

faith

September/October 2007 • Volume 39 • Number 5

Renewing our Vision of the Sacraments
Editorial

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David Barrett

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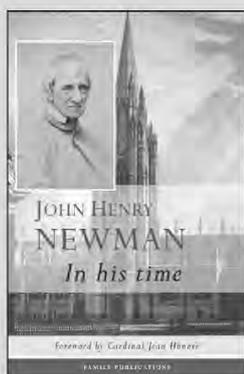
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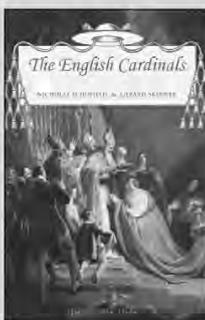
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CONTENTS

The Spirit Moves Over The Waters: Renewing our Vision of the Sacraments	2
<i>Editorial</i>	
That they may have life: The Church and the Sacramental Economy in Holloway's Thought	8
<i>Fr David Barrett</i>	
Western and Eastern Approaches to the Transcendence of God	13
<i>An interview with Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith</i>	
All That I am: A Critical Appreciation	18
<i>Fr John Fleming</i>	
All That I am: Context and Response	25
<i>Fr Joseph Quigley</i>	
Pastoral Forum: The Truth Will Set You Free	30
<i>A policy concerning Infant Baptism – Fr Roger Nesbitt</i>	
Letters	32
<i>To the Editor</i>	
Comment on the Comments	34
<i>Dr William Oddie on a battle for true development</i>	
The Road from Regensburg	36
<i>Our new column reporting Faith and Reason beyond Catholicism</i>	
Cutting Edge	38
<i>Atheism and cultural conditioning</i>	
Sunday by Sunday	39
<i>Our sermon suggestions</i>	
Book Reviews	42
<i>Conor McDonough on some helpful insights from philosophy and science into the relationship of body and soul; Dylan James on a critique of Catholic moral teaching through history that fails to convince; Joanna Bogle admires a happy and inspirational tale of two lay Catholics who have made a difference and Jerome Bertram listens in to the Abbot of Pluscarden speaking to his monks.</i>	
Notes from across the Atlantic	46
<i>A survey of religious and public life in America by Richard Neuhaus</i>	
Faith Online	48
<i>Our regular guide to the web</i>	
Other Angles	
<i>John Navone S. J. on Divinisation and the Incarnation</i>	7
<i>Edward Holloway on the Supernatural</i>	12
<i>Edwin Gordon on the reality of the Mass as more important than its forms</i>	16
<i>Ferdi McDermott on the Catholic School as a sign of contradiction</i>	28
<i>Edward Holloway on Loving Christ Today</i>	47

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The Spirit Moves Over The Waters: Renewing Our Vision of the Sacraments

“And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him, immediately turned about in the crowd, and said, ‘Who touched my garments?’” (Mark 5:30)

“We present Christ as the fulfilment of matter and the key to the meaning of the cosmos without making the humanity of the Lord into an eternally necessary ‘Self-symbolisation’ of the eternal Logos. This in turn makes it possible to present the sacraments as a natural consequence of the relationship between Christ and the Church without making matter or human actions pre-determine divine grace.”

EDITORIAL – RENEWING OUR VISION OF THE SACRAMENTS

Why Sacraments?

This editorial article takes more the character of a sustained theological meditation than a topical or controversial ‘op-ed’ piece. There is good precedent for this approach in the magnificent editorials which Fr Edward Holloway wrote for *Faith* in the nineteen seventies and eighties, some of which have now been republished by *Family Publications*. We hope and pray that more volumes will follow soon.

The title of the first volume is *Christ The Sacrament of Creation*, which has prompted our theme here. Our choice of topic is also occasioned by a recent discussion in *The Tablet* about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, whether it is a physical presence or not. Detailed discussion of that precise point would deserve a major article in its own right, but one correspondent in the debate asked how the Church could insist on the literal presence of Christ’s Body and Blood in the Eucharist when surely the point of salvation was to “escape from the physical altogether” into the realm of unsullied spirit?

The classical Protestant mindset, of course, regards sacramental thinking as something akin to paganism and magic. The primary reason for this in Protestant theology is the conviction that human nature has been utterly corrupted by Original Sin. Its instinctive tendency, therefore, is to become a religion of the Word alone rather than of the Word made flesh.

If this tendency were followed to its logical conclusion it would be difficult to believe in the literal truth of the Incarnation in the first place. And indeed many of the early Protestants were more or less explicitly Arian – seeing the Son of God as a being of lesser glory than the Father – or Docetist – denying the full humanity of the Lord – in their Christology. This is not said to be in any way anti-ecumenical, it is simply a fact of history. The Jehovah’s Witnesses are the true heirs, in this sense, of some of the early Reformers. Mainstream Protestant denominations do not formally deny the Incarnation like this, but the point is that there is a certain tension and ambiguity regarding the Incarnation, more or less conscious, that runs through all Reformation thinking. It is a tension that is linked to the theological pessimism about matter.

Tension Within Catholic Tradition

Catholicism, of course, does not hold this absolute pessimism about matter or human nature. However, it has to be admitted that there has been a degree of tension about the understanding of the sacraments in Catholic tradition. It is a tension that is linked to the long standing debate about whether the Incarnation takes place wholly in response to human sin or primarily as the fulfilment of God’s creative plan.

The state of neo-scholastic sacramental theology in the mid twentieth century may be typified by Bernard Leeming’s magisterial work, *Principles of Sacramental Theology* (1955). For Leeming matter is simply used as a remedial instrument for leading man to God after the fall. So, in his estimation, the sacramental economy only exists as an expedient for

correcting the wounds of sin. In which case one has to ask why did God bother creating the body, indeed matter, in the first place? It would seem to be nothing other than a drag upon the spirit. In the life of heaven the body would at the very least be a redundant appendix to eternal blessedness.

This way of thinking ought to mean that pure spirit-to-spirit communication was the original ideal for men as well as for angels. And Leeming does indeed argue that unfallen man would have come to know spiritual truths not by discursive instruction and reasoning but by direct divine illumination – no need for Scripture or for the Church then?

Leeming says that in a state of innocence God would not have needed to communicate with us through “artificial (sic) signs”. The worship of God before the fall would likewise “certainly not have involved his dependence on material things as a means of grace or knowledge.” He admits frankly that this is close to the non-sacramental beliefs of the Quaker movement and their doctrine of ‘inner light’. They are only to be criticised apparently for “not giving due weight to the effects of the fall”. (Leeming p.603-604)

It has to be said that not all scholastics agreed with this perspective. Suarez, for example, argued that just as language and symbol are natural to humanity, so the sacraments are appropriate as means of communion with God. But by the time of Vatican II the dominant theories in the schools and manuals were those which shared the essential perspective of Leeming.

The Patristic Vision: Flesh as “The Hinge of Salvation”

However, if we go back to the Greek speaking Fathers of the Church, we find that they had a much more robustly organic and bodily vision of salvation. St. Irenaeus, for example, argued the case for the real presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist in emphatically physical terms.

The Fathers maintained the sacredness of matter and its positive role in God’s saving plan. This was in the face of many related heresies all of which drew on the cosmic dualism at the heart of paganism and had a problem accepting the goodness of the body and hence that it participates in divinity or that it can inherit eternal life in the resurrection. The orthodox Christian outlook was summed up famously by the Latin Father Tertullian in the phrase: “The flesh is the hinge of salvation/*caro salutis est cardo.*” (*De Carnis Resurrectione* 8; PL 2,806)

Divinisation Through “The Mysteries”

The wider context of this patristic vision is the idea of the ‘divinisation’ of man in Christ. We are saved not by escaping from tainted matter, but rather the touch of God on our humanity is through a communion of spirit that is intrinsically ministered through the physical, for that is the constitution of human nature as God intended it to be “from the beginning”.

In fact, rather than matter being a burden and a drag upon the spirit, it is man’s incarnate nature that is the very reason for God’s personal Incarnation. This is the crowning glory of God’s overarching plan in order to bring about the perfect union of heaven and earth and the final communion of all creatures in eternal bliss. So for them matter, which might otherwise seem to be our source of humiliation, is in fact the very source of our exaltation and of God’s greatest glory.

For them, the Incarnation was not an afterthought but is The Mystery at the heart of God’s creative purpose hidden in the Father’s heart from all eternity and revealed in Christ in the fullness of time. So far from matter being a remedial tool in God’s saving plans, the Holy Spirit empowers material things as essential instruments of Christ’s divinising ministry throughout time and space in the sacraments, which the Fathers referred to as “the Mysteries”.

The Eucharist is the apex of this sacramental union between Christ and the Church. It is the Mystery of mysteries *par excellence*. It is what makes the Church Christ’s extended or Mystical Body. We too often forget that it is the Eucharist that makes the Church, the Mass that makes the community, not vice versa. The incarnate presence of Christ as Saviour and Redeemer in the Eucharist opens the fountainhead of Divine Life that flows through and energises all the other sacraments and indeed the whole life of the Church.

The Fathers did not reflect on the exact causality of this process, but they constantly emphasised the fact of this living relationship with Christ through ‘the mysteries’ through which mortal men are incorporated – literally – into the Divine Life. This theme of sacramental ‘divinisation’ is found explicitly in the writings of St. Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil and John Chrysostom among others. They all teach clearly that the sacraments are the extension in the life of the Church of Christ’s work of raising man into union with the divine life, which is the primary purpose of the Incarnation, whether or not man had sinned.

The Flawed Syntheses of Rahner and Teilhard

The recovery of this patristic vision was one of the aims of the Second Vatican Council, and indeed much of it is contained in such beautiful documents as *Lumen Gentium*. But in the event, post-Conciliar thinking has been dominated in large measure by the theology of Karl Rahner and the philosophy of Teilhard de Chardin. Their influence has reached far beyond the halls of academia into popular catechesis and pastoral practice.

Rahner proposed that all Being – which for him is equated with Spirit – must go out of itself into ‘non-being’ – which for him is equated with Matter – to become the ‘symbol’ of itself. In this way Being fully express its own identity. Being/Spirit then returns to itself in self-knowledge and acceptance through a paradoxical process of self-transcendence. He applies this dialectical – some

might say ambiguous or even contradictory – principle to the whole of his philosophy and theology.

For Rahner the humanity of Christ is nothing other than the ‘symbolisation’ of the eternal Logos, and the Church is in turn the ‘symbolisation’ of Christ. The sacraments are then easily assimilated to this model as the further ‘symbolisation’ of the Church which therefore *both contain and effect* the primal mystery of God’s Self-communication to human nature and its acceptance within human history. This mindset is behind the often repeated error that the sacraments ‘simply celebrate grace already achieved’. It may not be exactly what Rahner meant, but it is the inevitable translation into catechetical and pastoral reality of the tensions inherent in his system.

Teilhard de Chardin uses more dynamic language, but his system in which matter and spirit are seen as essentially a single, twin-faceted energy that runs through the whole of reality, translates into much the same kind of ‘panentheistic’ vision. In Teilhard’s thought God immerses Himself into the creative dynamic of cosmic evolution so that spirit becomes the leading edge of material complexification. Christ is then the final flowering of this upthrust of Spirit from within evolving matter. The Church and the sacraments are simply the concrete expression of this emerging ‘Christosphere’. This thinking lies behind the pervasive idea that divine presence emerges from the human quality of the celebration and that the ‘grace’ of the sacraments is the crystallisation of qualities inherent in the community.

Both of these theological syntheses were attempts to reconnect with a sense of the sacredness of matter. However, despite their best intentions, the confusion of matter and spirit that is common to their thought inevitably leads to the effective identification of God and creation, of nature and grace with far reaching consequences for the subversion of Catholic orthodoxy.

A New Synthesis: Matter and Spirit – Union without Confusion

Edward Holloway in his own monumental work, *Catholicism: A New Synthesis* addressed many of the same concerns both before and after the Council. At the core of his system is the idea of the Unity-Law of Control and Direction which presents creation and salvation as the manifestation of a single, dynamic wisdom and purpose that shapes the fabric of every created nature. Yet, crucially, his system does not blur the distinctions between matter and spirit, nature and grace, God and the world.

Holloway considerably enhances and develops the patristic perspective about the flesh as the ‘hinge of salvation’ with his vision of the evolution of matter poised and framed from its beginning as a unity which culminates in the Incarnation of God. The Hollowayan principle which states that: *‘matter is that which is controlled and directed, mind is that which controls and*

directs’ is really a closer examination of the exact structure of that ‘hinge’ upon which all salvation hangs.

It shows how matter is necessarily integrated into spirit, but is not to be identified with it. So the body is not the ‘self-symbolisation’ of the spiritual soul, yet body and soul do integrate in a single nature. “Neither is meant to be handicap on the other” (Holloway, *Catholicism A New Synthesis*, Faith-Keyway 1971 p.309).

God the ‘Environer’ of Man

Holloway’s synthesis answers all that Rahner was looking for in his theory of ‘real symbol’ yet avoiding his incipient pantheism. For Holloway, all matter is aligned on Christ in the first place and is taken up into union with God as the fulfilment of its created constitution. This makes the sacramental economy completely coherent. For the Incarnation and all that flows from it is the very key to God’s purpose in creating the material cosmos at all.

The principles of the ‘Unity-Law’ bring into accurate and orthodox focus the relationship by which the body can be the real and effective symbol of the spiritual without confusion of the two. The whole economy of creation is sacramental in principle, and this relationship is brought to its perfection and peak in Christ who is the perfect and perfecting gift of God to his creatures.

The core principle of the sacraments of the Church therefore lies in this nature of man as ‘spirit wrapped in matter’ or, perhaps better to say, matter integrated into spirit, which has been created by God for intimate union with Himself through Jesus Christ. This means that in any order of creation and any state of man Christ is ‘The Sacrament of the World’. For “...the flesh without the Incarnation is a nuisance and an interference in the spiritual order... (so that)... in the very wisdom of God... physical reality must participate, and participate at a noble level, in the religious knowing, loving and adoration of mankind.” (Holloway 1971 p.310).

Similarly the Hollowayan principle which says: “that which controls and directs must come into contact with that which it controls but cannot itself be controlled and directed by it” expresses the relationship of union without confusion between the natural and the supernatural, as well as between man’s physical body and spiritual soul. It is possible on this basis to argue for the providential necessity of the Incarnation without making the creature determine the Creator.

We can present Christ as the fulfilment of matter and the key to the meaning of the cosmos without making the humanity of the Lord into the eternally necessary ‘Self-symbolisation’ of the eternal Logos. This in turn makes it possible to present the sacraments as a natural consequence of the relationship between Christ and his Church without making matter or human actions pre-determine divine grace.

Sacramental Causality and the Divinity of Christ

The formal principle of causality in the sacraments is always the Divinity of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but that causality involves in its very thought the fact of God made man who acts in and with the human community of the Church. It is not as if matter has been invested with some divine quality in its own right – that would indeed be a magical understanding – rather it is the dynamic, Spirit filled presence of the Christ in an enfleshed relationship with his People that constitutes the principle of sacramental life-giving empowerment.

Matter is the hinge of salvation, but it is never confused with the Godhead that empowers it. In the sacraments matter and spirit are linked in an effective instrumental union – ‘outward signs of inward grace’ – but are never identified with each other. In the sacraments, as in the Incarnation, the natures remain distinct and unconfused yet are truly joined in the person and work of God the Son. It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh on its own counts for nothing, yet it remains true that unless we receive him in the flesh we do not have life within us (cf John 6,52-65). This truth applies not only to the Eucharist, but also as a general principle to all the sacraments.

Sacraments as the Perfecting of Creation

For Holloway, unlike Teilhard, Spirit is not scattered and suffused throughout creation, rather the whole of the Universe is dependent on the Mind of God. The Spirit ‘hovering over the waters’ in Genesis is an image of divine power energising the physical but without any pantheist confusion of the Divine somehow immersing Itself into the material. The sacraments are the fuller development of this initial relationship between God and the universe, which has now been made plenary through the direct integration of Divinity and humanity in the person of Christ.

This also makes sense of the sacraments as objective acts of God which function *ex opere operato*, rather than just subjective acts of humanity which yearn for, invoke and somehow evoke the divine. Before the coming of Christ that was precisely the situation with the religious rites of Israel. They were ‘sacramentals’ in the wider sense, but they were not guaranteed as saving actions. The seven Sacraments of the Incarnation *are* objectively guaranteed because they are based on the perfect union of God and Man. They are the fully human acts of the fully Divine Saviour in the midst of his community.

So the sacramental rite does not have power simply as a ritual, but because Jesus *personally and historically* has become the principle of the final perfection of his creatures through his continuing communion with men in the living bonds of nature and grace which constitute the Church.

The ‘Mystical Body’ – Extending the Incarnation

In the sacraments God acts upon the creature in Christ through ‘co-operative’ causes. This is really a fuller development and

perfection of that pattern of creative causality centred upon the Mind of God which is written into the whole of material being, and which we name the Unity Law of Control and Direction (see Editorial, September 2006).

This co-operative activity does not make the action of God remote but rather as direct and immediate as communion between God and human nature can be. It is in fact the very character of the Incarnation itself, which for human beings represents the greatest possible intimacy with God. Christ has taken the material creation to himself as his instrument and he has gathered ‘from East to West’, – or better ‘from the rising of the sun to its setting’ – his own hierarchically ordered family of brothers and sisters through whom, with whom and in whom he loves and redeems us all unto heaven.

Once again we see a union without confusion between the Head and the members of the Church. The power is Christ’s alone, but the co-operative ministry of the Church is a real and necessary condition of divine communication and communion. As the Catechism puts it: “It is the whole community, the Body of Christ united with its Head that celebrates” in every sacramental liturgy (CCC 1140).

The Divinisation of Man and the Unity-Law

The Catechism also speaks of the sacraments as the dispensation of the ‘*plan of salvation as one vast blessing*’ (CCC 1079). This ‘blessing’ is nothing less than the gift of the Beatific Vision itself. Human nature is brought into union and communion with Godhead as its proper environment – its principle of life and life more abundant – through the Self communication of God the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the plan of God laid out in Christ from before the foundation of the world.

The Incarnation is not merely an event – not even The Event in salvation history – it is the final chapter in the unfolding history of creation and salvation through which God raises up his material creation to the heights of perfect union with Himself. It is the final and abiding relationship between heaven and earth. So the presence and ministry of Christ as God on earth extends and continues as a fact of history in the life of Church. Just as the Church fills up in the bodies of her members the sufferings of Christ, so also the consolations of the Lord overflow to others through her as she fills out the full measure of the healing love of Christ by her sacramental ministry (cf. Col 1,24).

Sacraments and the Paschal Mystery – Both Purification and Perfection

Speaking of sacraments in terms of ‘divinisation’ or ‘blessing’ does not in any way play down the redemptive dimension of the sacraments. For redemptive healing is not essentially different from sanctifying or divinising grace. Redemption means restoring through pain and sorrow the original invitation to perfect love that terminates in beatific communion. “When we speak of

'washing away' sin or of 'forgiving somebody' we are not really making a negative release from something, but we are *loving again* or loving in greater abundance." (Holloway p.322) The loving and its final outcome are not essentially different, but the love is massively intensified, filled with desperate pathos and struggle, and radically underlined in its utter freedom and generosity in the face of rebellion and contradiction.

Even in a fallen world order the sacraments are not exclusively ordered to the healing of sin. Vatican II re-emphasised how the sacraments of Christian Initiation restore and divinise inseparably – they redeem by making us co-sharers of Christ's own Sonship and heirs with him to glory. Marriage and Holy Order appoint to office and function in the Church by giving recipients a particular share in the personal work and dignity of Christ. Even Penance and Anointing have a perfective as well as an obviously restorative dimension.

All the sacraments incorporate us into Christ with a restoration that simultaneously sweeps us onwards into the love of God. They heal, ennoble, and glorify in one breath because they are the incarnate actions of the Father's beloved Son who is faithful to his original mission as the "first born of creation" (Col. 1,15) despite the disaster of sin. In the face of rejection and torture he was "humbler yet" (Phil. 2,8) even to accepting physical and emotional annihilation on the cross. As a result his glory shines out all the more powerfully against the darkness which could not overcome him. This is why the sacraments are all marked, each in their own way, by both the sign of the cross and the light and joy of the resurrection.

Christ The Sacrament of Creation

In summary we can say that the heart principle of the sacraments is the Self-giving of God to his creatures *according to the nature of the creature* which raises them into perfect union with himself, One could even argue that God the Son is "sacrament of the angels" in a certain sense for He is their principle of Life and blessedness. It is through the Eternal Word that the angels grasp the Father's Self revelation and through Him they receive the Holy Spirit of eternal joy. Only in the case of the angels, of course, God does not take their nature to himself (cf Heb 2,16). There is no need of it, for they commune natively spirit to Spirit. So there is no call for sacramental actions as we understand them.

Yet in creating human beings with bodies formed from the unfolding of matter in cosmic development, God the Son committed himself from all eternity to become Man according to the Father's will. This meaning and purpose is written into the very foundations of matter even in the 'primal singularity' of the universe. It is what controls and directs the laws and developmental phases of evolution right up to the brain of man. It is what guides and informs the history of revelation that culminates in the Incarnation. It is what shapes the sacramental economy of the Church, which eventually gives way to the Church of the Resurrection in heaven. Matter was made for the sacraments because Man was made for God in Christ who is "The Sacrament of Creation".

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DIVINISATION AND INCARNATION

By John Navone S. J.

The story of Jesus is what the eternal trinitarian life of God looks like when it is projected upon the screen of history, and this means not only on the screen of human history but of sinful human history. The obedience of Jesus to the Father, his obedience to his mission, is just what the eternal procession of the Son from the Father appears as in history. His obedience consists in nothing else but *his being in history*. Jesus did nothing but be the Son as man. His crucifixion was the dramatic manifestation of the sort of world we have made, the showing up of the world, the unmasking of what we traditionally call original sin. There is no need for theories about the Father putting his Son to death once we know that he was human in our world. Jesus died in obedience to his Father's will simply in the sense that he was *human* in his obedience to his Father's will.

Just as the crucifixion/resurrection is what the eternal procession of the Son from the Father looks like when projected upon sinful human history, so the sending of the Holy Spirit (so that we share in the life of God, so that the mystery of the church exists) is what the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit looks like when projected on to that sinful human world. And the Holy Spirit appears in our world as the transforming force making the world new, or the church new, the individual new, by reducing all the obstacles to its new creation.

The Holy Spirit of the Father and Son is our given capacity for God in our divinization. It is a given equality/communion with God. To lose sight of that would be to make ourselves God, to divinize ourselves. It is the mystery we encounter when we try to speak of the relationship of Jesus and the Father. There is an equality between them, yet evidently there can be no such thing as two individual Gods. Jesus is indeed from the Father, owes his being to the Father, but is nonetheless not a creature but wholly equal with the Father. The traditional word for this is "procession": Jesus proceeds from the Father but not by being created.

What we mean by the Incarnation is that the divine Son took on humanity; what we mean by our grace is that we human beings are given divinity. And it is in living the divine-life-we-are-given that we have what we call faith in the fundamental truth that the Father loves Jesus. That God is creator and loves Jesus as equal is revealed to us in the story of Israel and the church, centering and pivoting on Jesus of Nazareth.

The revelation is not given to us as a piece of *information about* God; it is communicated to us *in the act* of taking us up into his love. In other words, that the Father loves Jesus is revealed to us precisely in our being brought to share in that love between them: and this is the Incarnation. Jesus in fact actually reveals the Father's love for him not in talking about it but in embracing us within it – he does talk about it too, but you could listen to the talk without receiving the revelation for that lies in responding faith to the offer of love.

What is offered in the church and scriptures is a share in his life. What is unique about Jesus is the encounter with God that he represented. If we are to enter into the mystery of God we need to be taken up by God himself, to share in his knowledge of himself, a share that makes us acutely aware of our inadequacy before the mystery as we are brought closer to it.

So it is God's initiative that is needed. Not that we should speak more about him, but that *he* should speak to us. No one, however sinless, could know God except God. No one knows the Father except the Son, no one knows the Son except the Father. Unless we are taken up to share in God's self-knowledge there is just no way a creature can answer his/her own radical question about God. It is not sin that gets in the way; it is the fact that we are creatures. The gap between ourselves and God is not simply a moral one, that he is good and we are not. It is the metaphysical one: God is creator and we are his creatures.

Of course, our being sinners does not help. It means that we do not of ourselves share in knowledge of God (true of creatures anyway) but that when it is offered to us we reject it. There is for us no such state as absence of divinity: we are either divinized or we have rejected divinity.

For this is what is involved in the gift of Jesus. God loves Jesus and loves him from eternity as his co-equal Son, owing his existence indeed to God though not created. It is into this eternal exchange of love between Jesus and the Father that we are taken up, this exchange of love that is called the Holy Spirit. And this means, of course, that we are taken up into equality/communion. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit of love poured into our hearts (Rom 5:5) we are given equality, the divine life love itself, the Holy Spirit.



That they may have life and have it to the full: the Church and the sacramental economy in Holloway's thought

by Fr David Barrett

In the first half of this major article, Fr Barrett, who has just started a doctorate in Rome, shows how Fr Edward Holloway places the Sacramental Economy in the context of one divine economy of Creation and Salvation. In Part Two, to be published shortly, he shows a number of spin offs of this approach for solving perennial debates and avoiding the dangerous tangles so much moderns theology can get into.

"It is Jesus Christ who is the fullness and perfection of the Unity-Law. Just as in the act of the Incarnation He does not ignore the structure of this Law nor the structure of man, so also in the Body called the Church Christ takes account of this structure and perfects it."

"That they may have life and have it to the full": this is really a central theme to Edward Holloway's book *Catholicism: A New Synthesis*. In it we see the ultimate purpose of the Incarnation and the fulfilment of the meaning of not just man but also of the whole of the material order of creation. However, that Biblical quotation from John 10:10 needs qualification. As the translation of this sentence stands, we could easily imagine that Christ comes to give us a fulfilment which is enough for us, which is our full measure, which fills up our potential as human beings. Now all that is true but it is not the full truth. What is translated as "to the full" is in Greek *perission*, and it would be more appropriate to translate this as "abundantly". It is better to read the text as: "That they may have life and have it abundantly." Is this just a mere quibble over words? Most definitely not. For the measure that Christ comes to bestow on us is not our measure but His; it is the fullness of God's own life and this is an abundance which excels and surpasses any fulfilment of ourselves that we could ever possibly imagine. As Holloway consistently points out, it is the only destiny God ever willed for us; even so, because it is an abundance beyond our expectations, this is a pure gift to us from God, a gift in the order of charity, and because God never acts imperfectly we find that this gift of sheer love is the greatest gift that could ever be bestowed on us¹.

It is the most that even God could give, the fullness that is Himself in the Divine and not the creature's way of possessing God².

'Unity Law'

It is essential to bear this perspective in mind because this ultimate end of man is what the whole sacramental economy is designed to bring about. We should also note that this end does not relegate the rest of the material order to futility, to no role at all. There is a relation between the structure of matter, the structure of man and the structure of the Incarnation, the Church and the sacraments. Those structures are summed up in what Holloway terms 'The Unity Law of Control and Direction'. This refers to the fact that every created thing looks to a principle other than itself for final purpose and achievement of its meaning. It looks beyond itself for this fulfilment and cannot give it to itself. Its identity then is established through relation to others. If we examine a complete being we find that it mediates overall coherence to the parts that compose it, on which it depends to be complete at all; these parts are real in themselves but they are only ultimately intelligible in relation to the whole and in themselves their structure naturally tends towards the higher unity. This is summed up lucidly in the essential principles of the Unity Law:

A thing cannot be its own cause and its own control. It must come into contact with that which it controls, but cannot be caused by it³.

Everything stands in this relation to everything else. Holloway's reflections on the notion of the 'relative substance' make precisely the same point: material things are not self-sufficient entities, complete in themselves; they have an intrinsic limitation, inherent in them because they are a moment in the history of evolution from which they receive their place and purpose. They contribute to the overall meaning of evolution but only on the basis that they have received and continue to receive their very being from this history of evolving, always unified, being⁴.

When we speak of the sacramental economy, we are referring to the means that God uses to give His Divine Life to man. God is man's Envioner, his Bread and his sunshine. Like the rest of the created order, man must receive from his environment the fulfilment he needs, for which he yearns, and he can only do this by coming into direct contact with his environment. This will be given in a way that fits in with man's nature and through the Incarnation God shows us how: His Son becomes man and He relates to us through His human nature, and this includes the flesh, since this is an intrinsic part of our ability to relate to others and also to God. It is only in relation to Christ that we gain the abundance of life for which we yearn. This life will not be mediated to us in an abstract manner. It will be concrete and particular, at certain times and in certain places, and so it will involve recognisable rituals and at the same time visible signs which in some way will be material, for time and space are but aspects of what it means to be matter⁵. If life is to be given to our personalities, then the whole person will be involved and the means to administer that life will be adapted accordingly.

From this we begin to see more of that unified cosmic sweep from the poisoning of the universe to the ultimate consummation in the final resurrection. The whole of God's plan for man and creation is characterised by a simplicity and beauty which reflect His own Being.

Incarnational

For Holloway, while it is true that the sacramental principle is a continuance on a higher plane of the laws that rule all creation, it is not just that.

Yes, it is profoundly in harmony with the nature of man as a unity of matter and spirit. Picture, symbol and ritual are products of this essential identity: they express the co-operation of both orders of man's being as meaning is manifested through visible or audible forms. Indeed language itself witnesses to this: the external sounds or written formulations are arbitrary, and so "not determined in a programmed way by the environment acting upon a brain" – and this itself indicates the existence of the soul in man; at the same time in all the variety of sound between the different languages, we find that a unity of meaning is expressed through those sounds and forms. For example, the meaning of

the word "dog" is still communicated even if we use the differently sounding words "chien" or "cane". Here then the material and the spiritual co-operate in a unity so that we have "a spiritual content wrapped up first in a sound and then in a graphic symbol"⁶. Man would inevitably express himself in family and society, and ultimately in religion, by using symbol and rite.

The Incarnation, the Church and the sacraments all flow naturally from such a conception of man. However, there is one important difference and this is where we find that the sacramental principle does not just mirror man's nature nor the rest of material creation. I said that man would even in religion express his own nature by using rite and symbol: these are manifestations after all of his spiritual and corporeal nature. With the sacramental economy we do not have man expressing himself. The principle agent at the heart of this economy is God the Son made flesh. Thus do the sacraments express the fullness of man's true template or icon (Christ) and the abundance of life that God gives. This economy is not primarily the expression of our relationship to God but the "one and only *plenary communication and communion* of God with men"⁷. It is Christ who acts in the sacraments as the objective minister and the objective nourishment of man (thereby raising even the material universe to a status never before dreamed of, since Jesus involves it so directly in His work).

The Church

This is true also for the nature of the Church. Holloway consistently points out that the Church is not some Presbyterian gathering of believers who happen to come together because it is convenient to do so. The Church is not our work, our creation. It is the chosen instrument of Jesus Christ by which He mediates to every person and age His divine truth, divine authority and divine love. It is His work. Indeed it is more than this.

The Church is a life in Jesus Christ, not a static imputation. She extends His personality and His salvific work through time⁸.

If the Church does not hand on the fullness of Christ's revelation, His authority, truth and love, then the mission of Christ has failed and man is bereft in his very being. Many do not hold that she teaches faithfully and by His authority the truth of revelation but would nevertheless hold that the love of Christ is indeed alive today. This divides Christ and the unity of His work: He has come to give us life and this life more abundant is an ordered or truthful communion in God's love which enhances and raises our own being. Christ was clear that He was revealing the Father's word to mankind and that the Holy Spirit would indeed guarantee the teaching of the apostles and the Church as they hand on this

word (cf. John 14:24-26). If this were not so then Christ would not have provided wisely for His flock. As Holloway writes:

'The scandal which is greatest is not that perplexity or heresy ravages the Church, or that the occasion of the greater sin exists beforehand, but that some men who claim and who love the Christian name, can say that the Church does not at all times, in her Palm Sundays, or upon her Cross, live the full life of Christ in mind as well as in heart, and does not possess the full and certain truth of Christ, and the authority to assert and to define it when the crisis comes'⁹.

To suggest otherwise would be to have an economy of salvation which could not reach out in fullness to every human being across history. Without a divinely guaranteed proclaimer of the Gospel, we are left with individual interpretation and so the living Christ disappears behind a projected image that mirrors only the hearts and minds of fallen human beings. A divinely guaranteed means of transmission gives us the possibility of a sure encounter with the Redeemer. Anything else would be less than a divine economy: it would be untrue to the identity of man, that ardent seeker of truth, love and life, and it would not be worthy of the Divine Wisdom.

Human Communion

It is Jesus Christ who is the fullness and perfection of the Unity-Law. Just as in the act of the Incarnation He does not ignore the structure of this Law nor the structure of man, so also in the Body called the Church Christ takes account of this structure and perfects it. Man is social and so the Church too is an assembly: God gathers His People together from all the nations. The unity however is greater than that of any secular society. It is based on the Headship of Christ and our own organic union with Him effected by Him. As a result, the authority, truth and love of Christ will be handed on in and through this organic union and so will need to be tangible, evidential and enfleshed¹⁰.

This is an essential point. Man as this unity of body and soul can only fully meet Christ the Priest, Prophet and King in the way in which he meets and gets to know others. He meets them in certain places and at certain times (it is tangible). The communication that takes place is through real language and actions (it is enfleshed). This communication if it is true means what it says and so can be recognised (it is evidential): that is, the actions and language really do reveal in an evident and clear manner who the person is and what they mean. From this we can realise that the communication of grace is not the giving of a whole sum to man, as if the totality was bestowed on him

in one act or from the beginning of man's existence. It is given in stages and moments, referring to man's needs at given moments, helping to reach ever deeper into the rebellion in our hearts. It is a recognisable encounter because it involves ritual, matter, word, space and time – and to be recognisable it would have to use these as well.

This work can only be accomplished by the agency of Christ because to Him alone does it belong to be the food and life of man, present ontologically to each of His members. This work He consummated by the Sacrifice of His death and Resurrection. By this same Sacrifice represented in the Mass He gathers all men together into Himself so that they may relate to the Father in the Spirit in the same way as the Son; and by this Sacrifice they receive deliverance from sin and the fullest unity possible on earth with God and they are fully membered one to another. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, through this Sacrifice perfect praise and thanksgiving is offered to the Father. In it all is Christ the ever-living Priest, who is at the same time our Bread of life. All creation, especially man, finds completion in Him: "the Exemplar of the flesh is the flesh of the Word of God"¹¹.

Ministerial Priesthood

In order to gather "the sons and daughters of God around the table of their Daily Bread, the Life that ever intercedes for them and begets new sons and daughters of the Father, the Bread also of life and immortality"¹² there is needed an office in the Church, a ministerial role that shares in the unique Mediatorship of Christ. He fulfilled the order of society – priest, prophet and king – in His own Incarnate Self. In the Church there will need to be special office bearers who will have a real share in His unique Office. The sacrament of Holy Orders is the instrument He uses. Through the sacred character which they receive, men co-operate with Christ in His work of redemption and salvation: they are called "to an intimate participation with Him in His words and works, His loves and cares"¹³. As a result this is no delegation from the community but a gift from the Son of God made man. Through this gift to certain men He continues His one task which consists in "the teaching and fulfilling in divine truth and divine love with a divine authority, and in the feeding and nourishing unto Eternal Life of the whole personality of a man, in body and in soul"¹⁴.

Through their ministry, we receive a guarantee that the full work, truth and love of Christ is not lost in history but remains ever present because it is He who is the source and agent of the sacrament these men have received. They represent Him and in their work it is Christ who acts directly through, with and in them. His shepherding cannot be an abstraction, a vague spiritual influence from on high; it must be something that affects in a real way, a way that is tangible, evidential and

enfleshed. This guarantees that the doctrine of the faith will develop organically in history, with a competent authority to judge and guide this development, competent because it derives from Christ. In this unique Tradition, it would make sense therefore that Christ's infallibility be part of the Church's essential constitution, the "fifth mark" of the Church, as Holloway suggests¹⁵.

As with any society, there is need for an ultimate authority. In the Church, under the one King, a Bishop will be the final arbiter, especially in disputes. The Papal office therefore also flows fittingly from the nature of man. As in all other matters, the source of Papal authority is not the people but the Lord Jesus Himself. Without this unique office in the Church, there is not the fullness of the Magisterium of Christ: through the Pope this Magisterium descends and actuates the college of Bishops in their authority to teach in the name of Christ, received in Holy Orders. Holloway sees the office of the Papacy as the ultimate degree of ascent of the Bishops as they share in Christ's office. "The office of Peter is integrated directly into the office of the Personal Priesthood of Our Lord Jesus Christ." Like a curate or *vicarius* (vicar) whose office is integrated into that of the parish priest ("Curates come and go, but the parish priest abides forever"), so it is with the Pope in relation to Christ. Christ is the Supreme Priest, whose priesthood could never be equalled or fully attained by any creature. However the office of the Pope is the highest that any creature could get to – and it is arrived at by the grace of Christ. This does not involve a special papal character. Nevertheless, "the office of Peter, in the Church, under Jesus Christ, should then... be looked upon as the final power of actualisation of the priestly character at its final apex of adhesion into Christ of the power of Order in the Church"¹⁶.

This view of the Magisterium that 'descends' does not deny the real teaching authority of the Bishops as a college. Yet it is clear that they only have this teaching office because they are in hierarchical communion with the head: the head gives cohesion and gives a guarantee to this teaching.

Furthermore, the actualisation of the episcopal character is not accomplished because of the Bishop's own action of succeeding to Peter, as if it arose from him. It happens by the grace of Christ which acts continually through and in this character that He has given. This fits in with the Unity-Law where fulfilment is given through the environment: the creature does not award the fulfilment to itself from its own sufficiency. Perhaps it might help to give an example. Suppose an Orthodox Bishop were to become a Catholic and is permitted to exercise his episcopal office. He already has the sacred character of a Bishop but until he comes into hierarchical communion with the Pope the full possibility of this is not brought to fulfilment: he cannot share

in the definitely guaranteed ability to teach granted by Christ to the College of Bishops. This juridical expression is more than juridical. It gives the episcopal character an actuated power to teach with Christ's own authority. This power was there in potential but through episcopal communion with the Successor of Peter it achieves realisation of this. It is a work of the grace of the sacrament and if it is a work of grace then it is a work of Christ. This analogy gives us an insight into the actuation that a Pope receives in his sacred character with election to the Papacy.

The Sacraments in the Unity Law

So far we have seen how in Holloway's perspective the Church is a direct consequence of the work of Christ and is His work. He it is that gathers and joins to Himself the scattered children of God and through Himself in the Spirit they are united to the Father. The sacraments too flow seamlessly:

[A sacrament] is the enfleshing... of an objective gift of God, given objectively by God in Christ, enwrapped in matter as befits the nature of Man, and as befits the economy of God who became enwrapt with a human soul and body for the perfection and the beatification of His creature¹⁷.

In chapter 19 of his book, Holloway gives a history of the early Christians' growing understanding of the sacraments. Without going into detail here, he shows how they understood that through the basic elements of the sacraments (water, oil, hands, etc.) a real gift or status was bestowed upon the Christian. The co-operation of the material elements in this was analogous to the way God the Son becomes incarnate. By the prayer of the minister the elements were brought into unique relationship with Christ through the Holy Spirit so that by their means the grace and life of God are communicated to the recipient:

The ethos of the early Church is a mentality of direct and living union with God, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, who operates with a transforming power through ministers and through matter, through sacramental signs which are causative outwardly of the gift they effect inwardly, and especially through the Eucharist¹⁸.

The sacraments are the means therefore that are used directly by God in Christ to give us the abundance of divine life. This follows an incarnational pattern. It does involve the person of the minister but only insofar as that person is sacramentally

in the position of being Christ's living extension, as it were. The sacraments confer grace *ex opere operato*. This involves a causality which Holloway calls physical and perfective: physical, because it is Christ, God made man, who acts directly through the material elements of the sacraments; perfective, because this is the fullness of God's one work in creation, which creation finds a special fruition when matter calls out for spirit and the two are joined in one unity which we call "man". The sacrament therefore is not just a convenient instrument, a kind of rite that better signifies the giving of grace, where the matter is not directly involved in the bestowal of grace but merely through its meaning and use in a rite occasions the giving or even just expresses what is there already. Christ directly acts in and through the material elements so as to bestow on the personality of the recipient the gift of His own life. This is a gift which the symbolism of the sacramental rites are designed to signify. They are thereby structurally open to the direct ministering of Christ. In this way Christ ministers to men according to their very natures and according to the nature of the cosmos which was made through Him, imbued as it is with the pattern of the Unity-Law.

Part II, looking at the application of this to disputed issues in modern theology, to be published in forthcoming issue.

Notes

- ¹Holloway suggests that this insight can help resolve the Nature-Grace debate.
- ²Edward Holloway, *Catholicism: A New Synthesis* (Faith Keyway, Surrey, 1976), 109.
- ³Agnes Holloway, *God's Master Key: The Law of Control and Direction*, (Faith Keyway, Surrey, 1988), 92.
- ⁴Edward Holloway, *Catholicism*, 334-337; *Perspectives in Philosophy*, vol. 2, (Faith Keyway, Surrey, 1995), 38-49. The absence of this insight gave the scholastic notion of substance a whiff of nominalism.
- ⁵Edward Holloway, *Catholicism*, 206. My summary means to say that because matter is an essential component of the means that God uses to give His life to spiritual-material creatures, the way He gives that life will involve and take into account all that characterises matter: space and time being aspects of matter will thereby necessitate that His life be conferred at particular times and places, with certain sacraments being repeated to enhance and rejuvenate the life of grace in the person.
- ⁶Edward Holloway, *Catholicism*, 309-311.
- ⁷Ibid., 310.
- ⁸Ibid., 280.
- ⁹Ibid., 284.
- ¹⁰Cf. Ibid., 288.
- ¹¹Ibid., 293.
- ¹²Idem.
- ¹³Ibid., 297.
- ¹⁴Ibid., 298.
- ¹⁵Ibid., 296.
- ¹⁶Ibid., 301-302.
- ¹⁷Ibid., 312.
- ¹⁸Ibid., 317.

OTHER ANGLES

THE SUPERNATURAL – FROM FR HOLLOWAY'S, CATHOLICISM: A NEW SYNTHESIS

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Perhaps in Christian theology the content of the word 'supernatural' has not been thought out deeply enough. We tend to think of it as meaning something that God does or gives above and beyond natural causality. But is this true?

The supernatural order, while it is always gratuitous in relation to what we may naturally expect or claim, is not arbitrary.

The truly supernatural is *the communication to nature of the Being of God*. It is God giving Himself in the supreme degree of what He can bring to fulfilment in that which He has created in His own image. Now the Being of God is wisdom, truth, beauty, goodness and proportion by very definition.

So the communication of the supernatural to nature will perfect nature in a continuous order of truth, wisdom, law and ordered measure. The communication to created nature of what we call the 'supernatural' is not something extraneous, therefore, it is the communication of the supreme order of being, by which we mean sheer reality.

It does not take anything at all away from the meaning of the Cross to say that the victory of Christ and of his people through the ages is not simply a reward which is given at the 'good pleasure' of the Father. Rather it should be seen as an 'ontological' achievement. It is the power and Life of Christ at work in the Church and in the world.

Just as when armies crash against each other, the victory is that of superior power, so also the victory of love and grace against the very real force of evil, is a victory of a real superior force. Evil is overcome by the bringing forth of a superior order of life – of truth, good and beauty which overwhelms it with a perfection of that intrinsically more powerful.

Thinking like this would also give so much more meaning to the idea of 'vicarious' offering and intercession in our own spiritual lives. Interior prayer, when it is joined to and prompted by the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ, is not just a pious and good intention which is granted by a kindly and compassionate God, but is powerful in the order of reality.

See also page 47.



Western and Eastern approaches to the Transcendence of God

An interview with Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith, the Sri Lankan secretary to the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, in which he reflects upon modern challenges to an integral act of faith.

“It is not merely through historico-critical presuppositions that we arrive at the truth. One needs to search for it within the context of its deeper meaning, a sensitivity to the hidden riches characterising human thought and knowledge.”

EDITOR: *Your Grace, in the last year you have given a number of interviews concerning Liturgy in the modern context. I wonder if I could ask your opinion with regard to the related state of Western theology after the Second Vatican Council and then perhaps to make some comparisons with your experience of Asian spirituality. Firstly, then, how might you characterise the most influential post-Vatican II theological developments?*

ARCHBISHOP RANJITH: We know that in the past few centuries along with the growing tide of philosophical immanentism, rationalism and empiricism new trends in biblical study came to the fore bringing with them quite an upheaval. This tendency critically to analyse and seek out that which was historical as distinct from the elements of faith in the Old and New Testaments reached a peak in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries especially through the studies presented by Rudolf Bultmann and the exegetical school of form-criticism. Along with this there was an intensive research into the historical development of religions and their comparative value in the study of Scripture. Several schools of theology arose which analysed the culture in which the figure of Jesus emerged. This research fostered uncertainties because most of it was unrealistically analytical, breaking down the text into a so called demythologised form in order to search for that which was real behind the words. The search was on for a so called demythologised Jesus. This way exegesis nearly made the search for the historical figure of Jesus an impossibility. Suggestions also emerged of a significant distinction between early Catholicism and late Catholicism. This type of analytical approach to Jesus, which had its own repercussions on theology, led to a certain amount of unsteadiness. The role of faith and of the living witness of the Church tended to be largely ignored. Theology suddenly seemed to lose its classical role of being at the service of faith and truth.

This was happening parallel to a process of secularisation of Christian society and the emergence of materialism. Reductive exegesis became an aspect of modern Western culture. This was accompanied also by a humanistic and man-centred outlook of life, which tended to marginalise the concept of God. It obscured the transcendence of God, and not only of God, but in the end analysis of Man too. These trends influenced the thinking of the Church and of her theologians to a large extent. We have had, as a result, an immanentist approach to theology, which has tended to damage the Church to a great extent. The clear and lucid presentation of Catholic theology by St. Thomas Aquinas who established rationally cogent principles for the discovery of truth, suddenly seemed shaky.

Fortunately this did not continue to be so. Some of the more recent scholars, including disciples of Bultmann such as Käsemann, became critical of that kind of approach, and showed that the analytical method alone would not suffice. There is a need to have a fuller picture of Jesus. Who is the real Jesus? Truly, Christian theology flows from the event of His Incarnation. First comes the person of Jesus, the encounter with whom gives rise to faith and the search for an understanding of that faith. This encounter was important and Jesus indeed was someone who touched the lives of so many of those who saw, heard and shared his life. For them he was not a myth. They were indeed fascinated and drawn to him. Thus a purely analytical approach in order to discern the historicity of Jesus looked unscientific.

We now see the emergence of a better and fuller approach by Pope Benedict, through his newly published book, *Jesus of Nazareth*. It shows a more complete vision of the life of Jesus, and its background and purpose. This approach harmonises with a wholesome understanding of theology. For instance, we need to take note of the role of the community, the Church, and its early response to the person of Jesus: faith as a here and now experience of those who met him personally (cf. 1Jn 1:1-4). It is not merely through historico-critical presuppositions that we arrive at the truth. One needs to search for it within the context of a wholesome outlook of its deeper meaning, sensitivity to the hidden riches characterising human thought and knowledge. It also involves a spiritual as well as a profoundly rational recognition of our capacity for God.

The Holy Father in his writings is clearly pointing to a realistic way of thinking about God, about faith, about the Church and so on. I feel that the Pope here is introducing a fresh approach in this type of research. This is an approach about which I am personally very happy.

EDITOR: *Do you see this positive tendency more widely in our culture today?*

ARCHBISHOP RANJITH: Even though humanity has by and large thought of itself as being self-sufficient, it is now discovering that this is not true: man has his limitations. And so he is looking out for the transcendent more and more. The search for the transcendent and infinite is gripping human life to an increasing degree, even among the young.

EDITOR: *In what sense is Man's search for the Transcendent a 'wholesome' and 'spiritual' phenomenon?*

ARCHBISHOP RANJITH: The 'spiritual' does not just refer to the spirit that lives within man. The spirituality of man is the self-conscious link that we have with God, our yearning and capacity for God. This interior dimension is the most central part of human life. This is not to undermine or to look down upon human, physical, corporeal and bodily joys and happiness in a Jansenistic way. But it is to highlight the far superior dimension of each man – the yearning for wholeness in his relation to the eternal "Thou".

EDITOR: *How should one help modern men and women explicitly to recognise this dimension? Apart from showing that materialism has failed, and apart from developing a Christian theology within the Church which brings it to light, how can we actually in a positive way show that to people who are distant from Christ and the Church? How can we show that we have this capacity for God, that we have this need for God, that we're so much more than the goodness of the body?*

ARCHBISHOP RANJITH: The more that man goes deeper into technological and scientific progress, the more he feels that that alone cannot bring him fulfilment. We need to question ourselves as to where we could find true fulfilment of human life? There is this yearning for infinity in man. It is the seed of faith. For us Christians it is fulfilled in Jesus and in what he reveals to us: that the eternal "thou" is indeed "Our Father". Our faith comes to meet and find fulfilment in that experience.

EDITOR: *Does your own experience from beyond the European school of theology help in this regard? Can Asian insights or philosophies help towards highlighting the transcendence of God and the orientation of the human person in a holistic way towards the life of God?*

ARCHBISHOP RANJITH: For Asians, religiosity or rather spirituality is something that is considered inbuilt in their very constitution. It is not something that is superimposed. It's not a matter of something that is discovered through rational philosophy only. It is an attitude that is there deeply engraved in their lives, in their culture, and has been so for thousands of years. And this attitude of spirituality has then evolved into religion. It is deeply rooted not only among the poor and the disadvantaged. Some people's prejudice is that this religious sense is only generally present among the poor. That is not true. Spirituality and religiosity for us Asians are not just matters of personal option but inbuilt in the very essence of our nature: rich or poor, educated or not.

EDITOR: *Possibly we in the west used to have something more like that within our culture, say before the Enlightenment. Since the Enlightenment it's been stripped away, gradually as you said, by materialism and relativism. Is there a risk of something like that happening within the Asian culture?*



ARCHBISHOP RANJITH: I do not think so. I do not think that is going to happen to the same extent because in spite of material progress, religiosity, spirituality and values remain strong in Asia even in the most economically progressed societies. Questions may be raised, but perennial wisdom then comes in to provide the answers. This very important and central role of religion in human life is clearly a benefit to Asian culture. And it somehow provides a background of optimism.

EDITOR: *In other interviews, you have spoken about the strengths but also weaknesses of the development of liturgy in the last thirty years. The liturgy, it might seem, has become a little bit more man-centred. This seems to have been mirrored in what's happened, according to your description, in Western intellectual thoughts. That type of thought has been developing in the West for at least two hundred years, whereas the liturgy within the Church has only changed in the last forty years. Would you say that there's a cause and effect there, do you think that thinking in a more man-centred way has led to us praying in a more man-centred way, or do you think it's the other way round, or is it a more subtle relationship between liturgy and theology in the Church?*

ARCHBISHOP RANJITH: When you look at the Old Testament, you see that the people of Israel were born as the expression of the Covenant and the Sacrifice on Mount Sinai and the resultant experience of faith. It is an experience of God taking the initiative. It is the Lord who invites the people to worship him at Sinai (Ex. 3:12). Israel experienced this invitation and its consequence – the covenant with God – as an expression of His saving, liberating love. Israel indeed saw itself becoming

a people, the people of God, in that covenant relationship. And this leads immediately to an attitude of veneration, and in that veneration, which is also adoration, faith is born. So theology is not the first thing. Liturgy comes before that.

Besides, one cannot forget that the earliest traditions of the Scriptures were born both in the Old and the New Testaments within the context of liturgical worship in Israel and in the early Church. This is not to look down upon the other disciplines of the Church but rather to put the facts in clear perspective. In any case the first expression of divine encounter was always *Lex Orandi*. Adoration and worship then led to a deep sense of faith and then, of course, as faith grew it led to an even deeper sense of prayer and adoration and so on. That means the response of veneration enhanced faith and faith in turn enhanced veneration. And then, of course, it led to coherence of life, the *Lex Vivendi*.

In our context in the East too, it is the experience of God, in worship, which leads to faith. When you experience God your heart opens out in worship and veneration and then in that relationship God reveals Himself to you causing a profound sense of faith in you. The consequent attempt to express your faith in different ways then leads to the formulation of Doctrine. And once the Community embraces the Sacred teachings, they become Canonical. So the first act in this consideration is always worship. Thus for us Asians, and we can experience this more in the Oriental Churches, the central consideration is what is celebrated: The God we adore.

EDITOR: *: That's a nice point to end on. Thank you very much.*

POPE BENEDICT ON EVOLUTION AND YOUTH CATECHESIS

In a question and answer session with 400 diocesan priests in north eastern Italy at the end of his holiday, July 27th 2007.

"...there is a great deal of scientific proof in favour of evolution, which appears as a reality that we must see and that enriches our knowledge of life and of being as such..."

"But the doctrine of evolution does not answer everything and does not answer the great philosophical question: Where does everything come from? And how does everything take a path that ultimately leads to the person?... It seems to me that it is very important that reason opens up even more, that it sees this information, but that it also sees that this information is not enough to explain all of reality. It is not enough..."

"Our reason is not something irrational at heart, a product of irrationality. And reason precedes everything, creative reason, and we are truly the reflection of this reason... We are planned and wanted and, therefore, there is an idea that precedes me, a meaning that precedes me, which I must discover, follow and which, in the end, gives meaning to my life."

Linking Evolution with the creator is important because, he said, many young people are: "even thinking that without God, we would be freer and the world would be broader. But after a while, in our new generations, we see what happens when God disappears... The major problem is that if God is not there and the Creator of my life is not there, in reality life is a simple part of evolution, nothing more, it does not have meaning in itself."

THE MASS: MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE RITE

By Fr Edwin Gordon
Diocese of Clifton

At the time when the Red Army was invading China, a priest A knew was on loan to a certain diocese there. As the Red Guards approached his church he consumed the Blessed Sacrament to avoid profanation. The Red Guards threw him into prison where he remained for two years in solitary confinement. While there he received a bottle of medicine via the Red Cross which contained wine, and in the cap of the bottle, altar breads. With this he was able to celebrate Mass on several occasions undetected by the Guards.

He recited only the words of consecration and whatever he could remember. That Mass would have made present the very same sacrifice of Calvary as the Mass celebrated in Saint Peter's Basilica with all the external splendour that is fitting for the Lord of Hosts. Both masses would have made us present at the Last Supper, the death and the resurrection of our divine saviour.

At the last supper, Our Lord offered Himself in sacrifice fulfilling all the sacrifices of the Old Testament. This was the Passover meal in which the chosen people sacrificed a lamb, calling to mind their protection from the angel of death and the Passover across the Red Sea in their journey to the Promised Land. Our Blessed Lord was the fulfilment of all the promises and sacrifices of the Old Testament. As the Exultet puts it:

"This is the Passover meal when Christ the true Lamb is slain; whose blood consecrates the homes of all believers".

Our Lord would have used the same prayers and psalms as the Levitical priests used, and these would have been in Aramaic.

The chosen people offered animal sacrifices but these sacrifices could never take away sin except in so far as they pointed to the one supreme sacrifice that Our Lord would offer on Mount Calvary. By this sacrifice the words of Isaiah would indeed be fulfilled:

"If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool" (Isaiah 1:18)

At the Last Supper, Our Lord offered Himself in a sacrificial banquet: "This is my Body which is to be handed over for you" and "This is the chalice of my Blood which is to be shed for you". That sacrifice was consummated on Calvary. Our Lord went on to tell His disciples: "Do this in memory of me" and by these very words He ordained them priests to make present that one sacrifice to the end of time. In the words of Saint John Chrysostom:

"And just as the words (Increase and multiply and fill the earth) were once spoken but throughout all time give to our human nature the power of generation, so also the words (This is My Body) once pronounced produce a perfect sacrifice at each table in the churches, from that day to this and from now to Our Lord's second advent."

The words of consecration at every Mass are, as it were, the echo of Our Lord's own words, the priest acting in *persona Christi*.

The different rites that developed over the years, written very often by different authors, are the vehicle conveying that very same reality, namely the Last Supper, the death and resurrection of Our Saviour. The reality enacted by the particular rites is infinitely more beautiful than words could express.

The Curé of Ars, Saint John Vianney puts it this way "If we could comprehend the full meaning of the Mass we would die of love". While all the different rites convey the very same reality, nevertheless because of the limitations of human weakness the spirit of the world can very easily enter into the liturgy. Saint Paul warned of this in his letter to the Corinthians:

"When you come therefore into one place, it is not now to eat the Lord's supper, for everyone taketh before his own supper to eat. And indeed one is hungry and another is drunk"(1Cor. 11: 20-21).

This spirit of the world can continue to enter into the different rites that were celebrated during the history of the Church. As Saint Aelred of Rivaux some 800 years ago wrote:

"We hear monks doing all sorts of ridiculous things with their voices, plaguing us with womanish falsettos, spavined cleating, and tremolos. I myself have seen monks with open mouths, not so much singing, as doing ludicrous feats of breathing, as that they looked as if they were in their last agony or lost in rapture. I have seen them waving their arms about beating time to the music, and contorting their bodies in all directions. And they honestly do this in the name of religion; for they think that they are giving God a greater honour than if they sang without all this fuss. The simple folk who hear them may well be impressed by the organ music, but they cannot help laughing as they see such a ridiculous show going on in the choir. They are more likely to think that they are watching a stage play than praying in church. There is no awe here before the dread majesty of God, and no respect for the Holy Table at which Christ is wrapped in linen and His most Precious Blood poured out, where heaven opens and angels throng about us, bringing earth and heaven together...the mere sound of singing is preferred to the meaning of the words that are sung". (Mirror of Charity, Chap.21).

Likewise St. Pius X at the beginning of the twentieth century said:

“Characteristic of modern theatrical church singing is the constant repetition of a theme, which goes on and on *ad nauseam* with regular beats which cause the toes to tap on the floor and the heart to thirst for distracting novelty rather than for the love of God. Otherwise there is some soothing melody which lulls to sleep or wafts the mind on its gentle breezes over a garden of delightful reminiscences or sensuous desires. In place of the solemn chants of the Church, ballroom ditties are taken and twisted, and adapted to the sacred words by some make-shift dabbler in the science of harmony, without art and in most cases without even intelligence. By this means the liturgical functions, rich in meaning and significance, are lowered to the level of worldly shows, and the mysteries of faith are so profaned as to deserve the reproach of Christ: ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer to all nations, but you have made it a den of thieves’ (Mark 11:17)... and this in the Tridentine rite (or ‘usage’)!

All these examples show the importance of celebrating the liturgy with reverence and the dignity due to the great reality that is taking place. We turn in a special way to Our Blessed Lady who at the foot of the Cross offered Her Divine Son in sacrifice for poor sinners. She, more than any other, can teach us to reverence and love her crucified Son made present at every Mass.

Much of the opposition to the new rite brought in after Vatican Council II was caused by making it an excuse for introducing all kinds of experiments which were not really permitted by the rubrics. The music and lack of reverence often gave the impression that the Mass was just a party and a sing-song. Many look back with nostalgia to the old days of Gregorian chant and prayer, and so many turn against what they thought was the new rite.

Furthermore acceptance of the new rite was not helped by incorrect translations and alterations of the Latin. For instance in the response to the “*Oráte Fratres... suscipiat totiúsque Ecclesiae sue sanctae* (of all Thy Holy Church)”, the word “Holy” has been left out in the English translation. It is correctly translated in Italian, Spanish and Portuguese as “Holy”. Why has the word “Holy” been left out? Surely this is one of the essential marks of the Church!

There are numerous other alterations and mistranslations. Fortunately many of these errors will be put right following on the document issued by Cardinal Arinze *Redemptionis Sacramentum*.

Having been ordained in 1962 I have often said Mass in the Tridentine rite and love many of the beautiful prayers contained in it. Indeed I often pray the Offertory prayer in my own private devotions before the Blessed Sacrament: (*Suscipe Sancte Pater...*) “Accept O Holy Father Almighty and Eternal God, this holy and unblemished victim which I thy unworthy servant offered unto Thee, my living and true God for my own innumerable sins, offences and negligence and for all here present and for all the

faithful living and dead that it may profit me and them for salvation to eternal life”.

Those who have been brought up in the new rite should respect and appreciate the beauty of the Tridentine form which has been said by and has sanctified numerous saints. At the same time, those who have been nourished in the Tridentine rite should respect some of the insights of the new rite as sacramentalising our whole life.

The bread and wine that are offered by the people at the offertory of the Mass represent truly the offering of their whole life to God. Bread does not grow on trees and wine does not simply flow from the grapes. They demand human work and sacrifice. The bread “which earth has given and human hands have made” represents the work that has gone into the making of the bread; not only the work of the farmer and the miller but the work of industry, of man’s labour in the office, in the factory, or in the surgery. The crushed wheat which becomes flour represents sacrifice, the sacrifice of the sick who are not able to go to Mass, the sacrifice of the persecuted Church – all these through the action of the priest become the bread of life. Similarly, the wine brings to mind man’s labour, produce of the earth and joy of man’s life; the wine that rejoices the heart of man becomes our spiritual drink.

The offertory in other words represents the offering of man’s whole life to God, his joys and sufferings. His cross and his ideals united to the sacrifice of Calvary and the death of the Lord lead to the joy of Easter morning and the risen Christ.

Indeed one could say that without human work and sacrifice there would be no bread and no wine and the priest would be unable to celebrate Mass. Moreover, the new cycle of readings enhances one’s knowledge of the Scriptures. For instance, the story of the prodigal son, one of the most moving parables in the Gospels, was never read in the Sunday readings of the old rite.

In summary, the offertory prayers in the new rite emphasise that the whole of man’s life is sacramentalised and becomes the outward sign of God’s presence in the world. Saint Paul reminded the Corinthians that there should be unity amongst them:

“For it hath been signified unto me, my brethren, of you,... that there are contentions among you...I indeed am of Paul; and I am of Apollo; and I of Cephas and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul then crucified for you?” (1Cor. 1: 10-13).

To reiterate what has been said before, the one reality and event expressed by each ‘usage’ of the one Roman Rite is much more beautiful and profound than any words can express. The Mass is more important than the particular rite.

“For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink of the chalice you shall show the death of the Lord until He comes” (1Cor. 11:26)



All That I Am – a critical appreciation

John I Fleming

Following our discussion of Chastity Education as against Sex Education in the last issue we present a case study. Fr John Fleming discerns a worrying shallowness in the Birmingham Diocese's programme. He is Adjunct Professor of Bioethics at the Southern Cross Bioethics Institute, and President of Campion College, Australia. Fr Joseph Quigley argues that the scheme provides an opportunity for presentation of the holistic Catholic vision of relationships to pupils and the wider community alike. He is the National Religious Education Adviser for England and Wales and Co-Writer of All That I Am.

"The document seems not to provide a sufficient rationale for Catholic Teaching on chastity. Church teaching is given more as moral affirmations..."

Introduction

All That I Am (2004) is the sex education programme produced by the Diocesan Department of Religious Education, Archdiocese of Birmingham (UK). Strictly speaking *All That I Am* is the name of the staff handbook of a whole sex education programme articulated for secondary schools, the essential components of which are the further documents *All that I am* (The Road Ahead), *Where I am, How I am, and Who I am*. The entire programme is supported by an impressive range of DVDs which are beautifully produced, very appealing to the target audience, and professionally written.

Sex education programmes have always seemed to provoke strong controversy among parents and the wider community. The same is true where Catholic education is concerned. The locus of the controversy is the contrast between those who adhere to the western Christian moral tradition and those committed to the 'sexual revolution' wishing to further the revolution using school children as a captive audience.

In my own research on the opinions of Australians, to be published in September 2007, I found that many parents have complained that sex education programmes have been age inappropriate, obsessively concerned with the physical to the detriment of the moral and psychological context, and subversive of the values and moral positions that parents have typically held.

Such controversies have not been foreign to Catholic schools where secular sex education programmes have been implemented or alternatively new programmes developed which have adopted both the moral philosophy and pedagogical techniques of the secular programme. Parents have also felt that they have not been consulted or sufficiently consulted about the nature and content of the programmes, and that scant respect has been shown to them as the first educators of their children.

My research includes the following findings:

- a. 92% of Australians over 18 years of age support sex education in schools.
- b. 57% believe sex education is most appropriate at the onset of puberty (11-13 years), while 31% hold it should occur earlier.
- c. 56% of parents prefer their child to abstain from sexual activity until they meet a permanent partner, while 44% do not object if their child has one or more relationships providing they engage in safe sex practices.
- d. 84% of parents believe that parents should play at least an equal role with schools in sex education.

e. 74% of parents are not familiar with the content of sex-education programmes and 89% have no idea who has developed them. It is not surprising, then, that only 28% said that they approved of existing sex education programmes

f. 57% said that they believed sex education programmes should reflect family values and ideals.

I would not think that the attitudes in the UK would be radically different from that of Australians. If that is the case then the decision of the Archdiocese of Birmingham to implement sex education programmes from Year 5 (10 year olds) would not be supported by the Catholic community in the UK. However, the explicit statement of aim of the programme would accord well with these research findings:

The project aims to help and support parents in their duty as first educators of their child¹.

How the cooperation of schools with parents works out in practice remains to be seen, but the compilers of the programme urge teachers "to share with the parents what the video aims to do and the work children may bring home with them"².

It needs also to be stated that parents who send their children to a Catholic school have a right to be included in the way the sex education programme is developed and implemented. They also have the right to expect that the moral and social context within which the programme is taught is clearly Catholic, that children come away with a clear understanding of social relationships and the moral context in which sexual intimacy should occur, and an understanding of why the Catholic Church teaches what it teaches about the human body, sexuality, and friendship. The Birmingham programme could do more in looking at how parents can be supported in actually living out their primary role.

Emphasis upon Church Teaching.

There is no doubt in my mind that this programme, unlike many other programmes I have seen being used in Catholic schools, contains clear and unambiguous teaching on most of the moral issues relevant to the subject. A notable exception is the section on homosexuality about which more will be said later in this article. The programme sets out marriage as the morally right context within which sexual intimacy may be expressed while, of course, acknowledging that this moral teaching is rejected by many and infringed by others through human weakness. So, there is clear and unambiguous teaching about the wrongfulness of sex outside of marriage, the good of marriage and procreation, and the wrongfulness of abortion, euthanasia and reproductive technology. It is also the only Catholic programme which I've seen which sets out the Church's moral teaching from the Catechism on masturbation and homosexuality, subjects which are frequently ignored by Catholic education programmes as too hard to teach in the

current climate. As I have already suggested, and will develop further, the articulating of the Church's moral conclusions in this programme is insufficient given that it is without an adequate account of the moral reasoning that goes with it.

Pope John Paul II has made it crystal clear that "there can be no avoiding the duty to offer, especially to adolescents and young adults, an authentic *education in sexuality and love*, an education which involves *training in chastity* as a virtue which fosters personal maturity and makes one capable of respecting the 'spousal' meaning of the body"³. The fact of the matter is that we live in a masturbatory culture, with a mentality which has been shaped by the ubiquitous teaching of 'experts' that masturbation is not only not morally wrong but good for your personal development. If we add to that the pernicious avalanche of pornography readily available in all media (including especially the internet) then the rising tide of harmful effects on adolescent boys and young adult males is easily understood. Similarly, teenage girl magazines and other literature and media exhort young women to explore their 'erogenous zones' and discover the pleasure of masturbation and the 'giving' of oral sex. Instant sexual gratification is now so much part of the informal and unauthorised sex education imposed on young people that we even have young girls referring to 'boyfriends with privileges' as distinct from other friends.

The Birmingham programme laudably does not avoid the duty to confront the masturbation issue and its setting out of Catholic teaching on the wrongfulness of masturbation is rightly accompanied by a warning to teachers to treat this subject with a great deal of care. A lot more guidance should be provided to teachers on how this subject should be taught and especially with reference to the pornography which now frequently is used as an accompaniment to as well as an aid to masturbation. The implications of pornography and masturbation in terms of the 'objectification' of members of the other sex, the invasion of pornographic images into the mind when a man is making love to his wife, and so on are issues which need explicit and clear guidance to teachers. As already alluded to, the way in which Church teaching on homosexuality is handled in this programme is a real problem to which I will return.

The fundamental approach of the Birmingham programme is to locate sex education in the overall context of the physical, emotional, social and moral well-being of persons. This represents a refreshing and welcome change from the physicalist and "value free" programmes which abound in Western societies.

Of course, the physical aspects have to be addressed. The information provided in the programme about the physical development of the young person in adolescence is particularly well done. The material is accurate, straight forward in telling it how it is, yet deeply respectful of the dignity of the human being.

This is no easy task. That it has been so well realised is due to the fact that the compilers have got right the overall context within which we are to understand ourselves as sexual beings.

And the Birmingham programme is very pro-life, explaining why the killing of the pre-born child infringes the commandment not to kill the innocent. I think, though, that the section on abortion would be greatly strengthened if teachers (and therefore students) were further reminded of the seriousness of the crime of abortion in Catholic teaching and their obligation to resist it. This in turn would further emphasise why the Catholic Church holds marital intimacy in such high regard and why she teaches that sexual intercourse is seriously immoral outside of marriage. I have been authoritatively told that this matter is dealt with separately in the RE programme in the Birmingham Archdiocese. Nevertheless I believe it would be helpful for it to be reiterated here not only for the benefit of students in the Birmingham Archdiocese, but for the students in schools outside of the Birmingham Archdiocese who may use this programme and who do not yet cover this matter in their own RE programmes.

Teenage sex education should include the teaching, carefully and convincingly explained in *Evangelium Vitae*, that

“Abortion and euthanasia are... crimes which no human law can claim to legitimise. There is no obligation in conscience to obey such laws; instead there is a grave and clear obligation to oppose them by conscientious objection...” (n. 73)

The Church’s teaching on artificial forms of contraception is presented, and students are made aware of natural family planning not only as a morally acceptable means of family planning but also as an important means developing sensitivity between a married couple thereby helping build the exclusive relationship we know as marital friendship.

Against these positive judgements on significant aspects of the Birmingham programme I would wish to make a number of very important criticisms and some further suggestions for improvement.

Insufficient development of the Catholic rationale for teaching on sexuality

The document seems not to provide a sufficient rationale for Catholic teaching on chastity. Church teaching is given more as moral affirmations, to some extent supported by argumentation, but without a substantial rationale for it. It is not enough to say that the Church teaches that sex is reserved for marriage. You need to give strong and persuasive reasons for this. If students are not given the strong case that the Church puts for its moral position it will be that much easier for the student to say: “Well that’s your opinion, but others are saying something else. I prefer the other. It’s just one opinion against

another.” While the programme refers to *The Truth and Meaning of Sexuality* by the Pontifical Council for the Family (1995) it really doesn’t use to full advantage the argumentation provided.

Need for Natural law

In the programme natural law is referred to in a number of places. As will become apparent, in my opinion the document would be greatly strengthened if it were more elaborated. In a social context where the default position of most people is a crude mixture of utilitarianism and relativism, we need to reiterate the intrinsic wrongfulness of certain actions (e.g. killing the innocent), and the intrinsic goodness of other actions (consensual sexual intimacy in marriage). We want to enable young people to see that Catholic moral teaching is reasonable and in tune with the biological, psychological, spiritual and social reality of what a human being is. And we should enable students to see that there are objective moral goods which, if we participate in them in a rational way, will make for human flourishing⁴.

Need for Theology of the Body

The programme would also be greatly strengthened if the compilers would put into simpler and age appropriate form the admittedly very technical language employed by Pope John Paul II in his explication of sexuality and marriage in what the Pope himself described as “theology of the body”. Here Pope John Paul II understands the human body as a means by which the mystery and plan of God for man are revealed, a mystery which signifies the ultimate mystery of Trinitarian life and love. On this understanding the human body is seen not merely as a biological organism so much as a “sign” of the divine mystery. Sexual union is thus more than a biological process since human love is not a simple transport of instinct and sentiment, but also and principally an act of free will through which each gives themselves to the other in an integral manner such that husband and wife can become truly one in heart and soul. As such it is orientated towards procreation and mutual formation as possible parents. This notion of mutual, purposeful self-giving is not well accented or explicated in the current texts of the Birmingham programme, although it is there.

When my teenage daughter went to a series of seminars on the theology of the body her response was, “Ah now I see. Now I understand. I get it.” The point I am making here is that I don’t see that theology well articulated and explained in this document. It seems, rather, to rely too heavily on an argument from authority. The quotes are there from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. And some of the argumentation is presented but not in the clear and systematic way which the subject matter requires.

Moreover, I do not believe it is realistic to think that we can rely on teachers’ understanding of the theology of the body. While the teaching contained in Pope John Paul II’s theology of

the body is teaching from the authentic magisterium of the Catholic Church, it seems not yet to have been read, absorbed, and responded to adequately. The evidence is all the other way, viz. that most teachers have never been exposed to that theology. Indeed, some are themselves not convinced by Catholic moral teaching. I would have hoped that the handbooks would have included material that would have assisted teachers in their own formation as to the philosophical and theological rationale for Church teaching on sexuality. The existing biblical and theological reflections are diffuse and not systematically assembled in a way that would in any way assist in the realisation of that goal.

Need for Catholic Vision of Sexuality

And there needs to be a clearer integration of the Catholic understanding about the nature of the human being, about our sexual nature, about what a human being is for. Sexuality is not principally about genital sex but, rather, about the differentiation of human beings into male and female. All our relationships between the sexes are, in that sense, an exercise in sexuality but not usually genital sex. They are about chaste friendship, but only one such relationship is the intimate friendship that we call marriage.

By and large a man often talks to a woman quite differently from the way he talks to another man. Women also often speak differently to each other from the way they speak to men. We need to help young people to see that that's good. But these friendships are, or ought to be, non-genital. The special friendship in which couples share sexual intimacy is marriage about which the programme has a lot of very good things to say. The programme is especially strong in its promotion of chastity and self-discipline as essential for the development of true and lasting friendships, clearly delineating lust from love⁵. But, as I say, much more needs to be included about the nature of the human body and the reasons why the marital context is the morally correct context within which sexual intimacy is expressed.

One of the reasons why I am so insistent on this point is that the Church is up against very powerful social influences which promote the "values" of the "sexual revolution", undermining the capacity for young Catholics, and young people generally, to hear and receive the teaching of the Church. Given the opportunity which we have in our Catholic schools, we need to present the Church's moral teaching in its strongest possible form and in a dialectical relationship with the views which abound in contemporary society. In that way, students will be given the best opportunity not only to appreciate the strength of the Catholic moral case, but also the weakness of other positions which very often seem to be accepted uncritically by students and teachers alike.

Contextualising Contraception

The Birmingham programme clearly states that contraception is a moral wrong and gives reasons why this is so. In my view the prophetic section of *Humanae Vitae* (n. 17) should also be included so that the connections between contraception, marital infidelity, sexual promiscuity, and the lack of respect for the woman, are clearly identified.

"Let them first consider how easily this course of action could open wide the way for marital infidelity and a general lowering of moral standards. Not much experience is needed to be fully aware of human weakness and to understand that human beings and especially the young, who are so exposed to temptation need incentives to keep the moral law, and it is an evil thing to make it easy for them to break that law. Another effect that gives cause for alarm is that a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and, disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection."

Young people also need to understand the links between sexual immorality, divorce, contraception and abortion. When the contraceptive pill wasn't around, neither was legal abortion. Within a couple of years of the widespread availability of the contraceptive pill Britain revised its abortion laws in a permissive direction. The rise in divorce significantly accelerated, as has happened in country after country. Moreover, the radical separation of the procreative and unitive aspects of intercourse, and its widespread acceptance in the community has provided, in turn, the moral justification for masturbation and for homosexual acts, including sodomy.

The companies that make contraceptive pills clearly set out how the pill works and how it is intended to work in the leaflet which accompanies them. The link with abortion is clear. It seems that most birth control pills have three phases. 1) They sterilise the woman so she can't ovulate. This is the sterilising effect of the pill. 2) If that fails, they change the mucus at the neck of the cervix. This is the contraceptive phase of the pill. It prevents the sperm from getting into the uterus. 3) If that fails, the third action is to change the uterine wall to make the uterus inhospitable to the fertilised egg. This is the abortifacient character of the pill. It is not known how frequently the pill works as an abortifacient. Reference is made to this in the programme (cf for example *How I am*, Key Stage 4, pages 47 and 51). But the connection with abortion is not, in my view, effectively made. Moreover it needs to be carefully explained that the promotion and use of artificial contraceptives encourages an exploitative attitude to sexual intimacy in which the generation of new life is seen as a "failure", a "disaster", something to be avoided at all

costs. This in turn provides the context in which easy access to abortion is demanded as a backup to failed contraception.

Further, people who get into the habit of having sexual relations with a variety of persons (which contraception enables) may take that habit into their marriage. Sexual betrayal is a major indicator for divorce. Because of this, young people need to understand more about what we're actually like as human beings, including the phenomenon of disordered desire or 'concupiscence', and the implications of that for our partner in life (the one to whom we are married) and for society as a whole.

Natural Family Planning (NFP)

The Birmingham document has a list entitled "Contraception", and the first item that appears is "Natural Family Planning". The word "contraception", in common usage, means having sex but deliberately preventing its logical and primary outcome, i.e. a child. Natural family planning is not that. It is a serious mistake to put natural family planning under the heading of "contraceptives" because it may well imply that it is just another possible choice among a raft of family planning measures.

According to Catholic teaching the practice of NFP is *without* intrinsic disorder. Practised with good, unselfish reason it is without moral fault and is a good, healthy and wholesome way to live your married life. We need to teach young people the wonderful advantages of NFP. For example that the man better appreciates and loves his wife because he better understands how she changes over the course of the month. He learns how to be responsive to her, how to intuit when affection outside of the realm of erotic intimacy is more appropriate. He learns better to appreciate subtle differences in her well-being, and he comes to a deeper respect for her. NFP is about the building up of a relationship. It's not primarily about avoiding or achieving conception, although it can involve these. It is family planning, but it is much more. It's a whole way of living which builds the sensitivity of the relationship between husband and wife and fosters mutual respect and love.

Catholic schools have a wonderful opportunity to invite trained NFP instructors to teach this part of the programme which will enable girls to gain a fuller understanding of their bodies and their fertility, while at the same time assisting young men better to understand and appreciate the miracle of fertility, the special role played by the woman, and the implications for her physically, psychologically and spiritually as the natural cycle plays out in her daily life.

Homosexuality

In many ways the least satisfactory part of the Birmingham programme is the way it deals with the homosexual temptation. In the resource for teachers for Key Stage 4 the programme refers to the "unequivocal" Church teaching on homosexuality. That teaching is supported by a few flimsy sentences on why the Church rejects homosexual genital acts

before the programme equivocates on the seriousness of the issue. The emphasis is not on a detailed understanding of why the Church condemns homosexual acts. In fact there is a one-sided attempt to undermine the Biblical basis of the Church's moral tradition by asserting, without supporting argumentation, that "it is not particularly helpful to quote certain texts from the Old and New Testaments which are often used, in a somewhat fundamentalist way, to condemn homosexuality"⁶. Leaving aside the imprecise and misleading use of the term "fundamentalist" and its pejorative overtones, this is, to say the very least, very strange. Let me explain.

The same NFP book later quotes from the Catechism of the Catholic Church 2357 in these terms⁷:

"Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex... Tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life."

But the full text of article 2357 is this:

"Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved."

The parts in bold type are the parts omitted in the programme's version of the article. Yet the original says that the Church's moral tradition in this matter is based upon "Sacred Scripture which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity". Moreover, the footnote 140 refers to the very passages which the programme says should not be referred to because it would be "unhelpful" even "fundamentalist" to do so. The programme then further asserts that these passages "do not necessarily refer to what we recognise today as a homosexual orientation" and wants us to have a detailed understanding of "the prevailing social and cultural climate" in which those texts occur. So it is that the "unequivocal" teaching of the Church is to be relativised by reference to a social and cultural climate which is not described. No reasons are advanced as to why the scriptural teaching is to be or could be relativised in the light of the insights of sociology and psychology. So we are left with "unequivocal"

Church teaching, explicitly based on texts which ought not to be cited since they are “unhelpful” and suggestive of ‘fundamentalism’ (whatever that means), and with no real elaboration of why the Church teaches what it does on this important matter. We are simply left in confusion.

The real concern of the programme appears to be the protection of homosexuals from unjust discrimination and persecution. That is very laudable and fully in accord with the teaching of the Church in the Catechism in article 2358, cited on page 72 of the book. But this virtue cannot vitiate the confused, unconvincing and even distorted account of Church teaching on homosexuality which occurs in this programme.

Personhood of the Foetus

The programme asserts that the main issue about abortion is lack of belief in the personhood of the foetus. However, in my Australian study, the argument on personhood was perceived to be the least persuasive pro-abortion argument. While Australians are, by and large, pro-choice, they know that the foetus is a human being.

People actually believe that an unwanted pregnancy will seriously harm their life in some sense. It could be in terms of social harm or psychological harm. People see the abortion as being principally about the rights of a woman not to have that pregnancy imposed upon her if she does not want it. The Australian evidence reveals a society deeply conflicted on the abortion issue. On the one hand abortion is morally disapproved. On the other, the desire for choice, unwillingness to take choice away from women, and a perceived lack of social support conspire to defeat that moral disapproval. I would think that Britain, too, is a deeply conflicted society on abortion.

So, while the issue of the ‘personhood’ of the embryo/foetus is clearly a central question rightly addressed in the programme, the fact is that women choose abortion even when they are convinced that their baby is a person. More needs to be said in the programme about alternatives to abortion, where help can be accessed, and the Catholic Church’s non-judgemental assistance to women distressed by an unanticipated pregnancy. Community groups such as SPUC, LIFE and the Good Counsel Network are some of the agencies who provide alternatives to abortion including social, material, psychological and spiritual support for the woman during pregnancy and afterwards. Students need to hear, in a positive way, of the good works done by the Church and community groups, among whom Catholics are conspicuously present. And the role of selfishness needs also to be clearly addressed as well as the notion that choosing the morally right thing to do may not only be challenging but also may require heroism on the part of the woman.

Youngsters need to know that sacrifice for what is right is the deepest form of love, and that, through Christ’s self-offering, it will bear fruit.

The Link between Abortion and Infanticide

A great strength of the programme is its setting out of the developmental stages of the foetus from the time when the sperm penetrates the egg⁸.

One part of the document says: “We can safely assume that many who seek to justify abortion would never agree with infanticide or any other taking of innocent human life.” However, nearly all surveys indicate that most people in the UK support euthanasia. In academic literature the links are explicit. Scholars such as Michael Tooley, Helga Kuhse, Peter Singer and John Harris, have advocated infanticide at least in some circumstances and particularly where the child has a significant disability. Apart from the fact of disability these scholars question whether or not a newborn baby is a person. Michael Tooley has advocated abortion and infanticide for normal as well as abnormal foetuses and newborns.

My own research indicates that eugenic abortion is one of the two grounds for abortion with which most people agree. In fact 86% of Australians have indicated their support for abortion on eugenic grounds, a result which means that some otherwise pro-life people are actually pro-abortion in the case of children with serious disabilities.

The principal argument for abortion for a disabled child is that the child’s life will not be worth living, that it would be a burden to the child himself or herself, to those who have to care for him or her, and to society as a whole. These are the arguments which are also used for euthanasia. There is, in my view, a clear linkage between eugenic abortion and the eugenics of euthanasia.

A programme such as “All That I Am” needs to explain why killing human persons is always wrong. (cf. *Faith editorial* “Pro-Life Strategy and Arguments for the Soul”, March/April 2007)

Presenting the Law

In Key Stage 4, the programme provides information on the legal framework within which Britain permits sexual intercourse to take place. The Legal Fact Sheet makes it clear that the age of consent for sexual intimacy is 16 for heterosexuals and homosexuals, and that no one can legally have sex if he or she, or the other person, is below 16. Moreover, persons in positions of trust cannot legally have sex with a person under the age of 18 years. The Fact Sheet is preceded by a warning that this information is only about the law and not whether there are moral or other issues involved.

In my opinion, this is not enough. An often repeated mistake is to confuse what is moral with what is legal. This section could well do with a development of this point which would benefit both teachers and students. It would also provide an important opportunity for teachers to reinforce the dangers of peer pressure, especially when that pressure comes from Government agencies.

A particular case in point is the reference to the legal right of a minor to counselling on “sexual health and relationships”. “Sexual health” is code for abortion and contraception among other things. The programme would be greatly strengthened at this point if this was to be made clear, together with the fact that there is no moral right to such counselling, let alone counselling of children without parental knowledge and consent. In the Catholic tradition, parents are the first educators of their children, not the State. It is subversive of the rights of parents for the State to interpose itself between parents and their children. In the Australian research it is clear that Australians do not approve of the State taking such liberties. In fact 61% of Australians believe abortion should only be made available to a girl less than 16 years of age with parental consent. I would be surprised if British parents were any less protective of the well-being of their daughters.

Choice

The teaching aim on page 41 is: “to understand fertility awareness, pregnancy, natural family planning, artificial contraception and the teachings of the Church on these”. These are excellent aims. However, the words that follow are: “to be able to make informed choices”. This seems to be an invocation of the secular rhetoric of choice which carries moral relativism with it. While this is almost certainly not what the compilers intend, it is almost certain to be read that way by large numbers of teachers. I am able equally to choose to contracept as not to contracept; to abort as not to abort; to have sex before marriage as to be chaste. What matters is that I’m informed; I’ve got the information. Perhaps the point could be better described thus: “to be able to choose what is morally good and to avoid evil”.

In this way the programme would more obviously be seen to dovetail into what I believe the compilers really want to convey, that, for example, freedom ‘cannot be emancipated from the truth’ (*Evangelium vitae*). I am not free to tell lies. I am not free to work against truth. Choice for abortion and contraception is a choice for intrinsically evil acts. The intention in abortion and contraception is always either to kill or to prevent a child from coming into being by frustrating the natural sexual act. There is, Pope John Paul II says, no choice which can ever legitimate the killing of the innocent. The programme clearly teaches this. It would be a pity if the rhetoric of “choice” were to be so misunderstood by teachers and students that it served to undermine one of the great achievements of this programme, its splendid articulation of the humanity of the unborn child and the necessity to protect human life from its beginning until natural death.

Teachers

The identification of the right kinds of person to be teachers of sex education is crucial to the success of the programme. Since, the programme correctly observes that parents are the first educators of their children and that “the Church has always

emphasised that this education [sex education] is primarily the responsibility of parents”⁹, the parents have a right to say who will be assisting them in this area of education¹⁰ and in what manner. Where Catholic schools are concerned it is not good enough to have teachers of sex education whose personal beliefs and practices are not Catholic.

The Birmingham programme explicitly says that teachers in this area do not have to be Catholic. Moreover, the programme is simply concerned to ensure that teachers are, for example, “affirmative, encouraging, to be acknowledging and to be empathetic”, that they will “offer time to listen and time to challenge”¹¹. Here the programme has retreated into typically secular bureaucratese, the meaning of which is far from clear. Generally positive aspirations are all well and good so far as they go, but they are no substitute for the wise choice of teachers who are expected to cooperate in the teaching of subject material which is “primarily the responsibility of parents.”

I would recommend that teachers be thoroughly trained before they take on this aspect of the curriculum. There is a good case for specialist teachers in this area, teachers who have the specialised ability to teach a curriculum which assumes a detailed knowledge and appreciation of the Catholic moral tradition and who have the gifts and personal character and lifestyle that would enable them to teach the course with credibility.

If a teacher is using artificial forms of contraception, how is that going to affect his or her capacity to teach the Church’s teaching on contraception? If the teacher is ‘co-habiting’ with another human being, male or female, same sex or other sex, without benefit of matrimony, how does that affect that person’s capacity to teach with integrity on the Church’s requirement of chastity and abstinence before marriage?

I think I’m interpreting the Australian data correctly by saying that parents do want the teachers of sex education to be people who are stable in their own lives. These teachers need to be people whom the children can trust as reliable sources of information, and who practise what they preach. Even if they don’t agree with their teacher, they will know that the moral teaching being provided is credible. We shouldn’t see sex education as something that somebody can automatically do by virtue of being an RE teacher or a chemistry teacher. The formation and testing of teachers being prepared to teach sex education cannot reasonably be achieved at a one or two day in-service programme. Teachers who are going to teach in this area should be expected to give an affirmation that they believe in and will teach the moral doctrines of the Catholic Church. Parents and schools need to know that. And speaking as a Catholic parent, I certainly do want to know and be assured that the ones who teach my children in this important area of their spiritual and moral development are those whose personal character, knowledge and teaching skills are adequate for the task.

Conclusion

There are a range of other particular criticisms and recommendations that could be made of the programme. For example, I would strongly recommend that the subjects of “wet dreams” for boys and menstruation for girls be dealt with in classes of boys and girls separately from each other, particularly in the earlier years. Given that children grow and develop physically and emotionally at different rates, we should be careful how we deal with such personal and intimate issues, recognising that for some children it may well be embarrassing to talk about these things in a mixed class.

But the really big issues include the fact that the best argumentation to justify fundamental Catholic and Christian positions in sex education has not been articulated in this programme in the way that I think it can be. We must remember that while intellectual arguments will not always convince those who do not want to be convinced, they are nevertheless very important. While this programme makes a very creditable contribution to the development of a sound Catholic moral position for young people, it has not yet used to best advantage what is available in the still largely unappreciated ‘theology of the body’ of Pope John Paul II. What I am calling for here is for the Birmingham programme to present that approach in a more systematic way which will show to best advantage the compelling nature of the Church’s moral teaching as true.

The official teaching of the Church is generally faithfully transmitted, and material on sexually transmitted infections is presented very well. But the need for the more persuasive reasons for abstinence before marriage and chastity within marriage remains. Fear and law will not convince, important as they may be. There is ample room for improvement in all these areas in any future revision.

Notes

¹All that I am, Key Stage 2, Resource for Year 5, 7.

²Ibid., 2.

³Evangelium vitae, n 97.

⁴Cf for example the work of Tommy Hughes. Hughes’ work represents a very good example of how this can be done.

⁵Cf for example *Unit One of Key Stage 3*.

⁶*How I Am, Key Stage 4*, p. 61.

⁷Ibid., 72.

⁸Cf for example *Where I am Key Stage*, 370-75.

⁹*All that I am, Key Stage 2, Resource for Year 5*, 6.

¹⁰As mentioned above, shortly to be published Australian research of mine found that: “84% of parents believe that parents should play at least an equal role with schools in sex education.”

¹¹*All that I am, Key Stage 2, handbook for year 5*, 8.

All That I Am – context and response

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Context

For many years before 1997, Catholic schools had had to adapt commercially produced sex education programmes for use with their students. Then the newly elected Labour Government identified reducing teenage pregnancy as a key target for the Departments of Health and Education. The authors of *All that I Am* (ATIA) saw this as an opportunity to produce a coherent and systematic programme founded on the Church’s teaching and open to a wider audience. After consultation with parents, priests, teachers, governors and students the Diocesan Department of Religious Education of the Archdiocese of Birmingham entered into negotiation with the Local Authority and Teenage Pregnancy Unit¹ to develop a sex and relationship

resource for Catholic schools. Thus was born *All That I Am* (ATIA). In a culture where sex is seen as a commodity and freely available, the writers wanted to provide a programme that would inform students’ understanding of their own faith and allow them to make ‘informed choices’ based on that faith.

ATIA is a staff resource comprising biblical and theological reflections, activities, student worksheets and DVD’s. The programme begins in Year 5 (ten year olds) and follows on to Year 13 (eighteen year olds)².

In England and Wales ‘sex education programmes’ are known as ‘sex and relationship programmes’ after publication of a Department for Education and Skills (DfES) circular. Both the Anglican Church and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales petitioned for such a name change. As a result no subsequent programme should focus solely on the biological aspect of ‘sex education’ but should also include strategies to help students establish, build and sustain holistic and healthy friendships and relationships.

As a Church we have fought hard to protect our right to present Church Teaching to our students in our schools and explore with them its obligations for lifestyle. Sex and relationship programmes now have to take cognisance of the recently published sexual orientation regulations (SOR) and Human Rights Convention which propose equivalence between sexual lifestyles. In discourse with the Government we have constantly stated that there is no moral equivalence between

'gender', 'orientation' and 'lifestyle'. Any sex and relationship programme must allow students to come to understand their sexuality, know what the Church teaches and learn how to live chaste lives.

The programme aims to convey the unity and coherence of Church teaching on a wide range of issues including the dignity of life and the gift of human sexuality.

It is founded on the assertion that:

- every human life has an intrinsic and absolute value through being created by God, in the image of God;
- this value derives from the simple fact of existing and is not dependent on an individual's age, abilities, social acceptability or any other characteristic;
- self-respect and respect for each other must underline all human relationships.

The responsibility of parents for their children remains paramount and this resource aims to support them in this ministry.

ATIA should not be considered as a 'stand alone' programme. It is one which aims to build upon both students' prior knowledge and existent training for teachers. This will be true whether or not it is purchased in other UK dioceses or internationally. It cannot be expected to provide all of the necessary links with such diocesan and trans-diocesan programmes. This is clearly the responsibility of respective Bishops' Conferences and Diocesan Departments of Religious Education. ATIA was designed primarily for Birmingham Catholic schools to address the disproportionate number of teenage pregnancies in the city in the late 1990's.

The programme was produced through close consultation with parents, teachers, students, and moral theologians, advanced skills teachers in sex and relationship education and colleagues from LIFE. At every stage of its delivery the programme is prefaced by a parents' meeting and supplementary staff training. This training includes, as a major component, a detailed rationale for the Church's teaching on sexuality and relationships in general and sexual intercourse in particular from biblical, theological and philosophical perspectives. This provides a clear and systematic rationale for sex and relationship education in a Catholic setting.

The course is monitored as part of the programme of diocesan advisory visits and subject to formal inspection every three years under the provisions of the Education and Inspection Act, 2005, section 48.

Response

Dr. Fleming recognises in his critical appreciation that ATIA "unlike many other programmes I have seen being used in Catholic schools, contains clear and unambiguous teaching on most of the moral issues relevant to the subject"³, while identifying some areas that cause him concern. What follows is a response to these in light of the above.

Personhood of the foetus

The Church's teaching clearly reiterates the primacy of the personhood of the foetus in its argumentation against abortion. In public theology and political rhetoric in England this remains a major point of contention. This was rehearsed in part during the BBC Radio 4 interview at 8.10am on 11th June 2007 between Ann Widdecombe MP and Evan Harris MP. The discussion highlighted the need for a substantive parliamentary debate on the current abortion legislation since medical science and practice is raising serious questions over when the foetus becomes viable outside the womb, the current twenty-four week limit for 'social' abortion and the growing number of doctors in the UK who are refusing to perform abortions because of the aforementioned.

Natural Family Planning

Concerning the formatting of Key Stage 4 materials and how natural family planning and contraception are presented and examined in the teachers' book, the authors were not aligning the two. Rather, the text was written as an *aide memoire* for teachers to remind them that any study of artificial forms of contraception with students (which they are required to do in the science curriculum) should also include a treatment of the Church's commitment to natural family planning. The latter should be offered to young people as an alternative that is reasonable, practicable and morally acceptable.

To reiterate, ATIA is not a 'stand-alone' programme and the Church's teaching on birth control is covered in the concurrent religious education curriculum that Key Stage 4 students will be following. *Humanae Vitae* speaks in terms of artificial and natural means of birth control. However, in common parlance and some dictionary definitions contraception and birth control⁴ are used either interchangeably or the latter not at all. Through training for teachers the importance of the Church's teaching on birth control is reinforced to ensure that there is no moral ambivalence. Many Catholic schools invite NFP instructors to talk with students.

Teachers

Headteachers are recommended to take particular care when assigning staff to deliver the programme to ensure that teachers (whether they are Catholic or not) have the relevant professional knowledge, skills and personal commitment to the Church's teaching on sex and relationship education. The faith profile of staff teaching in Catholic schools in England and Wales means that non-Catholic staff are sometimes asked to teach ATIA. If so, they would be fully supported by senior Catholic staff. The authors of ATIA were seeking to secure the programme's authentic, orthodox implementation and were not taking refuge in "typically secular bureaucratise".

Legal Fact Sheet

By following ATIA and the current religious education specifications for Key Stage 4, students will be left in no doubt that what is legal is not *ipso facto* also ethical.

Choice

The critique here is potentially very misleading. The term ‘informed choice’ within a Catholic text is no more to be interpreted as implying the secular rhetoric of choice, than a term used in Catholic teaching like ‘responsible parenthood’ is meant to imply to a secular rhetorician, ‘contraception’. The Church highlights the need to inform our consciences to enable us to make informed choices, namely, those based on Church teaching, in other words, ‘reason informed by faith’. (See *Who I Am*, 22; 24).

Homosexuality

The authors did not knowingly set out either to ‘water down’ the Church’s teaching or to undermine it. The reference to the misuse of scripture in ATIA is to remind both teachers and students not to engage in ill-judged proof-texting in line with ‘The Interpretation of the Bible and the Church’ (The Pontifical Biblical Commission). In part three of the section dealing with ‘Relationship with Other Theological Disciplines’, entitled ‘Exegesis and Moral Theology’ the text of the Pontifical Biblical Commission states:

- Similar observations can be made regarding the relationship between exegesis and moral theology. The Bible closely links many instructions about proper conduct – commandments, prohibitions, legal prescriptions, prophetic exhortations and accusations, counsels of wisdom, and so forth – to the stories concerning the history of salvation. One of the tasks of exegesis consists in preparing the way for the work of moralists by assessing the significance of this wealth of material.
- This task is not simple, for often the biblical texts are not concerned to distinguish universal moral principles from particular prescriptions of ritual purity and legal ordinances. All is mixed together. On the other hand, the Bible reflects a considerable moral development, which finds its completion in the New Testament. It is not sufficient therefore that the Old Testament should indicate a certain moral position (e.g. the practice of slavery or of divorce, or that of extermination in the case of war) for this position to continue to have validity. One has to undertake a process of discernment. This will review the issue in the light of the progress in moral understanding and sensitivity that has occurred over the years.
- The writings of the Old Testament contain certain “imperfect and provisional” elements (*Dei Verbum*, 15), which the divine pedagogy could not eliminate right away. The New Testament itself is not easy to interpret in the area of morality, for it often makes use of imagery, frequently in a way that is paradoxical or even provocative; moreover, in the New Testament area the relationship between Christians and the Jewish Law is the subject of sharp controversy.

Moral theologians therefore have a right to put to exegetes many questions which will stimulate exegetical research. In many cases the response may be that no biblical text explicitly addresses the problem proposed. But even when such is the case, the witness of the Bible, taken within the framework of the forceful dynamic that governs it as a whole, will certainly indicate a fruitful direction to follow. On the most important points the

moral principles of the Decalogue remain basic. The Old Testament already contains the principles and the values which require conduct in full conformity with the dignity of the human person, created “in the image of God” (Gen 1:27). Through the revelation of God’s love that comes in Christ, the New Testament sheds the fullest light upon these principles and values.

The context of this quotation is found in the preceding section entitled ‘Exegesis and Systematic Theology.’

A great deal of care went into the writing of this section of the programme. The authors aimed, in an age-appropriate manner, to outline succinctly the Church’s teaching and reasons for it. The authors felt it was important that students were exposed to what their bishops had written on this aspect of Church teaching. Hence the decision to quote from ‘Cherishing Life’ and its use in the Teacher Reference Points to the Church’s Teaching and Pupil Resource Sheet 12b on page 72ff of *How I Am*.

Dr. Fleming’s description “that [Church] teaching is supported by a few flimsy sentences on why the Church rejects homosexual genital acts before the programme equivocates on the seriousness of the issue” is unmerited. The omission of certain lines from §2357 of the Catechism concerning homosexuality was not a deliberate attempt to distort Church teaching. It was done recognising that this aspect of Church teaching will be covered in more detail by religious education specialists within the religious education programme being followed by Key Stage 4 students. As elsewhere in ATIA, what the authors attempted to do was build on and to reinforce this teaching.

Theology of the Body

The foundational anthropology of ATIA, as a whole, expresses the essence of Pope John Paul II’s theology of the body as a theology of the person, hence the programme’s title *All That I Am*.

Conclusion

Colleagues have appreciated the opportunity to read and respond to Dr. Fleming’s critical appreciation. Those outside the Catholic community in England and Wales who work in this area have begun to take cognisance of the Church’s contribution to the current debate on sex and relationship education. This contribution will only be strengthened by such dialogue within the Church.

Notes

- ¹An agency of the Government’s Department of Health.
- ²Learning in maintained schools is organised into three sections:
 - Foundation Stage (3-5/6 years)
 - Key Stages 1,2 and 3 (5/6-13/14 years)
 - Ages 14-19.
 This translates into:
 - Nurseries (3-4/5 years)
 - Primary (5/6-10/11 years)
 - Secondary (11/12-15/16 years)
 - Post-16 in either Secondary or College (15/16-17/19 years).
- ³Fleming John I, *All That I Am* – a critical appreciation, Faith Sept. 07, page 19, Emphasis upon Church Teaching.
- ⁴Cf. The New Collins Dictionary, 2007.

The Catholic School: a sign of contradiction

by **Ferdi McDermott**
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The Second Vatican Council (in the Constitution *Gravissimum Educationis*, 28th October, 1965) taught that Catholic education should be characterised by four key elements. They make a good checklist for parents searching for the right school for their children: 1. Promotion of academic excellence; 2. Breadth (an all-round education); 3. Moral formation (teaching children to choose what is right); 4. A formation in prayer, especially how to pray with the liturgy of the Church.

The Council Fathers are clear that every one of the four aspects is geared towards evangelisation: Catholic education should make a difference not just to the children at Catholic schools, but also to the world of work they will enter when they leave full-time education.

Catholic schools today are like a shop window for the Church: they should show Catholic life and witness at its most authentic, preparing the young to bear witness to the faith and to become the movers and shakers in every sphere of modern life. A good Catholic school, then, prepares its students "for service in the spread of the Kingdom of God, so that by leading an exemplary apostolic life they become, as it were, a saving leaven in the human community." (GE. 25.)

In most modern schools, even in Catholic schools, attention is concentrated on the first of those four aspects, to the detriment of the other three. Good GCSE results ought to be part of a good Catholic education, but they are not the be-all and end-all.

Five years ago, with a group of Catholic friends, I started a Catholic school that self-consciously took *Gravissimum Educationis* as its blueprint. Before we started planning this great adventure, I sought the advice of an old hand in the field of Catholic boys' schools, Eric Hester, well known to readers of this journal. Eric and I had been working together for a few years on MENTOR, a Catholic education magazine that lasted for seven years and did some important raising of awareness in our Catholic schools. I like Eric a lot and was delighted that

he accepted my invitations to join a group of advisors for the school project.

I still remember the moment – after months of prayer, discussions and reflection – that it became obvious to Eric that I hadn't been joking. He called me to say that if he was going to be in charge of this advisory group, then he had a piece of very important advice to give me that he hoped I would think about very seriously: "Forget all about it, Ferdi. It is too ambitious and will only end in tears. Think about this advice. It might be the best I ever give you."

After a few moments silence, he then said that if I decided to ignore his first piece of important advice (something he rather expected!), he would still be delighted to help with the project, and to carry out the advisory role that I had asked of him.

Eric proved to be quite right. The project is too ambitious, and there have certainly been enough tears along the way. In the academic sphere, we have not always managed parents' expectations perfectly, and because we are young plant, any falling short makes us vulnerable; but some batches of results, especially in English and in languages, have been better than most schools back home. In terms of Catholic formation and practice, there have been significant fruits. I remain convinced that our work has been – and continues to be – blessed by Almighty God, and that he permits the trials that come our way precisely for our own purification and sanctification.

Because of the cultural background of our first pupils and staff and the specific aims that the College sets for itself, it places its educational programme in the tradition of the pre-reformation public schools of England, such as Eton and Winchester. Schools such as these, as well as the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, were founded on the basis of a community of Masters and students who lived, worked, ate and prayed together.

This is the model for Chavagnes: a Catholic life in common dedicated to teaching and learning, and to the praise of



Almighty God. Based in a nineteenth century former junior seminary, with a beautiful neo-gothic chapel, the College is honoured to continue the ancient heritage of prayer and study that goes back to the medieval Benedictine priory that once stood on the site of the College. We all feel the holiness of the place and feel a genuine spiritual link with the priests and scholars who have lived and worked here before us.

There has also been a deliberate attempt to develop our particular situation into a strong culture for the College, mainly rooted in traditions that staff experienced in their own schools a generation ago, or in revivals of medieval traditions, such as that of the boy-bishop (a boy rules the College for a day on the feast of St Nicholas.)

This has proved a source of amusement for some secular journalists (particularly in the recent Channel Four documentary) who can't see past the boy bishops, boars' heads and Morris dancing, to see the seeds of faith that are flourishing and putting down deep roots in this rich cultural soil: an environment characterised we hope by an authentic quest of the Good, the True and the Beautiful.

In keeping with its medieval inspiration (and indeed with *Gravissimum Educationis*) Chavagnes places the liturgical

life – which is at the heart of the Church – at the very heart of its own life as a College. The liturgy is itself a school for the soul and an inexhaustible source of grace, and this is why we make it available on a daily basis. Although at first it takes a little getting used to, pupils soon learn to appreciate the strong religious emphasis of the College, and find it a source of inspiration and support in their studies and in their personal development.

Isolated from our countrymen, like the Irish monks of the early Middle Ages, we have discovered that exile can be spiritually fruitful. It has probably made us rather eccentric, but also more ready turn to God in our difficulties and triumphs. (Sometimes, if one has fallen out with one's colleagues over something, God is the only one left around who speaks English!)

Chavagnes is not, and was never meant to be, a model for other Catholic schools. Except perhaps in one respect: a Catholic school, like a Catholic family, should have a strong enough character, identity and sense of purpose to be a real sign of contradiction. Then, and only then, can it be a place of preparation for mission and a worthy shop window for the Church, providing a glimpse of the values of the kingdom of God, intensified and adorned with all the energy and enthusiasm of youth.



THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE

Pastoral Priorities Concerning Infant Baptism

“The sower went out to sow...”

*Fr. Roger Nesbitt, Parish Priest of Folkestone, Kent,
who recently celebrated his 40th anniversary of priesthood.*

These thoughts on parish policy towards infant baptism may seem somewhat controversial, especially to those clergy of the younger generation who are so convinced of the importance of preparation courses. However, they are the fruit of forty years of priestly reflection and pastoral experience and I offer them in the sincere belief that we are today, maybe for noble motives, making access to baptism too difficult for people and therefore restricting the operation of the grace of God and the ability of the Spirit of God to blow where he pleases.

My “baptismal policy” could be described briefly: I will baptise any child provided one parent is Catholic and that he or she expresses the desire to bring the child up in the faith. At first I am not primarily concerned about the marital status of the parents and I do not subject them to any sort of test to ascertain their degree of practising or not practising of the faith. This is not because I am unconcerned about the moral state of the parents but because I do not believe in depriving a child of the grace of God because of the spiritual weaknesses of its parents, or in using a child in an attempt to persuade its parents to live more virtuously. The child is innocent, it is in need of the grace of God, its parents wish it to be baptised – who am I to stop such a little one from coming to Jesus Christ.

Obviously I would like the parents to be married in the Catholic Church and to be practising their faith. But we do not live in an ideal world. Who knows the struggle of a Catholic parent with a non-Catholic partner, or in an irregular relationship, who comes to us seeking baptism for their child. Who knows of the prayers and yearning of a grandparent for that child to come to baptism? If we refuse baptism to children on the grounds of their parents’ irregular life style, these children will almost certainly never go to Catholic schools and will, therefore, almost certainly be lost to the Church entirely. Their parents, whose faith is obviously weak and whose formation was possibly very defective anyway, may well feel rejected or not good enough and will give up on the Church altogether. Whole extended families could lose any relationship with the Church. To refuse baptism to the children of people who somehow fail to live up to our ideal of what it

means to be a Catholic is surely equivalent to “quenching the smouldering flax” or “crushing the broken reed”.

My experience is that, even if the parents and godparents are weak in the practice of the faith, among the others who are present at the ceremony one will almost always find *some*, often a small minority but an important one, who take the faith seriously and are practising. It might be the grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, brothers, sisters, friends – these are the *true godparents* (even if not legally so) and together they make up the real community among whom the child will grow up and who will influence the child by their love, example and prayers. This is the existential reality of any baptism – the grace of Christ is truly present, but not where we might expect or want it to be.

Many of us know examples where Catholic children from lapsed homes have made remarkable spiritual growth despite the lack of practice in their families. Twelve years ago I baptised a child of lapsed parents who would undoubtedly not have passed the rigorous standards of practice demanded in so many parishes now. However, because he had been baptised, he went to the local Catholic school where he was positively influenced. He has now made his first Confession and Holy Communion, is serving regularly at Mass and is preparing for Confirmation. Last year I received two adults into full communion who had been baptised as infants but never brought up in the faith. One could go on and on with similar stories of parents whose faith has revived later on because they were kindly and sympathetically dealt with when they requested baptism for their children.

To make the point more strongly, I know of at least four priests who have come from families who were not practising when they were brought for baptism as infants, but who through the influence of a school, or priests, teachers or grandparents were led to strong and deep faith and then to ordination. I include myself among them. We must not underestimate or limit the grace of God and its influence as a living reality in the Church. Children are baptised into the wider family of the Church. Even though we know that their domestic family is the first

place where they should learn the faith, in truth many only really begin to learn it, if at all, in the Catholic School which is increasingly having to be *in loco parentis* in a unique way and which links the child to the wider Church family through the parish. As the Catechism puts it: "The Church is the place where the Spirit flourishes."

At the level of pastoral practice, I believe strongly that parish priests should make the arrangement of baptisms easy. Knowing the very real difficulties that so many people experience simply trying to survive in the modern world and knowing also how easily weak faith can be crushed, we should strive to be flexible and kind when dealing with parents. Very often they are only too well aware of their failures and shortcomings and not infrequently they are bowed down with guilt because they do not live as they know they should – they do not need a priest to lecture them on their inadequacies. Often they are hypersensitive to rejection and pick up immediately on the psychological message given by the well meaning priest while he explains why he is "deferring" the baptism of their child. The message is simple: "You (and your child) are not good enough to belong to this Church" – and they go away sad and humiliated, often never to darken the door of a church again.

The days of superstition and social pressure to have "the baby done" are all but over in Britain. It is my experience that almost all parents who present their children for baptism nowadays have some kind of faith. It may be implicit and unformed, but for all that it is no less real. It is a desire – often born out of the painful self-awareness of having failed in their own lives – at least to do what is right for the child, to have God's blessing on their son or daughter. I believe we should accept this implicit faith as that which is required by the Church for the administration of the sacrament and work on it, trying through all our other pastoral practice to fan the smouldering ember into a flame. I do not believe that baptism should be used as a bargaining chip to pressurise those we consider un-virtuous towards virtue, or as a reward for those who conform to our ideal standards. If the parish priest is welcoming and friendly with all parents, no matter what their personal situation, the word soon goes around the area that he is an understanding priest and quickly so many others who have one way or another been made to feel unworthy of the sacrament come forward to have their children baptised.

Much more could be written on this subject. However, let me conclude with one final observation. In my experience, the vast number of practising Catholics – when asked – agree with the proposition that the children should not be deprived of the sacrament of baptism because their parents do not practise the faith. The reason for this overwhelming consensus is clear:

ordinary Catholics actually believe the teaching of the Church on the necessity of baptism for salvation, they therefore know that it is important for a child to be baptised and they also have an immediate perception that it is simply unjust for a child to be deprived of baptism and therefore of God's grace because of the spiritual defects of its parents. The preoccupation with preparation courses and minimal standards of practice as a precondition for baptism is almost entirely a clerical one based on an erroneous theology of grace and an unwelcome rigidity in pastoral theory. I believe it is a misplaced enthusiasm which has yielded very little in the way of desired results and which has caused a great deal of alienation and hurt.

After all, it was the Lord himself who warned us that much seed would fall on shallow or stony ground or would be choked by weeds later on. Yet the Sower, the Son of God, still went out and sowed – for he is prodigal in the distribution of his grace. Let us follow his example, for after all it is his Church and his Grace, and the principle is self-evident: *the more seeds you sow, the more plants will grow* especially, it seems to me, in time of famine.

SPUC'S INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME 2007



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For more information or to register your interest, please apply by email to: johnsmeaton@spuc.org.uk or by post to John Smeaton, National Director, The Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, 5/6 St Matthew Street, London, SW1P 2JT. Tel: (020) 7222 5845

The Society for the Protection of Unborn Children
5/6 St Matthew Street, London, SW1P 2JT

THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE

letters to 
the editor

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FAITH AND FRUIT

Dear Father Editor

As grandparents now, we remember only too clearly the advent of *Humanae Vitae* (HV) in 1968. We had always accepted the Church's teaching on family planning and we were puzzled that it became necessary for Paul VI to reiterate it.

I remember hanging nappies on the washing line, waiting for the announcement in the news, wondering what we would do if the Pope denied what we had always believed to be Christ's teaching.

Our biggest shock was the reaction of the clergy who, instead of supporting HV, told us it was not infallible.

I once met with and discussed HV with Archbishop Roberts who looked amazed when I told him we accepted it. So many kind-hearted and compassionate priests tried to change our minds, even to the extent of giving us an article penned by the Canadian Bishops refuting it.

We found that we seemed to be one of the few who had actually read the encyclical, which we did over and over again – it made such sense. Our Catholic friends rejected it without even having looked at it.

We were isolated and even found ourselves asking priests their views on HV before Confession – if they were wrong on that they could be wrong on other things. It was a very difficult and lonely time and of course the discovery of the Billings method of family planning has revolutionised married life for young Catholics now. The rhythm method was utterly unreliable.

Two more sons later, we were introduced to the Faith movement and at long last we found ourselves surrounded by young enthusiastic orthodox priests who were obedient to the Pope. The joy and relief of this was indescribable and we can only say that everything the Pope predicted about the effect on life, morals and families by the non-acceptance of the Encyclical has come true.

Our hardships have born fruit in sons and grand-children who are all practising their Faith, which is all we have ever wanted.

Yours faithfully
Maureen Findlay-Wilson (Mrs.)
Marnhull
Dorset

LITURGICAL REALITY CHECK

Dear Father Editor

I was pleased to see Fr Conlon's letter (July/Aug) about Dom Philippe Jobert's article in the previous issue of Faith, having been considerably bewildered myself by the burden of Fr Philippe's song.

He may be right about mercy as the key to the Council, although the documents show me no more emphasis on mercy than I had been taught in the ordinary way before Vatican II. Be that as it may, his assertion that the revised form of the Mass is the ultimate expression of the Mystery of Mercy is a mystery of another kind.

He says himself that "there are few material modifications that distinguish the new rite from the old", which is true if one looks at the Council Fathers' decisions, rather than at what happened in most places when the Revolution took over. However, Fr Philippe's epitome of liturgically-conveyed mercy centres on the vernacular Mass facing the people.

Yet the Council said nothing at all about facing the people, and its permission (not requirement) for use of the vernacular included the expectation that Latin and the musical treasury of the Church would also continue in use as a normal part of parish life.

So, is Fr Philippe's presumed epitome of mercy via the Council really a product of the Council, or does it come from "the spirit of Vatican II" with which the revolutionaries speedily obscured the actual Council?

Also, the Mass always means the same, is the same reality, in any rite so how can each version of the Roman Rite have different meanings, as Fr Philippe suggests? The only way I see the new rite, to a greater degree than the old, reminding people of their need for divine mercy is in their desperation for rescue from the shambles so often made of it.

Fr Philippe obviously appreciates the beautiful liturgy at Solesmes, but seems to share the misapprehension of so many bishops, priests and liturgists that the laity, poor things, cannot cope beyond the level of nursery rhyme hymns and play school prayers. This unconscious condescension effectively cuts us off from the liturgical riches of the Church.

The vision of millions of the faithful thrilled to bits with vernacular Mass facing the people smacks of wishful thinking in the face of widespread liturgical deformation and the continuous decline in Mass attendance.

Yours faithfully
Susan Carson-Rowland (Mrs)
Brodieshill
Forres IV36

CHURCH TEACHING AND THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM

Dear Father Editor

James Tolhurst claims that "it would now seem entirely reasonable" to tell the parents of infants who die without baptism that "their unbaptised children are now in heaven" (Other Angles, Faith, July/August 2007). To do this however would seem to me to be somewhat irresponsible. There is nothing in the study by International Theological Commission (ITC) that justifies such a statement. The whole report is indeed written in an optimistic tone and tries its best to

move away from the Augustinian and Scholastic solutions to the problem of infants who died without baptism. Still, it clearly states in its conclusions: "We emphasise that... [there] are reasons for prayerful hope, rather than grounds for sure knowledge". He even acknowledges in his article that the ITC only claim we have "grounds for hope".

Of course, we want and need to show the utmost compassion to grieving parents who find themselves in such a tragic situation. As Faith Magazine has stressed in other contexts, compassion is inseparable from truth. The ITC says we cannot say for certain that unbaptised infants enjoy the beatific vision, so unequivocally to assert that they do would seem imprudent. Would it not be better to continue with the practice of entrusting these children, "with prayerful hope", "to the mercy of God" (as we do in the funeral rite established for them) rather than putting forward our own presumptuous speculations on their fate?

Fr. Tolhurst also seems confused about the status of limbo in Catholic tradition. He claims that "reducing limbo to a theological hypothesis" enhances the importance of baptism. That may be so, but limbo was never anything more than a theological hypothesis in the first place, albeit a very popular one with a strong place in the hearts of the faithful.

At a time when prayer for the dead has declined and the funerals of non-practising Catholics can more closely resemble a canonisation than a requiem, I would recommend teaching those relevant truths which we do know for certain. "There is much that simply has not been revealed to us" the ITC observes. But also there is much that has – let us focus on how we can compassionately explain these revealed truths to the parents of infants who die without baptism. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Yours faithfully
Chris Hack
Peter Avenue
London, NW10

Dear Father Editor,

Concerning the correspondence on Infallibility and "outside the Church no salvation" (Jan./Feb. 2007), I should like to suggest the following thoughts:

A straight line is the shortest way between two points. Sancta Mater is the straight line that leads most directly towards our eternal goal – the Vision of God and communion with His very life. It is also the only route – the Direct Line – that goes all the way to the final goal.

Other lines may converge with this pre-eminent Direct Line, before the goal is reached but do not go all the way to the final destination. These lines may be envisaged as either the life paths of individuals or the paths of other religious and philosophical traditions towards God. Convergence with the Direct Line may occur either in this life or after death because development can continue after our life here is over.

A person treading the Direct Line – Sancta Mater – may be very far from the final goal – most of us are. We may be further away than many who are walking on the other lines that have not yet converged with this Line.

On whatever line any one happens to be, the all-important matter is to be walking in the right direction. Then, those not on the Direct Line will eventually converge with it, although often not until after death. On all the lines, even on the Direct Line, some may be walking in the wrong direction. These will distance themselves ever further from the goal.

The direction in which we are walking – whether towards our goal or away from it – depends on prayer. As St. Alphonsus Liguori said: "He who prays is saved. He who does not pray, is damned".

Yours faithfully
Audrey Donnithorne
Bonham Rd
Hong Kong

FAMILIES OF NAZARETH

Dear Father Editor

It was good to see the reference made recently to the "Families of Nazareth" movement as listed in the Faith Online section – July/August 2007.

The short item outlining what the Movement is all about together with the relevant links indicated that there is a lack of information on the Movement's activities 'this side of the Atlantic'. Certainly web-based information is an issue for people wanting to find out more or even become involved in Families of Nazareth in Great Britain. However, there are some chaplains around the country who lead and support groups, one of these being Fr. Denis Sarsfield – a Westminster priest at Westminster Cathedral – who can supply any reader with more detail on local groups at least in the South of the country. His email is either denis_sarsfield@hotmail.com or deniss@rcdow.org.uk

Yours faithfully
Edmund Adamus
Director, Department for Pastoral Affairs
Diocese of Westminster
Francis Street
London SW1

comment on the
comments



by
William Oddie

**A DEFENCE OF CHRISTIAN
CONTINUITY**

It had to happen: sooner or later, the honeymoon was going to come to an abrupt end. The honeymoon, that is, between the now enfeebled and increasingly remote souls who for over a quarter of a century had carped and sneered at Pope John Paul II (and by the same token at 'PanzerCardinal' Joseph Ratzinger) but who had nevertheless hoped against hope for a Pope who would be somehow reborn if not as a fully paid-up liberal, as a Pope at least who would go easy on all that counter-cultural JP II stuff about being 'signs of contradiction' and about continuity with the pre-conciliar Church and who had breathlessly found (so they thought) that, lo, it was even so, in the wonders of *Deus Caritas Est*. 'On his election last spring,' carolled *The Tablet*, 'the former Cardinal Ratzinger was widely assumed to have as his papal agenda the hammering of heretics and a war on secularist relativism, subjects with which he was associated as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.' But no, the hoary old liberal standard-bearer mawkishly burbled, 'Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical confirms him as a man of humour, warmth, humility and compassion, eager to share the love that God "lavishes" on humanity and display it as the answer to the world's deepest needs... This is a document that presents the most attractive face of the Catholic faith and could be put without hesitation into the hands of any inquirer.'

This was never going to last, since heresy and relativism had, of course, never

disappeared from the 'papal agenda' and neither – perhaps more to the point – had his (and his predecessor's) analysis that disunity in the modern church was the result of a clash between two different interpretations of the Council itself, one right, the other wrong: as Benedict once more explained it, as his first Christmas as Pope approached in December 2005, 'On the one hand, there is an interpretation that I would call "a hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture" [i.e., the line peddled by *The Tablet* for thirty years]; it has frequently availed itself of the sympathies of the mass media, and also one trend of modern theology. On the other, there is the "hermeneutic of reform", of renewal in the continuity of the one subject-Church which the Lord has given to us...

'The hermeneutic of discontinuity', the Pope continued, risks ending in a split between the pre-conciliar Church and the post-conciliar Church. It asserts that the texts of the Council as such do not yet express the true spirit of the Council.' That, of course, is the ultimate basis of the once much trumpeted 'Spirit of Vatican II', a locution synonymous with 'the hermeneutic of... rupture'. And sooner or later in this pontificate, there was going to arise a *casus belli*, a serious and unavoidable confrontation over precisely this issue: and in mid-July it arrived. There was no way *The Tablet* was going to continue its armistice in the face of the Pope's presentation of his *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum*, in which he convincingly (to anyone not ideologically *parti pris*) explained that his intention in restoring the unfettered right to celebrate and attend the pre-1970 form of the Roman Mass was to bring about a healing of divisions caused by the rigidities of the immediate post-conciliar period. For, those still seized by the 'Spirit of Vatican II' are ideological (with all the intolerance that inevitably entails) or they are nothing – and the Pope's 'humour, warmth, humility and compassion' be damned. And to explain, as *Summorum Pontificum* does, that the Mass of Pope John XXIII and the Mass of

Pope Paul VI are simply different forms of the same Rite, is to take on this whole ideology in the most unmistakable way. This was a vital skirmish in the run-up to the final battle which must surely come in the relatively near future and though they had lost it before it began, they were never going to accept defeat with a good grace. If one didn't have an understanding of the hermeneutic of discontinuity at work one might think that *The Tablet's* editorial "A Step Backwards" shows a certain irrational panic. Concerning the Successor of St Peter's authoritative affirmation of the "extraordinary" status of the older form of Mass it asserts that: "To suggest that a Mass devised before the Second Vatican Council has the same value as one devised afterwards is to send a signal that nothing the Council did made much difference. This is the strongest indication so far that the theological conservatism of Cardinal Ratzinger... is still in place..."

'What follows is ugly', begins Fr John Zuhendorf's comment on *The Tablet's* article against *Summorum Pontificum*, written by Fr Mark Francis (who is, surely inappropriately, a member of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute at the Sant' Anselmo University in Rome). Fr Zuhendorf characterises Fr Francis as 'one of the darlings of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions in the USA' (a distinctly scaly outfit, about whose murky activities – including a children's mass written by an already defrocked paedophile – much could be said if we had the space). Fr Zuhendorf's piece was flagged up by Fr Finigan in his blog (thus does the Ratzingerian counter-revolution ripple out).

Fr Zuhendorf himself gave a link to what he justly described as a 'stomach-churning' article by Fr Francis entitled 'Models for multi-cultural liturgy'. This article is arguably hypocritical as well as stomach-churning, since it begins with the suggestion that 'Because of the amazingly diverse multicultural contexts in which pastoral ministers are called upon to work today, it is impossible to prescribe one liturgical model that will

be always and everywhere appropriate': this flexible and open-minded liturgist then proceeded to argue in *The Tablet* that only the Mass of Paul VI is always and everywhere appropriate and that its very existence automatically abrogated all previous liturgies for ever: presumably those who prefer the older form are not to be given the dignity of a group or 'culture' to be catered for by his free and easy multicultural ways, but are to be simply dismissed as a bunch of liturgical perverts. As Dr Alcuin Reid commented in his piece on the *motu proprio* for *The Catholic Herald*, 'The irony of protagonists of the modern use of the Roman rite opposing the availability of the older use by means of insisting on liturgical uniformity ought not to be lost – for overcoming liturgical uniformity was heralded as one of the victories of the modern liturgical reform'. And as Dr Reid rightly indicates, the accusation that to allow unfettered use of the 'old rite' will bring disunity (one of the modernist parrot cries reported by the *Herald*) is a nonsense: 'No', he wrote, 'whatever liturgical books are used, there will be substantial unity amid legitimate diversity, provided the rites are celebrated as the Church intends them to be celebrated. This is in perfect harmony with The Second Vatican Council and the tradition of the Western Church.'

Fr Francis's article in *The Tablet* seems to carry one unmistakable implication: that reconciliation with those who prefer the old usage, including the Lefebvrists – an ultimate aspiration referred to by the Pope in *Summorum Pontificum* – is not only unrealistic but actually deeply undesirable. This appears to be the only conclusion to be drawn from the real and underlying message of the piece, conveyed by its final one-sentence paragraph: 'In short, *Summorum Pontificum* weakens the unity of the Church by failing to support the foundational insights of the Second Vatican Council': the most 'foundational' of all those insights, it goes without saying, being the absolute discontinuity between the preconciliar and post-conciliar Churches. The *motu proprio*,

he insists, 'compromises the coherence of the Church's self-understanding and threatens to reduce the liturgy to a simple matter of individual "taste" rather than what it is meant to be: an accurate reflection of what we believe as Catholic Christians who live in the twenty-first century': for that, of course is utterly different from what Catholic Christians who lived in previous centuries (and in the twentieth century before the sixties) believed: hence, the absolute indefensibility of what he calls 'this medieval rite'. The so-called Tridentine rite, of course, far from being 'medieval' has roots deep in pre-medieval antiquity (it is in any case a strange view of history in which the Counter-Reformation took place in the middle ages), and is a living manifestation of the Newmanian principle of development, whereby a process of continuous change is inevitable if the essence of the Church's faith is to remain the same: for, as *The Catholic Herald* pointed out in its admirable leader, the reforms of Pope St Pius V, enshrined in the Missal of 1570, itself containing ancient elements, 'were inspired by the Council of Trent. But that Missal was itself reformed several times, culminating in the Missal of Blessed John XXIII of 1962.' And, continued the *Herald*, 'if the message of *Summorum Pontificum* is truly absorbed, then the Church will achieve a unity which has eluded it since the adoption of the vernacular Mass in 1970. The Missal of 1962 inspired the Second Vatican Council [an engaging suggestion] and was celebrated during its sessions. The Missal of 1970 was inspired by the Council's deliberations, though it was not a direct product of the Council: Pope Paul promulgated it himself'. Thus, all roads lead to the hermeneutic of continuity and reform: the repeatedly reformed 'Tridentine rite', in its final redaction, inspires the Council, which in turn inspires the Rite of 1970: the two rites are not opposed but organically related: as the Pope now says, they are simply different forms of the same liturgical reality. Not everyone will accept this narrative, but it is a stylish final solution to decades of ecclesiological

nonsense, and (except by the usual suspects, who can surely now be ignored as an historical curiosity) it has been accepted with remarkable unanimity. The fact is, it simply makes sense, to anyone with the most elementary notion of how the Catholic tradition always worked before the distortions of recent decades (which please God, after another decade or two of the current mopping up operations, and the retirement of a few dozen more bishops, will soon be a distant memory).

As Fr Richard C. Hermes, S.J., of the Parish of the Immaculate Conception in New Orleans, explained on his excellent Parish website, 'the Pope emphasises that there is no contradiction between the two editions of the Roman Missal. "In the history of the liturgy there is growth and progress, but no rupture. What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too, and it cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful. It behooves all of us to preserve the riches which have developed in the Church's faith and prayer, and to give them their proper place."

'That last point', Fr Hermes comments, 'is very compelling. The Mass as celebrated by St. Ignatius, St. Vincent de Paul, and St. Frances de Sales; the same Mass that nourished Thérèse of Lisieux and Maria Goretti; the Mass that attracted into the Church the likes of Clare Booth Luce and Evelyn Waugh; that Mass cannot be "harmful" or simply all of a sudden enter into the realm of "the forbidden".'

Well, precisely. The astonishing thing, surely, is that these things should ever have needed saying. Even more astonishing is that there are still those who continue to deny them.



The road from Regensburg

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



OF ISLAMIC INTEREST

Papal Hope?

The Pope's private secretary, Mgr Georg Gaenswein, has expressed the hope that the Regensburg lecture might help to avoid naivety concerning the identity and future of Europe.

Sueddeutsche Zeitung

Response to Regensburg ushers in Muslim Ecumenism

Earlier this year the American Quarterly *Islamica Magazine* published 100 names of Muslim academic signatories to the October 2006 Open Letter to Pope Benedict which challenged the Pope's Regensburg lecture. Their editorial states: "The seminal nature of this initiative becomes apparent when considering its achievement in forging one united theological posture across leading personalities from all the eight schools of Islamic thought – Sunni, Shi'a, or otherwise. This was no small achievement and it opens doors for more intra-Muslim, or "ecumenical", collaboration on a host of theological and moral issues. ...As Muslims and Christians comprise almost half of humanity and live side by side in so many troubled regions of the world, the need for respectful, yet candid dialogue is vital. The recent visit of the Roman Pontiff to Turkey was a step in the right direction."

www.islamicamagazine.com

Book on the Lecture

In a new St Augustine's Press book *The Regensburg Lecture* Fr James Schall S.J. argues that "far from being disrespectful of Islam or of modern thought (the lecture) is almost the first time the ultimate dimensions of both have been taken seriously and seen in their relationship to each other and to reason." *Catholic World Report*, July 2007

Mustafa Akyol on Regensburg and on historically violent Islam

In the March 07 *First Things* Mustafa Akyol, the Turkish journalist, offered an interpretation of the Pope's Regensburg address. This articulate pro-West Muslim columnist with the *Turkish Daily News*, who is also a proponent of the American neo-Creationist school of thought Intelligent Design, argued that the claim of some

secularists and Islamists that the Pope was "pursuing a clash of civilisations" was not true. Rather "he actually had a quite different vision" which is shown in a statement Cardinal Ratzinger used the day before the Servant of God John Paul II died, quoting his (Ratzinger's) own book *Christianity and the Crisis of Civilisations*:

'The real antagonism that characterises today's world is not that between various religious cultures, but that between the radical emancipation of man from God, from the roots of life, on the one hand, and from the great religious cultures on the other.'

In an online debate, organised by *frontpagemagazine.com* last December Akyol argued that "Pope Benedict has said, 'for Muslim teaching, God is absolutely transcendent, His will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality.' However this is not the universal Muslim opinion... The Mutazila (school of thought believed) that God was rational and 'justice was the essence of God, He could not wrong anybody, he could not enjoin anything contrary to reason.' (Karen Armstrong, *A History of God*, 1993 p. 164)"

cf. Faith Editorial January 2007, under the subtitle "Islam and the Nature of God", for our discussion of the Pope's emphasis that for Christians human reason is uniquely based upon the rational nature of God, or Logos.

In the same magazine back in October 2004 Akyol explained how the idea that the war-like verses of the sword" abrogated earlier peace-loving verses held sway from the 10th century. It was based on Sura 2, verse 106: "we do not abrogate any verse... without giving you a better or equal one." Since the 19th century scholars have apparently realised that by contextualising this verse, and others, the theory of abrogation is indeed unfounded. An interview with Catholic Islamologist Michel Cuypers earlier this year with *Il Regno*, has highlighted this and that today a growing number of Islamic scholars are calling for modern Biblical-like exegesis.

In a *Washington Post* piece, last May Akyol wrote: 'The infusion of politics into religion since the early decades of Islam has skewed the tradition. Islamic jurists, the creators of sharia, not only introduced non-Qur'anic concepts such as the ban on apostasy but also developed the "method of abrogation" to bypass the peaceful verses and uphold the verses of the sword. They also adopted several laws from Sassanid Persia, which included the specifications for the second-class status of conquered Jews and Christians as *dhimmis*.'

This extremism, he argues lost ground to the legitimate doctrinal developments of the (late 19th Century) enlightened Ottoman empire. But it made a come-back after the empire's First World War induced

collapse. "The fanatic Wahhabi sect – which had been the bête noire of the Ottomans and their reforms – dominated Saudi Arabia..."

www.thewhitepath.com

Relegating the Logos

Aref Nayed, the former professor at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic studies (Rome), whom we mentioned in the last (and first) version of this column as having entered into an intelligent and civilised post-Regensburg debate with Alessandro Martinetti, has now issued a long and vehement rejection of the Regensburg lectures themes in *Islamica magazine*.

He labels as "self-righteous" Euro-centrism the Pope's claim concerning the uniquely coherent Greco-Christian emphasis upon man's *logos* as intrinsically and evidently based upon God's *Logos*.

Islamica Magazine

Reason, Authority and Cardinal Cormac

Last June, Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor spoke to the Muslim Council of Wales about dialogue between Muslims and Christians. Perhaps referring to some of the more vehement post-Regensburg reaction the Archbishop of Westminster affirmed that dialogue is only fruitful when everyone involved feels able to say what he or she believes. Perhaps referring to the recent British *Sexual Orientation Regulations* he added that "We are most certainly not free to express our deeply held convictions, sometimes simply for reasons linked to so-called 'political correctness'."

The Archbishop aligned himself with the view expressed by the then Cardinal Ratzinger in his 2004 meeting with German philosopher Jürgen Habermas. Whilst Ratzinger accepted the western secular critique of the *pathological* elements of religion, he also asked Habermas to admit that reason has a similar weakness, particularly if it gives religion no voice and pushes to make it a totally private affair.

Murphy O'Connor also pointed out the difficulties for "even the most friendly" outsider to know who is the best person to ask when an explanation of Muslim beliefs and traditions is needed.

www.rcdow.org.uk

Venice Institute contributes to the debate

The current issue of *Oasis*, the Italian and Arabic Journal of a Venice based inter-faith study and research centre founded by Cardinal Scola in 2004, has a section entitled "Regensburg and Environs" containing three relevant articles.

It includes an article by Ida Zilio-Grandi a scholarly author based in Geneva and Venice, surveying rational Arabic discussions between Muslims and Christians during the Andalusian Islamic empire, from the eighth

to the thirteenth century. The British scholar, Julia Bray, overviews the work of the tenth century Islamic scholar Ibn 'Abd Rabbih. He supported the necessity of and the divine intention in setting up a Caliphate. Its justification arises, he argued, from the need for the Koran to be interpreted by reason and an authoritative tradition. The Caliph has a key interpretative role. *Oasis Magazine*

Interpreting the Koran

The Muslim Council of Britain's secretary-general, Dr Abdul Bari highlighted the misinterpretation of scripture as a cause of terrorism. He said: "The Islamic texts, like Biblical texts, can be misinterpreted..." Mosques, he said, have a key role in educating the young to interpret the Koran properly. *Times online, 20 June 2007*

Apostasy

Egypt's official religious adviser, Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa has stated that Muslims can change their religion. This is in anticipation of a Court ruling concerning 12 muslim converts from Coptic Christianity who want to revert. *Times, Faith News, 29.7.07*

Reason in Islam

The Algerian born French writer Malek Chebel published a book last year: "Islam and Reason: the battle of ideas". This liberal Muslim thinker argues that there have been two main approaches to reason within Islamic tradition. One, "Islam as doctrine", has held sway because of the particular choice of Caliph after the death of the prophet Mohammed. The other more "spontaneous" approach, more reflective and respectful of open rational enquiry, is represented by the eighth and ninth century Mu'tazila school of thought, the tolerant Arab civilisation of Andalusia, and by Sufism. *www.qantara.com*

Pontifical Council

The Pope's restoration of the *Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue* has been seen as a signal that the pontiff regards interfaith dialogue as a priority, despite the uproar caused last year by his controversial speech on Islam. The Pope appointed Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, the Vatican's former Foreign Minister, as president. *The Times, 26 June 2007*

With contributions from Lisa Gregoire and Richard Marsden.

OF EVANGELICAL INTEREST

Developing Natural Theology

Speakers confirmed for the June 2008 international and interdisciplinary conference on natural theology at Oxford University, include Marilyn McCord Adams [Natural

theology and the problem of evil], Simon Conway Morris [Evolutionary biology and natural theology], John Haught [The challenge of Darwinism for natural theology], and Keith Ward. Other subjects will include "Natural theology and the cognitive science of religion" and "The development of English natural theology". The conference is being convened by Alister McGrath, Oxford Professor of Historical Theology, who himself will speak on "Renewing the vision of natural theology". *Alister McGrath's website*

Intelligent Design?

Simon Conway Morris, professor of evolutionary palaeobiology in the Department of Earth Sciences at the University of Cambridge, has strongly and succinctly criticised *Intelligent Design* thought in the current issue of *Science and Christian Belief*, the journal sponsored by *Christians in Science*. He forthrightly describes Intelligent Design thought as depicting God as "closer to a super-engineer... than the personal and loving Creator that stands at the centre of Christian orthodoxy... a disinterested deity whose main function seems to be to leave enigmatic calling cards." *Science and Christian Belief, Vol. 19 No. 1 p.85*

Multi-verse?

The Cambridge branch of *Christians in Science* is hosting George F. R. Ellis of the University of Cape Town and former President of the Royal Society of South Africa on 6th November next. He will speak on 'The Multiverse, Ultimate Causation and God' at Emmanuel College, a subject often discussed in this magazine. *www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk*

CU leader can be non-Christian

Exeter University's Christian union (CU) lost independent arbitration over whether they should be allowed to specify that their leaders be Christian. CU member Ben Martin commented "religious association and freedom of speech are fundamental human rights and not ones on which... the CU is prepared to compromise." The CU are applying for a judicial review. *www.crossrhythms.co.uk*

Helpful Ecumenism

Pastor Albert Mohler, a Southern Baptist, has commented that he respects the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's* document *Subsistit* because it is consistent with previous Catholic teaching (with which he strongly disagrees), is honest about its inherent belief that the Papacy is integral to the nature of the Church, and that it shows a very sensible concern for the danger souls can put themselves in by being in serious error (as he believes Catholics are). *Fr Tim Finigan's blog.*

AND BEYOND

Pannenberg on Faith and Science

Wolfhart Pannenberg, the prominent Lutheran Professor Emeritus of Theology has explicitly taken up Pope Benedict's Regensburg theme of the "dehellenising" of Christian thought. In a June/July 2007 *First Things* article he acknowledges that "the argument that the God of Israel is in fact the one God conceived by the philosophers... was essential to the plausibility of both Jewish and Christian witness in the Hellenic world."

He surveys post-Enlightenment theological attempts to synthesise faith and reason, ending with Process Theology. He then states "As in the Apsotolic era and through the centuries, the crucial issue is how to conceive of the one God, creator of all that is. For philosophical theology different cultures require different arguments. Today for instance we must address the arguments of modern atheism. Moreover it is necessary to show how God can be conceived of as the creator of the universe, as that universe is described by modern science. ...a philosophical or theological conception of God as creator must be compatible with the universe as described by science." *First Things*

Pope and Rabbi unite in seeking truth

In a May *Jerusalem Post* article Jewish Rabbi Jacob Neusner said he was was "amazed" when he discovered that Pope Benedict, in his new book *Jesus of Nazareth*, had seriously engaged with his "talks with Jesus". He suggests that the post-Vatican II Judeo-Christian dialogue enters "a new age" with Pope Benedict's approach. The pontiff clearly believes that bringing their respective claims to truth out into the intellectual forum is the path of true dialogue between Jews and Christians.

Neusner, an American religious studies lecturer had argued that "Where Jesus diverges from the revelation by God to Moses at Mount Sinai that is the Torah, he is wrong, and Moses is right." Sandro Magister (*www.chiesa*) comments that "The central issue that prevents the rabbi from believing in Jesus is his revealing himself as God."

The Pope's book responds by contextualising the Sermon on the Mount by the intimate union of Jesus with the Father that we are called to share. Jesus clearly appears as the "new Moses" who brings the new Torah or, actually, returns to Moses' Torah and fulfils it" (p.65). Only through such communion can Man "fulfil" himself, because his innermost nature is oriented towards a relationship with God.

"Someone once called me the most contentious person he had ever known," Neussner comments. "Now I have met my match. Pope Benedict XVI is another truth-seeker." *www.chiesa*

cutting
edge

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

THE CHILDHOOD OF ATHEISTS (AND THEISTS)

In chapter 3 of his *The God Delusion* published last September, Richard Dawkins included a rebuttal of 'The argument [for God] from admired religious scientists,' in which he pours scorn on the citing of eminent believing scientists (contemporary or historical) as evidence for God's existence. "The efforts of apologists," he says, "to find genuinely distinguished modern scientists who are religious have an air of desperation, generating the unmistakably hollow sound of bottoms of barrels being scraped." And yet...

In the May 2007 issue of the University of California Press journal, *Social Problems*, the sociologists Elaine Ecklund (University at Buffalo) and Christopher Scheitle (Pennsylvania State University) have presented their findings on 'Religion among Academic Scientists.' In the abstract of the May paper, Ecklund & Scheitle open with the incentive for their study: "The religiosity of scientists is a persistent topic of interest and debate among both popular and academic commentators. Researchers look to this population as a case study for understanding the intellectual tensions between religion and science and the possible secularising effects of education. There is little systematic study, however, of religious belief and identity among academic scientists at elite institutions, leaving a lacuna of knowledge in this area. This absence of data exists at a time when the intersection between religion and science is reaching heightened public attention." Certainly if the evidence of the many publications on faith by leading scientists in the past two years is anything to go by – books by Dawkins, Collins,

and others, that have been mentioned many times in the *Cutting Edge* column in recent issues – Ecklund & Scheitle are absolutely right that people regard as highly significant what scientists think of religion.

The authors carried out their research by surveying 1,646 scientists in various disciplines taken from 21 of the elite U.S. universities, and conducted in-depth interviews with 271 of them. They had a high take-up in response to their survey, which included academics in the social sciences as well as the natural sciences. They compared religious belief and practice between the disciplines, and between the scientists as a whole and the general population. A prior version of the findings of this research was posted in February by Elaine Ecklund on a webpage hosted by the U.S. Social Science Research Council – <http://religion.ssrc.org/reforum/Ecklund.pdf> – and it is from the text of this that most of the quotations herein are taken.

Their findings showed that some 34% of their sample of scientists described themselves as atheist, and a further 30% as agnostic (3% and 5%, respectively, in the general population). A large proportion of scientists (52%) held no religious affiliation, compared to only 14% of the general population. They found only small differences between members of the different academic disciplines, although natural scientists were somewhat less religious than their social-science counterparts. However, the crucial part of their findings lay in the fact that it was not the study of science in itself that had generally determined their lack of religious affiliation, but other factors. Elaine Ecklund stated, in her (prior) paper:

"What are we to make of this lack of traditional religion? Is knowledge of science somehow in conflict with being religious? Childhood religious background, not exposure to scientific education, seems to be the most powerful predictor of future irreligion. Those scientists raised in almost any faith tradition are more likely to currently be religious than those raised without any tradition. In addition,

scientists who describe religion as important in their families as children are much more likely to practise faith currently. When compared to the general population, a larger proportion of scientists are raised in non-religious homes. When one considers that many more scientists come from non-religious homes or homes that were nominally religious, the distinctions between the general population and the scientific community make more sense. A large part of the difference between scientists and the general population may be due more to religious upbringing, rather than scientific training or university pressure to be irreligious, although these other possibilities should be further explored."

In summing up the findings of this interesting piece of research, Ecklund says: "There is some truth to the perception that scientists and the academy are 'godless.' Yet, to see the academy only from this monolithic view would overlook the significant numbers of scientists who do identify with some form of faith tradition (48 percent) as well as those who are interested in spirituality (about 68 percent)."

Interestingly, the researchers also found that some of the scientists they questioned were often having to tackle, in their classes, religious questions that once they did not touch on. With the rise of the evolution–creationism debate in the U.S., these academics, even if they did not subscribe to a religious faith themselves, were having to become more aware of ways in which faith and science interpenetrate, connect and harmonise. Ecklund adds an important point: "Scientists often rightly lament the scientific illiteracy amongst the U.S. population. Findings from this research also reveal, however, that a portion of academic scientists may be *religiously* illiterate." Certainly it would be the contention of many religious readers of Dawkins's book, *The God Delusion*, that Ecklund's point has great validity in the current debate.

Sunday by Sunday



by Fr John Boyle, Parish Priest of South Ashford

Sunday 2nd September
22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Lk 14:1-14

1. "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take your seat in the place of honour... No; when you are a guest, make your way to the lowest place and sit there..." I think it is safe to assume that the Lord is giving more than a lesson in wedding reception etiquette. There is a tendency in certain quarters to see the teachings of Jesus as nothing more than moral or ethical maxims to be observed to ensure harmonious relationships between each members of the human race. Yet this would be to empty him of his messianic character and divine nature. No, Jesus is getting to the heart of what it is to be capable of receiving the Divine Mercy when he says that "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted."

2. In her canticle of praise of the Almighty, uniquely given to us in the Gospel of Luke, Mary proclaims: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name." (Lk 1:46-49) Humility is an essential virtue for any disciple of Christ who wishes to rise to the heights of union with him, to be summoned to a higher place at the table. It is not wrong to desire to be at a higher place. As it is a privilege and an honour to be seated close to the bride and groom at a wedding reception, so each of us yearns in our hearts to be close to the action at and keen participants in the wedding feast of the Lamb.

3. And surely this is the wedding feast the Lord is referring to in his lesson – the holy sacrifice of the Mass, during which Christ and the Church are timelessly wedded to one another. At Mass, we are invited as "the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind" – the Church – who are incapable of repaying the bridegroom for the immense privilege of being invited to the Lamb's Supper. During the Mass, the Lord has regard for our low estate. We come hungry, and he fills us with good things. (Cf. Lk 1:53) Those, on the other hand, who come not in poverty but rich leave empty handed. If one may be permitted to adapt slightly the invitation that the priest makes before Holy Communion: *Beati (pauperi) qui ad coenam Agni vocati sunt.* – Blessed are (the poor) who have been called to the supper of the Lamb.

Sunday 9th September
23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Lk 14:25-33

1. "If any man comes to me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple." These appear to be harsh words. At a recent day of ongoing formation for priests, one of the speakers – herself a mother of four as well as a respected theologian and writer – was addressing the theme of the day: Home is a Holy Place. She asked: is it? Is the home, of its very nature, a holy place? Or does it need to be made holy? Whilst for many (hopefully most), home is truly a holy or at least happy, place, home can also be a place which destroys people, where there is cruelty and abuse. Even if this is not the case, it is less common than it used to be in families for prayers to be said together or for children to be encouraged to seek a vocation of total commitment to Christ. It is possible for home and family to be exalted to such a degree as to come between the individual and God.

2. The Jesus who says we must "hate" our nearest and dearest is the same who condemns the pharisaical neglect of family under the pretext of declaring whatever parents would have gained from their son to be Corban (i.e. given to God) so that he no longer has to do anything for his father or mother cf. Mk 7:11. St Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer comments on these words as follows: "These words indicate simply that we cannot be half-hearted when it comes

to loving God. Christ's words could be translated as 'love more, love better,' in the sense that a selfish or partial love is not enough – we have to love others with the love of God." (Christ is Passing By, 97)

3. Great saints and martyrs showed true love for their closest relatives by putting eternal life with Christ first. St Thomas More, despite being entreated by his family, refused to accept the Act of Succession, preferring to prove himself God's servant first. St Francis of Assisi was prepared to lose the favour of his father in order to follow Christ in poverty. St Paul Miki, one twenty six Japanese martyrs who were executed in 1597, was from an aristocratic Japanese family but embraced the Jesuit vocation which eventually led him to crucifixion. Many a young man or woman has known the pain of misunderstanding and disinheritance when they have converted to the Faith, or embraced a priestly or religious vocation. Jesus knows that his journey through this life is heading towards the Cross. Anyone who follows him must know the cost involved if they are to persevere.

Sunday 16th September
24th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Lk 15:1-32

1. The parable of the prodigal son is one of the most endearing passages of the Gospel. It is also the subject of a famous painting by Rembrandt. Many a confessional has this image displayed in or nearby. As much as being a parable to help us understand the joy of God the Father when we return to him, no matter how far away we have been, it also provides a model for fathers and mothers, and all who are responsible for others. If God is so ready to forgive, so should parents be ready to forgive their children, husbands their wives and vice versa, priests the souls who come to them for absolution.

2. There should be no doubt about the seriousness of the son's sin: "Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me." By these words, he was guilty of the sin of presumption: that he would, in fact, receive a share of the estate as if by right. He had also indicated his wish that his father were already dead, for the inheritance is not received until after the death of the testator. What human father would be expected to be looking out for the

return of his son in these circumstances? And yet that is what God our Father is doing when we distance ourselves from Him and His house which is the Church.

3. The late Cardinal Basil Hume, in his book *The Mystery of the Incarnation*, says that we are loved by a God who can never take his eyes off us. "While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved to pity." How must the Lord be looking upon the world at the present time, a world scarred by human conflict, war, terrorism, abortion, divorce. Today, let us call upon the Divine Pity to look upon his creatures with mercy. Let us pray for all who have lapsed and left the House of the Father that they may return through the joy of reconciliation by confession and forgiveness so as to partake once again at the rich banquet of the Eucharist. The father ordered that a fattened calf be killed and prepared for a feast. Christ, the Lamb of God, is offered to the Father for our reconciliation.

Sunday 23rd September

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lk 16:1-13

1. The parable of the dishonest steward is a puzzling one. The master praises this dishonest steward for his "prudence" in seeking to gain the friendship of his master's debtors by reducing their debt, even though the master himself will suffer financially from the actions of his soon to be ex-steward. Perhaps the master himself is unjust and dishonest, and is happy to see that his steward has been satisfactorily apprenticed in dishonest ways.

2. The steward and "the sons of this world" won the praise of Our Lord who said that they "are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light." The former takes great care to exercise foresight for the future. St Augustine writes: "When even a cheat is praised for his ingenuity, Christians who make no such provision blush. I mean, this is what (Christ) added, 'Behold, the children of this age are more prudent than the children of light.' They perpetrate frauds in order to secure their future. In what life, after all, did that steward insure himself like that? What one was he going to quit when he bowed to his master's decision? He was insuring himself for a life that was going to end. Would you not insure yourself for eternal life?"

3. "Use money, tainted as it is, to win you friends, and thus make sure that when it

fails you, they will welcome you into the tents of eternity." Almsgiving is a duty of charity, a commendable spiritual practice along with prayer and fasting, and a means for us to win friends in eternity, whether by giving money to organisations or individuals who carry out the corporal works of mercy – saving the lives of pre-born babies by supporting pro-life work, feeding the hungry by the alleviation of famine, sheltering the homeless, welcoming the stranger, or the spiritual works of mercy, such as having Masses offered for people who are sick or in particular need, or those who have died and the souls in purgatory.

Sunday 30th September

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lk 16:19-31

1. The parable of Dives (the rich man) and Lazarus (the poor man) has many lessons for us. The first is that there are consequences for neglecting those neighbours of ours who are in need and failing to come to their assistance through almsgiving (see last week's commentary) or by other means: we might end up in the torment of Hades, i.e. hell. St Jerome indicates that Dives could have saved himself quite easily: "Most wretched of men, you see a member of your own body lying there outside at your gate, and have no compassion?... Give what you waste to your own member. I am not telling you to throw away your wealth. What you throw out, the crumbs from your table, offer as alms." Jerome also tells Dives he had no excuse. He could not say "I did not notice him. He was in a corner. I could not see him. No one announced him to me." He lay at the gate. You saw him every time you went out and every time you came in. When your crowds of servants and clients were attending you, he lay there full of ulcers."

2. Conversely, the one who is neglected by his own is not left without the aid of God. Jerome says that the name Lazarus is "one who has been helped." "In his poverty, the Lord came to his assistance." God never forgets those who are despised in this world.

3. "If they will not listen either to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead." Jesus foresees continued lack of faith as he prophesies his own resurrection. The duty to care for one's neighbour is a law that is written on our hearts; it is written

in the law and the prophets; it is proclaimed once again by Christ the Lord, and continues to be proclaimed by the Church teaching in the name of the One who has risen from the dead. The law of love of neighbour sums up the teachings of the Son of God. Those who suffer here on earth will be comforted in heaven. "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied." (Lk 6:21)

Sunday 7th October

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

(Rosary Sunday)

Lk 17:5-10

1. "Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to man... To live, grow and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith; it must be 'working through charity', abounding in hope, and rooted in the faith of the Church." (CCC 162) There are: the gift, our attempts to nourish it, our prayer for increase, its practical expression. Faith enables us to see what needs to be uprooted – the mulberry trees – in our lives and to be single-minded in uprooting it. Miracles? Yes, but the ordinary kind.

2. "We are merely servants..." (better translated as "we are useless servants.") The Lord himself is the Servant King. The Son eternally obeys the Father. His greatest satisfaction is the fulfilment of his Father's will: "Not my will but thine be done." This is his glory. And it is ours too. Perseverance in the work entrusted to us requires faith. It is all too easy to give up in the face of a lack of apparent results. "Perhaps I should be somewhere else where my talents would be better used..." we might think to ourselves. What we are probably looking for is greater glory for ourselves or human satisfaction. St John Chrysostom writes: "Dearly beloved, see how the person with his mouth open for human glory and performing the works of virtue on that account has no benefit from it. Despite practising every example of virtue, if he seems to give himself credit for it, he ends up empty-handed and bereaved of everything."

3. Today is Rosary Sunday, the first Sunday of the month dedicated to the Holy Rosary. Particular attention to the contemplation of the mysteries of the Rosary during this month will lead us to a deeper faith after the example of the Blessed Virgin. The Rosary begins with the trusting faith of Mary who,

like the servants in the Gospel today, obey the Master: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." (Lk 1:38) Elizabeth declares: "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." (Lk 1:45) The Rosary continues through the mysteries of Christ and ends with Mary's coronation in heaven. The Master treats his most faithful of servants with the highest honour. By comparison with Mary, we truly are "useless servants." But our faith will bring perseverance, and our perseverance our reward in heaven, with Mary's intercession.

Sunday 14th October
28th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Lk 17:11-19

1. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem where he will have his triumphal entry on Palm Sunday followed by his passion and death on the Cross. On the Cross he will accomplish the redemption of all mankind, opening the way to entry into the Kingdom and giving birth to the Church and her sacraments from his wounded side. The road to Jerusalem leads him through border country, straddling Samaria and Galilee, and he is approached by ten lepers at the entry to one of these borderland villages. Leprosy was considered a sign of sinfulness. There was therefore a double ostracism: from the civic community for fear of contagion and from the worshipping community because of the implied sinfulness of the sufferer.

2. In response to their plea for mercy, Jesus heals all ten. By this healing, re-integration into society from both the civic and religious points of view is now possible. From Jesus' complaint at the lack of gratitude of nine of them, we can assume that these latter were Jews. The only one who thanked him was the Samaritan. In response to the Samaritan's gratitude, Jesus assures him of more than physical healing. As St Athanasius says: "They (the nine) thought more highly of their cure from leprosy than of him who had healed them... Actually, this one was given much more than the rest. Besides being healed of his leprosy, he was told by the Lord, 'Stand up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you.'" Were the other nine saved?

3. Leprosy is now easy to cure if caught in time. A course of tablets is all that is needed. The stigma of leprosy is lessened today. But all of us suffer, to some extent,

from leprosy of the soul. The cure is as easy as the one Christ gave the ten lepers: "Go and show yourselves to the priests." The sacrament of Reconciliation heals our souls and saves us. Availing ourselves of this means of forgiveness is the surest way of giving thanks to the Lord for his great mercy.

Sunday 21st October
29th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Lk 18:1-8

1. Prayer is the most important activity for a human being. It is what sets us apart from the rest of creation. Everyone connected with the Faith movement will know the maxim of St Ephrem that is oft repeated at its conferences: "Fish swim, birds fly, men pray." The whole of creation praises God through the praise that mankind offers to God on its behalf. Yet so few have discovered the art of real prayer. Few understand what prayer really is. Many try but give up when they perceive that their prayers are not being answered.

2. The Old Testament reading from the book of Exodus relates how important it was for the Israelites that Moses remain in an attitude of prayer while they were contending against Amalek. As long as Moses' arms were raised in prayer, Israel had the advantage. When he tired and his arms fell, the advantage turned to Amalek. Thus he was provided with a stone to sit on and Aaron and Hur supported his arms which remained raised until sunset and the victory was Israel's.

3. We too can tire of prayer. We let our habit of prayer slip, and things begin to go wrong in our lives. We slack in our interior struggle, we lose a sense of perspective, we fight the wrong battles, failing to judge situations objectively and with wisdom. In short, we lose a sense of justice, an appreciation of things 'as they are meant to be'. Then we fail to be what we are meant to be, and we fail also to live this out in our relations with others. There is an internal justice (justification) which is the result of God's action in us, and an external justice (performance of good works) which involves our response to the gift of God's grace. What did the widow in today's Gospel want from the unjust judge? All we are told is that it was 'justice... against my enemy.' She persisted until she obtained it. The Lord teaches that we too must 'cry to (God) day and night' for justice. We must persevere in prayer until things

are 'as they are meant to be', so that our Father in heaven may 'deliver us from evil' as Israel was delivered from the hands of the Amalekites and so that the Son of Man might find faith in us when he comes.

Sunday 28th October
30th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Lk 18:9-14

1. It is good to give thanks to God for the graces he has lavished upon us. The Pharisee in today's Gospel parable pronounces a prayer of thanksgiving... or so it seems. In fact, he is making himself equal to God, adopting the position of judge upon his poorer neighbour as well as judging himself all too favourably. He counts himself among the justified and the tax collector among those who are 'grasping, unjust, adulterous.' The tax collector may well have been all these things, but the Pharisee and his prayer are rejected and condemned.

2. As in the readings from the past few weeks, once again we find in the Gospel of Luke our Lord aligning himself with the poor, meek and lowly. The psalm is a prayer of one who is poor, humble, distressed, broken-hearted, crushed in spirit, but who confidently blessed the Lord 'at all times' with praise 'always on my lips' for 'The Lord hears the cry of the poor.' The Pharisee prayed with an attitude of confidence, but the tax collector who beat his breast was the one who went home again 'at rights with God', in a state of justice having obtained the mercy of God.

3. St Cyril of Alexandria admonishes the Pharisee of today's parable: 'Moderate yourself, O Pharisee. Put a door and lock on your tongue. You speak to God who knows all things. Wait for the decree of the judge. No one who is skilled in wrestling ever crowns himself. No one also receives the crown from himself but waits for the summons of the referee... Lower your pride, because arrogance is accursed and hated by God. It is foreign to the mind that fears God.' Of the tax-collector, the same father of the Church says: '(He) feels shame for his conduct. He is afraid of the judge. He beats his breast. He confesses his offences. He shows his illness to the Physician, and he prays that he will have mercy. What is the result?... "This man went down to his house justified rather than the other."' St Basil the Great reminds us: 'Humility often saves a sinner who has committed many terrible transgressions.'

Book
reviews



**Explorations in Neuroscience,
Psychology and Religion**

by Kevin S. Seybold, Ashgate, 157pp, £50

The Soul: An Inquiry

by Francis Selman, St Paul's, 142pp, £7.95

One of the most pressing questions on the interface between science and theology is that of the relationship between the body and what Christians call the 'soul' (this includes, of course, the question of the relationship between brain and mind). Academically, at least, this question remains an open one: rather than some consensus emerging, the range of 'solutions' proposed (physicalism, holistic dualism, non-reductive physicalism, dual-aspect monism), is ever-growing. Confusingly, each new solution seems to involve a novel definition of the basic terms. For the interested amateur theologian, engaging with this world of shifting ideas is a daunting prospect. A solid grounding in both the conceptual issues involved and the conclusions of neuroscientific research is needed.

Fr Francis Selman, a lecturer at Allen Hall seminary, and Kevin Seybold, an academic psychologist based in Pennsylvania, manage to cover each of these bases separately, but, sadly, neither combines both aspects in one book.

Fr Selman's *The Soul: An Inquiry* is thoroughly Thomist in its approach to its subject. The soul is held to be the 'form of the body' (i.e. that which gives particular existence to the matter that makes up the body, what makes it a 'living body'), and soul and body are united in a 'substantial

union', which means that what we refer to as 'I' is not something spiritual inhabiting a material shell, but that the body is included in this 'I'. It is against this theological background that Fr Selman takes on those who 'leave out the soul', especially materialists, who, for example, assert that the mind is reducible to the brain. His arguments for the existence and immortality of the soul are well-articulated, original and refreshingly clear.

While well-acquainted with the tradition of philosophical reflection on the soul and its relationship to the body, Fr Selman's knowledge of recent scientific research relevant to his subject appears less impressive and his terminology, and even some of his ideas and arguments, can therefore appear outdated or irrelevant. For example, in criticising Dawkins, he points out that "If every step in the series [of evolution] occurs by chance... the end cannot be ordered", apparently unaware that Dawkins does not view evolution as entirely random, but allows for a certain direction, provided by the mechanism of natural selection (p. 51). Similarly, he appeals somewhat unconvincingly to the idea that "nothing is annihilated in nature" (p. 118, i.e. the principle of conservation of mass-energy) to support the immortality of the soul. A more thorough engagement with scientific thought would seem desirable, if only to match the depth of engagement with philosophical reflection.

This is precisely what is on offer in Kevin Seybold's *Explorations in Neuroscience, Psychology and Religion*. Despite its somewhat patronising aim to "present some of the scientific findings coming from [psychology and neuroscience] in a way that is... non-threatening to Christian belief (inside flap), this book is a useful, understandable, and comprehensive introduction to the fields of neuroscience and psychology. It lacks organisation, however, and, unlike Selman's book, it doesn't say very much. Also, and more worryingly, the author seems to lack philosophical and theological precision, exemplified by the following dubious claim:

"From a trinitarian perspective, God is not an immaterial substance". His apparent lack of theological formation leads him, in his chapter on evolutionary psychology, to follow the "many" biblical scholars who "do not believe that humans were [originally] created without sin" (p. 122, a case of the blind leading the blind, perhaps?). This same lack seems to lead to his being somewhat uncritical of the quasi-theological conclusions of certain scientists. For example, he writes that "a study in 2002 found that cancer patients defined their religious faith using primarily positive rather than negative emotion words, suggesting that religious faith can be understood using emotion terminology" (p. 79). The logic of this sentence escapes me.

The difference between Selman and Seybold is seen most clearly in their treatments of the question of the immortality of the soul. Seybold takes the currently trendy line that the idea of the immortality of the soul is extrinsic to Christianity, a Platonic addition that obscures the eschatological essential of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the resurrection of the body (p. 51). Selman, on the other hand, seeks to subvert this same trend by constructing an extended argument in favour of the immortality of the soul (chapter 10). He argues that the current emphasis on the resurrection of the body is incoherent without the idea that the soul is immortal – "belief in the resurrection of the body without the immortality of the soul... fails to secure the resurrection of the same person" (p. 115). Here Selman displays the benefit of a keen philosophical mind. Seybold's in-depth knowledge of the relevant scientific issues is no replacement for careful inquiry.

Neither of these books is without its flaws. However, the strengths of one make up for the weaknesses of the other and, read together, they form a helpful introduction to a confusing field.

Conor McDonough
Kings College
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A Church That Can and Cannot Change:
The Development of Catholic
Moral Teaching

by John T. Noonan, Jr., *Notre Dame, Indiana:*
University of Notre Dame Press, 297pp, \$30

Few matters of Church history and doctrine have been as significantly and disastrously misrepresented as the so-called 'changes' in the Church's teaching on morality. This book stands as a part of this tradition of misrepresentation.

It aims to show that the Church has not developed but, rather, has reversed her position on three moral teachings (slavery, usury, religious freedom) and can thus do so on other issues (in particular, the indissolubility of marriage). As Cardinal Avery Dulles put it, "Noonan manipulates the evidence to make it seem to favour his own preconceived conclusions. For some reason, he is intent on finding discontinuity—but he fails to establish that the Church has reversed her teaching in any of the four areas he examines" (*First Things*, Oct 2005). This brief review cannot refute all of Noonan's claims, but it will attempt to indicate some problems with his approach and give an example of how it fails.

First, what is good about this book? Noonan is a judge and an historian, and as an historian this work gathers together a large volume of historical data that will be useful for orthodox and heterodox scholars alike. As Charles Curran has reminded us, Noonan's 1965 historical work *Contraception* "led many theologians and others to conclude that change on this issue was both possible and necessary" (*The Tablet*, 2 April 2005). Of course, Pope Paul VI judged otherwise, but, Noonan's work on contraception is still used today as an historical reference. What his present book offers that other studies have not is a detailed historical account of the Church's attitude to slavery.

Secondly, what is problematic about this book? In addition to its prejudice in favour of discontinuity (as indicated above by

Dulles), this book is problematic because of its methodology. As an historian, Noonan can be expected to write as an historian, however, as an historian of ideas (namely doctrine) he needs to offer a more systematic and analytic approach to the doctrines whose history he is investigating. Without such a systematic approach an historian will inevitably fail to see the internal coherence of notions that a superficial glance might otherwise misinterpret as contradictory.

Noonan's analysis of usury indicates some of the problems with his approach. If his approach was more analytical then he would consider the definitions of usury, the sources of any differing definitions, and the authority of those who taught. In contrast, however, far from carefully analysing such things, his treatment fails to distinguish between the views of theologians, the opinions of early Church Fathers, and the status of various statements from popes and councils. All of these are blurred together in a manner that accentuates the impression that the Church in her Magisterium has reversed herself and is thus untrustworthy as a moral guide. The notion that the Church has actually consistently held to something while the context has changed seems to be a notion that is pre-judged in the negative. He refers to the various exceptions to the prohibition on usury that theologians and Church authorities allowed, but these exceptions are cited in an attempt to discredit the teaching, not in an attempt to indicate what was actually being taught. In fact, he closes his treatment by dismissively quoting Jacques Maritain's statement that the Church has taught something consistent about usury, something that she continues to teach today.

What might be a different way to analyse the issue of usury? Perhaps to start by considering the context of the early Church and to consider what it was that the early Fathers of the Church were

defending when they condemned usury. In the society of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas money was a static entity and so to charge for the use of it was seen as unnatural, contrary to the nature of what money was. In such a context, interest on a loan was nothing less than a means for a rich person to get money out of a poor one while losing nothing himself. To charge interest on a loan was nothing less than extortion. In the modern world, however, money cannot be judged to be such a static entity and if Aristotle was judging the 'nature' of modern money he would judge it to be of-its-nature capable of changing value, capable of having risk attached to it, and that to lend it to someone else would therefore be a loan one could charge for, i.e. charge interest for. Thus it is consistent for the Church to teach at one moment in history that interest on money is immoral, and to teach at another moment in history that interest on money is moral. Money has changed. At both times she has sought to defend the poor against the rich, and has taught that a loan can be extortionate, but the context has changed what is or is not extortionate.

In short, Noonan's work is not useful for the typical reader. It provides a useful set of historical references, but the lack of subtlety and analysis in the way these references are cited means that the reader must use great discernment and significant other resources if he is not to find the book more of a hindrance than a help to his study of these topics.

Fr Dylan James
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Built on Love. An Autobiography for Two.

by Valerie and Denis Riches, *Family Publications*, 175pp, £12.99p

The names of Valerie and Denis Riches will be familiar to many, probably most, readers of FAITH magazine as great campaigners in defence of marriage and family life. Valerie has appeared many times on television and radio in debates on topics ranging from divorce law to the types of sex education currently being imposed on schools, and Denis is the founder of Family Publications, one of the success stories of modern Catholic publishing.

Now they have told their joint story, in a readable and rather charming book which will be a real delight to their many friends, and is a record of an era in which many social and moral values were changed and in which Christians were challenged to defend things that really mattered.

Valerie and Denis' story starts conventionally enough with descriptions of 1930s childhoods, British wartime experiences (Valerie's family lost their home in a bombing raid) and a postwar romance complete with a wedding photograph with Denis in RAF uniform. The early years of their married life are described with humour and charm, with some nice anecdotes – my personal favourite is of Valerie taking their little daughter regularly to post letters to Denis when he was working abroad, and small Venetia expressing concern: "Poor Dadda, he must be very uncomfortable in that pillar-box!".

It was when their children were in their teens that the Riches became aware of the way in which, through changes in the law, through the media, and through official policies in education and health, a whole anti-family and anti-marriage line was being foisted on society. Giving children contraceptives without parental knowledge or consent, promoting

abortion as a standard part of health-care provision, insisting on programmes of sex education that promoted a range of sexual activities and downgraded marriage... all this and more gave great cause for concern and brought together a group of doctors, teachers, social workers and others anxious to take some action. The result was a group, initially called The Responsible Society, which as Family and Youth Concern became a strong voice for family values. The group still thrives and is doing excellent work.

Tellingly, it has been the experience of FYC that whenever they have been able to present their case fairly in the media, they have won public support. The facts are at the core of this: as more and more contraceptives have been distributed to young people, the abortion rate and the illegitimate birth rate have both gone up, not down. As sex education has become more and more explicit, teenage sexual activity has increased. Policies adopted by successive governments have been proved wrong over and over again.

In *Built on Love* we re-live some of the earlier battles, and become uncomfortably aware of how any group or individual who tried to speak up for marriage and for parental rights experienced being marginalised, ignored, or openly insulted both by officialdom and in the media.

Throughout, the Riches' happy family life, and their Christian beliefs – which would eventually bring them into full communion with the Catholic Church – were a source of strength. Their journey towards the Church is told without undue sentimentality and with conviction and common sense. They also write touchingly of friends with whom they have shared various adventures, and especially of young people with whom at different times they have shared their home and their lives.

This is a happy and inspiring story – the only sad thing is that the Riches are unable to recount that the various battles – for example to ensure that marriage is once again established as the foundation of community life, or to ensure protection for unborn babies from abortion – had been won. They haven't. The next generation must now take up the banner. This is already happening, as the cheery picture of the young team at *Family Publications* reveals. There are more adventures ahead yet. The final words of the book apply to all campaigners as well as to Denis and Valerie themselves: "We face the uncertainties of the future with confidence, in the knowledge that God will provide us with the grace and strength we may need."

Joanna Bogle
New Malden
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Unfolding the Mystery, Monastic Conferences on the Liturgical Year

by Dom Hugh Gilbert, OSB, Gracewing, xiv + 154 pp, £9.99

The word "Conference" has a peculiar meaning in a monastery, derived from the famous "Conferences" of St John Cassian, which St Benedict directed should be read regularly to his monks. The word "conference" is still used for addresses to the community, even though the Abbot, or another senior Father, speaks without interruptions.

Here we overhear the Abbot of Pluscarden speaking to his monks, but the texts have been edited to make them accessible to the general reader, and only occasionally do we find passages of specific concern to the community at Pluscarden. The selection is arranged to follow the liturgical seasons from Advent to Christ the King, after an initial three conferences on prayer.

A theme which soon emerges and is maintained throughout is that "our whole time becomes sanctified time". (p. 38) Prayer is not something we do for specific times and then switch off as if we could return to secular life – no, the set times of prayer serve to leaven the whole day so that we are never out of the presence of God. In the same way the various moments of our Redemption, celebrated in the various seasons, suffuse and interpenetrate the entire year. Thus "it is always Epiphany" (p. 49) "always Lent, always Easter" (p. 107), "Pentecost is now, too" (p. 106-7), "the Parousia is among us, in the Eucharist" (p. 142). The Eucharist is indeed the key to it all, for in the Mass we are brought into the presence of Our Lord's birth, death and resurrection, His ascension, the descent of the Holy Spirit, the final consummation of all things.

All time is always sanctified: there is no such thing as "ordinary time". It is a strange comment on our present calendar that half the year is so designated, as if Epiphany were not still relevant, as if we do not still live in the light of Pentecost. It is greatly to be hoped that the liturgical reforms initiated by our present Holy Father will find some way of expressing this sanctification of the whole year in the calendar. In this selection of Conferences, indeed, we jump from the Baptism of the Lord straight to Lent, from Pentecost almost straight to Christ the King (though the Assumption and All Saints do punctuate the gap). This may be because author and publishers are saving more conferences for a second volume.

The liturgy is naturally the centre of a monk's life, but Abbot Hugh stresses that the monastic round of prayer is also essentially apostolic: a monk always prays for the people, even though not always with the people. Yet even in the remote fastnesses of Morayshire, people find their way to the monastery, and the Easter celebrations are "the greatest public service a monastic community can perform". (p. 103) Those who attend the liturgy on the great days can be inspired to live the Christian life in a hostile world: we are reminded of the effect the Easter Liturgy of Pannonhalma had on the faithful in Hungary during the years of persecution. (pp. 80, 103)

The phrase "the Paschal mystery" occurs frequently: it is quite modern, from the writings of Louis Bouyer in 1945 (p. 87), but it is rooted in the earliest Patristic tradition. The death and Resurrection of Our Lord is what gives all death and life its meaning. In the celebration of the Easter Triduum we come to the essential purpose of our own existence, already, now, caught up into the Resurrection,

finding the consummation of all things in the Eucharist. The so-called Parousia is already now. Incidentally the use of the word parousia to mean the Last Judgment is another very modern usage, and it can rather distort our reading of the New Testament if we project a twentieth-century definition back into the first century. The word really means "presence". To "recognise the presence of the parousia" (p. 140) is to get to the real meaning of the word in St Paul: Christ is in us now, and we can only live the Christian life if we are aware of that Presence, which is dynamic, always coming towards us, as in the ancient concept of a King's "advent" or "epiphany" to show that he is with his people. (p. 34) In the words of the Easter Vigil: "Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the end; Alpha and Omega; all time belongs to him and all the ages – to him be glory and power through every age for ever!"

Jerome Bertram C.O.
St Aloysius
Oxford



Notes from across
the Atlantic

by Richard John Neuhaus



RETRIEVING CATHOLIC IDENTITY

We've mentioned before Archbishop Michael Miller, secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome. He's the kind of leader who warrants more frequent mention than most. This spring he spoke to a conference of Catholic educators at Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio. The Church, he says, is looking for "benchmarks" of Catholic identity in colleges and universities that claim the name Catholic. There must be "measurable strategies... that require the university to deepen its Catholic character, moving it from where it is now to where it wishes to be in the future." "Teachers are called to be witnesses and educators of authentic human life," and the Catholics among them should be "outstanding in their integrity of doctrine and probity of life." That, he noted, is from Canon 810 of The Code of Canon Law. Schools make a special effort to recruit minorities and women, he observed. "I see no reason, and, despite widespread popular opinion, there is no constitutional reason, to exclude Catholics from similar consideration." He also observed that what typically passes for "religious studies" is no substitute for teaching theology. On the campus culture, he said that "expectations for student behaviour, the fostering of moral character and virtue, policies on campus speakers, health policies, and the promotion of justice should reflect a distinctively Catholic ethos". It has been seventeen years since John Paul II issued *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (From the Heart of the Church) and the progress toward making Catholic schools more Catholic has been, to put it gently, slow and mixed. But more and more schools are seriously engaged in asking the questions about "Catholic identity", which is all to the good. There are more than 225 nominally Catholic colleges and universities in this country. Some, such as Georgetown, are, it would seem, irretrievably lost to the Church. Others,

such as Boston College, are positioning themselves to be the bastion of "Catholic Lite". Others likely will, in the next ten years or so, drop altogether the pretence of being Catholic. But if, as one hopes, there will be 150 or more schools that are authentically Catholic in the manner envisioned by *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, that will be in no small part thanks to the thoughtful and firm prodding of Archbishop Michael Miller. Which is one reason why I had very mixed feelings when in Rome I learned that Miller had been appointed the next archbishop of Vancouver. That's great news for Vancouver. But who will help maintain the momentum for renewal at the Congregation for Education?

COMMUNION AND CONSTITUTION

On his trip to Brazil, Pope Benedict said, as he has said before and as canon law specifies, that politicians who reject the Church's teaching and support abortion gravely impair their communion with the Church and should refrain from receiving the Eucharist. Once again, Rep. Rosa DeLauro, Democrat from Connecticut, led the charge. It will be remembered that a while back she orchestrated a statement by politicians explaining to obtuse bishops why one can be both pro-abortion and a Catholic in good standing. This time she found seventeen fellow Democrats to join her in explaining to the pope that "Religious sanction in the political arena directly conflicts with our fundamental beliefs about the role of democratic representatives in a pluralistic America – it clashes with freedoms guaranteed in our Constitution. Such notions offend the very nature of the American experiment and do a great disservice to the centuries of good work the Church has done." Oh my, this is serious. It appears the pope is un-American. In truth, the pope is not imposing a "religious sanction" (although perhaps he should) but explaining the consequences for one's communion with the Church, such consequences being not "in the political arena" but at the altar. And I very much doubt that the freedom to receive Communion in the Catholic Church is "guaranteed in our Constitution". It does guarantee the freedom of the Church to govern itself and the freedom of Americans to adhere, or not adhere, to its teachings. Even Rudy Giuliani, who has some very real problems with his adherence, had the good sense to

respond, when asked about his possibly being refused Communion: "I do not get into debates with the pope. That is not a good idea." Representative DeLauro and her colleagues should face up to the fact that they have some hard decisions to make with respect to the right ordering of their loves and loyalties.

SIGNS OF FAITH

Some while back, in 2001, *First Things* published a series of remarkable photographs by Sam Fentress, who for twenty years has been photographing roadside signs all over the country. The signs typically exhort those who pass to repent and believe. Now the photographs have been put together in a handsome book: *Bible Road: Signs of Faith in the American Landscape*. Paul Elie writes in the foreword: "Fentress's fencepost proverbs and exhortations are at the side of the road, but they are at the centre of our religious life today, not at the margins. They are not the work of primitives or regionalists. They don't carry the evidence of a prior way of life; they don't pronounce judgement on our society. Rather, they express the fierce Christian belief, the mood of end-times fear and dread that is in uneasy coexistence with our bustle and optimism. This – the press of firm belief upon the present – is the great difference in Fentress's work, and it is made manifest by the richness of his technique: the gorgeous colours, the complex use of light and shade, the looming skies and horizon lines. The conventional wisdom says that signs at the roadside are there as messages for the journey. But Fentress's work suggests that they have been put there because the side of the road is the only open space left, the place where life in America today seems the largest and the least worked out." I'm not sure that the side of the road is the only open space left. As anyone knows who has driven across the country, or even looked down while flying over it, behind the side of the road are spaces so vast as to seem unlimited. But Elie is certainly right that the signs photographed by Fentress are not in the same category with those old Burma Shave ditties. They give expression to a very contemporary and vibrant faith that is both simpler and much more complex than the complexifications cherished by those who know only that we live in a secular society.

A Sacramental Love

A 1985 meditation by Fr Edward Holloway, the then Parish Priest of Esher

CHURCH OF THE HOLY NAME, ESHER

Parish Newsletter for Sunday July 11th: 15th of the Year

Said a certain very young man to me once "I get scared when I think of heaven going on, and on, and on. It even made me cry once. I think I will get so bored". I was able to reassure him, but that would be rather too long for a newsletter. Said the same sage on another occasion "I have often thought I would like to meet God. I often wonder what He is really like. I wonder at times if I would like Him if I knew Him". Well, Cardinal Newman, not me, makes the point that while religion must be expressed in creeds and propositions, because the plan of God is organised and structured, our Faith is not about propositions, our Faith is not a code of conduct. Religion is God's self-disclosure of Himself, revealed in human form in Jesus Christ. The personality of God, putting it in human terms, is revealed in Our Lord, and if you love Him now, you would have loved Him then, not otherwise. You would love Him for the depth and beauty of his personality, not his physical attractiveness, though He must have been a noble human figure to know and understand. It is a point worth pondering: "I wonder if I would like Him if I met Him". He was the revelation of truth, beauty of being, goodness, and sheer integrity. It is worth making the point that not everybody did like Jesus Christ. So, you were not compelled in any physical sense to like Him. You would have liked Him if he had been your sort of person, saying, being, and living the way you like to be, or at least would like to follow with a lot of encouragement from a leader. The higher people were in society the less they seemed to like Jesus Christ. The higher you go and are, the more I suppose you accept and work on certain presuppositions, that condition your enjoyment of power, your actions, and your integrity in dealing with other people. I suppose we don't notice it, but we make so many compromises with human snobbery, human sin, human error, and human greed, the nearer we are to the top in ruling other men. The ordinary people were in awe and admiration of

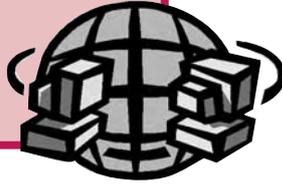
Jesus Christ. They certainly sensed that He was someone utterly different, or certainly a very great Prophet. Would you say they loved Him? I doubt it. The young and sincere, the old and very deep, the woman in the crowd who lifted up her voice and blessed Him... these did. Most found Him just a bit too much, just a bit too demanding. Someone to get excited about, but not someone to identify with, someone to love and follow. We have to ask ourselves would I have loved Him, given Him myself, followed his every invitation? If I draw back from Him now, it is not likely I would have been any different then. Yet, He was the disclosure of all that is good and lovable, noble, and most fulfilling in human life. Whether we would have loved Him and declared ourselves for Him, given our life over to Him... this is a measure of whether we really understand our Faith, really love God, really understand what life and beauty is about. Would I have liked Him if I knew Him? Be more generous, look into yourself now... for whether we like Him or not, or would have is a judgment not on Him, But on ourselves, our own quality.

(see p. 12 for another Hollowayan snippet)



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

Vatican State

This fascinating new site acts as a companion to the Vatican homepage. You can make a virtual visit to the Vatican gardens, check St Peter's Square on several webcams or listen to the Pope giving the latest Angelus address on the Vatican radio link. There are brief historical notes and information on the various structures of government. (The Vatican city is allowed to sail its own vessels flying the papal flag, although "it does not avail itself of this right at this time"). View the archives of Vatican stamps dating back to 1929 or photos of the first papal car. Lastly, you can order some fine art reproductions from the Vatican museums.

www.vaticanstate.va/EN/

Summorum Pontificum

As well as providing the full text of the Pope's Motu Proprio on the use of the 1962 Missal, with accompanying letter, this American blog gives up-to-date analyses and comments. It presents the American Bishops' Conference '20 questions' page. There are also U.S. Diocesan official reactions posted and news from other blogs as the threshold date of September 14th takes effect.

www.summorumpontificum.net

Protecting our children

Following the theme of last issue of Faith, and the review in this one, this site tackles the subject of sex education. Yet again it reveals the same battles occurring across the Atlantic. 'The Veil of Innocence' heavily criticises the official programmes approved for American Catholic children and provides relevant points from authentic Church teaching and the wisdom of the saints. There is also practical advice for parents seeking to protect the chastity of their children. And a letter of encouragement from a U.K. teenager.

www.veilofinnocence.org

Wintershall: Mystery Plays for the 21st Century

Is this England's answer to Oberammergau – with organic farm produce to boot? Each summer there is a Life of Christ and each winter a traditional Nativity play. These are staged on a private farm estate in the heart of the Surrey Countryside. Some parish groups now make annual visits to what has already become a place of pilgrimage and a great sign of hope. The site also provides details of the Rosary Way and Stations of the Cross set in the grounds.

www.wintershall-estate.com

Catholic video of the day

From apologetics to debates and the odd bit of humour. There are some good links to Catholic channels.

www.catholic-tube.com

Pick of the blogs

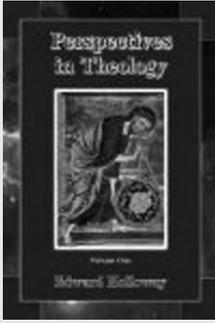
You may know New Advent for the Catholic Encyclopaedia. But here is a selection of blogs and news items from around the web which is updated throughout the day. There's usually something of interest.

www.newadvent.org

Gospel Of Life blog

The sisters have entered the blogosphere. It looks as though they are already proving its value as a medium to spread the pro-life message.

<http://gospeloflifesisters.wordpress.com/>



PERSPECTIVES IN THEOLOGY:

VOL. ONE

CHRIST THE SACRAMENT OF CREATION

Edward Holloway

The first volume of collected writings by Fr Edward Holloway seeks to present his contributions to Faith magazine to a wider readership. A champion of Catholic orthodoxy, Fr Holloway sought to bring about a new reconciliation between science and religion. In this way he anticipated and also participated in Pope John Paul II's programme of intellectual renewal in the Church. In this volume you will find stimulating writing on the key themes of his synthetic perspective, including the existence of God; the development of Scripture; Christ as Son of Man; Mary Immaculate; the nature of the Church, and much more.

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Catholicism *a new synthesis*

by Edward Holloway

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