, fleshy enjoyment and advancement. Bodily dignity and purpose were seen as essential to the person.

This was the view of the proto-capitalists. Adam Smith wrote: "But man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only." He continued, "He will more likely prevail if he can interest their self-love in his favour, and show them that it is for their own advantage to do for him what he requires of him".⁵ One can see this approach to the human body in the Greco-Roman religious custom of the Bacchanalia, and in modern materialism. Karl Marx, the father of materialistic communism, satirically asked: "Does it require deep intuition to comprehend that man's ideas, views, and conceptions – in one word, man's consciousness – changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations, and in his social life?"⁶

This disbelief in the value of the human body was epitomised by Thomas Hobbes, who wrote: "Man is in the condition of mere

nature, which is a condition of war, as private appetite is the measure of good and evil".⁷ Following this view, the sexual revolution, as well as the demands of Wall Street, dangerously dismissed the body's significance and continually over-emphasised self-centred pleasure and unrestrained power.

Current Approaches to the Body

Contemporary thinking continues this denial of the body, and refuses to give it any substantial place in a meaningful human personhood. Wrongly, current thinkers see the human body as just an instrument or a mere tool for some function. The humane and Christian view, however, sees the human person as including a spirit which needs a body as a complement and mediator to fulfil his destiny as a traveller to God, the Ultimate Good, through the goodness of the material cosmos.⁸ It must be realised, therefore, that the question of the human body does not deal only with biology and chemistry, politics and economics, but also with meaning and value.

The Christian Belief and Response

Understanding the gnostic violence to the human body, what can be made of the numerous ascetics of the Christian Church? Is their approach to the body consistent with those of the gnostic belief? Or are their practices in unison with the Christian and integrally humane belief concerning the body's dignity? Is there anything to learn about the body from the Christian saints and their practices?

Of those Christian ascetics, what can be said of the desert fathers, such as Abba Daniel who fought not to sleep in order to keep vigil through the night in prayer, or Abba Macarius and his resolution of silence and strict solitude, or Abba Benjamin's radical fasting?⁹ What explanation is possible of Benedict's *horarium*, Francis of Assisi's poverty, or Ignatius of Loyola's indifference? Does John of the Cross summarise the authentic Christian view when he wrote that the human person is to deprive himself of the "gratification of the appetite in all things," giving up all the desires for the delight of hearing, smelling, seeing, tasting, touching, with the result of finding oneself in a "darkness and void"?¹⁰

The appropriate explanation of Christian asceticism begins with the dignity of the complete human person, not only his soul but also his body. This dignity calls the person to excellence, to actualise the image of Divinity within him. Due to the Fall, the person is marked by an attraction to lesser and disordered goods. This attraction and the surrender to it makes the person a slave to self-gratification, to gnostic self-hatred, whims and fancies, as well as social trends and opinions. The person is lost within this pool, unless he labours to find something beyond them. By himself, he cannot do this work. He must look to the One who has come and provided the way and example out of this self-enclosed and promoting trap. The work of redemption does not remove the distractions of lesser goods, but does give the grace to restore them to their proper place and purpose.

The Human Person as an Ascetic and Aesthetic Being

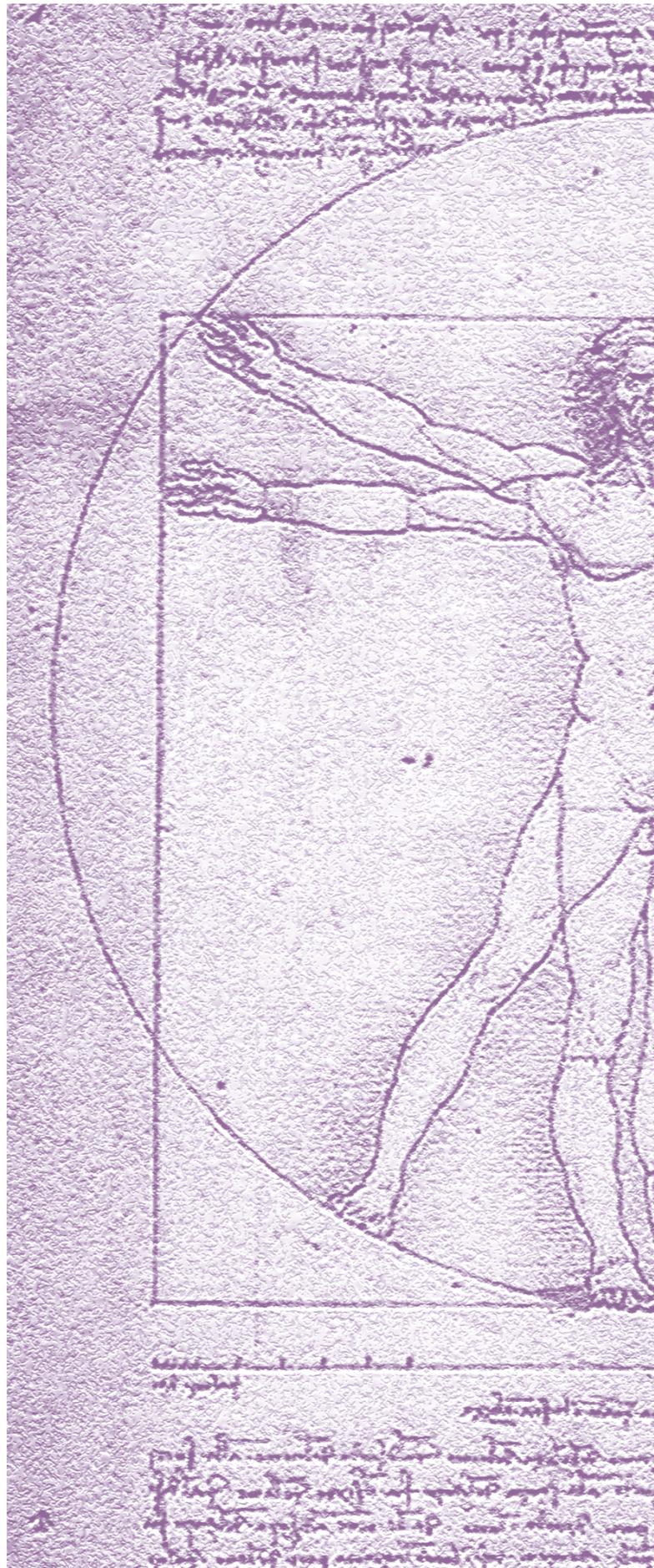
In this effort for redemption, the person's dignity, extended to both body and soul, gives him the singular power among the contingent world to be an ascetic being, with the ability to say no, to protest, or to break away.¹¹ He is not a creature of uncontrollable instinct. Additionally, while the human person shares many areas of life with the living sub-personal creation of the plants and animals, he is called to personalise his acts, to seek the "sublimation of the common-place".¹² For example, the human person eats for nourishment like the animals, but he *personalises* the act by giving thanks and by establishing rules of civility and protocol. Furthermore, the human person can recognise Truth and Beauty. He is also an aesthetic being, destined to actualise Truth and Beauty through his actions in the material world, making his life and the culture around him reflect these realities.

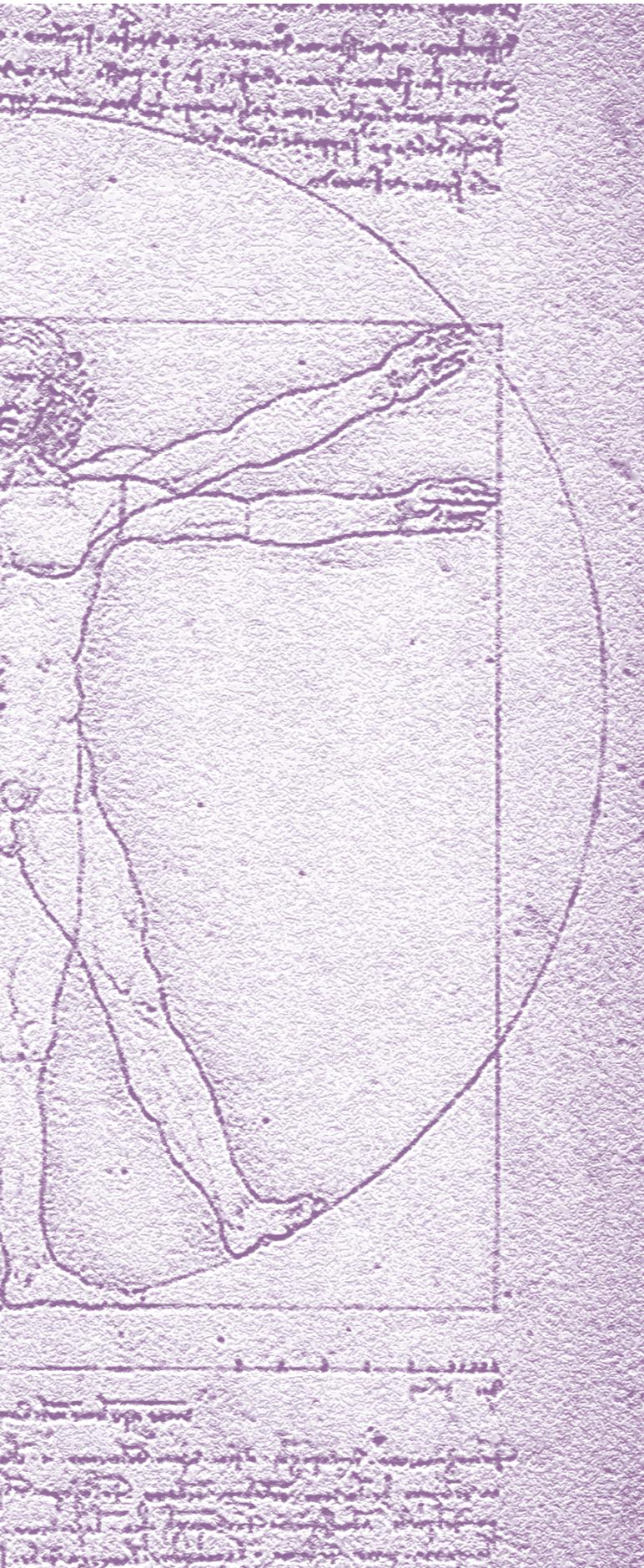
The Real and Restless Battle for Integration

Influenced by gnosticism, many conceptions of the human person, his body and soul, of personal acts, and the flourishing of Goodness and Beauty in personal and communal life, are either too pessimistic or optimistic. They fail to see the human person as a united being, and make no concession for the real and restless battle within him. Christian asceticism is unique because, while it acknowledges the body and soul as good, it realises that they must be disciplined and put at the service of one another, in order that the full person will be made capable of elevation to glory. The discipline and penances of the body and soul are born out of an awareness of the evil which exists in the person's attachment to the fallen world through the senses, the intellect, and the spirit. They are meant to assist in the purification of these fallen attachments within the human person. In contrast to gnosticism, the acts of Christian penance, however simple or extreme, are not ends in themselves, but rather acts directed towards both positive growth and edification of the person, and acts of love towards the One who is carefully redeeming them. As John of the Cross wrote: "To arrive at what now you do not enjoy, you must go where you do not enjoy. To reach what you do not know, you must go where you do not know. To come into possession of what you do not have, you must go where you have nothing". He continues, summarising the purpose of Christian asceticism:

Hence, we call this nakedness a night for the soul. For we are not discussing the mere lack of things; this lack will not divest the soul, if it craves for all these objects. We are dealing with the denudation of the soul's appetites and gratifications; this is what leaves it free and empty of all things, even though it possesses them... Since the things of the world cannot enter the soul, they are not in themselves an encumbrance or harm to it; rather, it is the will and appetite dwelling within that causes the damage.¹³

The goal, therefore, of Christian asceticism is not to reject, manipulate, or suppress the natural instincts of the body and soul, but merely to control and spiritualise them.¹⁴ As Bonaventure explained: "The mirror presented by the external world is of little or no value unless the mirror of our soul has





been cleaned and polished".¹⁵ The focus is not a renunciation from an evil, but an ordination of the goodness of the body, spirit, and passions of the human person towards the One, and the fullness of life he offers. It is an integration of the various dimensions of the person into a well-balanced being; made in God's image, so that each dimension can be what it was created to be and assist the person in living an abundant life. As John Henry Newman wrote:

We may indeed love things created with great intenseness, but such affection, when disjoined from the love of the Creator, is like a stream running in a narrow channel, impetuous, vehement, turbid. The heart runs out, as it were, only at one door; it is not an expanding of the whole man. Created natures cannot open us, or elicit the ten thousand mental senses which belong to us, and through which we really live.¹⁶

Conclusion

Seeing the lives and examples of the Christian saints; along with understanding the dignity of the human person and the intentions underlying its practices, Christian asceticism provides a clearer and more holistic view of the human person. The person's reality as an embodied spirit and the dynamic drama, which occurs within his own existence, is demonstrated as the human being labours to "become" the person he already "is".

The integrated, fully-alive person is the glory of God, and united with his Creator and Redeemer, breathing as a bridge which harmoniously unites matter and spirit, he can intone the song of existential gratitude and fulfilment: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my being rejoices in God my saviour".¹⁷

NOTES

¹Baptism Homily, January 8, 2006, *L'Osservatore Romano*, January 11, 2006 (English Edition).

²*Catechetical Disputations*, 6.5, as contained in Jean Danielou, *The Angels and Their Mission*, Trans. David Heimann (Westminster: Newman Press, 1957), pgs. 45-48; cf. Aquinas, *Summa*, I, q108, a8.

³*On the Nature of Things*, Trans. F. Capley (New York: WW Norton and Company, 1985), p. 75.

⁴As contained in Marie Beuzeville Byles, *Footprints of Gautama the Buddha* (London: Rider and Company, 1957), p. 92.

⁵*Wealth of Nations*, Trans. Edwin Cannan (New York: The Modern Library, 1937).

⁶*Communist Manifesto*, Trans. Robert Hutchins (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), II, p. 428.

⁷*Leviathan*, Trans. Michael Oakeshott (New York: Collier Books, 1968), 15, p. 123-124. This view is also satirically mocked in Book IV of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

⁸Emmanuel Mournier, *Personalism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1950), 4; cf. Robert Baker, *Redemption of Our Bodies* (Charleston: Communications Office, 2005), pgs. 3, 8-9.

⁹Helen Waddell, *The Desert Fathers* (New York: Vintage Spiritual Classics, 1998), 74; 75-76; 77.

¹⁰*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Trans. Kieran Kavanaugh (Washington, DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1991), I.3.1-2, pgs. 121-123.

¹¹Mournier, *Personalism*, 47.

¹²*Ibid.*, 46.

¹³Ascent, I.3.4. pg. 123.

¹⁴Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*, Trans. Lewis Coser (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998), p. 109.

¹⁵*The Soul's Journey to God*, Trans. Ewert Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), Prologue, 4, pg. 56.

¹⁶"The Stay of the Soul," in *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1897), XXII, p. 318.

¹⁷Luke 1:46-47; cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 4,20,7: PG 7/1, 1037, as contained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 294.

BEAUTY IN THE LIGHT OF SACRAMENTALITY AND THE SOUL

Dr Dudley Plunkett
Senior Academic Tutor at Maryvale Institute, Birmingham,
and author of Saving Secular Society
(Alive Publishing, 2007).

The Heythrop Institute Study *On the Way to Life*¹ argues for a 'Catholic sacramental imagination' as a response to the 'turn to the subject' that is characteristic of contemporary culture. Unfortunately, the Study appears to be more concerned to find common ground with that culture than to evangelise it. It gives this writer the impression of allowing the world to set the agenda for the Church rather than the other way around. This article considers how we might understand 'Catholic sacramental imagination' differently in its relevance to the concerns of 'Catholic education, catechesis and formation' featured in the Study's subtitle. In the interests of a holistic approach, I seek to emphasise how not only individuals but also cultures can be evangelised. Inspired human imagination can create beauty capable of evangelising those who are not aware of, or have lost sight of the supernatural. I want in this article to explore a sacramental vision, a kind of 'seeing beyond', that is empowered by faith in the God-man who reveals the transcendental attributes of beauty, goodness and truth of the Godhead.

In Christian understanding, the whole of creation springs from the Blessed Trinity, and the beatific vision is the experience of those spiritual creatures who share God's Kingdom. Where does humanity enter the picture? Within the universe human beings are God's creation in a special way, since they are made in his image and likeness. They approach God in faith and in the activities that fill their earthly, bodily existences. These include the spiritual life and investigation of what they can know of God by reason and from revelation in scripture and tradition. Human experience can help us recognise an ultimate source of truth, goodness and beauty. This growing awareness leads us towards God along the path he has provided, namely the teaching of the incarnate Christ, our membership of the mystical body of his Church, and our gradual incorporation into his Kingdom. This incorporation happens through the redemption won for us on the Cross and our response to God's salvific love by our love for him and for each other.

All this is to say that in the Christian vision our human world has a sacramental dimension. Christ's incarnation is mirrored by our lives and work. Cultural, artistic and spiritual activities reflect the attributes of the Creator himself, in some way analogously to how Jesus reveals the Father in his earthly life. It implies that there is a human awareness of divinely inspired beauty which transcends sense experience. The direct way then to apprehend beauty is by the spirit, not the senses. This does not mean that we would no longer need to consider

shape, colour, texture, sound, odour, taste or experience, but that we would need to venture beyond them. This approach to beauty affirms its spiritual character by superimposing faith upon sight, silence upon hearing, communion upon tasting, touching and smelling, love upon sense experience and contemplative prayer upon intellectual analysis.

We cannot approach the subject of divine beauty with neat definitions. We must come in humility. This is because we have only a dim awareness of beauty's true nature. We can see only hints of divine beauty, and if some poets or artists seem to have a talent for seeing a particular kind of natural beauty it does not follow that they will also see or appreciate supernatural beauty (for example, in people, liturgy, or scripture). The best we can hope for is to discover beauty in a continuing process that leads us on to a fuller understanding of truth and to a love of the good and the holy. I want to suggest how this process engages with and evangelises culture.

Beauty in the Sacred

The revelatory character of sacred art is specifically depicted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 'To the extent that it is inspired by truth and love of beings, art bears a certain likeness to God's activity in what he has created.' (CCC: 2501) Here faith and culture meet in a new synthesis: 'The practice of goodness is accompanied by spontaneous spiritual joy and moral beauty. Likewise, truth carries with it the joy and splendour of spiritual beauty. Truth is beautiful in itself.' (CCC: 2500) People have always been drawn to Christian faith by the sacred beauty that the Church offers us in the revelation of God in Jesus, scripture, liturgy, sacraments, lives of the saints, sacred art, miracles of conversion and healing, and in her own very nature. Scripture is replete with examples, but perhaps especially in the Psalms, as in the opening lines of Psalm 63:

*God, you are my God, I am seeking you,
 my soul is thirsting for you,
 my flesh is longing for you,
 a land parched, weary and waterless;
 I long to gaze on you in the sanctuary,
 and to see your power and glory.*

The beauty of this psalm lies essentially in the spiritual and supernatural domain, and yet it has powerful physical and natural qualities. The metaphor of the land thirsting for God summons up countless images of landscapes, exhausted travellers, coming rainy seasons, of the country blossoming

with new life, as well as of the soul longing for a contact with its Creator, hoping for its own transformation, thrilled at the thought of the hidden beauty about to burst forth, desperate to discover the very face of God after a long pilgrimage, and so on. The more we open our hearts to the prayer, the more hauntingly transcendent is the beauty it reveals.

The liturgy provides us with similar examples, as when the Prefaces of the Mass explode in expressions of praise of God that are then offered to be joined with those of the angels and saints before the throne of the trice Holy. In his Apostolic Exhortation following the Synod on the Eucharist, Pope Benedict XVI evokes the fusion of earthly and heavenly beauty in the liturgy:

Like the rest of Christian Revelation, the liturgy is inherently linked to beauty: it is *veritatis splendor*. The liturgy is a radiant expression of the paschal mystery, in which Christ draws us to himself and calls us to communion.... Here the splendour of God's glory surpasses all worldly beauty.... The beauty of the liturgy is part of this mystery; it is a sublime expression of God's glory and, in a certain sense, a glimpse of heaven on earth. (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 35)

The Via Pulchritudinis

In as much as beauty, truth and goodness are revealed in the sacred, in nature and in people, or are crafted in things made by human hands and minds in science, literature and the arts, so gospel faith is enhanced in its power to convince and transform people and cultures. Everyone has a God-given right to know, love and cherish beauty, since it is part of God's self-revelation guiding us to know the author of beauty to be grateful to him and praise him by magnifying his glory.

Such a *Via Pulchritudinis* is proposed by the Pontifical Council for Culture as a 'way of beauty' by which culture can be evangelised.²

The notion of a sacramental imagination can flesh out this idea by focusing our attention on the harmonious metaphysical relationship between heavenly and earthly beauty which, allows the invisible to be made visible and the transcendent to be glimpsed on earth by a spiritually enhanced understanding. This is not imagination in the subjective sense, but a sign of the real presence, or omnipresence, of God. As I read it, the Heythrop Study tends to be reductive in its use of the term 'imagination' and to refer more to the subjective act than to the objective imaging of the transcendent, as if the intellect or the will were not intrinsically ordered to grace for their full and highest operation, or the picture created by the 'sacramental imagination' counted more than the reality being reflected. I believe it is more fruitful for the work of evangelising to adopt a Catholic realist view that affirms at its heart the reality of the material and the spiritual, the human and the divine, rather than risk being seduced by the relativism and subjectivism of postmodern culture.³

I prefer then to think along the lines of a Catholic *vision* or understanding of the universe which is sacramental, wherein there are visible signs of an invisible source, and whereby we can see the divine in the mundane or created order, as in the Eucharist which is the ultimate sacrament. This is the objectively real order, centred upon the Word becoming that flesh which is given for our redemption in the Eucharist. The Paschal meal of the New Testament replaced a ritual full of signs and prophecy: 'Here for empty shadows fled is reality instead'. We are given a foretaste of the beatific vision, a joyful awareness of how heaven comes to earth as a preliminary to the faithful going to heaven. Such an incarnational perspective lies at the heart of Pope John Paul's *Letter to Artists*:⁴

This prime epiphany of "God who is Mystery" is both an encouragement and a challenge to Christians, also at the level of artistic creativity. From it has come a flowering of beauty which has drawn its sap precisely from the mystery of the Incarnation. In becoming man, the Son of God has introduced into human history all the evangelical wealth of the true and the good, and with this he has also unveiled a new dimension of beauty.... (para. 5)

This leads us to a brief conclusion. We need to envision ways of evangelising human culture through the transcending and transcendent power of beauty. This could radically challenge secular cultures and agendas.

Some might say that to instrumentalise beauty in this way is not a truly artistic position, that it subordinates the creative impulse to an external motive, but I could turn to many artists for a precedent. Anyone who has read *Il Paradiso* knows that Dante writes beautifully, even mystically, of the divinely beautiful; no less does Gerard Manley Hopkins. In any case, there is no mutual exclusivity between the creative impulse and the proclamation and worship of the Creator. Through bringing out their profound inter-relationship we can promote a newly evangelised culture comprising imaginative activities that are open to the transcendent, a culture that locates human creativity in art, literature and science within the context of the call to holiness. Such creativity should be an option chosen for life that acknowledges truth, goodness and beauty as having their source in the divine.

NOTES

¹James Harvey and Anthony Carroll (2005), *On the Way to Life*. Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics and Public Life.

²See the conference section of the Pontifical Council for Culture on the Vatican website: <http://www.vatican.va/>

³The Study contends: 'It is always a sign of crisis in the community's confidence when it has to rely on its structures of authority for validation' (p.29), as if the promises to Peter and the Second Vatican Council were not structurally constitutive of the Church.

⁴Pope John Paul II (1999), *Letter to Artists*. <http://www.vatican.va/>

EDITORIAL NOTE: We plan to have more comment on *On The Way to Life* in our next issue.



THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE

THE HUMAN SOUL: PROTECTION FROM PULLMAN'S POLEMIC

Young Catholics are open to many influences and rarely see the evil that may be lurking behind some elements of popular culture. It is not always possible simply to shut them out. Young people need clear and careful guidance if they are not to feel that adults are just predictably "against" anything that is current and popular. Philip Pullman's books and the films that are being made from them are a topical example. The following was originally written as a personal response to a confused fifteen year old who asked for clarity in the face of the growing controversy.

Dear Josh

I can see why you like Phillip Pullman's books. He is a talented writer who has a memorable way with words. He is particularly good at describing feelings and bringing out how his characters see the world at quite a deep level. He also has a rich imagination and he is good at pulling surprises. And like all good writers he knows how apparently ordinary events can have far reaching effects.

But having said all that, what worries me is the picture of the world that he paints with all these clever gifts. He now says that he is just creating a fantasy world, but in fact he is trying to say things about the real world. And he is consciously trying to fill children's imaginations with anti-Christian images. He's actually trying to teach you and influence your way of thinking, but without being honest enough to tell you that. He admitted as much in an interview for the American newspaper several years ago when he said: "I'm trying to undermine the basis of Christian belief" (interview with Alona Wartofsky for *The Washington Post* Monday, February 19, 2001).

In fact it seems to me that he is very mixed up about some very important things – the truth about God and humanity and the world. Sadly for him he doesn't understand who God really is at all, which is pretty basic. He seems to have some serious misunderstandings about most Christian teachings. In fact he makes a lot of mistakes of simple logic. Like so many anti-Christian atheists he is not really a very clear thinker at all. Last but not least he has a very twisted view of the Church, which is why he rejects them.

I can't help thinking that his 'daemon' must be a 'duck-billed platypus'! The platypus is a strange animal of the Australian marsupial family. It has fur like a mammal, feet like a frog and a beak like a duck... It is a living work of fantasy: slightly ridiculous yet strangely fascinating. But the platypus has a nasty and potentially lethal secret. Behind its left heel it has a stinging spike filled with deadly poison. Get too close to the curious little platypus and he will poison you. Do you see what I mean about his daemon?

Actually Pullman's use of the word "daemon" is interesting. It just means "spirit" in Greek, but he is trying to mess with your head here, and your imagination too. The "daemon" that each character in his books has is like a cross between a soul and a guardian angel. But Pullman is well aware that it sounds rather like "demon" and he wants you to get the idea that what Christians call evil is in fact good, and also that what we call good is actually evil. Think about that... What is this man really trying to do to children's minds and imaginations with these books?

He comes clean about the big message he wants to get across in these books later on in *The Subtle Knife*.

"There are two great powers and they've been fighting ever since time began. Every advance in human life, every scrap of knowledge and wisdom and decency we have has been torn by one side from the teeth of the other. Every little increase in human freedom has been fought over ferociously between those who want us to know more and be wiser and stronger and those who want us to obey and be humble and submit". (*The Subtle Knife* p.335)

He is saying that you are either on the side of wisdom and decency, or you are on the side of obedience. Put another way this is saying that in order to be in favour of knowledge, wisdom and decency you have to be disobedient and rebellious. And by the same logic, he is saying that if you are on the side of obedience, then you will be the bitter enemy of knowledge and decency.

This is what is called a "false contradiction". There isn't an either/or choice between truth and obedience. In fact it is humble people who find the truth, not those who are full of themselves. He thinks that it takes courage and daring to be disobedient. Whereas it takes real courage to be good in the face of temptation. It takes real strength to keep listening to God's voice when your own desires (and other people!) are telling you to take the easy way, the more pleasurable way.

Actually his idea of the "alethiometer" (which literally means "truth machine" in Greek) is an interesting one. I would say that each one of us does actually have our own spiritual compass that is built into our hearts and points us towards truth and goodness. It is called our conscience. But like the alethiometer, we have to learn to use it, and we have to be honest in listening and obeying it. The more we follow it, the better we become at being good and finding real truth. And by the same token, if we ignore and abuse our conscience (alethiometer) then it won't work properly any more, and may lead us into darkness and loneliness that could even last for ever.

Of course God doesn't want that for us, so He also warns us and tells us the truth about right and wrong. There are times when we don't want to listen to that, and self indulgence can look very attractive. That's when God's way can feel unattractive and we might be tempted to call Him oppressive and mean – just full of rules and limits.

It's a bit like if someone offers you drugs. They will tell you that the drugs will "free your mind", that you are missing out on a new

experience, that if you refuse you are being boring, that you are scared of your parents or conforming to the Church and its silly old rules ... etc. But actually these are lies. Drugs don't make you free. They might make you feel "spaced out" for a little while, but that soon wears off and then you are a slave to the drug for the rest of your life – trapped in the misery of being an addict.

It's the same with all things that are called 'sin'. God doesn't forbid them because He is a killjoy, but because He does really want you to be free and happy. God wants us to grow up to be as full of life and joy as He is Himself. He said so in the Bible: "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full". He also said: "I want you to be with me where I am, so that you may see the glory I had before the beginning of the world" and "I want my own happiness to be in you". You will find all these things in St. John's Gospel. So it is not the Church who wants to cut your "daemon" away from you and leave you cold and soul-less. Far from it. It is the devil who wants to do that by telling you that you should rebel against God and kill Him in your heart by refusing his wisdom and love.

Actually it is the saints who are really alive and free. They are shining with joy and care for others. They each have their own unique stories of courage and adventure. You could say, if you like, that they have all acquired golden daemons, beautiful and powerful, loving and lovable. This is the result of living in grace – that is living in friendship with God. Yes, this is what God wants – not grovelling slaves, but friends who do what is good because they love Him who is Good. They love Him with all their heart, mind and strength.

Jesus said: "I do not call you servants, I call you friends, because I have made known to you all that I know from my Father" (also from St. John's Gospel). It is sin that makes us into sad liars, cheats, murderers, drug and sex addicts, thieves, greedy, jealous and selfish people who are really soul-less and boring, miserable, grey and cold in heart. Everything we call sin is like the Spectres of Indifference, it gradually consumes your soul and eats away your spiritual strength. Wicked things are like sweets that eat away at your teeth – they taste nice when you eat them, but they do you harm in the long run.

This brings me to Phillip Pullman's biggest misunderstanding about Christian teaching. He gets it all wrong about Original Sin. Very wrong indeed. But I wonder whether he really wants to know what Catholic teaching is, because he deliberately puts words into the Bible that are not there. On page 371 of *The Golden Compass* he gets Lyra to read from the Book of Genesis. What she reads out is this:

"And the serpent said to the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and your daemons shall assume their true forms, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to reveal the true form of your daemon, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they saw the true forms of their daemons and spoke with them. But when the man and the woman knew their own daemons, they knew that a great change had come upon them, for until that moment it had seemed that they were at one with all the creatures of the earth and the air and there was no difference between them: And they saw the difference and they knew good

and evil: and they were ashamed and they sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness".

All the words I have put in italics here are completely made up by Philip Pullman. Lots of his readers might think that this is simply what the Bible says. I think it is a very, very dishonest of him not to point this out.

He seems to think that committing sin was a good idea and brought some real benefits. Actually it just messed things up for us all, because it damaged our personal alethiometers and made our beautiful God-given "daemons" (which are really our souls – daemon is just the Greek word for "spirit, but I suspect Pullman is subtly trying to get you to think "demons" or evil spirits as good and friendly things) very sad and sickly indeed!

Of course it's got nothing to do with so called 'dark matter', if that exists. That would just be part of the balanced structure of the universe. What sin does is upset the balance of creation by going against the Law that makes everything work together in harmony.

Needless to say, God does not want that. He helps us to mend our consciences and to change the direction of our hearts. Actually our built-in alethiometers are not just instruments for telling truth from falsehood and right from wrong. It will point us towards God Himself. Yes, if we use it with prayer then we can actually come to know God in Person, and love Him as a real experience of light and laughter that will last for ever.

If we search for Him this way, then we get beyond the feeling that God's law is just saying "Thou shalt not" all the time. We find that He is not a boring, cruel "Authority", who wants to kill our joy. He is overflowing with Love, Life and Peace that He wants to share with us. So naturally He helps and encourages us along the way towards Him, even if that does means correcting us sometimes and calling us back from going down the wrong path. To crown it all He has shown Himself to us by becoming Man in Jesus. And as you rightly pointed out, He bridged the gulf that sin made between us and heaven with His own Body on the Cross. Now He lives among us and gives us Himself through the sacraments, so we can now find Him and listen to Him and follow Him and love Him in our own human, down to earth way. That's what the Church is really all about.

While it is possible to appreciate Philip Phullman's books as well written works of imagination and an engaging adventure story, you should be very careful about taking on board what he is trying to tell you. Unfortunately with well written stories this tends to happen subconsciously, that is, without you noticing it. The author's way of looking at the world just slips into your imagination and starts to influence your own mental outlook. So perhaps you can see why we need to be on our guard when reading this kind of material. We have to take the subtle knife of faith and reason to what he is saying and expose the gaping holes in his thinking and the massive distortions in what he says about the Catholic faith.

Take care
With much love,

Uncle Phil

letters to 
the editor

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RECENT UNDERMINING OF THE FAMILY

Dear Father Editor,

John Deighan is to be commended for the accuracy of his analysis "Undermining the Family-Where are we at?" (Nov-Dec 2007). The erosion by stealth of a common language defining the innate dignity of human sexuality has been clear for those with eyes to see. Spiritual vision is granted to us all with the eyes of faith. Open our eyes wide we must to this creeping threat to the domestic church if we are not to wake up in the middle of a nightmare landscape from which our children cannot hide. Let us not forget the words of Pope John Paul II as he elevated St. Edith Stein to the rank of co-patroness of Europe, warning: "A Europe, that would change the value of tolerance and universal respect into ethical indifferentism and scepticism about values that cannot be forsaken, would open itself to most risky ventures and sooner or later it would see appearing in new forms the most dreadful phantoms of its own history". I look forward to seeing John Deighan's proposals to combat such political demons.

Yours Faithfully
Edmund Adamus
Director, Department for Pastoral Affairs
Diocese of Westminster
Francis Street
London

ECONOMICS' PRE-ENLIGHTENMENT ROOTS

Dear Father Editor,

Many thanks for Edward Hadas' very interesting article in the November-December 2007 edition of *Faith*. The history of social sciences, certainly of economics, however, may not be quite so dubious as he portrays.

I am not sure of the significance of the word "modern" in Mr Hadas' contention that "the modern study of economics was started by Adam Smith". The study of economics, in fact, goes back considerably earlier to the late scholastics of the Catholic Church. The matter is explained by Alejandro Chafuen in

his too little known book "Faith and Liberty: The Economic Thought of the Late Scholastics," first published in 1986 with a second edition in 2003. From the late fifteenth century the theologians of the Church began to reflect upon the "new things" in the social order of their times, in this case the emergence of the modern business economy – trade, commerce, credit, banking and industry. Questions of a "just price" were paramount and the scholastics can be credited with discovering the principles of the market determination of prices. Chafuen shows how Adam Smith took his cue in a direct line of intellectual descent from these thinkers.

Thus, modern economics, like the modern business economy, is not the dubious result of a secular Enlightenment, but the fruit of European Christendom and the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages. They are part of our Catholic heritage.

Of course what has happened to Economics since Adam Smith is another story and closely related perhaps with what has happened to the modern academy, something else we inherited from the Middle Ages but seem now to have wrecked.

In any event Adam Smith himself deserves a better press. He was primarily not an economist but a moral philosopher. Even so his *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* is a remarkable work which deserves respect both as an enquiry and as an argument for economic liberty.

The way to engage our contemporaries who do not share our faith is by means of rational and dispassionate argument based on that tradition of Natural Law which we share with all except those who today would seek to abandon the use of reason itself. Edward Hadas makes a very good start on this road but we should not dismiss all secular thinking simply because it is secular.

Yours Faithfully
Rev (Deacon) John Greenwood
Alberta Street
London SE17

UNITY LAW CONTRA POST-MODERNISM

Dear Father Editor,

One of our students recently introduced Our Lady's School of Evangelisation to the approach of the Faith Movement and to Fr. Edward Holloway's book *Catholicism: A New Synthesis*. This included using some of Fr. Holloway's ideas during our Youth Outreaches to second level students here in Ireland.

I was struck by the following extract from your Magazine's recent editorial (Nov-Dec '07) concerning the failure of secular humanism which "seeks to exclude God from public policy as an irrelevance, an interference in humanity's autonomous self-development without any vision of meaning and value ... The truth is that for all its noisy propaganda atheistic humanism has nothing positive to offer humanity. And we have it in our power to do so much more than merely resist and refute the march of secularism. We hold in our own unworthy grasp the treasure that humanity longs and searches for. We have a duty to offer it again to the world in the clearest and most convincing way possible".

All the more reason for the second evangelisation called for by Pope John II. God bless your work among the youth of the U.K. which is so much needed.

Yours Faithfully
Eleanor Healy
Co-Founder, Our Lady's School of Evangelisation
Knock
Co Mayo
Ireland

Dear Father Editor,

I write to congratulate you on the November/December edition of *Faith*. I have been a subscriber since the early days, and I found this one of the best editions ever produced, with a number of articles that deserve very wide circulation and attention. I was reminded of *Faith* in the 1970's with articles by Dom David Knowles on *Humanae Vitae*.

Lest anyone think I am praising my own efforts, let me say that I should be very pleased if my own modest book review could be seen as a footnote to some of the outstanding articles.

Yours Faithfully
Eric Hester
Somerdale Avenue
Heaton
Bolton

Dear Father Editor,

Thank you for your strengthening and reassuring magazine. The post-modernism which you recently highlighted is of course infecting much of academic study. For example undergraduate English has for a decade or so been preoccupied with so-called underlying assumptions concerning gender, class, race, sexual orientation etc.. Some virtually pornographic texts are not

infrequently required reading. The ramifications for students, not least our own young Catholics, seem significant.

Yours Faithfully
Miss Robina Knewstub
Fecitt Rd
Revidge
Blackburn

TERTULLIAN AND ORTHODOX DOCTRINE ON THE FLESH

Dear Father Editor,

Gerard McKay's ongoing concern about the trustworthiness, perhaps even the orthodoxy of any text that cites Tertullian's famous dictum "the flesh is the hinge of salvation" (*caro cardo salutis est*) is surely misplaced (Letters, Nov-Dec 07). The Catechism of the Catholic Church itself includes precisely this quotation (CCC 1015) giving explicit reference to Tertullian's *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* as witness to the Church's optimism about the goodness of body.

In fact The Catechism also includes another reference to Tertullian's works (CCC 228 citing his *Adversus Marcion*, in favour of God's unicity). The Magisterium is clearly using Tertullian's lucid and succinct style from his Catholic writings to express the ancient orthodoxy of the Apostolic faith on these points without in any way endorsing his other, heretical, views.

In any case, to debate about Tertullian's (well known) doctrinal meanderings and fall from grace is to miss the point. Tertullian is not being used as a doctrinal foundation. The issue is only whether the thought neatly expressed by "caro cardo salutis" sums up the general patristic view of the place of the flesh in God's saving plans. A modicum of knowledge of the Fathers assures one that it does.

St Irenaeus, for example, has the following:

"...as it is certainly in the power of a mother to give strong food to her infant, but the child is not yet able to receive more substantial nourishment; so it was possible for God to have made man perfect from the first, but man could not receive this [perfection], being as yet an infant. And for this cause our Lord in these last times, when He had 'summed up all things into Himself' (cf. Eph 1.3), came to us, not as He might have come, but as we were capable of beholding Him. He might easily have come to us in His immortal glory, but in that case we could never have endured the greatness of the glory; and therefore it was that He, who was the perfect bread of the Father, offered Himself to us as milk,

as to infants. He did this when He appeared as a man, and nourished us, as it were, from the breast of His flesh. By such a course of milk nourishment we become accustomed to eat and drink the Word of God and may be able also to contain in ourselves the Bread of immortality, which is the Spirit of the Father". (*Adversus Haereses* Book IV, Chapter 38).

In other words, the earthly, matter-bound origin of human nature calls forth God's greatest act of loving care and humility – the Incarnation of God the Word through which humanity is united to Godhead in a union more intimate than with any other creature and gradually raised to immortality. Through man's need, therefore, the Incarnation is the crowning glory of the whole creation. Or to put that the other way round, God created Man – and by implication the whole material order to which he belongs – in order to glorify his Son. All flesh is ordered towards God incarnate in whom human beings are perfected and glorified, body and soul.

The mystery of the Eucharist also flows directly from the plan of the Incarnation which is primarily about the "divinisation" of man in Christ. Redemption from sin and undoing the effects of the fall are only possible for man because human identity already "hinges" on Christ through the flesh. There can be little doubt that this is the earliest patristic theology which is still taught explicitly in the Eastern Church. Neither is it alien to the traditions of the West. At the height of the Counter Reformation St Francis de Sales taught exactly this perspective in his *Treatise on the Love of God*. St John of the Cross also expressed the same thought in his mystical poems on the Divine Marriage.

Many other saintly authorities could be quoted, but one hopes that this helps to reassure those who, in the current climate of tension, have been made nervous and perhaps over cautious about what truly belongs to the orthodox tradition of the Church. I'm sure we can all agree that the Catechism can be taken as an authentic guide.

Yours Faithfully
A brother of Charterhouse

IMMIGRANTS MASK THE DEPTH OF DECLINE

Dear Father Editor,

William Oddie's article in the latest (Jan-Feb 2008) *Faith* Magazine raises interesting issues.

He refers to "about half a million more Roman Catholics in this country than five

years ago" who have come here from Eastern Europe. This made me compare the statistics for 1999 and 2006 in the *Catholic Directory for England & Wales*. Statistics are notoriously misleading but, in the light of these figures, the supposed extra half-million Catholics increase the gloom implicit in Oddie's comments. I discovered that 585 Catholic Churches have been closed (c. 17%), that the estimated total population of Catholics is roughly constant at 4.1 million and that Mass attendance has diminished by 114,574 (from c. 1042K to 927K). If there has been an influx of 500K practising Catholics in Britain many of those should be part of the 2006 figures. The numbers who have lapsed from their Catholic faith in the seven years from 1999 would appear to be significantly more serious than we might suppose.

There is a striking image, in the middle of Psalm 105, relevant to our extraordinary epoch in which so many Christians are abandoning their religion and Europe's Christian heritage has been publicly rejected. The situation is similar to how the Israelites apostasised 3000 years ago:

*They failed to destroy the peoples
As the Lord had commanded
But instead they mingled with the nations
And learned to act as they did
They worshiped the idols of the nations
And these became a snare to entrap them.*

Christian evangelisation campaigns are clearly unable to compete with the godless messages preached all day and every day on the TV, radio and in printed media. Furthermore Europe's Christians are confronted with new laws which demand conformity with immoral behaviour and a 'political correctness' which contradicts the Gospel.

William Oddie expresses very succinctly the dismay of many Catholics at the apparent complacency of our Bishops; one can only hope they may be defending the Catholic Faith in hidden ways and in prayer.

Recourse to Blessed Pope John XXIII's opening prayer of the Second Vatican Council may be apposite:

"Almighty God! In Thee we place all our confidence not trusting in our own strength. Graciously hear the prayers which we pour forth. O Mary, Help of Christians and all the Saints, intercede for us. Jesus, our Redeemer and Immortal King, to you be love, power and glory for ever".

Yours Faithfully
Philip Audley-Charles
York Way
London, N7

comment on the
comments



by
William Oddie

VATICAN AND SECULAR SHOCK AT
AN ATTEMPT AT INTEGRAL CATHOLIC
EDUCATION

No sooner had I finished my piece for *Faith* magazine's last issue (in which, my readers may recall, I encouraged Polish Catholics to keep themselves at arms length from the secularised and indifferentist ethos of many English dioceses) than news emerged that one English bishop at least had done something to try to address the problem, and that he had in the process aroused the kind of secularist hostility which is, I strongly suspect, – certainly in this country – the only really reliable sign that the Catholic Church is being faithful to its vocation.

I refer, of course, to the document *Fit for Mission?: Schools*, published in December by Bishop Patrick O'Donoghue of Lancaster, the actual text of which many of you will already have acquired, the reaction to which, however, – both hostile and the reverse – needs also to be registered as part of its necessary import: for, there is not much point in being a Sign of Contradiction if nobody notices, and the secular reaction to a subversive religion like Catholicism is part of its authentic meaning. *Fit for Mission* has undoubtedly been noticed: reactions range from extreme secularist hostility to an overwhelmingly positive response from the Catholic faithful, not only in the bishop's own diocese and throughout the English Church, but in several other countries too. His office has received requests for copies of the document from dioceses in the United States, Canada,

Australia, France (interesting), and Malta following a public endorsement by Archbishop Mauro Piacenza, Secretary for the Congregation for Clergy, who sent Bishop O'Donoghue the Congregation's congratulations on his 'courageous examination of the state of evangelisation and catechesis in the diocese of Lancaster's schools and colleges' and for developing a positive programme for action in harmony with the 'operative Magisterial documents'.

It is, indeed, something of an unusual event that an English bishop should base himself so firmly, not merely on the odd bland quotation here and there from whoever the current pope happens to be, in order to camouflage the true nature of some firmly secularist initiative, but on the spirit as well as the letter of entire magisterial documents, not least the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* itself – which, it will be remembered, we were all told by Bishop David Konstant was not for the likes of us, but for the bishops to read so they could tell us what was in it. The Lancaster document's approach to this key text is very different, and is worth some attention. 'The most important book published by the Holy See in this generation for Catholic education,' says Bishop O'Donoghue, 'is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and its summary, the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*'; he says that 'it is vital that both the *Catechism* and the *Compendium* are used by teachers in our schools and colleges, who can guide pupils in how to make best use of them'; that 'the key to unlocking this treasury of Church teaching.... lies in the *Catechism* itself'; and that 'It is important not to pick and choose which doctrines of the Church to teach children, particularly very young ones. It is not acceptable to take an approach to the teaching of the faith that reduces it solely to the simplest, easily assimilated concepts'.

The point about *Fit for Mission* is that even this is not considered enough: having established the general principle,

this admirable bishop now lays down the practical detail, *so that nobody has any excuse for ignoring his clearly expressed wishes*. This is what his words mean in practice: and this is what a diocesan inspection will presumably expect to find: 'As bishop, it is my express wish that all primary and secondary schools will have copies of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: A complete copy of The Catechism of the Catholic Church* is to be given to every teacher in the school... and at least one copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is to be available in the School library. In primary schools, there should be at least one classroom set (say, 30 copies) of *The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. In secondary schools there should be at least one full classroom set of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and at least one full classroom set of *The Compendium* – and these books should be regularly used in Religious Education'.

No wonder that Rome is astonished and gratified. 'The Congregation, wrote Archbishop Piacenza, 'is especially pleased as your pastoral plan is precisely that which was called for in the General Directory for Catechesis after the release of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*'. But there is more to it than that: this is not some bureaucratic response to a Vatican document that most Catholics have never heard of (the *General Directory*), but an insistence that the entire teaching of the *Catechism* itself should be at the heart of everything that happens in Catholic Schools. The document begins by asking what Catholic Schools are actually for (a question some of us had been asking ourselves), and addressing the question of whether, if they are not actually achieving what they are supposed to, we should have them at all: 'Are we losing sight of the uniqueness of Catholic education?', the bishop asks (the answer, of course, is that too often we are). 'Have we forgotten', he

continues, 'that Jesus Christ is the true centre of all that we do because we have become too focused on other demands of school life? [answer: Yes]. Is the Catholic faith a living reality at the heart of every diocesan school and college? [answer: No]. Are our pupils having a rich and living encounter with our Risen Lord? [Answer: don't even ask]. Are we transmitting the fullness of the faith in an exciting and creative way to our pupils and their families?' These are, it is made plain, real questions, not the usual empty diocesan rhetoric. And the consequence of these answers is real, too: 'If we cannot answer a confident "Yes" to the last three of these questions, *the point of keeping our schools is lost and the project of education in our diocese has failed*'. No flannel about academic standards or good manners or citizenship or Catholic schools being attractive to non-Catholics: 'Is the Catholic faith a living reality at the heart of every diocesan school'? Yes or no?

Well, the reaction has been instructive. The proposal that a Catholic school should take the Catholic religion seriously is being seen in predictable quarters as a new and undesirable development (which shows nothing more starkly than that until now any such idea has been unusual to say the least). All this has attracted the attention of one Barry Sheerman, chairman of the parliamentary cross-party committee on children, schools and families, who now wants to haul offending bishops (the good news is that there are at least two) in front of his committee for an inquisitorial going-over (which by the time you read this may have taken place).

Under the headline 'MPs challenge "doctrinaire" bishops', *The Observer's* report began by claiming that 'Roman Catholic bishops are to appear in front of a powerful committee of MPs amid fears that they are pushing a fundamentalist brand of their religion in schools. Bishops have called on parents, teachers and priests to strengthen the role of religion

in education. In one case the Bishop of Lancaster, Patrick O'Donoghue, instructed Catholic schools across much of north-west England to stop "safe-sex" education and place crucifixes in all classrooms. He also wrote: "Schools and colleges must not support charities or groups that promote or fund anti-life policies, such as Red Nose Day and Amnesty International, which now advocates abortion". Other offensive 'fundamentalist' ideas proposed by 'O'Donoghue' (not 'Bishop O'Donoghue', just 'O'Donoghue', as though he were on trial for child abuse) are: calling on teachers to use science to teach about the truths of the faith, only mentioning sex within the context of the sacrament of marriage, and insisting that artificial contraception is wrong and emphasising natural family planning.

Bishop Arthur Roche of Leeds is also singled out as one of these 'fundamentalist' bishops, who according to the National Secular Society are attempting 'to introduce a Taliban-style regime of Catholic orthodoxy in [their dioceses] schools'. Bishop Roche has, *The Observer* reported, 'sent a letter to parishes warning them that Catholic education was under threat following attempts by the local council to set up an inter-faith academy'.

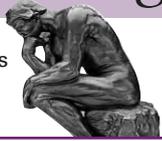
Barry Sheerman, chairman of the parliamentary cross-party has reacted to all this with admirable frankness: no weasel words here, simply an open suspicion of all religion when it is actually believed rather than just talked about. 'A group of bishops appear to be taking a much firmer line' *The Observer* reported him saying, 'and I think it would be useful to call representatives of the Catholic church in front of the committee to find out what is going on.... It seems to me that faith education works all right *as long as people are not that serious about their faith* [my italics]. But as soon as there is a more doctrinaire attitude questions have to be asked. It does become worrying when you get a new

push from more fundamentalist bishops. This is taxpayers' money after all'.

This Sheerman, it needs to be said, is parti-pris in all this, and might even be accused of using his chairmanship of a Commons committee in order to push his own personal agenda, since he (as MP for Huddersfield) is one of the group attempting to set up an 'inter-faith' academy in the diocese of Leeds partly, without doubt, in order to undermine authentically Catholic education: and if this is not a gross misuse of office, I do not know what is. According to Sheerman, Bishop Roche 'had a letter read out in every parish church in Kirklees and Calderdale, a really big area, accusing politicians of trying to dilute Catholic education. He said Roman Catholic education was under threat'. Well, precisely: since Sheerman says that 'faith education works all right as long as people are not that serious about their faith', it is obvious not only that that is exactly what he is attempting to do, but also that Bishop Roche is absolutely right (other bishops please note) to resist him. And now, because Bishop Roche is opposing Sheerman's secularising scheme for his diocese, Sheerman wants to drag him down to London in chains to appear before his Star chamber on a charge of being 'serious' about his faith. Well, bring it on: it is all an excellent opportunity for bishops to explain what Catholic education is really for, and to declare plainly that if the State expects our schools to abandon the Catholic faith as a quid pro quo for receiving Catholic tax-payers' money, then that is an expectation we are not prepared to satisfy: and then, we will have to take the consequences. These may be unpleasant; but at least we will know where we are. Catholics are always at their best when the battle-lines are clearly drawn.

The road from Regensburg

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



POPE ON TRUTH: SEEK THAT WHICH "SURROUNDS" OR LOSE THE GOOD

Below are some of the words which Pope Benedict intended to deliver at La Sapienza University in Rome last January. The event was called off following a protest by some lecturers and students at a reference he once made to the claim of a particular philosopher that the verdict on Galileo was "rational and just".

The Pope tells us that at Regensburg "I spoke as Pope but, above all, as a former professor of what used to be my own university. ... However, I was invited to 'La Sapienza,' the ancient university of Rome, as Bishop of Rome, and as such I must speak.

"...The true, intimate, origin of the university lies in the longing for knowledge which is inherent to mankind. Humans want to know what it is that surrounds them. They want truth.

"Truth is never just theoretical. ... Truth means more than knowing. ...The truth makes us good, and goodness is truth. This is the optimism that lives in Christian faith, because [that faith] has been granted the vision of the 'Logos,' creative Reason which in the incarnation of God was revealed as Good, as Goodness itself".

Today there are "new dimensions of knowledge ... (mainly) the natural sciences ... and the historical and human sciences, ... (and) the recognition of the rights and the dignity of man" has increased.

But "the danger of falling into inhumanity can never be completely eliminated," in particular "the danger facing the Western world ... is that man today, precisely because of the immensity of his knowledge and power, surrenders before the question of truth. ... This means that, in the end, reason gives way before the pressure of other interests and the lure of efficiency, and is forced to recognise this as the ultimate criterion".

zenit.org

SECULAR ACADEMICS AFRAID OF CHURCH-SCIENCE HARMONY?

Opposition to Pope Benedict's now postponed appearance at La Sapienza University, has led Professor Giorgio Israel to write that the resistance of his colleagues is a sign of fear about a dialogue between faith and reason taking place.

In an article published in *L'Osservatore Romano*, Israel, who is a professor of mathematics at La Sapienza, argues that the reason the liberal "openness" has been put aside in the case of the Holy Father has been explained by Marcello Cini – one of the intellectuals opposing the Pope's visit – in his letter to the University's Dean.

"What Cini regards as dangerous is the fact that the Pope may try to open a dialogue between faith and reason, to re-establish a connection between the Judeo-Christian and the Greek tradition, and that science and faith may not be separated by an impenetrable wall".

"The opposition to the Pope's visit," Israel adds, is therefore "not motivated by an abstract principle of secularism. The opposition is of an ideological nature and has Benedict XVI as its specific target for speaking on science and about the relationship between science and faith, instead of limiting himself to speak only about faith".

Catholic Online, 16 January 2008

OF ISLAMIC INTEREST

AFTER THE LATEST OPEN LETTER

As a result of an exchange of letters between Cardinal Tauran and Prince Ghazi of Jordan three prominent Islamic scholars will visit the Pope in February, whilst the Cardinal, Prefect for the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue will visit Cairo's Al-Ahzar Mosque. This will lay the groundwork for a Spring meeting.

Cardinal Tauran's letter was the Holy See's response to the October Open Letter, *A Common Word*, signed by 138 Muslim scholars. As we discussed in our last editorial (January 07) the Cardinal acknowledged a section of the common ground proposed by *A Common Word*,

namely concerning "the one God" and "that we are called to commit ourselves totally to him and to obey his sacred will". But in terms of foundations for dialogue the Cardinal talks about human dignity, rights and fundamental moral values, whilst also encouraging the "sharing" of "knowledge" and "experience", as well as "promoting" common values.

On behalf of the 138 scholars Prince Ghazi, head of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought and a former pupil of Harrow School, has replied, in a generally positive tone. He interprets the Cardinal's letter as proposing "the Ten Commandments ... as a basis of dialogue" which he terms "an excellent idea". This he calls the "extrinsic" "dimension" of the proposed discussions, meaning "that which refers to the world and thus to society". He seems to interpret the positive tone of the Cardinal's reply as implying an acceptance of an "intrinsic dimension" based upon the inner spiritual nature of man called to love the One God and our neighbour, as proposed by *A Common Word*. He also makes a gentle complaint at the lack of openness and charity of those Vatican representatives and commentators who have objected to the idea of "theological dialogue with Muslims".

The Editor

PROMINENT CATHOLICS CONTINUE TO DOWNPLAY DISCUSSION OF "SOUL AND GOD"

In the January 07 editorial of this magazine we reported on the robust response of prominent orthodox Catholic commentators to last October's *A Common Word*. We proposed taking a different, more accepting line. We argued that avoiding discussing the spiritual nature of love of God, "of total devotion to" him misses a great opportunity to respond head-on to encouraging Islamic developments in this area (e.g. see *Road from Ratisbon* entry below). It also only also delays the discussion of something fundamental to reaching a significant mutual understanding with leading Muslims.

Richard John Neuhaus, writing before Prince Ghazi's above-mentioned reply to Cardinal Tauran, has joined these commentators in agreeing that

“theological dialogue is exceedingly difficult with Islam”. The Editor-in-Chief of *First Things* and syndicated columnist in this magazine went as far as to say that “it serves neither peace nor understanding to acquiesce in the efforts of Muslim leaders to change the subject” away from “the sources of terrorism and oppression perpetrated in the name of Islam (which) after all, is what prompted these exchanges in the first place”.

First Things, February 2008

Similarly the Jesuit priest Samir Khalid Samir has said that the above-mentioned Spring meeting between Catholic officials and Muslim scholars is at risk of “hollowness or falsity” if the dialogue addresses theology alone, and not the concrete problems of the two communities. In an article for *Asia News*, Samir, professor of Oriental Studies at St. Joseph’s Seminary in Lebanon, stresses his concern over what he sees as attempts by Muslim personalities to “dodge fundamental and concrete questions, like human rights, reciprocity and violence, to ensconce themselves in an improbable theological dialogue ‘on the soul and God’”.

Concerning Prince Ghazi’s letter summarised above Samir said that it “seems to say that human rights are not important, and are only a political question. Only theological dialogue is of interest. But what good does it do to talk about the one God, if I do not recognise that man has an absolute dignity in the image of God? That freedom of conscience is sacred, that the believer has no more rights than the non-believer, that man has no more rights than woman, etc? It must be affirmed that man comes before religion: respecting man comes before respect for religion. This is the Christian approach”.

Asia News, 9th January 2008

IS THERE A ROAD FROM REGENSBURG?

The Tablet reports none less than Professor Aref Ali Nayed of the Cambridge Interfaith Programme as rejecting the idea that the Pope’s Regensburg lecture provided a significant impetus to the current Islamic-Christian dialogue. This prominent signatory of last October’s *A Common Word*, co-ordinator of follow-ups to it,

and member of the upcoming Islamic delegation to the Pope, said “I keep hearing this, especially from Catholics”. He pointed out that the Amman Message, issued a year before Regensburg, condemned terrorism and advocated Islamic unity.

On the other hand the purpose of the Amman message is described on its website as “clarify(ing) to the modern world the true nature of Islam and the nature of true Islam”. This is in contrast to the two post-Regensburg Islamic Open Letters the first of which was an immediate and direct response, the second of which was issued exactly one year later, both of which had explicit addressees, primarily the Pope.

The post-Regensburg dialogue has focussed upon the doctrine of God in Christianity and Islam, as brought out in our next two entries below. An important theme of this column, and of our last editorial, has been to chart the various public Islamic qualifications (if sometimes apparently slightly contradictory) of the absolute transcendence of Allah over the last eighteen months, which qualifications bode well for effective theological dialogue.

The Tablet, 8th December 2008

PROMINENT MUSLIMS ON THE POSITIVE EFFECT OF REGENSBURG

Two Islamic affirmations upon the important novelty of the two Open Letter responses to Regensburg have been noted in this column before, a third is described in the following item.

Last September we mentioned the issue of *Islamica Magazine* which furnished the first formal announcement that the first Open Letter now had 100 signatures. Its editorial emphasised “The seminal nature of this initiative” and that the need for such “dialogue is vital”.

Last November we reported that the official website for the second Open Letter to the Pope and others states that this letter was unique in the history of Islam.

Faith Magazine, Autumn 2007

THE ROAD FROM RATISBON AND THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

The October 2007 edition of *Oasis*, the review of the Venice based inter-faith International Studies and Research Centre, carries three reflections upon “God and Reason”. Hmider Ennaifer, a Tunisian lecturer in Muslim Theology, talks of a “rather significant new development in certain Muslim elites. A large number of thoughtful and above all rational responses were made”. Ennaifer argues the case that “transcendence in Islam is compatible with the Immanence of God” through bringing out aspects of Allah’s relationship to us. Our January 07 editorial showed how this positive development was present in last October’s *A Common Word Between Us and You*.

Maurice Borrmans a White Father expert in inter-religious dialogue, has a piece entitled *The Dialogue that Sprouted at Ratisbon* – (Ratisbon has been the name for Regensburg preferred by English-speaking historians). He makes some similar points, emphasising that from “Lebanon to Libya and on to Paris the speech by the Pope generated acute reflection on the part of very many scholars: to save the idea of God”. He refers to the prominent Lebanese thinker Ridwan al-Sayyed who suggests that both Islam and Christianity have schools which emphasise God’s transcendence and those which emphasise a certain resemblance between us and God. Recently there has been, he argues, a resurgence in Islam of the latter type of thinkers, as witnessed for instance, in the Amman message, and the call to “anamnesis” which the Tunisian Abdelwahab Meddeb feels the Pope at Regensburg was making to Muslims.

Oasis, October 2007

continued overleaf

THE ANTI-REGENSBURG IRONY

Professor Nayed backed up his above mentioned devaluing of the Regensburg piece by affirming that it “fuelled misunderstanding and hatred”. This refers to the Regensburg lecture’s academic quotation of a medieval, threatened, Emperor stridently challenging the Prophet Mohammed and implicitly suggesting that the Muslim relegation of *logos* enabled hatred and violence to be fuelled.

The Tablet 8th December 2008

PROMINENT NEW YEAR WARNINGS CONCERNING SECULARISM’S WEAKNESS BEFORE TRIBAL ISLAM

In his *Daily Mail* column Peter Hitchens has argued that the developing permissiveness of British multi-culturalism and relativism paradoxically allows the development of a dogmatic and dominant Islamic community. Prominent Islamic culture is proving fairly impervious to agnostic relativism. Islamic culture may indeed be preferable to such secularism in numerous ways but it spells the end of our Christian culture. He suggests that unambiguous acknowledgement of and defence of the fundamental role Christianity has had in the development of our civilisation is the only way to prevent a radical cultural revolution in our land.

Daily Mail 8th January 08

In the *New York Times*, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, author of *Infidel*, has partially supported the thesis of Lee Harris’s book *The Suicide of Reason: Radical Islam’s threat to the Enlightenment*. They both affirm the popular preference for tribal loyalty over reason within Muslim communities across the world. This is supported by Islam’s rejection of the separation of religion and politics, the sacred and the profane. Harris argues that western secularism misunderstands Islam if it thinks reason and kindness will easily prevent the spread of Islam.

Ali develops this in her own particular direction: “Muslims have been migrating to the West in droves for decades now. They are in search of a better life. Yet their

tribal and cultural constraints have travelled with them. And the multi-culturalism and moral relativism that reign in the West have accommodated this... Many western leaders are terribly confused about Islam”.
New York Times 6th Jan 2008

EARLY QUR’ANIC TEXT TO BE INVESTIGATED

A groundbreaking report by the *Wall Street Journal* writer, Andrew Higgins, makes the astonishing claim that a priceless photo archive of ancient manuscripts of the Qur’an, which were considered to have been destroyed in the bombing of the Bavarian Academy of Science, is still in existence. According to the journalist, the story of its destruction was fabricated by Anton Spitaler, an Arabic scholar at the academy and “a powerful figure in post-war German scholarship”. Spitaler hid the 450 rolls of film away for more than 60 years.

The film had been assembled before the war for an academic study on the evolution of the Qur’an.

Angelika Neuwirth, a former pupil of the late Spitaler and professor of Arabic studies at Berlin’s Free University, is now overseeing a revival of the research.

The revived Qur’an venture plays into a very modern debate: how to reconcile Islam with the modern world? Academic quarrying of the Qur’an has produced bold theories, bitter feuds and even claims of an Islamic Reformation in the making.

The Qur’an is viewed by most Muslims as the unchanging word of God as transmitted to the Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century. Muslims believe the text did not evolve or get edited.

Wall Street Journal, 12 January 2008

ISLAMIC CRITICAL THINKING ENCOURAGED

The international best-selling author of *The Trouble with Islam*, Irshad Manji, came to the UK in January to promote her new film, *Faith without Fear*. Manji, a well-known critic of radical Islam and orthodox interpretations of the Qur’an, who also publicly supported the Pope’s comments on the faith at the Regensburg lecture, advocates a revival of critical thinking in Islamic tradition.

“Islam began as a religion of justice but it has become corrupted into an ideology of fear, said the Muslim writer”. It is we Muslims who have done most of the corrupting and therefore only we Muslims can lead the effort to fix it. For those who claim that this is an unIslamic or anti-Islamic message, I remind them as a faithful Muslim that the Koran tells us to take ownership of our problems”.

The Times Online, 18 January 2008

AND BEYOND ISLAM: DIALOGUE WITH BAPTISTS CONTINUES

Last December the Pope received in audience a delegation of the Joint International Commission sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, who had been discussing “The Word of God in the Life of the Church: Scripture, Tradition and Koinonia”.

The Pope said “It is my hope that your conversations will bear abundant fruit in the examination of such historically controversial issues as the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, the understanding of baptism and the sacraments, the place of Mary in the communion of the Church, and the nature of oversight and primacy in the Church’s ministerial structure. ... issues such as these need to be faced together, in a spirit of openness, mutual respect and fidelity to the liberating truth and saving power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ”.

Zenit.org

With contributions from Lisa Gregoire.

Sunday by Sunday



By Fr Stephen Boyle, Parish Priest of New Addington

4th March: 4th Sunday of Lent

Samuel anoints David the Son of Jesse. He is to forward the plan of God as king of Israel. The importance of King David is shown to us at the very beginning of the New Testament. At the annunciation the angel says: "The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David". Zechariah also speaks of David in the Benedictus: "He has established for us a saving power in the House of his servant David".

At baptism, we were anointed by the priest with the chrism of salvation. All of us are marked with the indelible seal of Christ, and belong forever to Him. And just as David was specifically chosen for a great vocation, so is every baptised person. In the Lord of the Rings Frodo, when discouraged in his quest, is informed: "This task was appointed to you, Frodo of the shire. If you do not find a way, no one will". God knows each of us by name and we are chosen by Him for a specific vocation. Just as each one of us is unique, with our own DNA, so each Christian, each "anointed one", has a unique calling in the plan of God.

Jesus takes on the throne of David when he is born. Jesus confirms his kingship to Pilate "Yes I am a king...". Pilate himself writes out a notice and fixes it to the cross; 'Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews'. As we come close to celebrate the events of the Passion, we are reminded that the kingship of Christ is a kingship of sacrificial love.



9th March: 5th Sunday of Lent

"I am the resurrection and the life". To day we have one of the seven I am saying of Christ. This saying is a clear indication of the divinity of Christ and his personal consciousness of his divinity. *I am* was the manner in which the Lord referred to himself when he spoke to Moses from the burning bush. That he possessed the absolute sovereignty over life and death was a prerogative that was believed to belong only to God.: " God gives death and life, brings down to Sheol and draws up"(1Sam 2:6)

This saying, and the event that confirms it, the resurrection of Lazarus, also indicates the centrality of Christ in the economy of salvation. Jesus places all hopes for future resurrection on himself. The resurrection of the dead was a doctrine current in Judaism: "Of those who are sleeping in the land of Dust, many will awaken, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting disgrace". (Dan 12: 2-3), It formed part of theological debate at the time, as can be seen the debate with the Sadducees.(Mt 22:23). Christ in person exercises the divine saving work of God on behalf of his people. He is God our Saviour in person, carrying out the works of God because he himself is God.

"That they may have life and have it to the full". (Jn10:10) This life is transmitted to us through the sacraments, and it is in the Eucharist that Jesus truly is our resurrection and our life: "If anyone eats this bread he will live for ever...he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day". (Jn 6: 51,54). We are called to contemplate the eternal life on offer in our Holy Communion.



16th March: Palm Sunday

The Gospel readings this Palm Sunday are from Matthew's Gospel, the most semitic of the Gospels. Matthew points to Jesus as the fulfilment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. He quotes from the prophet Zechariah indicating the peaceful claims of this king riding on a donkey. It is worth giving the full context: "*Look, your king is approaching, he is vindicated and victorious humble and riding on a donkey on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He will banish chariots from Ephraim and horses from Jerusalem, the bow of war will be banished. He will proclaim peace to the nations, his empire will stretch from sea to sea, from the River to the limits of the earth*". (Zechariah:9: 9-10)

The Kingship of Christ is one of peace and humility. This is even confirmed when he is given the title, "Jesus of Nazareth", since Nazareth had no claim to fame. A few days later Jesus shows the true nature of his kingship on the Cross. The prophet also indicates the universal nature of the kingship. At the Urbi et Orbi next week we see the fulfilment of this prophecy as Pope Benedict, the vicar of Christ, gives his Easter Blessing to all the nations of the world.

The success of the Mel Gibson film in 2004 was a wake up call to remind us of the astonishing nature of the Passion. No matter how many times we hear it , something new should always strike us. It is truly the greatest story ever told. We ask for the grace of generous hearts as we listen to the Passion on Palm Sunday and on Good Friday



continued overleaf

23rd March: Easter Sunday

Our earthly death cannot be the end. The sadness at the loss of our loved ones shows that death does not seem natural to us. We are made to live, not to end up as dust and ashes. The discovery of the empty tomb is the full revelation of the vocation of mankind. All that is to be seen is a rock and some linen cloths. Jesus Christ is risen, and in him is our hope of resurrection. The promise of immortality written into our very nature is fulfilled through Him. It is through Him that we have a firm hope that our loved ones have an everlasting dwelling place in heaven.

In one preface of Easter, we have the following: *In him a new age has dawned, the long reign of sin is ended, a broken world has been renewed, and man is once again made whole.* In our world it may seem difficult to see the dawning of this "new age". Yet this would be wrong. The message of Christ has reached the ends of the earth. It is not noted in the media but in each of our Catholic Churches there are young and old attending, and in each town in our country Jesus is present and adored in the tabernacle and at Mass.

In preparation for the new millennium Pope John Paul put it thus: "He is not a weak and ineffective Christ but a Christ who has triumphed throughout twenty centuries and who remains the power of God and the wisdom of God... the Christ of the millennium is the man who has entered into the history of nations, has uplifted cultures by His message, transformed the destinies of peoples and who, in revealing God to man, has revealed all humanity to itself".



30th March: Second Sunday of Easter

In our relationship with God we need to know first of all that he is merciful. Due to our sinfulness we cannot have a friendship with God unless he forgives our sins. It has to be his first gift, his first initiative. In the events of Holy Week we have seen that in Jesus, God has been revealed as a Father who loves, and who desires to reconcile all human beings to Himself.

"For whose sins you forgive they are forgiven..." (Jn 20: 23). In the Rosary, the third mystery of light is the 'Proclamation of the Kingdom of God'. We also pray in the Our Father, 'thy kingdom come'. If the kingdom of God is at hand, then the forgiveness of sins is a prerequisite for this Kingdom. Jesus' ministry of mercy and forgiveness must continue after the Ascension. This Divine power of the forgiveness of sins given to the apostles and passed down to the bishops and priests of our day is a fundamental part of the life of Christ's Church.

The Feast of the Divine Mercy originates from the apparition of Jesus to St. Faustina. It is an opportunity to experience the full mercy of God: Jesus said to St. Faustina, "No soul will be justified until it turns with confidence to my mercy... this is why the first Sunday after Easter is to be the feast of mercy. On that day priests are to tell every one about my great and unfathomable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. The soul that will go to confession within 8 days and receive communion and spend some time in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament on this day shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment".



6th April: Third Sunday of Easter

One of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit is courage. That this is truly a gift is confirmed in St. Peter's address to the crowd. It is only two weeks ago that his threefold denial of Jesus had been recounted to us. Yet now he is fearless in his proclamation of Jesus and his resurrection. He will give his life as a martyr. Today we remind ourselves of the graces given to us at our confirmation. We maybe are not called to be martyrs, but in our secular society we are called to be no less courageous in the defense and expounding of our faith.

He explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself". (Acts 24: 28) Fr. Holloway, the founder of the Faith movement, puts it thus: "The whole of the Old Testament is one great season of Advent for the coming of the Messiah. The greatest of the rabbis were convinced that everything in the Law and prophets spoke only of fulfilment in the days of the Messiah". St. Peter himself indicates that the miracle of Pentecost is the fulfilment of the prophesy of Joel 3:1-5.

"He made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them". (Lk 24:29) Jesus does not force himself on the two disciples. He respects their free will. The generosity of the two disciples is amply rewarded with the recognising of Christ in the breaking of the bread. How different the story would be if they had not pressed him to stay! We press Jesus to stay with us in our hearts, and pray that we may always recognise him in the breaking of bread, the Holy Eucharist.



13th April: Fourth Sunday of Easter

This Sunday is known as Good Shepherd Sunday. "The Lord is my shepherd" is a well known Psalm and hymn. The Psalmist expresses his total trust in God as the Good Shepherd. All that he desires is given to him. God will never desert him and will give him the best of things. Best of all, he will dwell in the Lord's own house for ever.

The Psalmist has no inkling that this Good Shepherd will lay down his life for his sheep and heal them. St Peter informs us: "Christ suffered for... through his wounds you have been healed". (Pt 2:20-25) He is a Shepherd who searches for the lost sheep. He willingly gives his life for them, and offers them the fullness of life eternal. "I am the gate of the sheepfold.... Anyone who enters through me will be safe: he will go freely in and out and be sure of finding pasture". (Jn 10: 8,9) Yet even with this expression of God's love for us we can lack the total trust so beautifully expressed by the psalmist. It is a salutary lesson for us to be inspired by the faith of one who did not have the knowledge of the crucified one.

Today is the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. It is the day the Holy Father ordains priests in St. Peter's Basilica for the diocese of Rome. Let us join the Holy Father in his prayer: "Let us pray that in every parish and Christian community attention to vocations and to the formation of priests will increase: it begins in the family, continues at the seminary and involves all who have at heart the salvation of souls".



20th April: Fifth Sunday of Easter

"I am the way, the truth and the life". (Jn 14: 7) This is the last of the seven "I am" sayings. Christ is our environer. The spiritual life is not just for those that way inclined. Praying is as natural as breathing. Grace is truly the sunshine of the soul. In Him we are called to live and move and have our being. We cannot exaggerate our dependence on Him. Our secular world has it so wrong. In its attempt to run a world without reference to the spiritual it ends up with a world without hope.

Pope Benedict puts it thus in his latest encyclical *Spe Salvi*: "In this sense it is true that anyone who does not know God, even though he may entertain all kinds of hopes, is ultimately without hope, without the great hope that sustains the whole of life (cf. Eph 2:12). Man's great, true hope which holds firm in spite of all disappointments can only be God – God who has loved us and who continues to love us "to the end," until all "is accomplished".

"Whoever believes in me... he will perform even greater works". (Jn 14:12) So many have helped us in other ways in our lives, but it is to those who have guided us in the practice of our Catholic faith that we will be eternally grateful. This is surely the greatest work. Parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith. We thank them and pray that, they may treasure their vocation, as the baptismal rite puts it, "to be the best of teachers, bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do, in Christ Jesus our Lord."



27th April: Sixth Sunday of Easter

Jesus promises the apostles the Holy Spirit who will be with them for ever. This confirms that it is by the action of the Holy Spirit that the Church is apostolic. The Church is faithful to the teachings of the Apostles, but it is the Spirit who brings them to life, saving them from the fate of being abstract truths. They are 'spirit and life,' revealing the face of Christ, and bringing true joy and fulfilment to our lives.

There is always a wish by the magisterium to be sensitive to all that the Spirit is saying to the Church and the Churches (cf. Rev 2:7). Both Pope John Paul and Pope Benedict recognised the significance of the movements in the Church. Before becoming Pope, Cardinal Ratzinger noted their "essential criterion" of being rooted in the faith and teaching of the universal Church and unwaveringly loyal to the Pope. He urged the movements to submit to the guidance of local bishops in order to ensure they are not dividing parishes or diocese. But he also told bishops that they must respect the gifts of the Holy Spirit expressed in the movements and allow themselves to be surprised at what God can accomplish through them.

All movements acknowledge the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making them instruments of God in this time of the Church's history. They concur with the Holy Father that through them God has accomplished so much, and in God's providence will continue to do so. They are a potent force for good in our world and a reminder that the Spirit is always working.



Book

reviews



John Henry Newman In his Time.

Edited by Philippe Lefebvre & Colin Mason. Foreword by Jean Cardinal Honoré. Family Publications, 271pp, £11.95

The fascination of John Henry Newman's life and works does not wane with the passage of time. It may have its more intense years, followed by a less productive period, but invariably it continues like the waves on the sea shore.

The present volume is another study of this renowned Oxford scholar who seems destined for further acclaim and attention, at least in Church circles.

This book is aimed at the general public but will also be of interest to scholars. It gives a portrait presentation of Newman, concentrating on five places associated with his life and on nine areas in which he excelled. An *Introduction* by Fr Keith Beaumont of the French Oratory offers a fine summary of all the chapters of the book.

The first place we associate with Newman is Oxford. It had a profound influence on him. Its University with its ancient traditions is essential to the understanding of his subsequent spiritual and intellectual evolution. Peter Nockles rightly asserts that the determining factor was its 'catholic' ethos which pervaded the education imparted there. Not only was intellectual information given but it traditionally combined sound belief and right conduct. All of Newman's controversial stands in Oxford were linked to the defence of the moral and religious aspects of the University education as exemplified in the course of its history.

Littlemore then became his haven. Sr Mary-Brigid Dechant, FSO, who belongs to the Spiritual Family *The Work* (the present curators of the College at Littlemore) provides a brief but accurate account of Littlemore and its place in Newman's journey.

Another member of *The Work*, Sr Brigitte Maria Hoegemann, has a very interesting chapter on Newman's associations with Rome. She focuses on his first encounter with the city (in 1833) and on his subsequent stay there when preparing for the priesthood (1846-1847). On his first visit, his impressions and feelings were contradictory ones: admiration at "a fresh world of intellectual beauty, taste and imagination" yet repulsion at what he then saw as superstition and corruption (cf. pp. 62-63). In stark contrast is the feeling of serenity and peace of the years following on his reception into the Catholic Church.

Birmingham then became Newman's home for a greater part of the second half of his life. Fr Paul Chavasse, Provost of the Birmingham Oratory and Postulator of the Cause of Beatification and Canonisation, gives a notable and well-informed account of Newman's relations as an Oratorian with this city. Angelo Bottone, who lectures at the Dublin Business School, gives an account of Newman's seven difficult years working for the establishment of the new Catholic University of Ireland.

The second section of this publication contains nine studies on various aspects and attributes of Newman's life: his renowned talent as a gifted preacher (Paul Chavasse) and educator (Paul Shrimpton); his vocation as an Oratorian (Daniel Seward) and confessor (John Kirwan); his spirituality in relation to his conversion experiences (Robert Christie); his talent as a letter writer (Joyce Sugg), novelist (Michael Durand) and poet (Joseph Salvatore Pizza). A final unusual but well-documented study examines what claim Newman would have to the title Doctor of the Church. Fr Drew Morgan of the Pittsburgh Oratory investigates the criteria used in the conferring of this title on

St Thérèse of Lisieux. How Newman measures up to these *Norms and Criteria* is illustrated by words spoken or written about him by Pope John Paul II and by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later, Pope Benedict XVI). In an original study, Fr Morgan regards Newman's contribution to the teaching of the Church in the realm of conscience and development as indicative of a charism of a *Doctor Ecclesiae* given by the Holy Spirit. Many would concur, but only the Church's highest authority will decide on the existence of a particular charism of wisdom and its beneficial influence on the people of God.

The nature and limits of a short book review cannot do justice to the many fine studies and interesting insights throughout the pages of this volume. The publishers are to be congratulated on offering the public a compact and reasonably-priced volume which may well be very timely, if we consider the possible Beatification that could soon take place, provided the miraculous cure through his intercession, now being examined in Rome, proves to be genuine and acceptable.

+ Philip Boyce, OCD
Raphoe

The Glory of these Forty Days: Reflections on the Lenten Season.

By James Tollhurst, Gracewing, 101pp, £5.99

From one point of view, monks have an easy life. The classical Benedictine way of life is structured to keep the mystery of our salvation always in mind. As St Benedict says, we should prefer nothing whatever to Christ. In the daily Mass and Divine Office, in the reading at Chapter and in the Refectory, the monk will hear the words of Sacred Scripture and the Fathers many times each day. He will also have regular spaces in his daily timetable set apart for sacred reading, *lectio divina*.

Those who live their Christian life in the world, who may have a demanding job and a growing family to look after, do not

have this advantage and often struggle to maintain their life of prayer and keep contact with the wellspring of Christian revelation. As St Francis de Sales tells us, it is counter-productive for a lay person to try to live like a monk, but Catholic faith and spirituality is a unity centred on the mystery of Christ handed on to us in Sacred Scripture and Tradition. This is for all. It is thus a pity if the laity are fobbed off with peripheral devotions.

Fr Tolhurst's book is an admirable presentation of the mystery of our faith, in a series of daily readings for Lent. It gives the reader real meat for meditation cut up into digestible chunks for busy Christians. Each day the reader is presented with that day's Gospel, thus maintaining a link with the Church's liturgy for those who can't get to daily Mass, followed by brief notes on the Gospel and short relevant passages from the Fathers of the Church, the Saints or the Magisterium. We are given brief notes on the ecclesial writers quoted, and the book is a good way of getting to know these masters of the faith. On Sundays, one of the Gospels from the three year cycle is chosen. The texts can be read through in less than five minutes, but are packed with material for meditation that can be brought back to mind in any free spaces in the day.

Lent is not just about fasting. One of the great things about the reformed Roman liturgy is that, through the richness of its prayers and readings, it presents Lent as a journey towards the celebration of the paschal mystery at Easter together with those who are preparing for Christian initiation. The introduction to this work mentions the ancient custom of the Lenten station Masses in Rome, revived by Pope John Paul II and celebrated in specific Roman Churches as stopping places on the way. Fasting and penance are an essential part of this annual pilgrimage, but so are works of charity, prayer and meditation. This book provides the busy Catholic with food for the journey. The texts given are not just nice thoughts and ideas, they give us daily help

in living our Christian life; to copy an idea from Pope Benedict's Encyclical *Spe Salvi*, they are performative, not just informative. One often finds that the Fathers of the early years of the Church are more direct and better at this than modern writers. Thus we can recommend this as a book to buy and use this Lent.

Dom Augustine Holmes, OSB
Pluscarden Abbey,
Elgin,
Scotland

Is Religion Necessary and Other Questions? A study Guide for Home groups.

By Barbara Reed Mason, Proclaim Publication, (available from Nooks Farm, Stonyhurst, Clitheroe, Lancashire. BB7 5QY), 60pp, £3.50

Faith readers will know how beneficial study groups are. There is a real need for a good booklet that can be used by study groups and this booklet admirably fills that need. The basic idea of the booklet is that it should be used as a study guide for home groups in conjunction with the *Compendium of the Catechism*. Every section contains a brief summary or quotation from *The Compendium* together with other authoritative sources, such as the teaching of the popes, and wide and frequent references to the Bible, Canon Law, and the full *Catechism*. The explanations are clear and the book is not afraid to give lucid definitions. It could not be better done. I know, in fact, that the book has been very successfully used by adult home groups.

In fact I believe that the booklet could be widely used by all who want to know the faith better or to teach it. The booklet would be especially appropriate for sixth form general RE in schools that do want to teach the faith and not just have vague socialism with a Christian tinge. Younger pupils would find this booklet a useful supplement to their GCSE course, or a replacement for it for one year. Parents and grandparents trying to teach the faith at home would find it a Godsend. Parish

priests could put it safely and profitably into the hands of converts and all who want to deepen their faith.

Consider just some of the topic headings: 'What does it mean to believe in God? How do we know what is true? The Church's teaching on the Trinity; The Church's teaching on Tradition; How can there be One Way in a world of different cultures? Why does God allow suffering? Does God send people to hell? Do I have to go to church? Is sexual fulfilment a basic human need? Cultural Christianity; obedience and authority; Submission in an age of rebellion'. The book itself is a minor miracle in that these questions are considered succinctly without any superficiality or smart-Alec answers. The tone is one of reasonable discussion by those of good will, another reason why it would be such a success in schools. But it is quite clear that the Catholic Church teaches "as one with authority". Most of those titles are in the form of questions in order to provoke the discussion that this book fosters.

The booklet carries an *imprimatur*, as all books used for teaching RE are required to do by Canon Law. It acknowledges help from Dr Philip Caldwell, a priest of the Salford diocese who teaches at Ushaw. It contains a useful practical note about study groups, with useful points e.g. – "Keep the group small – no more than ten people (if more people begin to come, start another group!) There is a separate *Leader's Manual* (at £2.50) which ought to be purchased since it contains valuable advice which fits in with the overall scheme.

This study guide is inexpensive and deserves a very wide circulation.

Eric Hester
Bolton

continued overleaf

The Gift of Self in Marriage

By Anita Dowsing, *Gracewing*, 194pp, £9.99

In this, her second book on marriage during a career in Adult Religious Education in the Diocese of East Anglia, Anita Dowsing seeks to bite a very big bullet indeed: the gap between the Church's teaching on key aspects of marriage and the actual beliefs and practice of many lay Catholics today. To this end she has produced a very attractive and honest volume, mining the writings of John Paul II including *Familiaris Consortio*, *The Theology of the Body* and *Love and Responsibility* for a personalist perspective on the act of love in marriage which would sell well to third millennium Catholics. She also refers frequently to the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the current Pope's *Deus Caritas Est*: all most encouraging.

Thirteen chapters take her from a basic definition of marriage, with some analysis of differing attitudes in the Church and the world today, all the way through to how marriage prepares the spouses for the after-life and the "New Heaven and New Earth". On the way she touches on the application of science and technology to sex and reproduction, dips into literature to illustrate changing attitudes in the half-century between Nevil Shute and Bridget Jones, considers sexual compatibility in the light of the *Song of Songs* and writes well on the psychology of marriage and self-giving. Biblical references and quotes from recent writers including von Hildebrand, Nouwen and Rahner, abound. Unfortunately, Dominican gets the odd word in too.

The nub of the book for me, as perhaps for many, is the chapter on conception, children and family planning – 'The Gift Bears Fruit'. Here Dowsing pulls few punches, presenting well the 'children as gift', not burden or right, argument and is very clear on the immorality of separating the unitive and the procreative. She recommends Janet Smith's book *Why Humanae Vitae was Right* and states boldly that the NFP debate is not about effectiveness but about truth. She also deals honestly with difficulties associated with the practice of NFP and has evolved

an interesting theology of 'waiting'. Faint unease set in with her unquestioning acceptance of the possibility of rape within marriage and with her willingness to see the Pill prescribed on the grounds of mental illness. She also seems to assume that the temperature method is the type of NFP mainly on offer, which is perhaps a generational thing but a bit worrying.

A rather good treatment of the 'Christ-Church marriage', its prophetic foreshadowing in the Genesis 'one-flesh' text and a reflection on sacrifice in marriage then gives way naturally to two further chapters covering the problems facing Catholics with regard to divorce and remarriage. These contain much compassion, clarity and wisdom combined with a positive presentation of the Church's teaching on admission to the Eucharist. I liked her optimism here: "it is surprising how salvageable marriages can be".

The Gift of Self in Marriage is a broadly sound book, but not without some weaknesses. We all realise that it is not the aspect of traditional Catholic teaching on marriage which is going to inspire and attract in our secular age, but there is no mention of the 'remedy for concupiscence' angle or much on Original Sin, which I would have thought merited more than a passing nod. Dowsing's very personal and indeed anecdotal perspective also lacks an acknowledgement of the influence of secularism and unsound teaching on many Catholics. Does not the wide rejection of *Humanae Vitae* amongst Catholics reflect a loss of real faith in the Church and the absolute truth of her teachings? Is it really the case that many otherwise completely orthodox, well-informed and practising Catholics reject only the Church's teachings on sexual morality? And why has all this disobedience and misunderstanding happened suddenly? It cannot just be, as she says in the first chapter, that since the liturgical changes following Vatican II people just assumed everything else would change. What about the knowingly misleading teaching issuing from the pens and mouths of disaffected clergy, experts and establishment journalists, not to mention nearly two generations of ambiguous teaching in our schools and the paucity of episcopal

backing for NFP programmes? But I suppose it is churlish to emphasise what she does not do when she does so much, and the rather more trenchant analysis which others might make of the same set of problems is not likely to have been honed working for steering groups and deanery teams.

On the whole I enjoyed reading this wide-ranging book. I am not quite sure of the intended readership: I think it is for priests and marriage preparation catechists or guidance counsellors, rather than something to put straight into the hands of an engaged couple. It certainly has possibilities for providing material for a marriage preparation course using its questions for discussion and further reading suggestions.

Dora Nash
Oxfordshire

Fit for Mission? Schools

By Rt Rev Bishop Patrick O'Donoghue, bishop of Lancaster, 62pp, available free from the website of the Diocese of Lancaster.

'Fit for Mission – Schools' is a document arising out of the Diocese of Lancaster's review of its sacramental and missionary life. The content is theologically sound and extremely well structured. It furnishes us with a clear and authentic statement of Catholic teaching on education and provides excellent guidance and suggestions for its implementation in Catholic schools.

There is much else to be praised in the document. For instance:

- It well emphasises that parents are the first educators of their children.
- It acknowledges that we live in an age in which Catholic teaching is increasingly disputed, that attacks upon it often go unchallenged, and that this undermines Catholic life.
- It makes the clear assertion that the 'primary purpose' of the Catholic school is 'formation in the faith'.
- It addresses the vexed questions surrounding the very nature, existence and rationale of Catholic schools in England today.

- It implicitly recognises that Catholic education has failed to achieve its primary purpose and that those responsible have been unable or unwilling to identify the cause and correct it.

We must therefore strongly welcome this document as the first serious attempt by any diocese in England for more than thirty years to offer a comprehensive response to the ills facing Catholic education. Unfortunately, there are a number of background issues relating to this document that will inevitably weaken its good intentions and future implementation.

Firstly, the document is not presented as diocesan policy, but rather as a

consultative statement that seeks responses from governors and teachers after they have reviewed, discussed, reflected and considered the content. After a year of consultation it is stated that 'significant elements' of it will be incorporated into the Diocesan Inspection Schedule Section 48. This process might well encounter significant hurdles.

A special assembly of bishops which met in Rome in November 1998 drew attention to the fact that 'teachers in Catholic schools often have lives and ideas that are publicly in conflict with Church teaching' and they recognised this as a 'counter-sign'. Confusion about Vatican II and poor understanding of the Church's central

teachings were also identified as issues among both teachers and students. Therefore the diocese might well experience resistance to *Fit for Mission? Schools* from staff in Catholic schools. This of course is notwithstanding the fact that the document is both reasonable and outlines the most basic standards of Catholic life for schools.

Professor James Arthur
Christchurch University
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Professor Arthur is author of 'The Ebbing Tide. Policy & Principles in Catholic Education'. Published by Gracewing.



Notes from across
the Atlantic
by Richard John Neuhaus



GOVERNMENT AND CHILD CARE

It says in this morning's paper that Sen. Hillary Clinton has laid out a new approach, emphasising the importance of experience and "working within the system" but "without sacrificing important values like preserving Social Security and protecting abortion rights". She is obviously making a pitch for those "values voters". She says she is also determined to "reclaim the future for our children". According to our parish paper, "she wants her presidency to be a means of helping parents raise their children. 'I want to be able to say to you as your president, "Our children are well,"' she said". No doubt many parents will be reassured. It appears that it now takes not only a village but a country to raise a child. Which puts me in mind of an exchange some years ago between Sen. Phil Gramm and a federal bureaucrat who wanted to expand a programme of government child care. Gramm opined that mothers and fathers are best equipped for child-rearing because they love their children more. The official objected, saying, "I love your children as much as you do, Senator". To which

Gramm responded, "I am very pleased to hear that. What are their names?"

CHANGING DYNAMICS

It's long past time for liberal Catholics to face the fact that their fifteen minutes – or, more accurately, twenty-five years – are over. So says John Allen in an extended essay in the newspaper of record for liberal Catholicism, the *National Catholic Reporter*. He is far from the first to say it, but its publication in NCR is of more than passing interest. Francis Cardinal George put it more succinctly several years ago: "Liberal Catholicism is an exhausted project". Readers may have noticed that observations in a similar vein have appeared in these pages from time to time. From the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) until the mid-eighties, the taken-for-granted assumption was that the forces of liberalism, progressivism, reform, renewal – all marching under the banner of *aggiornamento* – were in control. *Aggiornamento* was taken to mean "updating" or "modernisation" or "getting in tune with the world" or "reading the signs of the times", and it was an intoxicating cause. In liberal Catholicism, *aggiornamento* quite swamped the primary theme of the council itself, which was *ressourcement*, meaning a vibrant reappropriation of the fullness of the Catholic tradition. The subsequent story of the ascendancy of *ressourcement* as the normative context of *aggiornamento*, under the leadership of

John Paul II, was central to the argument of my 1987 book, *The Catholic Moment*. Nonetheless, and however belatedly, it is encouraging to see NCR acknowledge the changing dynamics in Catholicism in this country and the world. As Allen recognises, the change of the last quarter century is not only due to papal leadership under John Paul and Benedict but is joined and reinforced by a resurgence of new publications, renewal movements and catechetical and evangelistic programmes strongly attuned also to young Catholics. And he is right in recognising that the liberalism of the first twenty years after the council is far from dead. It is still dominant, he writes, among "priests, deacons and the academic guild". He is likely correct about older priests and deacons. But then Allen searches for a name for those who are now centre stage in the Catholic drama, and he settles on "evangelical Catholics". Like Protestant evangelicals, he says, such Catholics are strong on authority, clarity of message and eagerness to share the faith with others. I doubt whether his proposed appellation will have staying power. The term "evangelical catholic" (usually lowercase) has for decades designated Protestants with catholic (or Catholic) leanings. I should know; I was for many years one of them. The reality is that liberal Catholics always seemed to want the Catholic Church to be something other than she is. Thus the incessant use of two-church language – the pre-Vatican II Church and the post-Vatican II Church. Those in the ascendancy since the election of John Paul want the

Church to be what she is, except more so. Some call themselves “John Paul II Catholics”, and now “Benedict XVI Catholics”. But that can sometimes smack of party spirit. Better is the response of the above mentioned Cardinal George when he became archbishop of Chicago ten years ago. Reporters pressed and pressed to get him to say whether he was a liberal or a conservative. In response, George pointed out that Catholicism is necessarily conservative in preserving the fullness of tradition and necessarily liberal in its generous understanding of human frailty and eagerness to share the faith with others. “If you need a word to describe me,” he said, “just call me Catholic”. That will do nicely.

BRIBERY FOR GOOD CITIZENSHIP

Paying people to do what they should do on their own seems a dubious policy. Unwise parents do it with their children. And Michael Bloomberg has adopted it as an antipoverty tactic in New York. A pilot programme will pay participants up to \$5,000 per year for doing things such as attending parent-teacher meetings, going to a doctor and opening bank accounts. “What we are trying to do here,” says the mayor, “is to use capitalism to encourage behaviour”. This is capitalism? One wonders what poor but sensible people think about their neighbours getting paid to do what they have been doing all along out of a sense of responsibility. One might ask whether the city is acting like those unwise parents in infantilising citizens by bribing them to be good. It’s a small programme so far, with only three thousand families enrolled in a city that has more than two million people living below the official poverty line – a line above what was called middle-class sixty years ago. Bloomberg is a billionaire several times over, and he undoubtedly means well. He evidences a paternal attitude toward the city, and not only toward the poor, as witness his draconian ban on smoking. And of course – despite the efforts of Ed Koch and Rudy Giuliani – New York continues to be a very liberal place. Who knows? Maybe those who are bribed will get into the habit of doing the right thing. But what will the poor and hardworking mother think when she discovers at the parent-teacher conference that the woman seated next to her was paid \$100 to show up? Responsibility is for suckers?

FORBIDDEN READING

“That’s pretty good, for government work”. One used to hear that a lot during the Reagan years, before Republicans became big-government enthusiasts. Pretty good, for government work, applies to the Bureau of Prisons, an agency of the Justice Department. After September 11, concerns were raised about books in prison libraries that might incite violence. Of course, specifying, as was the case, that the concerns had to do with Muslim books would raise questions of discrimination and “religious profiling”. So the bureau set up a task force to deal with all the books in prison libraries, or at least all the books that are “religious” in nature. There were hundreds of thousands of them, most of them having been donated by individuals or placed by religious groups over many years. The task force has now come up with what might be described as an Index of Approved Books. There are 150 books on the list for every religion: 150 for Christians, 150 for Jews, 150 for Muslims, 150 for Hindus, on down to 150 each for Yorubans and Bahais. Never mind that 75 percent of prisoners are Christian and maybe .0001 percent, if any, are Bahai. Unlike the Catholic Church’s old Index of Forbidden Books, which specified a relatively small number of offenders, the Index of Approved Books forbids all books that are not explicitly approved. The *New York Times* story notes that *A New World of Faith* by Avery Cardinal Dulles has been yanked from the shelves. We may heave a sigh of relief that prisoners will be protected from Cardinal Dulles, a man notorious for inciting terrorism. Also being tossed are books by televangelist Robert Schuller, perhaps because prisoners get violently angry when faced with their inability to change their circumstance through the power of positive thinking. There may be wisdom, too, in forbidding Harold Kushner’s *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* and Reinhold Niebuhr’s *Moral Man and Immoral Society* – prisoners so often refuse to repent of their evil ways, claiming that they are innocent and blaming society for their troubled lives. So, if you think about it deeply enough, there may just be an element of method in the madness of the Index of Approved Books. More likely the saying applies, “Pretty good, for

government work”. Lawsuits are underway aimed at restoring the right of prisoners to read Cardinal Dulles et al., and it appears that the prison system is rescinding its ill-considered plan. The cardinal had no comment on his achieving, at last, the distinction of being on a de facto Index of Forbidden Books.

REASONS FOR HOPING

It was a gathering of pro-life directors in the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia, and Justin Cardinal Rigali, archbishop of Philadelphia, was the featured speaker. Noting that some have grown weary, he accented “reasons for hope” in the pro-life cause. The number of abortions in America continues to decline, and fewer teenagers are engaging in sexual activity. Whatever the reasons, says Rigali, this is an encouragement. “To be free of disease, to be free of the fear of an ill-timed pregnancy, to be free of a broken heart – this is the freedom that we want for our young people, and we rejoice that it is unfolding”. He cites data showing that support for the unlimited abortion license imposed by *Roe v. Wade* is also declining, as more and more Americans identify themselves as pro-life. The Supreme Court’s decision upholding a ban on partial-birth abortions, *Gonzales v. Carhart*, “is a significant step in the right direction – moving away from the infamous ‘abortion distortion’ in Supreme Court jurisprudence and bringing their interpretation of abortion law more in line with other fields of law”. The cardinal also issued a “gentle reminder” that some have made an “idol” of the pro-life cause, letting it displace the indispensable life and sacramental grace of the Church. “Because the ‘Evil One’ wants us to fail, there is a temptation to claim this territory as our own and guard it – not as a gift from God but as the work of our own hands”. Rigali underscored also the importance of unity among Christians. “People will come to know Christ and the hope of salvation if they recognise us by our love for each other”. In sum, the pro-life cause is God’s cause before it is ours.

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DAVIES, POPPER AND THE UNITY-LAW 'MIDDLE WAY'

It was in the famous 'op-ed' column of the *New York Times* in July 2005 that Cardinal Schönborn opened up a fascinating and vigorous debate about faith and science. Last November another major contributor at the faith–science interface, English cosmologist Paul Davies, graced the 'op-ed' page of the same newspaper with a provocative piece entitled *Taking Science on Faith* (24th November 2007).

The article is about challenging assumptions, and setting out to prove that much of the way science currently proceeds is also to take certain things 'on faith'. He explains how the orthodox view amongst theoretical physicists is that there is, 'out there,' a perfect, unified law – it is the very goal of the sort of 'grand unified theory' that many physicists are aiming at. And this is, he suggests, just as much a sort of 'faith' as the Christian view of a creator God. "Over the years I have often asked my physicist colleagues why the laws of physics are what they are. The answers vary from 'that's not a scientific question' to 'nobody knows'. The favourite reply is, 'There is no reason they are what they are – they just are'. The idea that the laws exist reasonlessly is deeply anti-rational. ...Can the mighty edifice of physical order we perceive in the world about us ultimately be rooted in reasonless absurdity?" Recent attempts to explain away the fine-tuning of the universe's laws by hypothesising a 'multiverse' of different universes do not convince Davies: "The multiverse theory is increasingly popular, but it doesn't so much explain the laws of physics as dodge the whole issue. ...The problem has simply been shifted up a level from the laws of the universe to the meta-laws of the multiverse".

He suggests that "the very notion of a physical law is a theological one in the first place, a fact that makes many scientists squirm. Isaac Newton first got the idea of absolute, universal, perfect, immutable laws from the Christian doctrine that God created the world and ordered it in a rational way". Now, in fact, Davies's intention, made clear in his response to critics of the article, is to challenge this orthodoxy concerning an immutable law which is just a 'given'. He, somewhat fancifully, proposes that it is conceivable that the laws of the universe need *not* necessarily be immutable, or defined 'from outside' the universe, and he is looking to investigate this possibility. But, he says, if instead physics is going to adhere to the idea of a perfect physical law, then "[science's] claim to be free of faith is manifestly bogus".

He explains more precisely what he means in his response to the critics: "in using the word faith I refer to the metaphysical framework, *shared* by monotheism and science (but not by many other cultures), of a rational ground that underpins physical existence. It is the shared faith that we live in a universe that is coherent, a universe that manifests a specific mathematical scheme of things, a universe that is, at least in part, intelligible to sentient mortals. These tacit assumptions running through science, that stem from monotheism, can all be challenged. The universe doesn't *have* to be that way! But most scientists believe it *is* that way". Davies thus proposes a "shared failing" of reason plugged by an *a priori* faith in both religion and science.

He has come under attack from his fellow scientists for his article. They tend to argue that the scientific intuition that things will happen in the future somewhat as they always have, is mainly based on the fact that this has worked well in the past four centuries, and so is not the quasi-religious faith Davies suggests. They therefore see science as founded on a rational belief concerning a probable future. But Davies, rightly in our opinion, discerns a much stronger knowledge claim amongst scientists concerning a definite future. He points to scientists' certainty about the "immutable" nature of laws across the past and future. Such conviction is in contrast with the widely accepted

Popperian 'rational' affirmation of the inherent provisionality of scientific theory.

Davies cites the popular search for a unified field theory and he asks, whence such conviction about such a truly universal state of affairs? From monotheistic faith he replies, and depicts his detractors' pieces as bearing "the hallmarks of a superficial knee-jerk reaction".

Something more than past patterns is indeed surely needed to justify the scientific certainty concerning predictability. But Davies is surely wrong to jump to the conclusion that this something more is an *a priori* quasi-religious faith. Perhaps the truth lies between these two poles.

All physical reality is intrinsically and constructively orientated beyond itself. An aspect of this is the past's developmental orientation towards the future. It is this rational recognition, in all our observation of the cosmos, which is at the heart of the predictive success of science. This universal human recognition is not immediately comparable to religious faith, but nor is it simply a conviction that past patterns will be repeated in the future because they usually have done before.

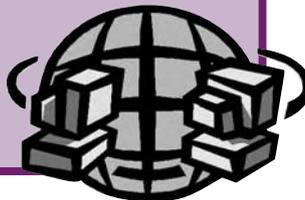
Davies' detractors are right that scientific affirmations about the future, and indeed expectations concerning a unified field theory, are founded in rational observation. Davies is right that the strength of conviction behind these affirmations goes beyond the fashionable, Popperian, philosophy of science which deals in the currency of the purely provisional and fails explicitly to found its expectations. They are each wrong in ignoring the unity forming and constructive relationality which human rationality discovers at the heart of everything.

As touched on in our current editorial the transcendent orientation towards higher unities of all physical things is mirrored in the artefacts of man, which are, in as much as these things are 'real' things, directly relative to the spiritual minds of men. This intrinsic, purposeful relationality written into matter as it is, can only come from ultimate Mind.

The critical responses to Davies's article, and his counter-response, are at:
www.edge.org/discourse/science_faith.html.

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

Reading the Word of God with the Church

The Congregation for the Clergy has just posted this helpful new resource, *Biblia Clerus*; alongside a biblical text you can browse commentaries from the Fathers, related texts in the Catechism and other church documents – or even poems from the saints. A similar commentary on the Sunday liturgy cross-references to homilies of the Church Fathers. However, at the time of writing it does not seem to be linking satisfactorily and involves using French to get to the English texts. Once running correctly, it should certainly add a little fuel-injection to Sunday homilies.

www.clerus.org/bibliaclerus/index_eng.html

Rome's prayer for priests

In case you haven't come across the Congregation's wonderful new initiative 'Praying for Priests', it is worth downloading the pamphlet and related letters. There are practical ideas for promoting Eucharistic adoration for priestly vocations. The Congregation encourages the 'spiritual adoption' of priests through a truly inspiring series of devotional anecdotes.

www.clerus.org

Healing the pain of abortion

Dr Theresa Burke founded Rachel's Vineyard in the 1990s. It provides a method of therapeutic weekend retreats for all those affected by abortion. The effectiveness of this apostolate has resulted in rapid take-up by nearly all U.S. States. International outreach is now growing in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Africa, South America, Ireland, England, France, Portugal, Scotland, Spain, Taiwan and Russia with new translations in progress for Korea, Japan and China. Blessed Teresa of Calcutta heads the list of endorsements.

www.rachelsvineyard.org

Papal Encyclicals online

It can sometimes prove a little fiddly acquiring documents from the Vatican homepage in a straightforward format. You can download just what you want so easily here. The 'pope directory' is particularly interesting. There are even a few photos of some extremely ancient papal documents.

www.papalencyclicals.net

A new hope for Catholic education

Bishop O'Donoghue's excellent document *Fit For Mission? – Schools* can be downloaded free from this site – for you to give to your school governors.

www.lancasterrcdiocese.org.uk/mission%20review/school-report.pdf

The Year of St Paul

Does anyone actually know about this attempt at evangelisation in the U.K.? It doesn't help that this otherwise excellent site from the Basilica of St Paul Outside The Walls is not in English yet.

<http://www.annopaolino.org/>

The Benedictine nuns of Colwich Abbey

Ten sisters form this community just outside Stafford. They seem justly proud of their history and it is good to see that the mantle is still being handed on. A novice provides her own blog on community life – with the odd photo too.

www.colwichabbey.org.uk
<http://colwichnov.wordpress.com>

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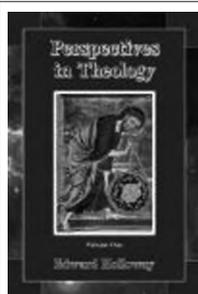
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Our understanding of the role of Mary, the Virgin Mother through whom the Divine Word comes into his own things in the flesh (cf. John 1:10-14), is greatly deepened and enhanced through this perspective. So too the dignity of Man, made male and female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

www.faith.org.uk