

faith

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Catholic Schools Revisited: What Future Now?
Editorial

The Decline of Catholic Education: An Appraisal
Eric Hester

The Soul, The Faith and Aristotle
Kevin Flannery SJ
with a response from William Charlton

Why Should We Listen to The Church?
Ryan Day

Chris Hack corresponds on the spiritual nature of man
Edmund Nash reviews *The Soul of the Embryo* by David Jones

OTHER ANGLES

Peter Hodgson discusses the meaning of Physics
Caroline Farey explores the use of Art in catechesis

REGULAR FEATURES

William Oddie : comment on the comments
Richard J Neuhaus : notes from across the Atlantic
The Truth Will Set You Free : pastoral forum
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Catholic Schools Revisited: What Future Now?	2
<i>Editorial</i>	
The Decline of Catholic Education	8
<i>Eric Hester</i>	
The Soul, The Faith and Aristotle: A Response to William Charlton	18
<i>Kevin Flannery SJ</i> <i>plus a Response from William Charlton</i>	
Why Should Young People Listen To The Church?	23
<i>Ryan Day</i>	
A Mother's Diary	26
<i>Fiorella Nash</i>	
The Truth Will Set You Free	27
<i>"An Experience of Youth Catechesis" – Richard Marsden</i>	
Letters	29
<i>To the Editor</i>	
Comment on the Comments	33
<i>William Oddie</i>	
Sunday by Sunday	35
<i>Our regular guide to the Word of God in the Sunday Liturgy</i>	
Book Reviews	38
<i>Edmund Nash sees a lacuna in David Jones' helpful writing on the embryo, Chris Hack finds Peter Hodgson's latest science and religion book very significant, Joanna Bogle admires two new CTS pamphlets.</i>	
Notes From Across The Atlantic	41
<i>A survey of religious and public life in America by Richard Neuhaus</i>	
Cutting Edge	43
<i>The Delusion of Dawkins</i>	
Faith Online	44
<i>Highlighting Catholic resources on the World Wide Web</i>	

Plus OTHER ANGLES from Caroline Farey p.16 and Peter Hodgson p.31

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Catholic Schools Revisited: What Future Now?

*"It is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."
(Ephesians 6:)*

"One English bishop recently remarked in public that in 20 years time we may not have state-funded Catholic schools at all. Frankly, it is a question of whether they will self-destruct before the opponents of faith schooling secure enough political support to abolish them."

Spiritual Battle for Catholic Education

"We believe that our schools are still worth fighting for". So we said in the Editorial article "Catholic Schools: Time to Decide" (Faith Mar-Apr 2005). Sadly, even in a year and a half, the situation of Catholic education in the UK has deteriorated rapidly both with regard to the political climate and—as Eric Hester puts it in his own analysis in this issue—because "the English Catholic Church had lost the vision and the will to resist" the pervasive secularisation of the surrounding culture.

In any fight, we need to keep our eyes open to developments and to understand something of the strategy that will be needed to win. If we are involved in a spiritual struggle for Catholic schools, what we need to do is to survey the various possible battlefields, the strategy of the enemy and the weapons that we will need to win. We may also need to consider alternatives to the conventional cultural war, especially in the UK. There can be no question of surrender where the future of children and young people are concerned. However, if the enemy has overwhelming superiority on the field, less conventional means of engagement may be more effective in gaining results.

OFSTED'S Control of Schools

In 1944, the "historic agreement" allowed that Catholic schools in England and Wales would be maintained by the State and receive 90% funding for capital improvements. (The Scottish Bishops obtained a slightly different and, arguably, more favourable agreement.) This made sense for the state because the children educated in Catholic schools would have to be educated somewhere. With the Catholic Church providing the buildings out of the "pennies of the poor", the State was released from this burden of capital expenditure. On its part, the Catholic Church could appoint staff, determine the curriculum and arrange Catholic Religious Instruction and Religious Worship, while the same staff and the capitation for books and equipment would be paid for by the State—expenses that would have to be incurred in any case for those children. The State, for its part, would have the benefit of schools that, in most cases, offered a very good education. A happy agreement indeed.

There were always 'border disputes' within this settlement. A story from the 1960s will serve to illustrate. Her Majesty's Inspectors came to a Catholic school, undertook the inspection and delivered their report, describing the staff as "a pretty mediocre lot". The parish priest read the report to the staff, screwed it up, threw it in the bin and said "I want you to know that you are all hand-picked". The staff continued in post, many of them for years to come, delivering an excellent education, both in the general curriculum and in the Catholic faith.

Such defiance of the inspectors and of the Local Authority would be unthinkable today. Through OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education), the State now has power that would be the envy of any totalitarian government. (Cf. *Inspection, Inspection*,

Inspection, Anastasia de Waal, Civitas. London. 2006). A school's OFSTED report is published and the judgements of the inspectors form the basis on which the school is judged by parents, by the Local Authority and by the newspapers. Few dare to question the validity of these judgements: to do so is itself seen as weakness. Government and opposition parties use the judgements as if they were objective descriptors of the quality of education provided by the school. A weak OFSTED report, or even a few weak points in it, can be made the focus of trenchant criticism in the local press. A bad report affects the retention of staff and the recruitment of pupils, leading to further problems as the school is forced to make up numbers by accepting pupils who cannot get in elsewhere or whose parents are not interested in inspection reports. Any parish priest affirming the "hand-picked" staff in these circumstances would be a figure of ridicule.

The influence of OFSTED has penetrated deeply into education as a whole and Catholic education in particular. The National Curriculum constrains the use of teaching time, and the requirements to provide written evidence of policies, lesson planning, assessment, monitoring and evaluation have meant that teachers are focussed relentlessly on meeting Government guidelines in order to avoid the 'second death' of being put into what is known as a "Category". The latest revision of this process actually requires schools to monitor themselves first through the 'Self Evaluation Form'. In the bad old days, in some schools, boys were expected to say "Thank you" after being caned, but they were never expected to cane themselves!

OFSTED as a Tool of Government

In theory 10% of curriculum time is given to RE and collective worship in Catholic schools, but few schools would dare to follow this directive if that were at the risk of achieving the unyielding targets set by the DfES (Department for Education and Skills) and enforced by OFSTED. Hence, in many secondary schools, 'extra-curricular' events such as class Masses or opportunities for sacramental confession are routinely substituted for classroom RE lessons. On paper, there are curriculum and inspection requirements for RE, and so extra time for the celebration of the sacraments within the school day ought to be shared among all the curriculum areas. However, try suggesting this to senior staff and they will simply smile and shrug. They know that you are absolutely right, but they also know that there is absolutely nothing they can do about it.

Nominally, OFSTED is independent of the Government. Nonetheless, the Chief Inspector reports to the Secretary

of State and OFSTED acts as a tool for implementing Government policy by policing initiatives foisted on schools by the DfES. The appearance of independence and objectivity gives OFSTED considerable power, particularly when its reports can easily be found on the internet by any party sympathetic or hostile to a school. The actual link between OFSTED and Government means that this extensive power can be used to implement the Government's ever changing policy and centrally imposed targets in a highly authoritarian way with the outward appearance of legitimacy.

Staffing and Governing Catholic schools

Recruitment and retention of teaching staff has been made difficult by the resulting bureaucratic workload imposed on teachers. Many have left the profession to seek refuge in less pressurised office jobs. Recent efforts to alleviate the pressure have focused not so much on reducing the paperwork itself but on recruiting teaching assistants to look after classes while the teachers do the admin. The mantra: "Planning, Preparation and Assessment" sounds very worthy until you realise that in undertaking the tasks under these headings, most time is spent on preparing a paper trail to provide "evidence" for the next OFSTED Inspector, showing that Government initiatives have been faithfully implemented.

Catholic schools in England and Wales are expected to follow, the *Memorandum On Appointment Of Teachers To Catholic Schools* issued by the *Catholic Education Service* on behalf of the Bishops' Conference. A previous version of this document stipulated that for every teaching appointment, practising Catholics should be given preference, all other things being equal. However, the revision of 2003 states that the Head, the Deputy and the Head of RE should be practising Catholics but as regards other teaching staff, finding practising Catholics is only to be "a high priority". In practice, for many secondary schools, baptized Catholics form somewhere around a half of the complement of teachers. A significant proportion of these Catholics do not practice their faith. It is ironic that oversubscribed schools apply a draconian test of Catholic practice for the admission of students, while many staff in the same schools are non-Catholic, or Catholics who do not go to weekly Sunday Mass themselves.

An Outdated Culture of Dissent

It is far from uncommon to find Catholics teachers who dissent from the teaching of the Magisterium, especially on matters concerning the family and the regulation of birth. The spiritual and doctrinal developments of the 'John Paul II generation' seem to have passed by our Catholic staff rooms, especially in the secondary sector,

without any real impact. Thus we hear of increasing clashes between 'old-school' RE practitioners and newly ordained chaplains who insist on actually having *scriptural* readings in the Mass, for example. Many of our senior Catholic staff belong to the 'baby boomer' generation and are surprised and shocked when evangelical young Catholics come into the school and talk openly and with conviction about Catholic doctrine and morals.

As regards school Governors, the emphasis is almost entirely on compliance with diocesan and governmental employment policies rather than with Catholic formation. So whilst a governor might fail to be re-appointed if they are related to an employee of the school—an increasing problem owing to the large numbers of non-teaching staff now recruited from the local parishes—however it would be unlikely that a Governor would find their re-appointment blocked because they spoke in favour of women priests or civil partnerships.

Owing to Government pressure on schools, the Diocesan Schools Commissions have been forced to focus on supporting schools in meeting the requirements of OFSTED simply so that Catholic schools retain a good reputation in the public domain. By and large they are successful in this, and such compliance has been one of the most powerful political arguments against the abolition of faith schools. However, this has come at the expense of promoting solid Catholic teaching.

The Loss of Integral Catholic Teaching

The deeply flawed *Here I Am* and *Icons* programmes still hold the field in English schools despite the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and some very fine alternative resources that have been developed through private initiatives. A common reason for teachers to resist any change to these more orthodox schemes is that the local diocese provides no training or support for them.

The role of Governors becomes impossible in this situation. On paper, they have wide-ranging powers over the content of what is taught in the RE class. In practice, these powers are entirely circumscribed by OFSTED, DfES regulations and the minefield of employment law. It is a myth that Governors "set the curriculum". They do nothing of the sort. They simply carry the responsibility if government regulations are not carried out to the letter. Even in terms of the "Catholic ethos" of the school, Governors are very limited in their power to change policy in a school. All too often concerned Governors, even when they are the local parish priest, have found that, if they try to raise serious concerns about doctrinal, moral or liturgical issues, when push comes to shove, "the Diocese" will not back them.

The Impact of Secularisation

Catholic schools do retain distinctive characteristics, but sadly these are not always what we might hope for. Ideally we would hope that young people leaving Catholic schools would be going to Sunday Mass, solidly grounded in Catholic doctrine, orientated to developing a life of sacramental and personal prayer. In the case of the 'high-flyers', we would hope to see some becoming active pro-lifers, apologists and apostles: "co-workers in the truth" with the College of Apostles.

Schools can legitimately protest that the failure to achieve these objectives cannot be laid exclusively at their door. The young live in an aggressively secular society. Many do not receive support from practising Catholic parents, and of course they may rebel or fall in with peer pressure as many teenagers do. But unfortunately, many Catholic schools do act against the objectives of true Catholic formation at times.

In some areas of the curriculum, Government policy tends to make one's "personal view" into the most important factor. "Values clarification" is often the preferred model for teaching. This means that young people are encouraged to explore various issues and clarify their own opinions and attitudes without any guiding orientation or authoritative intervention.

Impact on Practising Catholic Pupils

The impact of this approach will be more harmful in Catholic schools than in the state sector. In community schools under the control of the Local Authority, Catholic pupils are a minority whose views are often respected as such. The Catholic viewpoint on any moral issue will itself be an "alternative viewpoint" and of interest for that reason if nothing else. Whereas in Catholic schools, the approach of "looking at alternative views" mistakenly assumes that the young people have been indoctrinated with Catholic views and need to consider different viewpoints. This is a disastrous misreading of the culture in which young people grow up in Britain today.

The truth is that their "different viewpoints" will already form almost the default mindset of the young because they are those of the secular mass media, routinely hostile to Catholicism and presented convincingly, persuasively and unremittingly. One of the saddest examples of the "values clarification" approach is the utterly misguided desire of some Catholic teachers to invite a "pro-choice" speaker to give the "alternative view" on abortion, or a "gay" speaker to give the "alternative view" on homosexuality. Given the influence that popular teachers have on their students, this damage is compounded if the teacher also has a general view that the Church is too "patriarchal" or "authoritarian".

When the content of the local sex-education programme is contrary to Catholic teaching, for example, parents who complain can find that their most difficult opponents are the senior staff, Governors and even “the Diocese”.

Practising Catholics a Minority in their Own Schools

Peer pressure against practising the faith can be intense in many Catholic schools. Whereas students in a non-Catholic school may see the priest as a figure of fun or curiosity, students in Catholic schools may find that it is “social death” to be seen talking to their parish priest or to admit to serving Mass.

If the school RE policy starts by assuming that young people will not listen to the Church’s teaching, the effect will be to further marginalise practising Catholics among the students, unconsciously aiding and abetting the pressure that they receive from their peers. This will be especially true for those from large families whose parents are known to be “difficult” over the school’s sex education policy.

Perhaps many of those within Catholic education who read this piece will be angry that we have painted a bleak and negative picture of Catholic education in Britain today. However, many parents and young practising Catholics who have recently left school will be nodding their assent vigorously, knowing that we have been realistic and honest. We are speaking out on this issue particularly for the sake of good Catholic families who, in some cases, are at the end of their tether.

In our increasingly inter-faith society we need to make clear distinctions between secular thought patterns and lifestyles and those of integral Catholicism. Muslim parents are rightly saddened and confused by the degree to which, even in Catholic schools, Church life has taken on a materialistic and hedonistic hue. They can take some convincing that our Prime Minister is not an orthodox Christian; and the fault does not seem to lie simply with them or with Mr Blair himself.

Not all Bad News

In many areas of Church life, there are indeed hopeful developments on the horizon. The new movements and communities have provided the Church with new vocations, young men and women who should in time to revitalize the Church. But with regard to Catholic education, it may be a much more difficult task to turn the ship around, perhaps it has already become impossible. The growing trend of opening “mixed faith” schools will not help, to put it mildly.

Nor will accepting the latest Government proposal/diktat about all faith schools taking in at least a compulsory

25% quota of students of other faiths and none. The Catholic Education Service seems to be standing up for Catholic education and opposing it. Yet, as Eric Hester argues in the following pages, it may be too little too late. It is unrealistic to hope that this will be the end to Government pressure upon our schools.

One English bishop recently remarked in public that in 20 years time we may not have state-funded Catholic schools at all. Frankly, it is a question of whether they will self-destruct before the opponents of faith schooling secure enough political support to abolish them.

What Does the Future Hold?

In *Faith*, we often speak of the importance of the spiritual environment for the growth of the soul. We do need to consider the various ways in which the present and future generations of young Catholics will be exposed to the sunshine of the soul. It may be necessary for priests and others in the active apostolate to consider where they may most effectively use their limited time and energy.

First and most important is the family. This will always be essential regardless of the state of our Catholic schools. The strong Catholic families in our parishes need the untiring support and encouragement both of priests and of the new lay movements within the Church. They have their own battles in Britain today. House prices are being forced relentlessly upwards—not least by the prevalence of child-lite cohabiting couples ('straight' and 'gay').

The tax regime, as well as cultural mores, pressurise mothers to work even when they would prefer to do the “childcare” themselves, and regulation begins to hit them as their children are monitored by the state. Our society increasingly caters exclusively for families with one or two children. Our correspondence column has in recent months highlighted the social predicament of parents who are open to going somewhat beyond this norm. Even the new car seat regulations work against such families.

Nonetheless, the example and influence of good Catholic families is infectious. With solid backing, they can be effective apostles of other families, promoting the Gospel of Life and the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*. This, more than anything, will provide a firm anchor for the future.

We may find that an increasing number of families take the option of home-schooling. This can never be a solution for the majority who do not have the educational skills nor the financial security for one parent to stay at home and teach their children. Yet for some families it can be a way to safeguard the faith and morals of their children. The Church should at least respect such conscientious decisions and be a source of loyal and friendly advice.

The parish itself is also vital. As a “family of families”, the parish can provide a stable spiritual environment where the living God is encountered by a wide and diverse group of people. The parish currently faces its own battles, as the defeatist mentality of “planning for a Church with fewer priests” sees the dismantling of the parish structure itself, including the guaranteed presence of a parish priests and hence the familial relationship at the altar of God. It may be that parishes will have to offer more in the way of catechesis. At least this has the advantage of allowing legitimate freedom to draw on the many excellent materials that have been produced in recent years, of which the latest outstanding example is the CTS programme *Evangelium*.

Time for Reassessment?

Our editorial eighteen months ago argued that a choice concerning whether or not we should fight for the integrity of State aided Catholic education was upon us. Since then the crisis has deepened—rapidly. The historic settlement by which the State supplied 90% of the costs of schools, which in turn contributed Catholic values to society, has been turned completely on its head. Now a dwindling Catholic laity are paying 10% of the costs of schools that are, in many cases, less and less distinguishable from their secular counterparts.

The gravity of the situation, no doubt, varies from school to school and diocese to diocese. There are, of course,

beacons of light and goodness in the gathering gloom. There are still some Catholic schools in the UK where the influence of loyal Catholic teachers, governors and priests is bearing fruit. But in all honesty, the odds are heavily stacked against them, both from external attack by the political forces of secularism and from internal neglect from doctrinal confusion and dissent in the local Church.

Everyone must make their own conscientious decision, but we know of many parish priests who are feeling forced to make a sharp assessment—in the best OFSTED fashion—of their rôle in Catholic schools. They are taking a long, hard look at the time they give to Catholic Education: Governors meetings and training days, Diocesan education meetings, and perhaps even some of the time spent with children and students in a school context. They ask themselves what positive 'outcomes' result from all this for the building of God's Kingdom.

They may decide that more fruitful outcomes result from time spent in the parish Church and the parish Hall with children, young people and parents. Historically speaking—especially recalling the battle cry: “Schools before Churches!” of the nineteenth century hierarchy—this may seem heartbreakingly defeatist. Yet, continuing the military metaphor with which we began, it may now be the most effective means of insurgency against institutionalised modernism and the ever increasing encroachment of the State on Catholic education.

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The Decline Of Catholic Education: An Appraisal And A Recommendation

Eric Hester

Eric Hester charts the decline of Catholic content and control in the delivery of education in the Catholic State sector. He places particular emphasis on the role of Catholic agencies in this process.

From 1975 to 1999 he was headmaster of two Catholic schools. Due to their changes in status he has experience of headship of the following types of school: secondary modern, comprehensive, independent grammar; independent preparatory; grant-maintained grammar, and a local authority grammar.

"If nothing happens to change things, then in as little as five years, outside the independent sector, there could be no truly Catholic schools remaining in England."

Defining Catholic Education

Catholic schools in England could appear, *prima facie*, to be doing well. They are usually popular schools locally and rarely have problems filling their places. They obtain very good Ofsted reports and have examination results that are at least as good as other local schools. However in terms of their canonical mission, the story is rather more complicated. I will argue here that the Catholicity of their teaching and of their control is in imminent danger of being all but submerged. It cannot be separated from what has happened in the last forty years, not just in English Catholic schools but in the English Church.

A necessary consideration is that in Canon Law it is parents who are given all the rights over the education of children and not the state, not even bishops whose role is the very limited one of providing Catholic schools where they do not exist and inspecting and regulating them. It is useful before all else to see what Canon Law says about the rights and duties of parents. All italics are mine.

The Rights and Duties of Parents in Canon Law

CANON 226 § 2 Because they gave life to their children, parents have the most serious obligation and the right to educate them. It is therefore primarily the responsibility of Christian parents to ensure the Christian education of their children in accordance with the teaching of the Church.

CANON 793 § 1: Parents, and those who take their place, have both the obligation and the right to educate their children. Catholic parents have also the duty and the right to choose those means and institutes which, in their local circumstances, can best promote the Catholic education of their children.

CANON 796 §:1 Among the means of advancing education, Christ's faithful are to consider schools as of great importance, since they are the principal means of helping parents to fulfil their role in education.

§ 2 There must be the closest cooperation between parents and the teachers to whom they entrust their children to be educated. In fulfilling their task, teachers are to collaborate closely with the parents and willingly listen to them; associations and meetings of parents are to be set up and held in high esteem.

CANON 797: Parents must have a real freedom in their choice of schools. For this reason Christ's faithful must be watchful that the civil society acknowledges this freedom of parents and, in accordance with the requirements of distributive justice, even provides them with assistance.

CANON 799: Christ's faithful are to strive to secure that in the civil society the laws which regulate the formation of the young, also provide a religious and moral education in the schools that is in accord with the conscience of the parent.

CANON 803 § 2 Instruction and education in a catholic school must be based on the principles of catholic doctrine, and the teachers must be outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life.

Confidence and Expansion in 1950

When the English hierarchy celebrated the centenary of its restoration in 1950, the tone of its pronouncements, especially in the education area, is a celebration of the significant development of the Catholic Church in this country. The only problems were those of growth: new schools were needed, not just the new secondary modern schools, but more grammar schools. New Catholic Training Colleges (remember them?) were necessary to produce the huge numbers of extra teachers needed. All was confidence and expansion.

The English bishops stuck to its Declaration of 1929 which unflinchingly defended the teaching of the Catholic Church and the rights of parents.

1. It is no part of the normal function of the State to teach.
2. The State is entitled to see that citizens receive due education sufficient to enable them to discharge the duties of citizenship in its various degrees.
3. The State, ought, therefore, to encourage every form of sound educational endeavour, and may take means to safeguard the efficiency of education.
4. To parents whose economic means are insufficient...it is the duty of the State to furnish the necessary means ...from the common funds arising out of the taxation of the whole country. But in doing so the State must not interfere with parental responsibility, nor hamper the reasonable liberty of parents in their choice of a school for their children. Above all, where the people are not all of one creed, there must be differentiation on the ground of religion.
5. Where there is need of greater school accommodation, the State may, in default of other agencies, intervene to supply it; but it may do so only "in default of, or in substitute for, and to the extent of, the responsibility"...
6. The teacher is always acting *in loco parentis*, never in loco civitatis though the State; to safeguard its citizenship, may take reasonable care to see that teachers are efficient.
7. Thus a teacher is not and never can be a civil servant... Whatever authority he may possess to teach and control children, and to claim their respect and obedience, comes

to him from God, through the parents and not through the State, except in so far as the State is acting on behalf of the parents.

Caution and Compromise in 1999

The 1999 edition of the Catholic Education Service's (CES) *Evaluating the Distinctive Nature of the Catholic School* acknowledges the supportive role of Catholic schools towards parents in its introduction (Part 1). But the next mention of the primacy of parents is in the sixth sub-section of "Part 2: The Mission of the Catholic School". Here, under "Home, School and Parish", a spirit of "collaboration" is mentioned and the "Church" teaching that parents are the "first teachers" (not "primary educators") is explained as "underlin(ing) the role and responsibility of parents within the home as the place where faith is formed and nurtured."

It is a very toned down version of the above 1929 Declaration and 1983 Canon Law. Indeed the document's acknowledgement of the risk of secular influence within Catholic Education is rather vague (and a slight grammatical *non-sequitur*):

"Catholic schools and colleges in England and Wales are at the interface of many different understandings of life, of society, and of education. Perhaps the most challenging of these (sic) is the contrast (sic) between the Christian approach to education which is based on the understanding of all life as God's gift, and a general approach to education which does not openly acknowledge any religious values." (p.8)

Most importantly the tone of Canon Law is miles apart from the reality of what is happening in the English Catholic maintained schools system. Below I will discern a link between this reality and the CES's lack of focus upon the basic principles of Catholic education in recent years. (I am not here discussing Catholic independent schools, which cater for less than ten per cent of our young people).

Overview

Intend argue the following three points: First, these maintained schools are, in general, not even attempting to teach the integral Catholic faith, let alone successfully doing so. The officially approved textbooks are such that if pupils committed every page to memory they would not know even the most basic Catholic truths. Secondly, so-called "Sex education" is widespread in English Catholic primary schools in direct contradiction to explicit and repeated bans on it from the Holy See. In secondary schools, the "sex education" is sometimes indistinguishable from that in the local comprehensive: condoms are displayed, , guest speakers are invited to

give talks on morally sensitive without being vetted, and pupils may be referred to family-planning services without the knowledge of parents, let alone their consent.

Thirdly, in terms, of structures, Catholic governors used to have complete control of the three important elements in any school: the curriculum; the admission of pupils; and the appointment of teachers. Legislation has in recent years removed such control in each of these areas without the Catholic authorities putting up any fight. In some cases, the Catholic Education Service (CES), has actually urged the government to take away from governors powers that even a Labour government would have left with them, such as the right to interview parents before admitting a child in order to help to determine the extent of Catholic practice. As for employment law, it has become a minefield. If the government's so-called anti-discrimination law goes ahead, and Catholic 'resistance' continues to be feeble, then it may well be impossible for Catholic governors not to appoint, for example, a practising homosexual. And when even the theoretical Catholicity of appointees can longer be guaranteed nor can the Catholicity of our "Catholic" schools.

Teaching the Faith

The decline in the basic knowledge of our faith, especially among the young, in recent decades is a fact hard to dispute. Its general social and intellectual causes and its specific presence within Catholic education have been elucidated in this and other publications quite a bit. For my part I would just put the current situation in an historical context.

In terms of doctrine, the old catechism was not just a method, it was a syllabus used throughout the world, incorporating formulations made by the great Councils. Priests, parents, teachers all knew it and reinforced its teaching. Soon after the Second Vatican Council, for no good reason, the catechism stopped being used in Catholic schools. England had no single replacement. Many schools introduced the *Dutch Catechism*. This was based on the good idea of attempting to offer a new and seminally synthetic vision of the Faith. However, in line with a lot of the 'New Theology', it diverged so much from authoritative Catholic teaching that a usually reticent Rome demanded many changes in its text before it could be called an 'official' Catechism. In fact the demanded changes were just tacked on the end of the published, promulgated and widely used version. It was all too little too late.

Modern Text Books, Outdated Methodology

Then for years, there were no RE books produced for Catholic secondary schools. We had mere syllabuses: the Lance syllabus of the late 1960s, and the Konstant

Syllabus of the 1970s. Heads and governors were pleading with the English hierarchy for books. Eventually, the "National Project" produced the notorious *Weaving the Web*. It was to understanding the teaching of the Catholic faith what the Keystone cops were to passing the driving test. It was not even a serious attempt to teach the basics. It has eventually been replaced by a book called *Icons* which is just as bad and which has aptly been called "Son of Weaving the Web". It has little eschatology; no mention of concepts like 'soul' or 'grace'; plenty about the new sins of sexism and homophobia, unknown to the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, or to Our Blessed Lord Himself.

There is an analogy with what happened to the teaching of the three Rs in the sixties. The idea was that teachers need not formally teach children to read and write and do basic arithmetic; somehow they would pick it up for themselves. This was a disaster and at least some moves are now being made to restore actual teaching. Not so in RE, where the same repugnance was expressed about actually teaching anyone anything. Yet we are talking about a Revealed Religion. *Icons* and *Here I Am* for primary schools, which does not even have a pupil's book are pure nineteen sixties in their methodology.

No Catholic Exam Syllabus

Bad as are the books used up to the age of 13, the situation is even worse after that age. There is no national syllabus at all and no Catholic textbook. Almost all Catholic secondary schools put their pupils in for a religious GCSE examination. But there is no Catholic examination, nor any Catholic authority supervising the examination. There are "Catholic" papers but they make no attempt to test Catholic doctrine thoroughly: why should they? On subjects like abortion, some examination boards specifically make it necessary to put "both sides of the argument". With some boards, entrants cannot even use a Catholic Bible.

The books used as pupil textbooks, in contradiction to Canon Law, usually carry no *imprimatur*. In my experience they are very weak, and not just doctrinally but educationally poor. Let me give a quotation from a Hodder and Stoughton book, widely used in my experience, *Issues and Beliefs in the Catholic Faith*. "Although no one can be sure, it is thought that about 10 per cent of the population (6 per cent of men and 4 per cent of women) are homosexual." Quite apart from the gross exaggeration in this statement and the wooliness of "it is thought", just think about the mathematics. The author has perpetrated a classic mathematical howler. If the figures for men and women are true (6 and 4 per cent respectively) then the actual figure overall, if men and women are roughly equal in the population, will be 5 per cent.

No other subject on the curriculum would be allowed to get away with this inexcusable error which insults children, not just since there is a basic mistake of mathematics, but because no actual verifiable figures are provided—anything will do in a book about RE. Moreover, Catholicism rejects categorizing a person by the particular type of erotic temptation they happen to suffer from.

Avoiding Correction

When *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* was published it seemed like the answer to prayer. Cardinal Hume commended it and said that every Catholic teacher should have a copy. That has not happened. Here is a test: when you go into a school, ask how many copies of *The Catechism* there are in total; all schools need copies for their teachers plus, at the very least, a set of 30 for use in class teaching. The recent *Compendium of the Catechism* has been similarly sidelined by the catechetical apparatchiks. The Holy Father said it is for all Catholics, but again you will struggle to find a single copy in many Catholic schools. Yet it is a gift from God. It can, and should, be used as a textbook, not only with all ages in secondary schools, but with primary schools children, too.

The religious inspections that schools are subject to are not only useless for ensuring that the Faith is taught properly, I would suggest that they are positively harmful. A concession was obtained from OFSTED that the Catholic sector be allowed to inspect its own RE. The people carrying out this inspection are those authorised by the catechetical 'experts' of the local diocese. They do not, as in the diocesan inspections of old, ask the children searching questions to find out what they know, they just look at syllabuses and procedures. They are quite different from any other inspections and lack rigour.

Even worse, the people who authorise the inspectors influence the schools unduly. There was a notorious case in one Archdiocese, as reported in the *Catholic Herald* in July 2002, where, according to the CTS General Secretary, a diocesan "Director of Religious Education and Inspection alerted the diocesan religious advisers that they were not to recommend" *The Way, The Truth and The Life* from the diocese of Birmingham. Instead the *Icons scheme*, with its widely acknowledged inferior presentation of Catholic doctrine, was prescribed. Any Ofsted inspector who as much as recommended a particular book would be sacked.

The Real Presence

assert—as one who taught before and after the sixties revolution—that, in practice, what the Church is teaching now in actual practice in actual classrooms has radically changed.

One obvious example of this is knowledge of the Real Presence among the ever dwindling amount of young people who come to Mass. It is not emphasized in the books they use at school. Many young Catholics, to all intent and purposes, do not believe in the Real Presence. Surveys show this, but any reader can verify it through some judicious questioning of an average teenage Churchgoer (let alone the multitudes who do not go): for example "What is given out at Communion?", or "What is in the Tabernacle?". Answers such as "Holy bread" or "Blessed bread" will count as a failure to have imbibed Catholic teaching on this point. By their fruits you will know them.

Moreover if you happen to observe these youngsters at the consecration and going up to Communion, one might consider whether their demeanour suggests that they really know they are receiving the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Blessed Lord.

In my childhood, the Catholic culture that pervaded all from the classroom through the catechism to Sunday Mass clearly taught this reality. We genuflected carefully every time we passed the tabernacle, we knelt to receive Holy Communion and we knelt when we returned to our bench. There was no chewing in church, no mobile phones, of course, no running, no talking before the Blessed Sacrament. Vast processions of the Blessed Sacrament with an altar server giving out incense and girls strewing rose petals before the monstrance carried by a priest under a canopy held by four reverent men, weekly benediction with our heads bent low; "Truly this is the Son of God" we could say since we all *lived* this belief. Is it surprising that the young today do not believe in the Real Presence? And if they don't, why on earth bother come to Mass? Why bother being a priest?

Another example would be the lack of teaching of the Four Last Things, including the real possibility of going to Hell after judgment. The average Catholic funeral must seem to a young person to be a kind of instant canonisation. The emotional 'needs' of the mourners seem to trump praying earnestly that the soul of the departed may be open to the life-giving mercy of God. Most of our text books and teachers blithely assume that everyone who dies goes to heaven. Perhaps what we used to know as "presumption" (a term unknown to those in our schools) is our greatest sin today. It is a sin against the Holy Spirit.

Sex Education

If one turns to sex education, the Church does not officially and substantially teach anything different from what it taught before the Council: that any information on that subject is virtually entirely the responsibility of the parents at the secondary age. These might ask for

some help, while always maintaining control. Children of primary age must never be given sex education in groups, especially mixed groups. This is the official position of the Church. But many dioceses in England, through their recommended sex education policies, encourage governors to specify learning targets for children as young as five. In my experience this can easily involve the use of materials which would have earned their producers jail sentences not that long ago. One text recommended for infants in one diocese describes in detail, using the coarsest terms, the various kinds of homosexual physical relationships!

Significant Weaknesses in Current Programmes

The Birmingham Archdiocesan scheme *How I Am*, recently introduced to all its secondary schools, is praised as being especially moderate by Father John Fleming, an Australian bioethics professor and member of the Pontifical Academy for Life. But he also highlights significant weaknesses, for example: "Argumentation to justify fundamental Catholic and Christian positions on sex education is lamentably absent" and, it invokes "secular rhetoric in explaining the aim of understanding the Church's teaching on contraception and pregnancy as becoming 'able to make informed choices'". Further, Fr Fleming highlights a fact sheet which, prefaced by a short, generic disclaimer, "mentions the right to counselling on 'sexual health', and that is code for abortion and contraception among other things. There is actually no moral right to such counselling, let alone counselling of children without parental consent. In the Catholic tradition, parents are the first educators of their children." (cf, "Abortion and Sex Education" SPUC publications p.41)

It would constitute no excuse to say that Catholic schools were required by law to teach sex education in this way but, in any case, it is *not* required. In primary schools, governors are required to discuss sex education and to have a policy, but that policy can be that nothing is taught in the school. In secondary schools, the requirement is only to teach the National Curriculum, which is nothing horrific *per se*. Everything else is up to the governors. Yet the corruption of the young goes on.

The September 2006 edition of the *ProLife Times*, the SPUC newspaper, reports a Catholic primary school in one Archdiocese which has shown the Channel Four series *Living and Growing*. It has "explicit animations of sexual intercourse, accompanied by detailed verbal accounts of sex and masturbation with animated sequences showing sex and ejaculation." In a Lancashire secondary school, the head of science was quoted in the local paper as saying this: "It's terrible that kids are due to leave school when they are 16 and aren't learning about where to get

contraceptives... Now we go out and get the contraceptive packs to show them." The headmaster of the school, a priest who is a member of a religious order, confirmed that the school shows contraceptives to students. He also stated that the head of science had been "duped into talking to the local press and was quoted out of context." What, one wonders, would be "in context"?

Losing Control

All the changes in the actual teaching of the Faith since the 1960s were accompanied by changes in English society and in education itself. These made things even worse. In the 1960s, the Harold Wilson Labour government forced secondary schools to become comprehensive and the Catholic system changed in a matter of years almost as if going comprehensive was something to be done "in the spirit of Vatican II". Leaving aside the educational arguments about whether there ought or not to be grammar schools and selection, the actual process was a disaster for Catholic schools. Most of the Catholic grammar schools were direct grant, a wonderful system which meant that the school could be run as if it were an independent school while the local education authorities funded most of the pupils. As schools were 'comped' some schools just closed; others were forcibly 'linked' with others perhaps miles away. Teachers were redeployed, leaving governors little control over appointments, and lowering the morale of the profession. The discipline for which our schools had been so famous was placed under strain.

All Catholic grammar schools were single sex; almost all comprehensives were co-educational. That change was never discussed philosophically, but was simply accepted as an inevitable part of going comprehensive. Very often, the key decisions were made by architects and surveyors based on the capacity of buildings. Sixth formers bolted out of the Catholic system into 'techs' or local authority sixth form colleges. Almost all the few Catholic grammar schools that remained became independent and entirely fee paying. Thus, ironically, socialism ensured that such schools, which were formerly open to all, were restricted to the children of the rich. Another irony was that most of the Catholic bishops had been educated at these very schools which they allowed to be closed or transformed.

Obstruction and from Within

The Thatcher years saw things become worse not, I believe, because the Conservatives disliked Church schools, but because the English Catholic Church had lost the vision and the will to resist. A senior Tory figure told me that exceptions for Catholic schools from the National Curriculum were there for the asking; but no one asked. The Tories left the admission policies untouched but they brought in the right of independent appeal that

the Blair government gleefully exploited. There were, in fact, good policies that the Conservatives offered which the Church turned down. The system of grant-maintained schools would have been a tonic for Catholic schools. In these schools, all expenses were paid by the government leaving nothing to pay for the Catholic community.

Our ancestors would have seen it as the answer to prayer. Not so those in charge of Catholic education in the 1980s. They effectively banned it. One might assume that was because the government, giving more money to schools, wanted greater control. But it was just the opposite; grant maintained schools had far more autonomy than schools under the thumb of the local education authority. That was the drawback for the leaders of Catholic education. They valued their relationships with the local authorities and actually feared giving more autonomy to governors. This was an opportunity to develop Catholic schools as a service to our community, particularly Catholic parents. Furthermore it would have saved us a lot of money.

The Role of the Catholic Education Service

How different the history of Catholic education might have been if the bishops had decided that every Catholic maintained school should have become a grant maintained school! Only a few did and the Blair government abolished the system though it was willing to continue it for church schools; it was the Catholic Education Service who wanted the system scrapped. And so David Blunkett obliged. He also brought in tough new admissions policies. Incredibly, again the CES fought to make them even tougher.

One measure that has been a thorn in the side of our primaries is the ruling that no class may have over 30 pupils. That sounds good, but the government gave no more money. The measure simply stopped schools from organising in their own way. In 1998 the Conservative Party introduced an amendment in the House of Lords to exempt church schools. But the rug was pulled from under from this amendment by the Catholic Education Service making it known that they did not accept it.

Ann Widdecombe's defence of "the 31st child's right to a Catholic education" received sympathy from the late Cardinal Hume but he told her he didn't feel he could overrule his own CES. In those years, one wondered whose side the CES was on. Through the Freedom of Information Act I have obtained documents showing that in several crucial areas about admissions, the government was willing to make concessions but the CES argued for removing the rights of governors (see Appendix). The admission appeals panels were given absolute right to impose their judgements and there was no appeal against them. It has been rightly said that they have greater

powers over admission in Catholic schools than the Pope. The Pope cannot order any Catholic school to take a pupil but these panels can and do.

A disaster for all Catholic political influence was the publication in 1997 of the Bishops' Conference document *The Common Good*. This said that there is nothing by itself so wrong—not even abortion, nor euthanasia—that Catholics should not vote for those who promoted it. Catholics were not to vote on "single issues" but to take an overall view. In other words, in considering who to vote for, no value counted absolutely. This document, in the view of some who have political knowledge, has done more damage to the Catholic Church in England than anything else since the Reformation. The Labour party breathed a sigh and realised that they could get away with anything; and they have.

The Last Straw?

As I write this, in September 2006, the already bad situation is becoming worse. For several years, the employment of Catholic teachers has been difficult. New legislation may quite likely make it impossible. Any discrimination by religion or "sexual orientation" may be forbidden. Cynically, the government currently intends to exempt political discrimination from its bill. The Labour Party would be able to recruit only its own members for any job it chooses, but Catholic Schools may have to employ those who openly defy its teachings. In admissions, Catholic schools are already forced to take non-Catholics if they "have room".

There is now a move to force schools every year to take "quotas" of non-Catholics. This would mean that a popular school would have to turn away Catholics and give places to non-Catholics. There is a ray of hope in the fact that the CES has very recently promised to "robustly oppose" such a measure. Several local authorities, including big ones like Essex and Hertfordshire, are taking away free transport for Catholic schools, something the schools have had since before the Second World War. Catholic schools are now struggling for their very survival.

Teachers not to blame

In all that I have written, I do not criticize teachers and heads. They have been given the impossible task of making the educational bricks without even a ha'p'orth of straw. In the circumstances, many of them are trying heroically to keep up Catholic standards. It should be noted, too, that Catholic independent schools have not been subjected to most of the changes I have mentioned. That is why independent schools are often still strong Catholic schools. Even in the field of religious teaching, they have insisted on their independence by creating their own courses, which some have done brilliantly, or

importing books from America or Australia. The Catholic paper for Common Entrance shows what can be done.

An Action Plan

Can anything be done to avert the great crisis? I advocate the following:

1. Someone at the highest level—that of Cardinal, say—should personally see Tony Blair. The Prime Minister should be told that if his government were to produce legislation which will force Catholic schools to employ openly practising homosexuals and such, then the Catholic Bishops will strongly and publicly oppose.
2. Lay groups should consider getting involved in such a campaign. Public protests can have an important place.
3. The Conservatives are looking for policies! Leading Bishops could appeal to the new Tory leader to adopt policies which would transform laws which handicap schools into optional recommendations, in order to win back essential freedoms. That might well make Labour tone down its attack.
4. The role of the Catholic Education Service needs radical reform. It has failed effectively to defend the intrinsic nature of Catholic education. It is very difficult to name a specific concrete fruit of its work.
5. The present religious inspections of schools should cease and schools should be inspected, as in the past, by those who know their faith and will put questions to children to see if they know and understand their faith.
6. There should be a national Catholic examination at the age of 16+. This must not be in the hands of the present catechetical bodies. It should be set by Rome. It should be on the lines of the old Catholic School Certificate of happy memory, with a number of short questions requiring basic answers and then some essays to reveal deeper knowledge.
7. Every teacher in every Catholic school should be given a copy of The Catechism of the Catholic Church, as the late Cardinal Hume requested. The Compendium should be used as a textbook with the higher age groups of primary schools and with all ages in secondary schools.
8. Most important of all, the Catholic Church in England should acknowledge that it is in a state of crisis it should repent and invoke the protection of Our Blessed Lady.

If nothing happens to change things, then in as little as five years, outside the independent sector, there could be no truly Catholic schools remaining in England.

APPENDIX

On the 1997 minuted discussion between the Government and the Catholic Education Service

Under the Freedom of Information Act, I was able to gain from the Department of Education and Standards (DfES—who were very efficient and helpful) notes of discussions involving Church authorities and the DfES about school admissions, prior to the Labour government’s Education Act which introduced fundamental changes that damaged Catholic schools. I was sent extracts from meetings on 24 June, 30 June, 8 July and 16 July 1997.

Given the big changes being introduced, the first thing to note is the reticence of the CES to explain the Church’s principles and provisions. At no point did the CES even mention the rights of parents, for example, let alone attempt to defend them. In fact only once does the CES mention the word “parent” and then in relation to agreeing to the DfES’s arrangements for governors: “She (the CES representative) felt that the foundation governors should be in the majority as now, although the CES could accept a requirement for some of those governors also to be parents.”

The CES was explicit about going against the original recommendation of the Government that Catholic Governing Bodies should be allowed, if they so wished, to use interviews with parents before granting places, a right that Catholic schools in England had always enjoyed. “Both the CES and GBSE (the Church of England General Synod Board of Education) thought that church schools should not be allowed to select on the basis of interview and had been surprised by the reference in the White Paper.

The CES said that there were “other ways of establishing denominational commitment”. So Catholic governors, including many priests who are obliged to hold annual collections in their parishes to fund the CES, were being stripped of the right to use interviews to ensure parental commitment to the ethos of a school—something the Government was quite happy to continue—simply because the CES opposed it. The CES gave no reason for this. It cannot be doubted that if the CES had not intervened, the Government, who had proposed to allow interviews in their White Paper, would still allow Catholic governors this freedom.

There is another detailed reference where the CES came out as opposed to the “Greenwich Judgement” which had upheld the rights of parents over those of the Local Authorities in admissions. Given all this, it is not surprising that the most forthright comment of the CES is this: “The CES representative congratulated the Department for

taking account of the views of the group in drafting the White Paper.”

These official minutes attribute the following statement to the CES concerning grammar, technical and other schools specifically mentioned in Canon Law: "the Catholic church was opposed to selection by ability." In its generic sense this is the opposite of what Canon Law states in terms the primary relationship of schools with parents and their formative role. Furthermore in terms of "selection" by any type of "ability" there is no prohibitive teaching and several Popes have spoken in its favour.

If the CES representative was getting a bit above herself, perhaps it flowed from a particular ingrained political culture. It is not the mindset with which we founded our schools, as set out in by the first pastoral letter of the Bishops of England and Wales after the restoration of the hierarchy (1850):

“Prefer the establishment of good schools to every other work. Indeed, wherever there may seem to be an opening for a new mission, we should prefer the erection of a school, so arranged as to serve temporarily as a chapel, to that of a church without one.”

AUTHENTIC NEW MOVEMENTS: TRADITION AND FRESHNESS

Archbishop Stanislaw Rylko, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity made the following appeal in Colombia last year

"Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:19-20).



The great novelty brought to the Church by the ecclesial movements and new communities obviously raises frequent questions and causes a certain confusion with regard to the established way of doing things at the day-to-day pastoral level. As John Paul II said, "When the Spirit intervenes, we are always surprised. The Spirit causes events whose newness startles us." As we have repeated so often, the movements represent a challenge and a healthy invitation to which the Church must respond by vocation.



With their overflowing passion for the mission, the movements also challenge our preconceived notions of "being Church" which are perhaps too

comfortable and too adapted to the spirit of the age. A few years ago Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger made reference to "a gray pragmatism in the Church's daily life (...) in which everything appears to be "business as usual," but in which faith is actually eroded and cast into confusion.



The "calm conservation" vision of the Church which is so prevalent in certain circles today comes under direct challenge by the movements' vision of a missionary Church courageously projected toward new frontiers. This latter vision ought to help diocesan and parish pastoral programmes recover a much needed prophetic, militant element. The Church of today is greatly in need of this. It must be open to the newness produced by the Spirit: "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19).



ART AND INTEGRAL CATECHESIS

Caroline Farey

Art fascinates. Liked or disliked it attracts the curious, especially those, consciously or unconsciously, looking, searching, desiring deeper meaning in their lives. People search in art for that 'something' that might fill the mysterious, sometimes aching, gap that words have failed to fill. The extent to which words are accompanied by concrete supportive evidence tends to be the extent to which we can trust them.. 'I love you' would mean very little if there were no gesture, no sign, no action of love that 'embodies' the words. Such an action carries the words, lifts and transports the meaning from the life and heart of one, into the life and heart of another.

The Catholic faith is not just a faith of words, not just a message, not just a doctrine nor simply a moral code; it is fullness of life in Christ Jesus, and therefore it is also ecclesial, liturgical, devotional, Eucharistic. It involves the *body* of Christ in people, in gestures of charity, in priests, rites, vessels and vestments and the very 'making flesh' of the body of Christ for us to consume. Catechesis delivered only as words is a sad reduction of the vast, rich, gratuitous pedagogy of God that the *General Directory for Catechesis* urges us to follow.

Edwin Muir, a poet from the Orkney Islands spoke of the tragedy of there being nothing more than words in the Calvinist form of Christianity with which he was familiar:

How could our race betray
The Image, and the Incarnate One unmake
Who chose this form and fashion for our sake?

The Word made flesh is here made word again,
A word made word in flourish and arrogant crook,
And there the logical hook
On which the Mystery is impaled and bent
Into an ideological instrument...

Christian art, especially art rooted in the fullness of Catholic faith, assists in that necessary transmission of the faith which must always be more than words because it must be fully incarnated. Catholic art is a step towards the 'incarnation' of our faith; towards the 'making flesh' again of Christ in the liturgy of the Eucharist. Art and words affect us in different ways.

Using art in catechesis is, therefore, not just a nice idea for the artistically minded. For those with no artistic skills, both the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* have works of art with short explanatory notes included. These works of art are integral to the message and it is not permitted to publish these texts without them.

In these new catechetical documents, the Church is only continuing her concern for catechesis through art about which she has spoken and written from very early times. The Church Fathers of the Second Council of Nicea in the year 787AD wrote strongly against the opponents of images:

'We define that... the representations of the precious and life-giving cross, and the venerable and holy images as well ... must be kept in the holy Church of God ... in houses and on roads, whether they be images of God our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ or of our immaculate Lady the Mother of God, or of the holy angels and of all the saints.... For, the more frequently one contemplates these pictorial representations, the more gladly will one be led to remember the original subject whom they represent...' (ND 1251, DS 600)

On the twelfth centenary of the Second Council of Nicea, in 1987, Pope John Paul II wrote an apostolic letter in which he is very aware of what he calls a 'resurgence of interest' and 'the growing need for a spiritual language of authentically Christian art.' He explains,

'Authentic Christian art is that which, through sensible perception, gives the intuition that the Lord is present in his Church, that the events of salvation history give meaning and orientation to our life, that the glory promised to us already transforms our existence. Sacred art must tend to offer us a visual synthesis of all dimensions of our faith.' (*Duodecimum Saeculum*, 11)

In a new one-year distance-learning course at Maryvale Institute, called 'Art, Beauty and Inspiration in a Catholic perspective', this paragraph of Pope John Paul II is explored in detail. Here let us simply say that any artwork that supports catechesis needs to follow these

same criteria in order to be authentically catechetical. There is an ancient tradition in the Church of appreciating two senses of Scripture, a literal sense and a spiritual sense (CCC 115-118). The spiritual sense has three Christological dimensions to it: a portrayal of Christ, of the Christian moral life, and an indication of the fullness of Christ, *Christus totus* (CCC 795), head and members, in glory. True Christian art can have the same depth of meaning.

Let us look at two examples of 'visual synthesis' of the faith. Most people are aware of Andrei Rublev's icon of the visit to Abraham's dwelling, by the Oak of Mamre, of three messengers who were invited to stay for a meal (Gen. 18:1-5). Most people are also aware that this is popularly known as Rublev's icon of the Blessed Trinity. What has the great artist done? A literal scene has been authentically interpreted as also able to portray the spiritual truth of the Trinity being present amongst the people he loves.

For a second example, look at the art work by the Canadian artist Michael O'Brien that accompanies this article. Here is another example of a true awareness of the Catholic faith in an artist and an ability to create 'a visual synthesis' of both the literal and the spiritual. The literal sense of the painting is revealed by its title: 'Joachim entrusting the Blessed Virgin

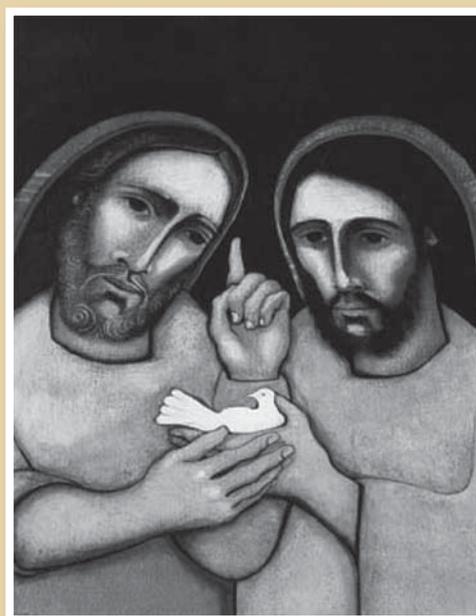
Mary to St Joseph'. The hand of the father figure that points upwards into the sky is pointing to a moon and twelve stars (they are not visible in this black and white reproduction). The moon set among the stars is a symbol of Mary, Queen of the Apostles (Rev. 12:1).

Look again, however, for the spiritual senses portrayed here: two men an older and a younger, symbolise God the Father and God the Son. A dove represents the Holy Spirit. The Father looks down at the dove and points up to the moon and stars. This is the heavenly 'moment' before the incarnation. The angel Gabriel, as we know, tells Mary that the Holy Spirit will come upon her, the power of the most high will overshadow her and the Son of God will be conceived in her (Lk 1:35).

The 'visual synthesis' continues. This is a devotional picture, its purpose is to assist prayer. It is also doctrinal in that it professes faith in the Blessed Trinity, in the Incarnation, the immaculate heart of Mary and the birth of the Church as the work of the Trinity. It is a picture that supports a moral sense of loving attention, of gentleness and of willing obedience. Once pondered and explained, such a painting 'through sensible perception, gives the intuition' of the rich coherence and beauty of the Catholic faith. Such paintings are outstandingly catechetical and visually represent, that harmonious whole towards which all Catechesis strives.

Miss Caroline Farey is Director of the distance-learning BA in Applied Theology (Catechesis) programme at Maryvale Institute, Birmingham, and Co-director of the one-year certificate in Art, Beauty and Inspiration in a Catholic Perspective. She is also joint author of the 'Learning through Art' pages in the catechetical journal The Sower, published by Maryvale Institute. For further information see www.maryvale.ac.uk

'Joachim entrusting the Blessed Virgin Mary to St Joseph'
by Michael O'Brien
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The Soul, the Faith and Aristotle¹

An Answer to William Charlton A Response

by Kevin L Flannery SJ

by William Charlton

Kevin Flannery is a Jesuit priest and Professor of the History of Ancient Philosophy (and former Dean) at the Gregorian University in Rome. Here he responds to William Charlton's exploration of Aristotle's approach to the human soul in the light of Catholic Tradition, published in this magazine earlier this year. Fr Flannery helpfully uses Aristotle and the Catholic tradition to hone some of Dr Charlton's thoughts. Dr Charlton makes a gracious reply.

Fr Flannery's latest book Acts Amid Precepts: the Aristotelian Logical Structure of Thomas Aquinas' Moral Theory was published by T&T Clark in 2001

"Aristotle gives no indication that he means just the souls of the virtuous. This corresponds fairly closely to the Church's teaching that all souls are individually created immortal. The Church has maintained this even while insisting that Platonic dualism is also incompatible with Christianity."

Responding to William Charlton

In the May-June issue of this magazine, William Charlton, former head of the Philosophy Department at the University of Edinburgh and author of many works on ancient philosophy and, in particular, on Aristotle's theory of the soul, published an article entitled, "The human soul as form: the relationship between Aristotle and Catholic teaching". I was originally invited by the Editor to write an article on a similar theme (roughly, "the soul") to have been published alongside Charlton's article; but, since, due to an oversight, I missed that deadline, the present article has become a response to Charlton's. And that is not a bad thing since, while respecting greatly the years of careful scholarship and searching intelligence that lie behind the article in question, I am not entirely in agreement with Charlton. In this response, I will also make frequent reference to an article that Charlton published in 2001, entitled, "Aquinas on Aristotle on Immortality [in *Whose Aristotle? Whose Aristotelianism?* ed. Robert W. Sharples, pp.63-77] which is in many ways a companion piece to the article that appeared in these pages. I will refer to "Aquinas on Aristotle on immortality" as AAI, to "The human soul as form" as HSF.

Form, Matter and Composite

Much of the argumentation of HSF is unexceptionable and, indeed, very useful for understanding Aristotle's conception of the relationship between form and matter and the way in which a soul might be a form. Charlton emphasizes the close relationship between form and matter, and he does so without falling into materialism. The key to avoiding the latter, he argues, is teleology: just as a lintel is that which it is in so far as it is wood (material) put to a certain purpose (to mark the threshold of a house), so an animal is flesh and blood which is arranged in a certain way but with a purpose. If one reduces one's understanding of an animal to the arrangement of the material but without the purpose, one finishes with the position rejected by both Plato and Aristotle: that the soul is a sort of harmony.²

The only hesitation I have with any of this concerns what Charlton says about the way form enters into the composite (i.e., the composite of form and matter). Charlton writes:

Although Aristotle uses the expressions "form," "matter" and "composite" (sonolon) or "the two together" (*to ek toutôn*) he is careful to say that a composite whole does not consist of form and matter. "The syllable does not consist of letters and arrangement, or the house of bricks and arrangement" [HSF 24].

The latter quotation is from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, book eight. I would translate the lines [1043b5-6] somewhat differently, thus: "The syllable is not produced from its letters and their arrangement, or the house from its bricks and their arrangement." This is similar to the Wittgensteinian point that when we represent the relationship between objects a and b as aRb (where R, of course, is the relation), we do not mean that R is the same type of thing as a and b (see *Tractatus Logico-*

Philosophicus §3.1432). But that does not mean that there is no such thing as a relation or that there is not a real difference between an object and a relation. So, it is perfectly legitimate to say that aRb consists of its objects (a and b) and a relation (R).

This indeed is consistent with—although not as strong as—what Aristotle says a few lines before the bit quoted by Charlton: “For soul and to be soul are the same, but to be man and man are not the same, unless indeed the soul is to be called man (and thus it is and is not the same)” [Metaph. viii,3,1043b2-4].³ This is essentially a proof that the soul and the composite (the man, composed of body and soul) are different things: when we speak of the soul and when speak of what it is to be a soul (“the essence of soul”), we refer to the same thing; when, on the other hand, we refer to a man, we do not refer to what it is to be a man (i.e., the essence of man) since the essence involves no concrete matter but a man is made up of body (concrete matter) and soul. So, the soul and the man are distinct things, although not in the way that object a is distinct from object b.

Aquinas would explain further that the human soul is distinct from the composite of which it is a part in a special way that distinguishes it from the souls of other animals. Other souls do not exist except in so far as the composite (the animal) exists. Animals are basically physical: just as heat does not really exist except in hot things, so animal souls have no existence except in animals. But, since reason is ultimately independent of the physical—as it must be if reason is found in God—rational animals, composed of body and soul, exist because the rational soul exists and not vice-versa. This makes the form of the composite man a part in a special way: it exists independently of the composite which exists (when it exists) because it (the form) exists [*De unitate intellectus* (Leonine edition), c.1 ll.622-53, 775-84].⁴

One Version of the History

Charlton sees any theory attempting to prove philosophically—that is to say, beginning from premisses having to do with the nature of reasoning—that the human soul is immortal as un-Aristotelian, un-scriptural, un-Christian and, therefore, unacceptable. The story he tells is this: the early Church, as evidenced by both the Old and the New Testaments, did not maintain that all souls were immortal but that a person could become immortal by living a good life.⁵ Beginning with Justin Martyr, Christian doctrine becomes contaminated with Platonism [AAI 71], including the philosophical position that “the human soul stands to the human body somewhat as a weaver stands to his coat” [*Phaedo* 87B2-E5] and the idea that all souls are immortal, the incorrigible ones destined to “undergo 'the greatest, most agonizing

and most terrifying sufferings for ever as a warning to others [*Gorgias* 525C1-8]” [HSF 2]. This Platonic vision is still in evidence in 1215, at the Fourth Lateran Council, which decreed that God created “the human creature, who as it were shares in both orders [the spiritual and the corporal], being composed of spirit and body” [HSF 28; *Denzinger* §800].⁶ (One recalls that Charlton dislikes talk of man’s consisting of body and soul, although he does not reject the existence of the soul as such, which he connects with the living substance’s teleological nature.) Around the time of Aquinas, however, and officially at the Council of Vienne (1311-1312), the Church sets out to correct this erroneous line of thought, employing in the attempt the writings of Aristotle—interpreted, however, in a Platonic way, so that every man is still said to have a soul which will exist (after death) independently of the body.

As I have said, this situation is unacceptable to Charlton: “The result is a rather disquieting edifice [of doctrine], with unborn embryos having immortal souls but no previous experiences, and the wicked surviving to be tormented after death with no prospect of an end to their sufferings or another stab at life” [AAI 73]. Charlton shows a card or two here: besides rejecting the possibility of eternal punishment, he thinks that the presence of a soul depends on its possessor’s having experiences of some kind. In any case, the corrective to all this, according to Charlton, is a return not only to the original scriptural position but also to the genuine Aristotelian position. For Aristotle—notwithstanding Aquinas’s exegesis—offers no proof in the *De anima* that the soul is *per se* immortal and, indeed, he probably held to the belief, common among the “Asclepiadae,” that a person, if he was extremely virtuous, might become a god [AAI 76].⁷

The Soul in Scripture

What can we say about all this? Let us consider first scripture, then Church teaching as found in the Fathers and in magisterial statements, and finally Aquinas’s interpretation of Aristotle. Obviously, in the present context, none of these topics can be treated in any depth, but one can at least indicate the more prominent strong points and weaknesses of Charlton’s account.

Charlton’s remarks about immortality and the soul in scripture are not without foundation, but one could not really say that he stands upon solid ground since the type of foothold he requires is not to be found in scripture. It is true that we do not find in either the Old or the New Testament the idea that the human soul is immortal of its very nature; but that is because the Bible does not deal in philosophical argumentation—or even in theological argumentation such as one finds, for instance,

in Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*. In the Old Testament Book of Wisdom (3.1-3), we read that "the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God and no torment will ever touch them; in the eyes of the foolish they seem to have died... but they are at in peace"; and, in the same chapter, the punishment of the wicked seems to belong primarily to the present world. This is consistent with Charlton's idea that only the good are granted eternal life—but it is not, strictly speaking, inconsistent with the distinction between eternal life (the reward) and eternal death (the punishment) found at Isaiah 66.22-24.

Similarly, in the New Testament Christ says, "The children of this era marry and are given in marriage. But *those who are judged worthy to achieve that era and the resurrection from the dead* neither marry nor are capable of marrying" [Luke 20.34-35; quoted at AAI 70, emphasis Charlton's]. But Christ also says, "Then he ['the King'] will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink'" [Matthew 25:41-42]. In HSF [29], Charlton cites 1 Corinthians 15.54, where Paul says that at the final resurrection "the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality," all this effected by the victorious Christ; but he ignores Romans 2.6-8, where Paul speaks of eternal life for "those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality" and then adds that, "for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury."

The Soul According to the Christian Tradition

But if scripture provides Charlton with some basis for his position, his account of the subsequent development of Catholic teaching is shaky at best. As we have seen, he argues that bad ideas about the soul's immortality come into Christianity by way of Platonism (middle- and neo-), which puts forward philosophical proofs of the immortality of the soul and a dualistic conception of the relationship between body and soul. This Platonic corruption begins with Justin Martyr (d. ca. 165) and only receives its (partial) correction during and after the time of Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274). This situation is reflected in the contrast between the Fourth Lateran Council's Platonic teaching that God created man with a mortal body and an immortal soul, and the Council of Vienne's purportedly Aristotelian teaching that the rational soul is "per se and essentially" the form of the human body [Denzinger §902].

The structure of Charlton's historical account is seen to be unsteady once one realizes that in fact Justin Martyr takes a position with respect to the soul's immortality not unlike Charlton's own. The souls of the pious are

rewarded, Justin says; those of the wicked "are punished as long as God wills them to be and to be punished" [*Dialogue* 5.3]. What is more, Justin attributes this position to Plato, citing in support the *Timaeus*. The reference is probably to 41A7-B6:

O gods, works divine whose maker and father I am, whatever has come to be by my hands cannot be undone but by my consent. Now while it is true that anything that is bound is liable to being undone, still, only one who is evil would consent to the undoing of what has been well fitted together and is in fine condition. This is the reason why you, as creatures that have come to be, are neither completely immortal nor exempt from being undone. Still, you will not be undone nor will death be your portion since you have received the guarantee of my will—a greater, more sovereign bond than those with which you were bound when you came to be [trans. D. Zeyl].⁸

Ideas similar to Charlton's appear also in Arnobius the Elder (d. c. 330) [*Adversus Nationes* 2.14-15, 29-34] and in his student Lactantius (c.240-c.320) [*Divinae institutiones* 7.5], both heavily influenced by Platonism.

Moreover, there is official Church opposition to Platonic dualism apparently as early as 543 with the anathemas against Origenism issued by Justinian and published by the Synod of Constantinople. There the proposition is condemned that souls, as a punishment for growing weary of divine contemplation, are cast down into bodies [Denzinger §403].⁸ Pretty much the same idea—this time attributed to Priscillian—is condemned again in 561 by the Council of Braga [Denzinger §456]. As to the immortality of the soul, the most important magisterial statement comes long after Aquinas: in 1513 the Fifth Lateran Council taught that the soul is immortal and infused individually into each human body [Denzinger §1440]. Although Charlton seems to think that the Church could and ought to change this teaching, this is not going to happen. As recently as 1968, in the so-called "Credo of the People of God" of Paul VI, the teaching was reiterated.⁹

Aquinas's Interpretation of Aristotle

Regarding Aquinas's exegesis of Aristotle, in AAI Charlton makes much of the differences between the treatment of the soul's immortality in the *Quaestio disputata de anima* (1265-66) and in the *Summa theologiae (prima pars: 1265-68)*, and the treatment found in the earlier *Summa contra Gentiles* (1260-65). Writes Charlton: "In the *Quaestio disputata de anima* and the *Summa theologiae* Aquinas not only rearranges his material but drops the arguments on which he relied in the *Summa contra Gentiles* and puts all his money on a few

lines in Aristotle's *De Anima* III 4" (i.e., 429a18-24) [AAI 63, 67]. The reason why Aquinas reduces and qualifies his position, says Charlton, is that he is "responding, though unconsciously, to a tension in the Christian doctrine of a life after death which arises from its having two independent origins" [AAI 63] one Platonic, the other Jewish (and more or less Aristotelian). But Charlton does not mention Aquinas's *De unitate intellectus*, which is similarly late (1270) and contains extensive discussion of Aristotle's *De anima*. Moreover, it includes at least one of the arguments that Charlton says are abandoned by the time of the *Quaestio disputata de anima* and the *Summa theologiae*. It contains, that is, the argument that the intellect "is not destroyed but perfected by receiving forms of objects of thought" [AAI 64; see *De unitate intellectus* c.1 ll.318-34].

Comparing Aristotle with Scripture

Setting these details aside, Charlton's attitude toward Aquinas's exegesis of Aristotle is actually quite favourable. Although he regards as unacceptably Platonic any attempt to prove philosophically—beginning, for instance, from the properties of intellection—that the soul is immortal, he also maintains that Aristotle quite rightly leaves open the possibility that the human soul might exist independently of the body, even though it is the body's form. This is consistent with the Thomistic idea we saw above, that the human soul is special in so far as the body-soul composite exists because of it and not vice-versa.

Charlton argues that the question whether "the concept of an intelligent thinker can serve as a form-concept for a human being is quite independent of the question whether a thinker can exist without a body." And then he adds: "I see nothing to stop us from saying that a human being is primarily an intelligent agent constituted by bodily parts, but such an agent could cease to be constituted by anything material and exist without a body" [HSF 27].

Aristotle on the Soul's Immortality

Charlton's only beef with Aquinas, therefore, is that he (Aquinas) thinks that Aristotle is out to prove that the rational soul survives the death of the composite man. Charlton acknowledges that there are passages in the *De anima* (and elsewhere) in which Aristotle suggests that the rational soul might survive death, but he finds in Aristotle no attempt to prove this.

If Charlton is right on this count, it would leave open the possibility that Aristotle held a roughly "scriptural" position on the immortality of the human soul: it might receive immortality as a reward.¹⁰ There is reason, however, to believe that in the *De anima* Aristotle was

indeed interested in demonstrating philosophically that the rational soul can survive death. The *De anima* consists of three books, the first treating the opinions of Aristotle's predecessors, the second treating the senses (although this runs over into book three), and the third treating, among other things, the rational soul and its properties. But even in books one and two Aristotle makes it known that he is interested in the intellect's separability.

In the first chapter of book one, he says (with clear reference to thought [*to noein*]), that, "if there is any way of acting or being acted upon proper to soul, soul will be capable of separate existence; if there is none, its separate existence is impossible" [*De anima* i,1,403a10-12]; and, in the first chapter of the second book, he suggests that certain parts of the soul "may be separable because they are not the actualities of any body at all" [ii,1,413a6-7]. Standing as they do in the first chapters of their respective books, these passages are clearly proleptic references to the arguments found in *De anima* iii,4-5. There Aristotle argues that reason "cannot reasonably be regarded as blended [*memichthai*] with the body" [iii,4,429a24-25], and he states that thought [*nous*] is "separable, impassible, unmixed" [iii,5,430a17-18] and that "this alone is immortal and eternal" [430a23].

Aristotle and Church Teaching

Over the long history of Aristotelian scholarship, there have been those who have argued that, in these later passages, Aristotle is talking about the Divine Intellect, not the intellects belonging to individual humans. But this hardly makes sense of their anticipation in chapters i,1 and ii,1. Moreover, just after the book three remark about intellect alone being immortal and eternal, Aristotle makes a back reference to another passage in book two. He speaks, that is, of the intellect's impassibility and (enigmatically) of memory loss. This is clearly a reference to *De anima* ii,4, where he says that, as the body runs down and eventually dies, "memory and love cease; they were activities not of thought, but of the composite which has perished; thought is, no doubt, something more divine and impassible" [408b27-29].

So, one does find in the *De anima* philosophical argumentation to the effect that the individual rational soul survives independently of the body. In the remarks and arguments about the separability of the intellect, Aristotle gives no indication that he means just the souls of the virtuous. This corresponds fairly closely to the Church's teaching—clearly formulated at least since the sixteenth century—that all souls are individually created immortal. The Church has maintained this even while insisting—as it has done at least since the sixth century—that Platonic dualism is also incompatible with Christianity.

- 1 I thank Fr. Stephen L. Brock for his constructive criticism of an earlier version of this essay.
- 2 For Aristotle's rejection of this position, see *De Anima* i,4,407b27-408a18; see also William Charlton, "Aristotle and the harmonia theory," *Aristotle and the Nature of Living Things: Philosophical and Historical Studies*, Ed. Allan Gotthelf (Pittsburgh/Bristol: Mathesis Publications/Bristol Classical Press, 1985) 131-50.
- 3 I make use in this essay of the *Revised Oxford Translation* (Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* [Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984]).
- 4 In the latter lines, Thomas cites Aristotle's *De generatione animalium* 2.3.736b12-15, where Aristotle says, "It remains, then, for the reason alone so to enter and alone to be divine, for no bodily activity has any connexion with the activity of reason."
- 5 From the Old Testament, Charlton cites 2 Mac. 7.9 and Wis. 5.15; from the New, he cites Lk. 20.34-35, Jn. 3:14-16, 6:53-8, 17:21, 1 Cor. 15 (various verses), 1 Thess. 14-17, 2 Thess. 1.9, Ph. 3.11, and Rev. 21.8 (see HSF 29 and AAI 71).
- 6 Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum* (edizione bilingue), ed. Peter Hünermann (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, 1996). The quotation from IV Lateran appears in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §327.
- 7 According to Charlton (citing L. R. Farnell, *Greek Hero-Cults and Ideas of Immortality* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1921] 401), "Asclepius was a human being who after a lifetime of outstanding service to humanity had become a god." Asclepius was the Greek god of healing; since Aristotle's father was a doctor, his family would have been of the cult of Asclepius.
- 8 According to Cassiodorus [*De institutione divinarum litterarum* 2], Pope Vigilius gave his consent to the anathemas.

William Charlton replies

I am pleased that my essay has elicited a reply from so learned and courteous a critic as Kevil Flannery, and I am grateful to him for correcting the insufficiently nuanced account I gave of Justin Martyr in the earlier essay which he also discusses. As another Catholic student of Aristotle, David Balme, once said, 'Papers are better than books, because in a paper you give a ball a kick, and then it becomes someone else's turn to kick it, and so progress is made.'

I agree with him that the Church teaches both that all human souls are "individually created immortal" and that the human soul is "essentially and *per se* the form of the human body". I should, perhaps, have given more credit to Augustine than to Plato for shaping the first doctrine. But the question which directly concerns me is whether these doctrines are compatible, whether they can both be true. I concluded with regret that I could see no way of interpreting Aristotle's form-matter distinction which would allow them to be reconciled. The statement Flannery quotes from the Fourth Lateran Council (1215, the year of Magna Carta) that "the human creature" is "composed of spirit and body" seems to me dualistic; and so do the words he takes from the Fifth Lateran Council (1513) that it "is infused [i.e. poured in, *infunditur*] individually into each human body".

Flannery seems to hope that we can reconcile the doctrines by saying that matter and form, even though they differ in kind or logical type, are still components of that of which they are the matter and the form. He

- 9 "We believe in one only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, creator of things visible such as this world in which our transient life passes, of things invisible such as the pure spirits which are also called angels and creator in each man of his spiritual and immortal soul" [Paul VI, "*Sollemni hac liturgia*," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 60 (Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1968) 436 (§8)]. The two footnotes (which are fairly important) read: "3. See the First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, *Denzinger* §3002"; "4. See the Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis*, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 42 (1950), 575; Fifth Lateran Council, *Denzinger* §1440-1441." The passage from *Humani Generis* reads as follows: "Therefore, regarding the doctrine of evolution—in as far as it inquires into the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter (for the Catholic faith obliges us to hold that souls are immediately created by God)—the Teaching Authority of the Church does not forbid that, in conformity with the present state of human sciences and sacred theology, research and discussions take place on the part of men experienced in both fields." It is worth noting also that, in 1844, at the behest of the Congregation of Bishops and Religious, Louis-Eugène Bautain promised not to teach that it is impossible by means of human reason to give a true demonstration of the "spirituality and the immortality of the soul" [*Denzinger* §2766]. In 1855, at the behest of the Congregation for the Index and with the consent of Pius IX, Augustin Bonnetty subscribed to the following proposition: "Reason can demonstrate with certitude the existence of God, the spirituality of the soul, and the liberty of man" [*Denzinger* §2812]. (One notes the absence here of any mention of immortality.)
- 10 Charlton is, of course, aware that Aristotle was not "acquainted with any Jewish writings, and the books of the Old Testament which express a belief in an afterlife are later than his time" [AAI 77].

reminds us that a relation in which one thing stands to another (like the relation of 'being to the north of it' in which Leeds stands to London) is different in kind from the things related but still real. But I do not see how this helps. I do not think he means that the relation of matter *to* form is different from matter *and* form but still real—that seems irrelevant. More probably he means that a form which something has is real and not the same as what has it.

Equally an intelligent agent constituted by flesh and bone is real and not the same as what constitutes it. But how can a form or a thing constituted by organic material be first created and then 'infused'? Surely what is created and then somehow added to a body must be conceived as spiritual substance after the fashion of Descartes or Locke, if not a blend of the non-physical ingredients: Being, Same and Other as suggested, perhaps playfully, by Plato in the *Timaeus*.



EDITORIAL COMMENT

Our editorial in our last issue argued for a philosophical reassessment of matter. This we hope was a further contribution to the task of attempting to show the coherence of Catholic teaching, the need for which Dr Charlton highlights by his reply.



Why Should We Listen To The Church?

Ryan Day

Ryan Day, an undergraduate at Cambridge University, gave this entertaining and effective talk at the last Faith Summer Session for young adults, proving the maxim that the best evangelizers of the young are other young people.

"If you read the Catechism and the documents of the Second Vatican Council, it becomes glaringly clear that the Church is quite simply the continuation of Christ's loving and healing presence here on earth; right now. Once you understand this, all of a sudden the Church becomes not so much a 'fascist' institution, but rather a real, mystical and physical Body through which Christ and each one of us can become lovers."

Getting Beyond Our Own Prejudices

Our title contains two words with pretty negative connotations for many young people, the words 'listen' and 'Church'! The word 'listen' is elevated to a young person's top five most annoying words as soon as we hit school, and in teenage years completely lose the ability actually to listen. The result can be unnecessary and reciprocated acrimony towards most forms of authority, which only strengthens our resolve to be 'independent' and 'adult' in our own right. Thus we hate the word, it makes us think of being told to do something by those gleefully wielding power from above, and as young people we often struggle with this.

The word Church unfortunately is sullied for different reasons. The generally ignorant secular media, (and disgracefully sometimes the 'enlightened' Catholic media) often present the Church as some sort of purely political organization, controlled by a bunch of incompetent dress-wearing old men, constantly racked by scandal. It is painted as a purely human institution and, worse than that, an institution that fails in its hypocritical aims. What about the Papal office itself? When Benedict XVI became Pope he was presented to the world as anything from an ardent Nazi sympathizer (now the dictator of course), to an angry Rottweiler.

Such constant propaganda can form the impression, however unconscious at times, that the Church is some sort of arbitrary law-imposer that delights in removing the fun and freedom from people's lives. For while the Church is certainly run by fallible people who, even while representing the Church, can fail themselves and others, to focus on this aspect is to miss the point. It goes without saying that people in all areas of life will mess up at times.

The point is of course far deeper than our title seems to suggest. Here I wish briefly to suggest what truly listening to the Church consists of, in light of what the Church actually is. We shall hopefully conclude that the word 'listen', understood in the narrow sense, is woefully inadequate for the job at hand.

Searching for Acceptance and Happiness

The self important 'I shall be ruler of my own actions' attitude that infects us all at times often combines with the insecurities of youth in a potent cocktail. Believing we are being radically individual by ignoring authority, we instead choose to follow our equally 'diseased' peers, and like a bunch of mad cows proceed to make complete 'muppets' of ourselves. Gazing at an old photograph of myself recently provides an immediate and wince-worthy example. Around ten years ago my generation terrorized the general public with a haircut known as 'curtains'; yes, a stupid name for stupid hair cut. At the time I considered myself 'the man' because I had adorned my extraordinarily large forehead with an overly gelled middle parting in which the strands either side curled up towards each other. Now I would rather be poked in the eye on the hour for the rest of my worldly existence than have to wear that haircut ever again!

What am I saying? Simply that the overwhelming minute by minute consideration for most of us especially in our youth is essentially, am I actually liked by people? This desperation to be liked, accepted, admired often dictates our actions and while it is not necessarily always a bad thing, it can drive us to act in ways that are often ridiculous or even downright detrimental to ourselves and others.

Girls; those of you who are old enough will have no doubt stood at a bar when some drunken fool approaches with "'ere love, get yer coat yer pulled!' or words to that effect. Not so long ago I heard a guy deploy this chat up line in a club:

"Hi, erm, how much does a polar bear weigh?"

Girl, quizzically: "don't know?"

Guy, grinning like an idiot: "Neither do I, but it breaks the ice."

Oh dear, what makes grown men act like this!? Well girls, here's a put down in that situation that I guarantee will work. Just say:

"Thanks for that, but I am afraid I can't provide the deep and redemptive love of the divine Christ that you really seek... even if you don't realize it".

They will run a mile.

But seriously, that is my point. Whether it is me trying to impress my mates, or guys looking for one night stands, or addictions to alcohol or drugs, these actions—in fact most actions—are ways in which we attempt to fulfill ourselves in the absence of or in the looking for a deep and satisfying love. I include these examples because everyone has acted in such ways at some point in their lives, and the fact that we do such ridiculous things serves to illustrate that there is some driving desire in us that is unquenchable and irresistible.

The Need To Be Loved

So while it may appear, on the face of it, that my questionable head-trimmings are simply manifesting my desire to be cool, liked, even admired; I want to suggest that at the heart of such action and desire was a more fundamental one, a desire to be loved. I'm not talking about 'you fancy so and so' love or sappy Hugh Grant film love, but the love of security and peace and ultimate fulfillment. I say this because each of us who has experienced real love to even the smallest extent realizes that it is the greatest experience we can have as a human person. It is in this way self evident that we were created to love and be loved. It is this, more than anything that will make us truly happy.

Humanly the finest and most satisfying sort of love in my opinion is found in deeply intimate relationships in terms of being completely open with each other, when

you know someone fully, and feel endlessly comfortable in their presence. This sort of love, while not always providing the adrenaline 'kicks', is, when we consider it, the type that gives us the most lasting and fulfilling peace and happiness. Whether it be the relationships we have with our parents, siblings, spouse or best friends, it's this type of love and relationship that if offered, we would not swap for anything. It's this type of love that helps cure our crazy insecurities as young people. It's this type of love that allows us to be truly comfortable and at ease with ourselves as we are.

Finding Real Love

Now I want to quote a man who in his youth erroneously sought the happiness which can only be found in a deep and lasting love in the immediate and material things around him. He talks to his true 'lover' about his journey towards satisfaction:

"Too late have I loved you, O beauty of ancient days, yet ever new! Too late have I loved you! And behold, you were within, and I abroad, and there I searched for you; I was deformed, plunging amid those fair forms, which you had made. You were with me, but I was not with you. Things held me far from you, things which, if they were not in you, were not at all. You called, and shouted and burst my deafness. You flashed and shone, and scattered my blindness. You breathed odours and I drew in breath and I pant for you. I tasted, and I hunger and thirst. You touched me, and I burned for your peace."

The quote is from St Augustine's Confessions (Book Ten), and Christ is his true love now. He was a man who has clearly realized that the love of Jesus Christ cannot be matched even by the love of those we share deep and lasting relationships with, because the person of Christ *is* Love.

Christ is God, and God is Love

So, if God is love, and has created the whole of the cosmos for the simple purpose of loving and fulfilling us, it makes sense to seek from Him that which will satisfy us completely. Christ, then, is the ultimate lover. All the loving that we receive from each other is a pale reflection of what he can offer us. He loves us on both a cosmic and personal level. This is the God that holds all that exists together; he holds every atom in this universe in a loving embrace. This is the God that came to earth and bled for us. As the hymn goes: "hands that flung stars into space, to cruel nails surrendered."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church talks of "the intimate bond between Christ and his Church" by saying, "Not only is she gathered around him, she is united in him, in his Body" (CCC 789). It then says that: "Believers

who respond to God's Word and become members of Christ's body, become intimately united with him... In that Body the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ" (790). And also: "He has joined her with himself in an everlasting covenant and never stops caring for her as for his own body" (796).

The Church Speaks The Language of Love

This is the sort of language we use to talk about marriage and complete sacrifice between lovers. So who better to experience this sort of love from than God incarnate, who emptied himself out completely, like a lover at our feet.

If you read the Catechism and the documents of the Second Vatican Council, it becomes glaringly clear that the Church is quite simply the continuation of Christ's loving and healing presence here on earth; right now. Once you understand this, all of a sudden the Church becomes not so much a 'fascist' institution, but rather a real, mystical and physical Body through which Christ and each one of us can become lovers. And we see that in its social, institutional form, the Church is the facilitator of a personal and social relationship—a truly human, incarnational relationship—with God.

It is so easy to let the Church's sheer size and post-sin woundedness make you forget that it exists primarily for this intimate and personal purpose. St. Joan of Arc said about Jesus Christ and the Church: "I simply know they're one thing and we shouldn't complicate the matter". Absorbing this properly, then, should trigger a radically different reaction when we hear statements such as 'listen to the Church'.

More Than Just Listening

As young people, we tend to think of listening as a static, one way process, not really essential to a relationship, since it carries the 'I'm being told' connotation. This is why we often view the Church in a negative way, as always 'coming down' on society when something bad is being done. But this is the wrong way to view it. Laws are laid down and teachings are given in order to allow us to live happily, to achieve the satisfaction for which we are created.

A mother chastises her child for running near the fire; this kind of rule making is born out of love in the knowledge of what is best for the child and what will prevent distress. Such is our relationship with the Church; like the child, we often see only the prevention of fun, the negative dictate. How perverse a culture we live in that constantly encourages us to go on seeing things in this immature way.

Responding to Love, Finding Life

The way in which we should listen to the Church, therefore, is not in the sense of a dog listening to its owner's command to 'sit', but in a truly free way. It is the obedience of one lover to another: a willing, positive response and openness, in the knowledge that the other has our best interests at heart.

It is the obedience of Christ himself, who said "If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." So actually it goes far beyond just listening. You don't just listen to the Church; it's about *responding* to a *life* in Christ, living up to what we were made for in order to be truly satisfied. It's about falling in love.

THE TRAGIC BLINDNESS OF THE SECULAR MINDSET

It is a characteristic of any decaying civilization that the great masses of the people are unaware of the tragedy. Humanity in a crisis is generally insensitive to the gravity of the times in which it lives. Men do not want to believe their own times are wicked, partly because they have no standard outside of themselves by which to measure their times. If there is no fixed concept of justice, how shall men know it is violated? Only those who live by faith really know what is happening in the world; the great masses without faith are unconscious of the destructive processes going on, because they have lost the vision of the heights from which they have fallen.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen

A MOTHER'S DIARY..... FIORELLA NASH



"Is sleep still overrated?" asked a priest cheerfully as I staggered in the direction of the coffee counter, feeling as though I were trying to walk across a bouncy castle. I wondered for a moment whether I could plead severe provocation if I made the obvious non-verbal response. It was almost as close to the bone as the dearly beloved acquaintance who warned me over dinner that I was turning into the Catholic answer to Private Eye's Polly Filler [yes, you miscreant, you know who you are. It'll be handbags at dawn!] It was the second morning of the Faith Summer Session and I had had precisely two hours sleep the previous night. Even when little Hugh Ambrose had humoured me and dozed off, the two of us were sharing a bed and I kept being woken up by a small knee jutting into my ribs or a fist in my mouth. It is quite incredible how violently a little baby can move and I felt battered and bruised by the morning. I had originally emptied out a large suitcase and turned it into a makeshift Moses basket for him [Brown Owl would have been proud] but I got so many comments and Lady Bracknell impersonations [yes that's right, I put my baby to sleep in a suitcase and pushed a copy of my racy novel around in his pram] that I abandoned the plan and brought him into bed with me instead. Oh well, looking on the bright side, we were apparently sleeping in a bed that was once occupied by Father Holloway. If he is ever canonised, it will probably make us secondary relics.

I knew I would regret being so dismissive of sleep sooner or later, but I am not going to publicly withdraw the comment, so there. I'll let you all into a secret. Whenever I am having a really bad night and little Hugh Ambrose is waking every hour, I try to imagine my grandmother [God rest her soul] standing beside me. The stilly watches of the night do not seem as lonely then and her memory reminds me that there are worse reasons to be awake in the middle of the night than a restless baby. Her firstborn son died in her arms of an infant illness that health visitors do not even talk about today and I wonder how many nights she lay awake longing to hear the sound of him crying for her. I never find it quite so easy to complain that I feel tired then.



"He's going on a bottle!" I bleated to a friend when Hugh Ambrose's premature teething became a little too much to bear. His gums are raw and I can feel his teeth desperately trying to break through. "There's no need for that," she assured me, "if he bites you just take him off your breast and say "no". It's time he learnt the meaning of the word."

The trouble is that by the time we get as far as "no" I am usually seeing stars and for some macabre reason, the sound of me yelping with pain causes little Hugh Ambrose to dissolve into fits of sadistic giggles. It is strange because the more alert and aware of the world he becomes, the more he is learning to empathise with other people's emotions. He will laugh uproariously if he hears me laugh and burst into panicked tears if he senses that anyone around him is anxious or cross, so much so that I have had to ask people not to raise their voices in front of him because he becomes so fretful. The only time he singularly fails to get the message is when he is feeding, leading me to wonder in darker moments whether my delightful little baby has turned into a vampire overnight. He is not content with milk any more, he wants blood!

But before I start feeling sorry for myself, I am beginning to doubt that babies lead the blissful lives we assume they do most of the time. First they go through the trauma of being dragged out of the comfort of the womb [or in Hugh Ambrose's case, spending hours bumping his head trying to navigate his way out and almost being strangled by his own umbilical cord], then they spend months being sick every five minutes with what must feel like constant food poisoning interspersed with diabetic hangovers. Just in case they get too comfortable, some smiley lady in white sticks needles into them every month or so for apparently no reason and as soon as that phase is over their teeth start cutting through.

Hugh Ambrose sits next to me, tucked up nice and warm against the chill of the English summer, the picture of misery. He has yet to work out that he needs to place his multicoloured teething toy into his mouth for it to help and rattles it indignantly.

.... and there will be much weeping and teething of Nash!



THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE

CATECHETICAL FORMATION OF THE YOUNG TODAY

Richard Marsden

Young people readily embrace a straightforward, Christ-centred and Eucharistic spirituality as long as they have first been given a clear and coherent account of the contemporary credibility of the Catholic Faith. A Catholic student shares his own experience.

It's lunchtime on Northumberland's stunning Holy Island at a retreat for Catholic students. The retreat organiser approaches the priest leading the group and inquires about the arrangements for the afternoon ahead designated as sacred space on the itinerary. "So, are we having Exposition then?" the organiser says. "Well that might be a problem as there is nothing in the tabernacle." (Note that Lindisfarne is a remote island with no resident priest and infrequent Sunday Masses) "If you wanted exposition, you should have asked me and I would have consecrated an extra host at Mass yesterday." A few more words are exchanged and then the organiser replies: "OK, we won't bother then." And so the four-day retreat passed without a monstrosity in sight.

Sadly, at numerous spiritual events for young Catholics, this is an all too apparent reality. Indeed, we live in an era in which, often, the physical presence of Christ comes second best to a coffee table draped with colourful fabric topped with multiple candles as a focus for prayer. This is not good enough. The Blessed Sacrament, the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ on earth, must be at the heart of any spiritual event for young Catholics, through the Mass, Exposition and His reservation in the tabernacle.

Before going any further, we must point out that youth work for teenage Catholics is a significantly different ministry than that for Catholic students and young adults. But the latter grows and develops directly from the former. Catechesis, it seems to me, should begin with the basics, so that children and teenagers are given reasons for believing in God, God made Man, and the Church rather than just being told that Jesus loves them. For young people to grow and mature in their faith, any teaching at school, in Holy Communion groups, in Confirmation groups and in youth groups must be firmly rooted and focused on the fundamentals of Christian doctrine "imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life" (CCC 5).

In my experience Youth days and Summer Camps run by Faith Movement are good examples of formative catechetical youth work. At the four-day Summertime events, children between 10 and 14 years old, are

presented with a logical and coherent vision of the Faith. The talks follow the following pattern: How can we be sure that God exists? Why is man so special in God's creation? What is Christ's mission? How can I meet Christ here and now through the Church? Why do we go to Mass? The talks are followed by workshops and the afternoons occupied by sports and activities. At the centre of each day is Mass. Not a Mass dubbed as "youth", with dozens of kids on the sanctuary dancing and clapping, but a liturgically straightforward weekday Mass.

Contrary to popular belief, the simplicity of a weekday Mass is of huge benefit to young people at these kind of meetings. It gives them a flavour of parish life and gives a subtle encouragement to attend Mass during the week back at home. It worked in this way for me and many of my peers. It also drives home the fact that children do not have to do anything practical to participate fully in the Mass. I once heard of an occasion when a primary school teacher insisted that every child take up one of their exercise books up at the Offertory of a school Mass so they could all "participate" in the celebration. Clearly the true, Catholic—Second Vatican Council—sense of "participation" has been bypassed here.

How much more could young people participate fully in the sacrifice of the Mass by being with Christ at Calvary, by being united with all souls in Heaven and Purgatory, and by receiving Christ's Body and Blood, therefore being closer to Him than at any other point of their earthly existence? The point is, if children are taught in detail what the Mass is from a young age and, from this, they fall in love with the Eucharist, all further catechesis about the truths of the faith will flow logically from this deep yearning for Christ.

Unfortunately, the teaching of the Faith in our schools often seems far from this ideal. 'Religious Education' involves little detailed teaching of the Faith upon which the school's ethos is based. Indeed, many schools spend an unnecessary amount of time teaching the beliefs of the other world religions. My contemporaries would not object to the inclusion of Islam and Judaism in religious education programmes, but nor would they object to this being kept brief and put in the context of the Catholic Church's relationship with these other faiths.

In some schools, the faith is taught using textbooks which haven't been granted an imprimatur. They make inaccurate claims about some of the most basic principles of Christian doctrine. If the orthodox teaching of the Catholic faith is not presented comprehensively and with enthusiasm, then teenage Catholics will have little incentive to grow deeper in their love for Christ and pursue further spiritual development. This seems to have been the difference between young people who still practise their faith and those who do not.

Turning back to youth ministry for young adults, Catholic University Chaplaincies can and do play a vital role in looking after and developing the spiritual needs of students. They offer a place where all Catholics, no matter what stage of their journey they are at, can come together and grow in the knowledge and love of their faith through talks, discussions, prayer groups and, above all, through the Mass. All are places where long lasting friendships, and even marriages, begin. Social events organised by Catholic societies can be some of the most enjoyable a student will experience. There are also some great examples of CATHSOC outreach to students of all faiths and none.

But the make-up of ministry to Catholic students is not without its faults. There is a big inconsistency in the structure and spirituality of university chaplaincies throughout the country. Some offer a wide range of styles ranging from Charismatic to the more traditional. Others can seem too exclusive, where one kind of spirituality is unfairly dominant over another. The results are that you get to know of quite a few students who much prefer to go to local parishes because they are not comfortable with the chaplaincy atmosphere.

Also, many chaplaincies do not concern themselves with diocesan activities or participation with external organizations, such as the new movements. This means that there is a lack of encouragement for students to become more active in their faith after they have graduated. In fact, some graduates become almost obsessed with chaplaincy life and find it difficult to return to a mainstream parish.

It is quite staggering how many students do not understand some of the most simple doctrines and liturgical practices and, indeed, do not accept, or feel uncomfortable with the Church's teaching on moral issues. The issue of abortion is barely talked about in Catholic circles at some universities and there is distinct lack of support for pro-life activism. There are just over ten official pro-life societies in 125 educational institutions in the United Kingdom; this is hardly going to be effective for combating the vehemently pro-abortion policies of the National Union of

Students and of individual Student Unions. The continual breakdown in catechesis and the lack of formation can be quite clearly seen in evidence amongst students at university level. The practice of genuflecting directly to a crucifix instead of the tabernacle or showing no sign of reverence whatsoever, for instance, is commonplace.

But it's not all doom and gloom in the formation of young people. At diocesan level, the knock on effect of the World Youth Day in Cologne seems to have revived enthusiasm, with new groups and events springing up as a result of people's long-lasting memories. One of my friends said to me on the ferry on return from the pilgrimage that he had had the best week of his life. This undoubtedly speaks for many more who made the trip to see the Pope and, above all, to adore Christ with a million other like-minded people.

Pope Benedict engaged with the youth of the world in a radically different, but equally effective way to John Paul II. His humility and wise words of guidance to young Catholics battling with secularism proved popular and were met with deafening renditions of the now famous chant, "Benedetto". In fact, he tried to silence the chanting of his name on a few occasions and told people to sing "Jesus Christus" instead. This is what was most poignant about Pope Benedict in Cologne; the way he continually directed all attention from himself to the physical presence of Christ at Exposition and during the Mass.

In his homily on this year's low-key World Youth Day in April, the Pope appealed to his young friends to "love the word of God and love the Church [which] will give you access to a treasure of very great value and will teach you how to appreciate its richness".

"Love and follow the Church, for it has received from its Founder the mission of showing people the way to true happiness," he said. "Jesus taught us how this can be done: 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free' (Jn 8:31-32)."

Maybe the answer to our ever-dwindling numbers of young Catholics is an official visit to Britain by the Supreme Pontiff himself, something which, of course, is out of our hands.





THE NEED FOR A CONVINCING CHALLENGE TO PHILOSOPHICAL MATERIALISM

Dear Father Editor

I enjoyed Peter Kwasniewski's article 'Catholic Tradition and the Creator of All' (*Sep-Oct 2006*). I thought it was an excellent review of the opinions of Scripture and Tradition on the meaning of creation, a topic of perennial importance for the Church. However, Professor Kwasniewski frequently mentioned the concept of chance or randomness in his overview, without really explaining what he understood the word to mean. For example, he observes that nature makes use of "random methods for definite purposes, as with the scattering of seeds". Citing Aristotle, he says "nature does not work in a purely mathematical way". This is an interesting assertion, but seems to leave some questions unanswered. Indeed, the concept of random chance is a difficult one and would certainly merit some unpacking.

Take the example of seeds being scattered by the wind. To what extent is this process truly random? From the standpoint of physics, that which we often call "random" in an everyday sense is in fact completely determined. If we could somehow know a seed's mass and all the forces acting on the seed at all points in time, we could write down a differential equation which describes its deterministic motion. Of course, it is unlikely we will be able to solve this equation precisely.

Any appearance of randomness is simply a lack of precise knowledge of the conditions (which may be incredibly complicated) and our lack of an exact mathematical equation specifying the seed's motion. In the long run, it becomes incredibly difficult to predict where the seed will end up so the whole thing might give rise to the illusion of randomness..

The loose use of the concept of "chance", which has plagued so much of the debate between science and religion, seems to be in some way related to at least two issues. One is the question of human freedom (which Professor Kwasniewski does not fully deal with and leaves implicit). The other is the Copenhagen interpretation of Quantum Mechanics. (see his review letter in this issue, Editor).

The Copenhagen interpretation allows for non-deterministic processes on a microscopic scale—a genuine kind of randomness. Such an interpretation remains disputed. If we accept this understanding of Quantum Theory, we can see our universe as capricious, where on the most fundamental level everyday laws of cause and effect do not apply. Our experience of chance and freedom might even, in this picture, be ascribed to the massively complicated and fundamentally non-deterministic interactions of the microscopic constituents of the universe and is then illusory.

This randomness is an exception to the rest of physics, which "obeys" deterministic equations. On the basis of the rest of physics, it can (and is) argued that all nature does indeed work in a purely deterministic way. This could be taken to imply that the entire history of the universe is in fact completely fixed from the beginning of time. Again, this makes any concept of chance, or indeed freedom, purely illusory.

Neither a capricious nor a wholly determined universe sits comfortably

with human self-consciousness. Such materialism risks reducing the meaningfulness of this fundamental human experience. We all perceive ourselves to be free (to some extent) and have a well-defined will, which does not seem to be simply reducible to low-level, non-deterministic physics—without losing the essence of personal self-consciousness

To escape such problems, it seems we must investigate the way in which man's spiritual nature affects his interactions with the material universe. Man, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:26) has a mind and will which are not merely an "epiphenomenon" of his material being (cf. Message delivered to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, 22 October 1996, by Pope John Paul II). This remains a huge open problem in philosophy, theology and the sciences.

This whole matter of chance and randomness seems naturally to highlight what is, in my opinion, a critical barrier in discussions with neo-Darwinism *et al.* No matter how many ways in which we see God manifested in His creation, we will find it very difficult to convince anyone unless we can break away from a materialist understanding of the universe. Since the Enlightenment, it has become a tacit assumption of our culture that the only kind of knowledge worth bothering with is that which can be proven by experiment and described with mathematical laws. This assumption seems to have paid off in some ways, in the proliferation of time saving technology and the rising standard of living in the West. To some people these benefits seem to justify the original assumption. Increasingly our lives are governed by technology, the everyday manifestation of this scientific way of thinking.

Immersed as we are in gadgetry, living a lifestyle which, in its very

making, is explicable by scientific laws, our culture feels an inherent uneasiness in discussing things that can't be explained in this way. Pre-technological cultures are much more open to the concept of the transcendent. This scientific worldview (combined with a fragmentary post-modern outlook) allows man to build his own cosy neighbourhood into which God does not seem to intrude. Western culture seems to be building its own latter-day Tower of Babel, where modern man seeks to "make a name" for himself at the expense of ignoring God (cf. Genesis 11:4-9). All the central ideas of Christianity (the Resurrection, the Virgin Birth, miracles and eternal life to name but a few) fundamentally do not fit in. They are beyond our ordinary experience (by their very nature) and are not scientifically verifiable.

If we are ever to win any of these arguments with evolutionism, we must demonstrate that man's reason transcends the material realm and is not restricted to the empirically verifiable—that he is a physical and spiritual being, in the image and likeness of God. This happens to be a fundamental aspect of the Catholic tradition. (See the review of David Jones's book in our Book Reviews. Editor)

We must be able to show that knowledge which cannot be verified by experiment is worthy of our attention again. If the Enlightenment alerted mankind to the necessity of experiment and mathematical theory, it did so at the expense of the transcendent. Whilst accepting all that we have learned from science in the past three hundred years, it must be our project to open men to God using their God-given natural reason. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this letter to do so!

It seems incumbent upon the Catholic intellectual community to engage materialism in a fundamental way, in order to find ways of achieving this goal. At the moment,

this doesn't seem to be happening. Our failure in this field has allowed secular post-modern culture to become a culture of death. Whilst theists are happy to see the hand of God in the order and goodness of creation, I believe engaging with atheists ultimately requires a far deeper approach, which has not yet been fully articulated.

Yours faithfully

*Christopher Hack
Peter Ave
Willesden Green
London*

Dear Father Editor

May I thank you for your profound editorial article, The Catholic view of Matter: Towards a New Synthesis in the September/October edition of Faith. It was fascinating, and I think important, to see the development over the centuries of the philosophical rift which eventually grew between science and religion, as a result of which many scientists (although by no means all) abandoned any idea of a Creator God.

On the question of infallibility, Mr Alan Pavelin notes that one of the Church's teachings which was regarded as infallible but has now been changed is that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church. May I quote Pope Pius IX on this subject, in an Allocution given on December 9th, 1854:

"It is to be held of faith that no one can be saved outside the Apostolic Roman Church, which is the only ark of salvation... nevertheless it must equally be held that he who is in ignorance of the true religion, if this is invincible, is therefore in no way culpable in the sight of God. Now who shall think himself sufficient to be able to set limits to this sort of ignorance, bearing in mind the manner and

variety of peoples, places, talents, and of all other circumstances whatsoever." [Allocution of Pope Pius IX, Dec.9, 1854.]

The same teaching can be found in today's Catechism of the Catholic Church, paras 846-848.

Yours faithfully

*Moira Lenartowicz
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Kendal
Cumbria*

DAWKINS' DENIAL OF MEANING

Dear Father Editor

This is only of partial interest to you in your high efforts to establish a synthesis of Faith and reason, but I was wondering if you might put to your readership a small query concerning one of the more divisive voices of the movement you oppose.

Richard Dawkins posits many arguments aiming to prove there is no God via science. It is actually sad that he often lets slip a disgust at what he perceives to be the power, influence and wealth exercised by religious authority at the expense of an enslaved and bamboozled faithful.

In seeing an advert for his latest tome *The God Delusion: What if There's No Heaven?*, aimed at "Dumping religious bigotry in the dustbin of history." (£4 off at Waterstone's) in *The Times* of 3rd October last. I was wondering if there can be a moral objection to an atheist extracting power influence and wealth (spendable) out of an ill-educated secular audience. Is he exempt by not being encumbered by a moral side to his thinking?

Yours faithfully

*James Gillick
Spaw Lane
Louth*

EDITORIAL COMMENT

See our Cutting Edge column for another view of the incoherence of Dawkins' position.

SLAVERY AND THE MAGISTERIUM

Dear Father Editor

The excellent article by Father Linus Clovis in your July/August issue contains a brief account of the attempts by several Popes to stop Catholics being involved in chattel slavery. As a footnote to that article, may I draw attention to a book entitled *The Popes and Slavery* written by Father Joel Panzer and published in New York in 1996 by Alba House (an imprint of the Society of St Paul). It contains a detailed history of the matter, as well as copies (and translations) of many of the relevant documents issued by the Popes and the Holy Office. These documents fully support the argument of Father Clovis.

Yours Faithfully

*Ian Devaux
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Suffolk*

Dear Father Editor

Thank you for yet another fantastic edition of Faith (Sept/Oct 06). As a contribution to your reflection upon the decline of our civilization might I share with you this experience of the BBC. On the morning of Saturday 27th May 2006 my family and I were listening to Radio One in the car, our six year old in the back of the vehicle. The DJ made a sneering joke as follows: "Europe has invented two narcotics, alcohol and Christianity, and I know which one I prefer". His ensuing sneers confirmed his preference was not a Christian one.

The following programme was on Sexually Transmitted Diseases in the young. The programme opened with inappropriate jokes about rampant sexual behaviour, with young girls ironically describing how they had been so 'out of it' that they couldn't remember who had given them their sexual diseases.

This was before 10.00 am, and families with young children could be expected to be listening. The target audience for this Saturday morning must also have included young teens as this was the age of the children participating on air. The programme would have

been merely feeble for an adult audience, but for youngsters it was, it seems to me, abusive. It was systematically encouraging underage sexual behaviour. Consciously or unconsciously it was at times revelling in children's experiences of unprotected sex and sex in which condoms had broken.

Among the questions raised are those concerning the details of the BBC's Child Protection policy and whether they have been followed in this instance. I rang the BBC to complain but over four months on have had no response. I have recently put it in writing.

Yours Faithfully

*Giles Rowe
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EDITORIAL COMMENT

See William Oddie's comments on the BBC in this issue and our discussion of the developing culture of 'Sex Education' in an upcoming issue.



LETTERS

OTHER ANGLES

PHYSICS: AN ILLUSTRATION OF DISCOVERY

Peter Hodgson

Physics is the activity by which we attain our knowledge of the structure and dynamic interactions of the inorganic natural world. But what is knowledge? It is vital to distinguish between speculation and knowledge. Speculation is an essential starting point, but until it is tested and verified it is not knowledge. Failure to make this distinction can easily confuse discussions of the relation between science and faith.

When a scientist is interested in a certain phenomenon he tries to imagine what interaction lies behind it, what is the hidden 'mechanism'. Then perhaps he has an idea. He thinks about it and it seems to make some sense, in a qualitative way, of his observations. The next stage, where physics begins, is to make some measurements of the phenomenon and to see how the resulting numbers can be connected. He somewhat

speculatively constructs a mathematical formalism that enables him to calculate those numbers, and then compares the calculated numbers with his measured numbers. If they agree they provide some support for his idea, but if they disagree they show that his idea is false.

This can be illustrated by some examples. Aristotle thought about the world and made some observations. It seemed to him that there is a sharp distinction between the celestial world where everything is unchanging and the terrestrial world of change. He thought that all material particles seek their natural places, so a stone falls towards the centre of the earth. The heavier the stone, the more strongly it seeks its place, so an object of twice the weight falls twice as fast.

All this is speculation. It never occurred to him to test this idea by seeing if it is true. All he had to do was to drop a pea and a potato at the same time and notice that they hit the ground simultaneously. This experiment, taking just a few seconds, is enough to demolish his idea. He did not do so; he thought that it was beneath the dignity of a philosopher to make experiments and he had no knowledge of mathematics. He was not a physicist.

Much the same can be said of two other speculative philosophers, Descartes and Kant. Descartes suggested, with persuasive rhetoric, a theory of the solar system whereby the planets are carried round the sun by vortices, but he made no calculations to see if it is true. He based his theory of motion on false premises, and so the results are absurdly wrong. He would easily have found this out if he had made a few experiments, but he did not do so. Kant put forward a theory of the origin of the solar system, but again made no calculations. These ideas were no more than unsupported speculations.

In sharp contrast, Newton had the idea that the same force that pulls a stone to the ground also keeps the moon in its orbit. This was also just a speculation, but Newton went on to propose his theory of universal gravitation that enabled him to calculate the strengths of the forces on the stone and the moon. He found that they differed by 20%, so he concluded that his idea was false, and put his calculations aside. Some time later he heard about a new determination of the radius of the earth, which comes into his calculations. With the new value, the results agreed, and so supported his idea. This is physics. He went on to show that the theory describes the motions of the planets to high accuracy

and implies Kepler's empirical laws. It also shows that the speculations of Aristotle and Descartes are false.

In his book on optics, Newton distances himself from speculative philosophers like Descartes by declaring: 'My design in this book is not to explain the properties of light by Hypotheses, but to propose and prove them by Reason and Experiment'. He knew that what is essential is a combination of reason and experiment, and without one of them it is just respectively speculation or observation, and without both of them it is not physics.

This distinction between speculation and physics is not always understood. The French physicist Pierre Duhem, a devout Catholic, once attended a conference of Catholic philosophers and theologians who discussed the philosophy of science. After listening for some time he could contain himself no longer and told them straight out that unless they had studied the pure sciences for their own sake for at least ten or fifteen years, they should stay silent on such questions.

This distinction between speculation and reality is found in other fields. Many people had the idea of a jet engine, but it was Frank Whittle that actually built one and made it work. Many people say we can obtain all the power we need by building windmills. A good idea, but please build one and carefully measure the power output, the reliability, the cost, the safety and the effects on the environment and when you have the numbers compare them with similar numbers obtained for other sources of energy.

Only then will you be able to say whether the idea is worth implementing. 'Science is measurement', thundered Lord Kelvin, 'unless you can measure what you are talking about and express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a most meagre and unsatisfactory kind'. He could well have added that unless you have a theory that can be expressed mathematically and which enables you to calculate those numbers and compare them with your measurements they are worthless observations.



comment

ON THE
c o m m e n t s

by William Oddie

FEAR OF GOD AND SECULAR SPIN

Among the many notable reactions—some violently intemperate—aroused by (or on the pretext of) the Pope's now legendary Regensburg address, perhaps the most singular was the addition, within days, of a paragraph to the entry for the Emperor Manuel II Paleologus in the Wikipedia online encyclopaedia. For those who have no internet access, it is worth quoting here: 'In a lecture delivered on 12 September 2006, Pope Benedict XVI quoted from a dialogue believed to have occurred in 1391 between Manuel II and a Persian scholar and recorded in a book by Manuel II (*Dialogue 7 of Twenty-six Dialogues with a Persian*) in which the Emperor stated: "Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." Many Muslims were offended by what was perceived as a denigration of Mohammed. In his book, Manuel II then continues, saying, "God is not pleased by blood—and not acting reasonably is contrary to God's nature. Faith is born of the soul, not the body. Whoever would lead someone to faith needs the ability to speak well and to reason properly, without violence and threats... To convince a reasonable soul, one does not need a strong arm, or weapons of any kind, or any other means of threatening a person with death..."'

One consequence of the Pope's supposed gaffe might have been that his slightly strange honeymoon with the liberal Catholic Press could have come abruptly to an end. The Tablet

carried out a poll, to discover whether Christians thought the Pope was wrong to quote Manuel II, according to which just over half thought he was. This poll was cited by the *Islamic Republic News Agency*, to justify the rather different claim that "A majority of Christians around the world [the Tablet's email poll to its newsletter subscribers could hardly be said to so representative] believe the Pope should not have quoted derogatory statements against Islam". It looked like the perfect pretext for the scales to fall from liberal eyes.

There were certainly mutterings from the likes of Michael Walsh about the "demotion" of the Vatican's former chief expert on Islam, Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald—on the ground that had he still been in Rome, he "might have alerted the Pope to the pitfalls of the quotation he used in his Regensburg speech", 'though the Pope could as easily have had the text of his speech faxed to Fitzgerald's new office in Cairo as to his former office in the Vatican. The likelihood is, however, that Archbishop Fitzgerald would not, in any case, have been consulted).

In spite of all this, Walsh's analysis not only maintained a level of respect for the Pope that he would certainly not have accorded his predecessor, but actually defended him to the point of denying the necessity for any withdrawal of his remarks. "Did Pope Benedict need to apologise at all...?", he asked: "Most commentators seem to think so. Karen Armstrong, writing in the *Guardian*... asserts that the Pope quoted the 14th-century Byzantine emperor 'without qualification and with apparent approval'." To this Walsh issued a stinging rebuke: "I do not imagine that rioters in Pakistan had read Benedict's words in full, but I would have expected Karen Armstrong to have done so." His defence of Pope Benedict homes in on an important passage from the Regensburg speech, not universally spotted by the Pope's defenders: "As an academic might," he continues,

"the Pope put Manuel II Palaeologus's words in context. He pointed out that they were the emperor's own record of the debate with the Persian sage, and said they were spoken "brusquely". More to the point, perhaps, the Pontiff himself quotes the Qur'an as saying exactly the opposite of what the emperor alleges. In other words, even in the Regensburg address, quite apart from his Angelus address on 17 September, the Pope distanced himself from the views of the emperor."

Walsh also pointed out another important context to note: that of the Emperor's own remarks. He had, said Walsh, "good reason for thinking as he did. His empire was under siege from the predominantly Muslim troops of the Ottoman Turks. Constantinople, his capital city, was to fall just over half a century later". This comes surprisingly close to saying that Manuel II got it right when he claimed that Islam had been spread by the sword; and it does prompt an important question: of those many Muslims who took offence at the Pope's use of Manuel II's words, why did so few of them respond that he was in error, since Islam is essentially a religion of peace? Was it, perhaps, because their own response was so exceptionally belligerent?

Like Walsh, Anthony Carroll—in *The Tablet*, no less—insisted that it was important to "examine precisely what the Pope said in the whole address, and why he said it," observing that "few academic lectures have caused such a stir as Pope Benedict's recent address in Regensburg on faith, reason and the university" and that "judging by many of the responses, few lectures have also been so poorly understood". Dr Carroll's long and impressive analysis of the Pope's thought, in his lecture and elsewhere, was much the most intelligent response to the furore that I came across. John L Allen, in the *National Catholic Reporter*, America's equivalent of *The Tablet*, also took the lecture seriously, but

was more critical of the Pope's supposed gaffe: "any PR consultant", he opined, "would have told the Pope that if he wanted to make a point about the relationship between faith and reason, he shouldn't open up with a comparison between Islam and Christianity that would be widely understood as a criticism of Islam, suggesting that it's irrational and prone to violence. Yet that is precisely what Benedict did."

The point is that this Pope does not, thank heaven, go in for PR consultants. If he did, he would constantly have to consider how his words might be distorted and torn out of context by his enemies, and he would never say anything. A more important question than, 'why was the Pope not more careful in what he said?' is surely this: how did words delivered in an academic context end up, utterly changed in meaning, in the inflaming of rioters in the bazaars of Karachi and Islamabad? Who, in the first place, tore them out of their intellectual setting and spread them within days among those most likely to react violently? That there are Islamic extremists watching for any pretext to stir up anger against Western 'crusaders' is certainly part of the answer. But a much more important part of the answer is that, more than any other agency, it was the BBC, particularly through its online service, who first wrenched the Pope's words from their context and then spread them through the world in a form which would inevitably lead to violence and destruction. It was *The Catholic Herald* (which has for some years kept a beady eye on the Corporation's endemic anti-Popery) which best chronicled this aspect of the Regensburg phenomenon. In a striking leader by its editor, the excellent Luke Coppen, the Herald encouraged its readers "to hold the Corporation to account, notably for the blundering and reckless coverage of the affair on the BBC's website" and urged the BBC's director general, Mark Thompson (himself a practising

Catholic) "to trawl through the archives of *BBC News Online* to see how ignorant and one-sided reports of "Muslim outrage" helped manufacture a crisis for the Church that has endangered the lives of Catholics". *The Herald* was not alone in pointing to the BBC's part in the crisis. Melanie Philips, in *The Daily Mail*, pointed to the way in which "as so often, [the BBC] has given undue airtime to extremists, thus lending credence to the false impression of the Pope's remarks", and she criticised the way the BBC had claimed that the Pope had "apologised", rather than simply expressing regret for the misinterpretation of his comments, "thus helping Islamic extremists believe that the forces of intimidation had cowed the Pontiff and scored a notable victory in the war against Western civilisation".

The extreme violence of some Islamic reactions had its own consequences, and stirred up something of a wave of support for the Pope in the non-Catholic press, duly noted in *The Catholic Herald's* coverage (which, extending as it did over four broadsheet pages of news reporting, and including the full text of the Pope's lecture and an intelligent comment piece by Stuart Reid, *The Spectator's* deputy editor, far outstripped the rest of the Catholic press). After a few days a consensus began to emerge in the secular press that the Pope (and maybe even naughty old Manuel II) might have a point. *The Sunday Times* argued that "The Pope should certainly not be pushed into withdrawing his remarks", and the paper went on to say that the reaction to the Regensburg lecture showed that many Muslims were intent on imposing their restrictions on freedom of expression in the West. Peter Hitchens urged readers of *The Mail on Sunday* to "back the Pope". *The Daily Telegraph* summed up an emerging view which may well prove to be the permanent legacy of this affair so far as Western

opinion is concerned: "We suspect", pronounced the *Telegraph* in a leading article, "that Western public opinion is not displeased that Benedict has said the unsayable. Now it is time for other churchmen to tell their Muslim counterparts that, in addition to dishing out criticism, they must learn to take it".

Some commentators went further, and implicitly (and approvingly) placed the Pope's remarks in the general context of Samuel Huntington's famous (and widely contested) analysis of the relationship of Islam and the West as a being a "clash of civilisations". For some commentators, Manuel II himself emerged as something of a hero. By quoting an obscure Byzantine emperor, surmised Christopher Orlet in *The American Spectator*, "I suspect that the Pope was hoping to make the point that unless the West comes together, heals its divisions, and faces the threat of radical Islam together, it may face a similar fate as [sic] the Roman-Byzantine Empire." But the Pope is not thus to be enlisted for the neo-con "war on terror". That Benedict in his Regensburg lecture was confronting the West as much as the Islamic world was emphasised by *L'Espresso's* Sandro Magister, who in a long and passionately written piece quoted words spoken by Benedict XVI only a few days before, when the Pope had attacked an aspect of Western culture by which the East was right to be repelled: "They do not see the real threat to their identity", the Pope had said, "in the Christian faith, but in the contempt for God and the cynicism that considers mockery of the sacred to be an exercise of freedom and that holds up utility as the supreme criterion for the future of scientific research.... The tolerance which we urgently need includes the fear of God—respect for what others hold sacred. This respect for what others hold sacred demands that we ourselves learn once more the fear of God." What a pity the mullahs (let alone the BBC) never spotted that.

sunday 
b y s u n d a y

31ST IN ORDINARY TIME: B
05.11.06 Mk 12, 28-34

- Our Lord adds a phrase to the 'Shema' (ie. Dt 6,4-5), which is the holiest text in Judaism and is quoted here to answer the admiring scribe (cf. Mk 12, 28ff). "With all your mind" (Mk 12, 30) does not appear in the original text of the Torah or Pentateuch, and the fact that Jesus should change this is daring and radical in the extreme. Even the Rabbis scrupulously avoided correcting a corrupt text out of reverence for the Word of God (eg. Judg 18,30). Only the God of Israel had authority over the Law of Moses.
- Perhaps Jesus wants to take into account the advances of Greek culture, and the consequent influence of Hellenism on Semitic thinking with this addition. Mind and intellect are very much the province of Greek philosophy, and Our Lord is clearly saying that our ability to think and reason should be put at the service of God, along with every other human faculty and talent. He is not detracting from the Law or embellishing it. Rather, he is bringing out its full meaning, using his own authority that both stimulates and repels his audience, according to their pre-disposition towards him.
- How we need to see this intimate connection between faith and reason in our own day! The Pope has spoken out bravely against every form of totalitarian fundamentalism, be it religious or secular. Any religion that tends to link religion with violence, denying the God-given necessity of reason in dialogue and thus the ability to accept differences and live in peace, condemns itself as inhuman. Similarly, any use of reason that sees no recourse to the divine, or even any dialogue with religion as

necessary, sets itself up as its own god, enslaving the human spirit that seeks God.

32ND IN ORDINARY TIME: B
12.11.06 Mk 12, 38-44

- Of all the sects in Judaism in the early first century AD, Jesus had most in common with the Pharisees. They predominated in the Judean and Galilean provinces, gathering disciples and a reputation for strict observance of the Jewish Law. They believed in spiritual reality and angels, life after death and resurrection, sacrifices offered on behalf of the dead and the power of prayer. They instilled reverence for the Law into their disciples, were learned and often hard working. Their commentaries on the Law were long and painstaking, and they taught the Torah by referring to each other's teaching.
- It would have been their tradition that Jesus inherited from the synagogue in Nazareth, although it was also these same Nazarene brothers and sisters who first tried to kill him (cf. Lk 4,28-30). Jesus, who was the fulfilment of the Law himself, saw too the spiritual and moral compromises they allowed in their seemingly virtuous conduct, whilst clinging to man-made traditions which had grown up around the Law like barnacles that weigh down a ship. The Pharisees went to ingenious lengths to maintain a strict outward observance, whilst the demands of justice often went unheeded (cf. Mk 12,38ff).
- The juxtaposition of brash outward observance and pride in the Pharisees with the humility, inner devotion and heroic self-sacrifice of the poor widow could not be more striking. Jesus' attitude recalls the words of God to the prophet Samuel, "God does not see as man sees; man looks at appearances but Yahweh looks at the heart" (1Sam 16,7). Our Lord looks beyond the small pennies of the widow to the fact that she has put everything she possessed into the Treasury. It is her love and

generosity that shine through. She thinks not of herself, only of God.

33RD IN ORDINARY TIME: B
19.11.06 Mk 13, 24-32

- This text of the eschatological discourse in Mark's gospel is problematic. Indeed, it was much favoured by the Catholic modernists, Loisy and Tyrrell, as proof of the so-called dubious historicity of the gospels. "I tell you solemnly, before this generation has passed away all these things will have taken place" (Mk 13,30) is a clear prophecy about events that have still yet to happen. Indeed, the comment in verse 32 seems to be a gloss that attempts to deal with this problem: "But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it" (Mk 13,32).
- Difficulties in Scripture need to be lived with, but there is less need to be alarmed than some might claim. Two events make up the eschatological discourses in the synoptic Gospels: the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming of Christ. Mark's Gospel is often dated before the destruction of the Temple (70AD) because it contains no account of the destruction itself, unlike Matthew or Luke (Mt 24-25, Lk 21). The unfulfilled prophecy could well refer to the impending Fall of Jerusalem a few years after Mark was writing. The text is difficult, not impossible.
- If the events Jesus describes here are an appalling prospect, so too was the situation of the early Church. By tradition Mark was close to Peter, who was martyred in 64AD, and if he wrote his gospel to preserve apostolic witness before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, then the period of composition was one of the bloodiest and least stable imaginable. The Jewish Rebellion from 66AD saw wholesale slaughter in Palestine, as Zealots provoked a bloodbath by withholding taxes from Caesar. Christians needed to hear Mark's words, "Know that he is near, at the very gates" (Mk 13,29).

FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING: B
26.11.06 Jn 18, 33-37

- “All who are on the side of truth listen to my voice” (Jn 18,37). Jesus is either God or a madman. This is not the language of compromise. These are either the most sublime words ever spoken, or the ravings of a megalomaniac intent on world domination. Pilate is caught between anvil and hammer, with no escape. He has no competence to judge on these matters, yet his career as governor of Judaea is on the line. No wonder Matthew should report the words of Pilate’s wife: “Have nothing to do with that man” (Mt 27,19).
- Who is in charge of this interrogation? The supreme irony here is that Pilate shows his poverty and powerlessness before Jesus, despite having the decision of life or death over the condemned man who stands before him. He is used to having men quaking before him, begging for their lives. But not this one. Jesus only talks to Pilate to draw him into the truth, not to save his own life. There is no fear in Jesus, despite the pain he has endured and the malice of the crowd. Despite his bravado, Pilate cannot cope with the sublime doctrine he hears.
- The kingship of Christ lies in saving the world from sin and death, not in any vain parade of armies. His trial is a triumphal progress. As he mounts the wood of the cross, Jesus ascends the throne of his glory and exalts the kingship of Christ crucified. On earth they crowned him with thorns, but in heaven his crown will be all the souls of the virtuous who have gained entrance into paradise through his cross. Sin and death no longer obtain, and only through taking up our cross and following the Master do we gain everlasting happiness.

1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT: C
03.12.06 Lk 21, 25-28.34-36

- “Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery

and drunkenness and the cares of life” (Lk 21,34). We must all be prepared for the Day of Judgement. There is no other wisdom worth listening to. If our souls are not heaven centred through prayer, the sacraments and the life of grace, then we are diminished as human beings. All our actions, no matter how glitzy and thrilling, merely mask the emptiness within. Our hearts are restless until they rest in God. This conversion begins now and is fulfilled in the joy and peace of heaven.

- Advent is all about taking stock of our lives. It is the season of joy awaiting the birth of the Messiah, and of assessing what impact that event will have on our lives. Will we let the Christ child be born in us again this year, making a stable for him in our hearts, or will we lose ourselves in the soul-destroying commercial mess of a secular Christmas? Christmas without religion is like swimming without water, so we need to get wise and let the Holy Spirit master us, leading us more deeply into the stillness of the season.
- Our attitude to the first coming of Christ is in many ways determined by our attitude to his second coming. Is our liberation at hand at Christmas, or are we indifferent? The second coming of Christ will be in power – we will recognize him then, like it or not (cf. Lk 21,27). By looking to the future, accepting what Our Lord has told us in prophecy, let us stay awake and pray for the grace to stand with confidence before the Son of Man (Lk 21, 36), whether that coming be at Christmas or the end of time.

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT: C
10.12.06 Lk 3, 1-6

- John the Baptist is the figure most fitting for Advent. There is something ironic about the way Luke announces his public ministry in juxtaposition to the greatest of the Roman Empire. It is as if Luke himself were heralding the coming of Caesar, rather than the coming in poverty of the greatest

of the prophets. There is irony here, but no sarcasm, for heaven itself can scarcely do justice to the greatness for which John is preparing us. John bridges the gap between the Old and New Testaments. He both prophesies the Messiah and points him out as well.

- Advent is all about preparing a way for the Lord. Our hearts and lives are very like the mountains and valleys which make the path to God obscure and difficult for us. We are so attached to selfish ways, with fear and pride too often shoring up our own wilfulness. John the Baptist cuts across all the excuses, and the Spirit of God speaking through him seeks to lay low the mountains of our sins and straighten the crooked paths that have led us astray. We need to listen and act. Time is short: now is the hour to repent.
- Confession is the sacrament proper to Advent because it heals and allows the Lord a straight path into our hearts. Forgiveness is the supreme gift that God has given us in Jesus Christ, and, in the power of that experience of reconciliation, we too can reach out to others. This is truly a season of joy because of this healing, but we need sensitivity because healing means recognizing wounds and weakness, and that is always a painful process. Our joy is not a fixed grin in times of adversity, but peace and self-possession in the Holy Spirit.

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: C
17.12.06 Lk 3, 10-18

- “If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none” (Lk 3,11). Luke’s gospel is truly remarkable. In so much as it follows the same pattern and direction as Mark and Matthew, but then boasts additions and refinements that appear only in Luke. This conversation between the Baptist and those who follow him is one such purely Lucan detail. Concern for the poor is an ever present theme throughout this gospel,

and the Baptist's exhortation to avoid greed, extortion and intimidation forms part of an important Christian tradition from the earliest times.

- There could be no more appropriate Advent message for early third millennium materialistic societies. Power and possessions are given us to serve, not as ends in themselves. Avarice can creep up on us, especially if we are never quite satisfied with what we have. Our hearts are always yearning for the next car or the golden promotion, and gradually our gaze turns from God and sees no further than our latest material craving. Only when we rage at not having what we desire does avarice break the surface. In such circumstances, not getting our way is a great grace.
- Humility floors pride and fires up faith. The more we receive this grace, the closer to God we become. John the Baptist was purified of the cravings and lusts of this world through his ascetic solitude in the wilderness. Having overcome Satan's wiles himself through God's grace, John's vision for divine things became crystal clear as he left his desert wilderness to herald the Messiah. There is no compromise in his cry to convert, and its power lies in John's own turning back to God. He practised what he preached and never pretended to be what he was not.

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT: C
24.12.06 Lk 1, 39-44

- The Infancy Narrative in Luke's gospel (Lk 1-2) is like a drama in five acts, where two annunciations (John's and Jesus') and two births (John's and Jesus') surround the central piece of the action, the Visitation, which is pivotal because it is the only scene where the four principal protagonists, Elizabeth and John, Jesus and Mary, meet and interact. Jesus' arrival causes John to leap in the womb (Lk 1,44), and both Elizabeth and Mary prophesy in turn (Lk 1,42-43; 46-55). The

Magnificat (Lk 1,46-55) sets the tone for the whole gospel and public ministry of Jesus.

- The focus of the drama is clearly the origins of the Messiah, but only through the eyes of Mary and Elizabeth and in parallel to the wonder at the birth of John the Baptist. The birth of the Christ has a vital human context, all of which is handled with great sensitivity by the gentile evangelist, Luke. The voice of prophecy, so long silent in Israel, suddenly sounds loud and clear, as it is fulfilled in the coming of Israel's hope, Jesus. Zechariah is caught unawares by this resurgence and is struck dumb (Lk 1,20). Mary is troubled but accepting, and bursts into song (Lk 1,38; 46-55).
- The Visitation is characterized by joy and humility. Elizabeth is poor but "worthy in the sight of God" (Lk 1,6), whilst Mary is the "lowly handmaid" of the Lord (Lk 1,48). God prepares a fitting human environment for his Son, and still seeks to do so in hearts and minds this Christmas. Will he succeed? Will we co-operate with the grace of God like Mary and Elizabeth, offering our whole lives in service to the Lord? Or will we wait till the Virgin made pregnant passes by, looking for a fitting place to bring forth her Son?

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY: C
13.12.06 Lk 2, 41-52

- This is one of the most extraordinary events in the whole of the gospels. Only Luke has it because, as Church tradition holds, he alone had access to the Mother of God in constructing the Infancy Narrative as the preamble to his gospel. The detail included, particularly in the dialogue, is amazing (cf. Lk 1,48ff). Only an eyewitness could have rendered such an account, particularly as this is the only reference to the hidden years of Jesus' growing up and early life before he starts his public ministry at 30. Every mother can empathize with Mary's plight.

- Luke emphasizes the wisdom and intelligence of Jesus (Lk 2,47). This is not mere boasting, but rather a proper analysis of the maturing spirit of the Christ. Perhaps we detect a physician's interest here, but Luke is writing as an evangelist primarily. His account highlights the key role of Joseph and Mary in forging the human character of Jesus. Their son's answers take them completely by surprise (Lk 2,49-50), but his growth in wisdom reflects beautifully on the family environment at Nazareth, as the human nature of Our Lord matures and develops under the watchful eyes of adoring parents.
- When things go wrong, we go back to basics. Family life is constantly under attack, as our post-modern secular society tries to redefine human nature according to its own permissive agenda. Nuclear families based around life-long commitment in marriage of man to wife may not be fashionable, but the needs of children for stable loving in a family environment do not change. There is not one child in the schools that priests visit who does not wish for his father to be married to his mother. Let us pray through Joseph and Mary that such a cry be heard.



book 
r e v i e w s

THE SOUL OF THE EMBRYO.
 AN ENQUIRY INTO THE STATUS
 OF THE HUMAN EMBRYO IN THE
 CHRISTIAN TRADITION
 by David Albert Jones, Continuum,
 266pp, £16.99

BOOK REVIEWS

The aspect of Magisterial teaching which has attracted most vilification by contemporary culture is probably the upholding of the Christian tradition of respect for life before birth. Specifically, it is widely alleged that the Church permitted abortion up until the 1860s and that the idea of personhood from conception is a modern, reactionary imposition. Such is the communal (and seemingly somewhat wilful) ignorance of Church history. One has sat through talks where the writings of Aquinas were rubbished by embryologists who didn't even know what century he lived in. Such remarks usually pass unchallenged and it is now more important than ever for Catholics to be well-informed in this field. The Soul of the Embryo will be a significant help.

This may make it sound like an apologetic work, which—at least in style—it is not. It will possibly be classified as such in Catholic bookshops but it reads more like a book on Church history. The first four chapters emphasise the deep philosophical divide between the ancient classical world - in which infanticide and child abandonment were widely accepted - and the people of Israel who had been commanded to “fill the earth and subdue it”. The next chapter examines the serious attention paid by the early Church to the precise interpretation of Talmudic passages concerning procured miscarriage and the penalties it incurred. Although the

careful inclusion of the original Greek and Hebrew might feel a little heavy going to the non-theologically or classically trained, no prior knowledge is assumed and the book manages to be both accessible without being patronising and scholarly without seeming pretentious. Since the descriptions of many historical events and characters are for reasons of space rather whistle-stop in nature, the major points are reworked in a convenient set of bullet points at the end of each chapter.

The sixth chapter breaks off from the historical narrative to discuss the changing attitude of philosophers towards the human soul. Thomas Aquinas's defence of the soul as “the principle of life” and “substantial” is well presented as an important part of the most prominent and enduring of western philosophical traditions concerning the nature of the soul. But whilst here and in the rest of the book Jones canonizes the former concept he seems a little less certain about the rational foundation of the soul's non-material substantiality. In his concluding chapter it is Christian revelation rather than natural reason which is presented as formally clinching their truth—for Christians. Such a state of affairs would imply, we would think, that the foundations of the pro-life movement s not as firmly grounded in natural reason, and so accessible to all, as they might be, and as Christian tradition has claimed they are. Let us explain.

The conclusion of chapter six suggests that, given the twentieth century's convincing criticism of Descartes' previously influential concept of “a ghost inside a machine”, “it is now much more defensible to use the classical definition of the soul as the ‘principle of life’. This is the meaning given to the term ‘soul’ in the present work.”(p.91) The traditional Christian concept of the soul, Jones points out, “reaffirms the communality of human beings with other animals, without denying the simultaneous presence

of discontinuity.”(p.90). This latter discontinuity seems implicitly to refer to the classical and magisterial idea of the soul's substantiality. In the whole of the rest of the book there is no philosophical defence of this distinction from animals, nor of the spirituality and substantiality of the human soul. Yet these concepts are crucial to the purely rational foundation of belief in the unique and absolute dignity of human life. It is not clear whether Jones feels that such a “proof” from natural reason alone is possible.

In the last two chapters reason and revelation are used well to support the fact that the embryo is an individual member of the human species. Contradictions involved in the modern political denial of this are clearly highlighted. But the only anti-embryo philosophy that is considered is that which accepts the absolute, personal value of self-conscious adult humans but denies it of the embryo. This position, the “most influential” of the genre, is shown to be “incompatible with any ethos founded on protection of the weak, including amongst others, the Christian ethical tradition” (p.242). However the increasingly explicit and influential philosophical tradition which denies unconditional dignity to any human and makes our ethical status the same as animals is hardly considered.

Jones has, perhaps unwittingly, well highlighted one of those crucial fault lines in Catholic thought that Faith magazine and movement attempts to discuss: Can natural reason convince a modern man that we are qualitatively different from animals? Does the traditional Catholic approach, for all its strengths well highlighted in Jones' book, suffice for the task? We are not sure this crucial debate has yet happened in our modern anti-life culture.

Chapter seven is a fascinating discussion of the development of Catholic thought on the origin of the soul. Concerning the “direct creation

of the soul"—'creationism' - Jones asserts that despite the fact that virtually all "the major scholastic theologians... held creationism to be absolutely certain.... there was never a time when the Catholic Church formally defined its teaching on the origin of the soul." (p.105) Jones uses a 1913 Catholic Encyclopedia to back this up but makes no reference to the later authoritative affirmations of Pope Pius XII, Pope Paul VI, and of the Catechism paragraph 366.

Further chapters deal methodically with a wide range of topics including ensoulment, redemption and the embryonic Christ, medieval church law, the contribution of the Protestant Reformers, and milestones in the history of embryology. The final chapter contains a superb analysis of contemporary biomedical issues such as IVF, cloning and embryo experimentation, including the very best discussion of the implications of monozygotic twinning that I have come across; the book is almost worth reading for the final chapter alone.

Those in search of something approaching the topic from the point of view of practical ethics may be slightly disappointed. There are one or two generalisations and omissions concerning recent legislative developments. For example, Jones reiterates the misinformation of the pro-cloning lobby (accidentally in his case) by stating that the destruction of embryos to produce stem cells was recently banned by President Bush. Not so: unlike the UK which operates a licence system for such experiments, American academics and corporations are free to destroy embryos to derive stem cells but are not eligible for public funding to do so. Although a vast number of column inches in the worldwide media continue to propagate this misunderstanding, this is obviously a very minor transgression in the context of the book.

Any Christian (or non-Christian) who reads this book will finally get

the opportunity to see the majority of the Magisterial teaching placed in its historical and philosophical context. May it be read and discussed, widely.

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THEOLOGY AND MODERN PHYSICS

*by Peter E. Hodgson, Ashgate,
282pp, £16.99*

The question of the interplay between science and theology is of perennial importance. In our time, it is a popular misconception that religion is opposed to science or that science somehow disproves religion. This book helps to show that this is not the case.

The book begins with an overview of the history of physics up to the beginning of the 20th century. Hodgson seeks to outline why a detailed understanding of the structure of the world began to emerge in 17th century Europe. He also explores why this did not happen in the Muslim world or elsewhere. There follows a detailed discussion of two of the greatest ever revolutions in physics—Einstein's theory of relativity and quantum mechanics. Quantum mechanics, for all its success, is still an incomplete theory which leaves many open questions in physics and philosophy. Different ways of resolving these problems are examined. The author goes on to explore cosmology, chaos theory, symmetry in physical theories and particle physics, always making connections with theology. Finally, Hodgson briefly discusses the fate of science in non-Christian (or post-Christian) societies before providing an epilogue summarising his thoughts.

Hodgson argues that the Christian belief that God created the universe to be good, ordered, and accessible to the human intellect is crucial for the development of science. If this view is not held, then there is little motivation

to seek detailed understanding of nature. Modern science then is rooted in a deeply held Christian worldview based on revelation (especially the Old Testament concerning creation) and influenced by ancient Greek philosophy. He traces the real birth of modern science to the high Middle Ages, when civilisation was permeated by Christian belief. Conditions were right for philosophers at the first universities to synthesise these ideas and lay the foundations for the developments later made during the Renaissance.

The book is also notable for its criticism of the "Copenhagen interpretation" of quantum mechanics, accepted by many physicists. This holds that the world is fundamentally 'fuzzy' or undefined on the smallest scales and that nothing can be definitely said to exist until it is observed in some (unspecified) way. It is also non-deterministic (asserting that you can only predict the outcome of a quantum mechanical experiment up to a certain probability) and requires non-local interactions which act faster than light. Such a view is fraught with difficulties, but has allowed physicists to make predictions which agree closely with experiment. A convincing alternative to the Copenhagen interpretation which both matches experiment and is philosophically satisfying has not yet been found. However, Hodgson rejects Copenhagen-ism and suggests interesting alternative directions for interpreting Quantum theory. He urges intelligently that it is necessary to reclaim reality and determinism (a view also held by Einstein). Some philosophers have speculated that the fuzziness of Copenhagen-ism can explain our experience of free will, a view Hodgson rejects.

The author also observes that caution is required when trying to let science influence theology. This is partly because science can be a quickly changing field. What seems established fact can be disproved by a new experiment and what seems

inexplicable might be a trivial result of some new theory. Any theological implications we try to draw from science run the risk of quickly being discredited. Another reason for caution is that scientific theories often use everyday words in a technical way. Unless theologians thoroughly understand the science, they run the risk of abusing terminology and distorting it to match their prejudices. Theology must take account of the way our world view develops through science, but must genuinely engage with it and not be reactionary.

This work provides an excellent overview of physics and the history of physics in relation to theology. Peter Hodgson is an Oxford researcher and teacher in physics and is perfectly positioned to comment on the science. As a member of *Pax Romana* (the *International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs*), he has a certain theological competence. He makes a point of including some detailed technical and mathematical descriptions of the physics discussed because, as he states, it can only be properly understood in those terms. For the technical reader this poses no problem, but for a non-physicist these passages will probably be challenging. With effort, most people should be able to get to grips with the maths, but these sections could be skipped without losing the gist of the argument. Occasionally, the work would have benefited from closer proof reading and more time spent explaining concepts for the benefit of the non-scientist. However, the extensive and detailed bibliography means anyone who is interested always has somewhere to turn. Overall, this is an enthusiastic and fascinating work and the views and insights that the author puts forward are intelligent and well-argued.

Chris Hack
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THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND
by Raymond Edwards
UNDERSTANDING THE NEW AGE
MOVEMENT

by Stratford Caldecott
Catholic Truth Society (CTS)
60 pp, £1.95

Remember when the CTS bookstand at the back of the church carried a few thin booklets with curled-up edges? Not any more. A full makeover a few years ago ensured a whole new approach. It now provides materials for schools, DVDs and videos, an interactive website, and more. The latest range of booklets—comfortable size, attractive illustrated covers, good quality print and production—tackles precisely those areas of religious and cultural life on which Catholics need accurate information in a bite-sized form that they can easily assimilate.

Raymond Edwards, whose occasional features in the Catholic press are always a good read, has done an excellent job covering the English Reformation. The tone is balanced, the style measured, and the whole thing is immensely readable. He makes good use of the new material and insights now available, eg. Eamon Duffy's *Stripping of the Altars* and J.J. Scarisbrick's research. I found Edwards' look at the Gunpowder Plot particularly useful—he asks the right questions and enables the reader to explore the whole thing from different angles, not excluding those of Government propaganda and twisted history. His analysis of the situation at the start of the reign of James I makes useful reading, as does his earlier detailed exploration of the political, financial and social scene in the latter part of Henry VIII's reign. This would be a useful booklet for those who find history 'difficult' and also for young Catholics whose education often leaves them confused in this particular area.

Stratford Caldecott's booklet on the New Age is timely and necessary. Perhaps too many of us have

dismissed this whole phenomenon as silly nonsense: crystals and spells and meditation and bogus bits of folklore. But we need to understand the context, and the reality; people are hungry for the spiritual, the 'other' in life, which is excluded by the consumerist pressures of today. They are confused by what they have been taught of Christianity and have adopted the notion that the Church has been responsible for many of the wars and most of the injustice in European history. The idea that there has been a secret wisdom, passed on down through the centuries, revealed here and there by spiritual masters, occasionally breaking through even in the Church, is very appealing. Its trappings such as candles, scents, interpretation of dreams, use of rituals and music, can make it all seem important and valuable.

It is helpful to have the history and background to the collection of ideas that have come to be known as New Age mysticism, and to be encouraged to see the movement for what it is. But Caldecott also offers thoughtful—and challenging—comments on how best to counter it. He suggests, surely with uncomfortable accuracy, that we have seen the end of "cultural Catholicism", of faith simply passed on, largely unchallenged, through families in the context of a settled community life. We must now be far more evangelistic, expecting converts from new sources, recognising the central importance of a beautiful liturgy, listening to people's need for the things of God and giving them real food for their spiritual hunger. These booklets have an attractive feel, and are moderately priced. They would be excellent for use in a discussion group. Their content is high-quality, written in good English and with a complete absence of clichés. This is Catholic publishing at its best, and is what the CTS was designed to do.

Joanna Bogle
New Malden

notes from across the

Atlantic

by Richard John Neuhaus

ON THE BACK OF CIVIL RIGHTS

The last great liberal cause that now meets with almost universal approbation was the civil-rights movement under the leadership of Martin Luther King Jr. That began in 1956, now half a century ago. Since then numerous causes have claimed the mantle of civil rights. Jesse Jackson extorts corporate pay-offs in the name of Dr. King. Sundry feminists and gay activists claim to be the continuation of the movement, as do, with greater justice, pro-lifers. Now African-American Muslims, many of whom were converted to Islam in the American prison system, are joining with Muslims from South Asia and the Middle East to lay claim to the legacy of Selma, Bull Connor, and the great drama that was the civil-rights movement. According to Religion Watch, African-American Muslims who once felt marginalized by other Muslims are now more prominent in the mosques because it is thought that they have experience with the discrimination now felt by Muslims in this country. The civil-rights movement of the 1950s and early 1960s was a singular moment in American history that successfully addressed the singular American wrong of the legal segregation of American blacks. In subsequent years, it became the catchall symbol seized on by everybody who wanted the benefits of being recognized as a victim. One can imagine few more wrong headed, implausible and self-defeating strategies than for the several million Muslims in America to join with alienated blacks in blaming their problems on the consequences of slavery and segregation. Presumably, Muslims did not come to this country in order to be permanently marginalised.

ON IMMIGRATION

In an interview with Zenit, Bishop Gerald Barnes, who heads the U.S. bishops' Committee on Refugees and Migrants, observes that Catholic social teaching affirms the principle that "sovereign nations have the right, in fact the responsibility, to control their borders". Also affirmed is the principle "that persons have a right to migrate to provide for themselves and their families". "Where these two seemingly conflicting principles get reconciled is in the development and application of immigration laws that take into consideration a nation's capacity to absorb newcomers, on the one hand, and the needs of migrants on the other. In other words, richer nations have a greater responsibility than do poorer nations in being open to immigrants." Which very helpfully explains why Mexico is not having a big debate over admitting immigrants from the United States.

SANDCASTLES & REVOLUTIONS

Just how tired is the tired old Left of Catholic revolutionism? One answer is found in Robert Blair Kaiser's new book, *A Church in Search of Itself*. According to a promotional email Kaiser recently sent, the book "is selling beyond the expectations of my editor at Knopf". Which, meaning no unkindness, perhaps says a lot about his editor's expectations. But Kaiser says the book is doing very well. "Not exactly sure why," he writes. "Maybe it's the writing." Then he adds, "Maybe it's the candid reporting. I choose to think many value the book most because it shows how the people of God can take back their Church." By taking back the Church, he means that the American Church ('AmChurch') should be autochthonous, which is to say, independent of external control. He has been speaking to friendly groups around the country, including Voice of the Faithful, and reports that the response is enthusiastic. "I can say they were all impressed with the notion that we can all

be most thoroughly accountable to one another in an autochthonous American Church, one that could be launched at some future national synod where elected delegates could create a constitution for the Church modelled on the U.S. Constitution. Craggy-faced Bill Callahan SJ, now 80, his eyes twinkling, said 'This seems like something we should try. It will be fun.' " If he has dear old Father Callahan on board, you know the revolution is well underway. "Studies show", writes Kaiser, "that the many are smarter than an elite few". On the other hand, he's counting on the elite few, noting that "some five percent" of the people of the Philippines overthrew dictator Ferdinand Marcos, and "only a half dozen English lords" forced the signing of the Magna Carta. Nobody knows, he says, "what critical mass it would take to force our own Magna Carta on the American bishops". He allows that "we have to get a huge assist from the media and the Internet". In that connection, he was disappointed with a *Washington Post* reporter whom he tried to recruit. The reporter "blanched, perhaps unwilling to think of himself as an adjutant in the cause of revolution". Kaiser, who has written from Rome for *Time* and *Newsweek*, has a different view of the journalist's task. "Objectivity? That's the curse of a newspaperman's job. Fortunately, as a correspondent for *Time*, with only mild objections from my chief of correspondents, my reporting at Vatican II gave aid and comfort to the forces of change." He concludes: "For those who are interested in the whole plan, please go to our new website www.takebackourchurch.org. If you understand what we are trying to do, please sign up for the revolution." I do understand what you're trying to do, Bob, I really do. Yes, I know it was great fun back in the 1960s, but it really is time for a rest. Just close your eyes and keep repeating to yourself, autochthonous, autochthonous... zzzzz.

Forty years of revolution do take it out of a man.

JIMMY CARTER ON AMERICAN VALUES

Former president Jimmy Carter has written another book on American values. He is deeply saddened by the way the “religious right” uses religion for partisan political purposes. In an interview with an Atlanta magazine, “Carter fittingly used a parable to illustrate how he’d like to see the political/religious debate unfold. ‘I was teaching a Sunday-school class two weeks ago,’ he recalls. ‘A girl, she was about 16 years old from Panama City, asked me about the differences between Democrats and Republicans. I asked her, Are you for peace, or do you want more war? Then I asked her, Do you favour government helping the rich, or should it seek to help the poorest members of society? Do you want to preserve the environment, or do you want to destroy it? Do you believe this nation should engage in torture, or should we condemn it? Do you think each child today should start life responsible for \$28,000 in [federal government] debt, or do you think we should be fiscally responsible? I told her that if she answered all of those questions, that she believed in peace, aiding the poor and weak, saving the environment, opposing torture ... then, I told her, ‘You should be a Democrat’”. Jimmy Carter is deeply saddened by the way religion is used for partisan political purposes.

A LOOK AT A LEGACY

Hugh Hefner of Playboy shame was eighty recently, and he is turning philosophical about his luminous legacy as a public benefactor. He is “the luckiest cat on the planet” for having so richly (and justly) benefited from having bestowed on humanity the gift of liberation from sexual repression. Michael Scully, writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, is not persuaded: “Enough to say

that police investigators, in the sex-crimes units that have expanded roughly in proportion to mass-market ‘adult material’, rarely conclude that the rapist or child predator lacked for pornographic inspiration before committing the crime. As to those ‘major beneficiaries’ of porn, you won’t find too many women these days who think that the world is better because of Playboy or the smug, selfish ethic it has always purveyed. For good reason has the Playboy Foundation long been a benefactor to NARAL Pro-Choice America and Planned Parenthood. The Playboy Philosophy has always been for the ladies, too—just as long as they remember what they’re good for, don’t get too sentimental and feel grateful when the playboy in their own life offers to pay for the abortion. One hesitates to speak harshly of an old man, who somewhere along the way must have done a few worthwhile things, but as to the public legacy of Hugh Hefner, he should have no illusions. All of us have our share of faults and sins to account for, but the lowest of vices and ‘strangest secret of hell’, as G.K. Chesterton called it, is the desire to pervert others, to coax and corrupt them and drag them down with you. And any man who at the age of 80 has that to answer for is by no stretch ‘the luckiest cat on the planet’”. There are several fine lines there, but I’ve filed this for future use: “The Playboy Philosophy is good for the ladies, too, just so long as they remember what they’re good for”.

BELLOC REVISITED

This is, I suppose, a Louisiana turn on Hilaire Belloc’s little rhyme: “Wherever the Catholic sun doth shine, / There’s laughter and dancing and good red wine. / At least I’ve always found it so. / *Benedicamus Domino!*” It happened some months ago, but the clipping has just come to my attention. Kraemer is a very small and very poor little town down in the bayou in which

people make what living they can from selling alligator skins and skulls. The local paper, the *Beauregard Daily*, carried the following obituary: “Willie ‘One Eye’ Kraemer, 91, a native and resident of Kraemer, died Saturday, Dec. 24, 2005. Visitation will be from 5 to 10 p.m. today and from 8 a.m. to funeral time Thursday at St. Lawrence Church in Kraemer. Mass will be at 11 a.m. Thursday at the church, with burial in the church cemetery.” After listing numerous survivors and those who went before, the obituary concludes with this: “He was a commercial fisherman, trapper and hunter. He hunted alligators and enjoyed drinking. He was Catholic.” *Requiescat in pace*, One Eye.



cutting/edge

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

THE DAWKINS DELUSION

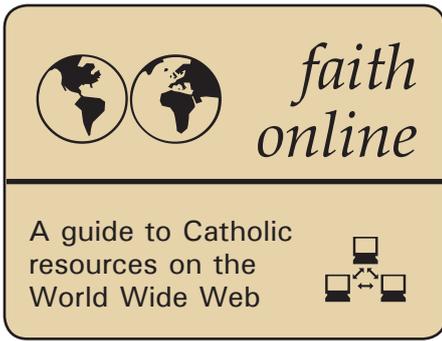
Richard Dawkins, Professor of the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University, does not, it has to be said, suffer fools gladly. Whenever he writes he is utterly ruthless about woolly thinking, and doesn't let pass a point of view that will not stand up to scrutiny. In his latest book, published in September and provocatively titled *The God Delusion*, he slates the whole rationale behind belief in God at all. He analyses various aspects—scientific, scriptural, moral—of the understanding of the divine across the major world religions. But his method, while laudably showing up inconsistency and even manifest absurdity, is itself deeply flawed. Predictably, he does not approach any aspect of the discussion about religious belief in a balanced way. This is his summary of the portrayal of God in the Hebrew scriptures: "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully" (ch. 2). Doubtless he can find isolated phrases somewhere in the Old Testament to justify each of these adjectives, but can this tirade, in any honestly objective way, summarise the Old Testament as a whole? This example illustrates the partial approach Dawkins habitually takes to this subject. He simply does not have the patience for calm, unbiased scriptural exegesis. It is his chapters on science which are more directly relevant to

this column, especially given Dawkins' expertise in evolutionary biology. First, he takes issue with Stephen Jay Gould's idea that faith and science are "non-overlapping *magisteria*," having nothing in common with each other and nothing to say to each other. Actually we would agree with Dawkins in this. God has revealed Himself as the Creator God, so faith and science study the deeds of the same God from different but complementary perspectives. Faith deals with a different *level* of truth, but not a different *kind* of truth from science. Dawkins also criticises, as we ourselves do, any notion that God is invoked merely to explain away gaps in our understanding of the universe. He takes creationists to task the over their analysis of gaps in the fossil record. He is particularly critical of the current ideas of "Intelligent Design" (ID) explaining how the ID-proponents' notion of "irreducible complexity"—biological gaps which they claim only God's direct creation can overcome—is not a valid counter-argument to Darwinian evolution. He draws on (Catholic) Kenneth Miller's *Finding Darwin's God*, to respond to the favourite ID example: the bacterial flagellar motor, showing how it could indeed have evolved from previously existent molecular structures.

Dawkins then assesses the arguments for God's existence from the design of the universe and the apparent directionality of the development of life on earth—what is called "the anthropic principle". This principle states that life and human consciousness exist in a world which is fine-tuned for the emergence of just such life. And yet, does the obvious fact that we are here with the power perceive the development that led to ourselves mean that this is how things had to be? Dawkins contrasts two possible answers to this dilemma: either God intentionally designed the universe, or there are many—hypothetical and unobservable—universes with many alternative values for the fundamental

constants of physics; so our, apparently designed, universe is just one of many randomly possible ones. Dawkins, of course, opts for this latter explanation, which is propounded by, among others, Martin Rees, who, in *Just Six Numbers*, contraposes "coincidence", "providence" and "multiverse". The only 'evidence' offered in favour of this hypothesis is that it provides a seemingly rational alternative to the argument for God from science—classic circular logic! But even if evidence were found for this completely speculative hypothesis, it would still have no validity as an argument for atheism. A "multiverse" is just a bigger and more complex unity, which must, in turn, have its own laws of development and selection. The argument from design/causality remains unaffected.

Dawkins finally justifies his atheistic position by suggesting that an intelligent Creator God would have to be more complex—and therefore more improbable—than the universe He is invoked to explain. Like so many materialists, Dawkins does not seem to grasp at all what transcendence really means. He sees 'God' as referring to just another, and bigger, entity in the contingent series of creatures. Remarkably Dawkins gives almost no space to 'theistic evolution', granting only the briefest mention to the eminent biologists and believers, Francis Collins (see *Cutting Edge* Sept/Oct 2006) and Kenneth Miller (*Cutting Edge* Nov/Dec 2005). All he says is: "I am continually astonished by those theists who... seem to rejoice in natural selection as God's way of achieving his creation... God wouldn't need to do anything at all" (ch. 4). Again Dawkins can only see this "lazy God" as some neo-desitic agent *within* the universe. He fails to grasp the *immediate and active* concourse of the transcendent Mind of God with every natural causative relationship—or "law"—in the Cosmos. That is why they all add up to a Unity of meaningful Control and purposeful Direction.



The links to all the websites mentioned in Faith Online are included in the Faith Website at www.faith.org.uk

FAITH ONLINE

CUTTING EDGE CATECHESIS

“Never defend. Never attack. Always clarify”. The webmaster, a former protestant, introduces this new site that uses every possible online accessory going. There are forums, blogs, live chatrooms, a Catholic wikipaedia, a wonderful library of online spiritual classics, MP3s of talks by Steubenville professors and a decent gallery of images for catechetics. You could spend many a happy hour discovering more about the faith here!

www.catecheticsonline.com

THE SOCIETY FOR CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

Inspired by the words of John Paul II, this site aims to promote a Catholic culture in every home, aiding families to “become what you are!”. Its main tool for this is the choicely named ‘fridge art’: games and activities designed to bring the liturgical life of the church into the home and to teach children how to live their faith. There are many useful resources here, from an excellent section on saints’ lives to reviews on films and books, and a collection of thoughtful essays on issues affecting family life.

www.sdcmuseum.org/sdc.htm

THE HOLY FACE

Believed to be the ‘Veronica’, or face-cloth of Christ, recent research shows this curious image can be perfectly superimposed on that of the Shroud of Turin. The shrine in Manoppello, Italy is maintained by the Capuchins. The site provides articles on research and a gallery of photos from Pope Benedict’s visit in the summer.

www.voltosanto.it/Inglese/index.php

WILLIAM E. MAY HOME PAGE

This site provides access to this now famous Professor of Moral Theology’s extensive work. It lists his scholarly publications, his *curriculum vitae*, many of his papers, and a collection of papers written by his students.

www.abc.mydom.co.uk

BRIDESHEAD E-VISITED

This smart site provides a guided tour round the works of Evelyn Waugh.

www.doubtinghall.com

MARY GARDENS

Founded in 1951 to research the hundreds of flowers named in medieval times as symbols of Our Lady.

www.mgardens.org

WHO’S THE PATRON FOR... ?

There are 5,200 cross-referenced patron saints listed here.

www.catholic-forum.com/saints