

faith

January and February 2012
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James Tolhurst

A Synthetic Universe

Edward Holloway

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Niall Gooch

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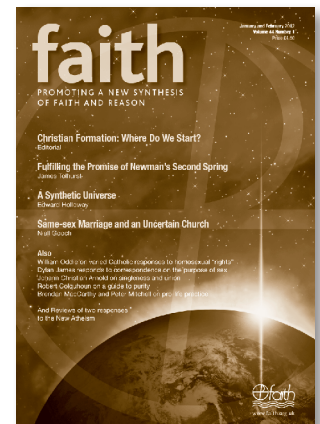
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In this issue **Fr Tolhurst** uses Newman’s 1852 phrase “The English Church was, and the English Church was not, and the English Church is once again” to reflect upon our current predicament. He evokes a hope for what Newman termed “a restoration in the moral world, such as that which yearly takes place in the physical”. In order to recognise that we need such a moral “third spring” it suffices to look at our inability effectively to resist what the November *Catholic World Report* called the “gay rights juggernaut”.

Niall Gooch and **William Oddie** articulately take such a “look” in this issue.

Close to the heart of this debate is the ongoing one in our **correspondence** column over Edward Holloway’s claim that the unitive meaning of sex is defined through the procreative. The first words of the extract we feature from **Johann Christoph Arnold’s** forthcoming book, “Sex, God and Marriage”, offer a helpful thought. He points out that “the gift of unity, whether with other people or with God, does not depend in any way on marriage”. The unitive fruit of the marriage act is not a generic unity. It is a formation of two individuals bound together in the one vocation of potential parenthood, whether or not children are actually given. The too rarely acknowledged implication of perennial and contemporary Church teaching is that sex cannot be unitive in any positive sense when actively separated from its procreative orientation. As **Fr Storey** argues in his letter: “sexual activity cannot by itself generate or increase human love.”

Our **editorial** overview of Christian formation in our multifarious Church suggests that the work for such basic coherence in Church teaching is one crucial aspect. Our publication for the first time of Holloway’s 1950 prophetic development of the implications of the discovery of the mathematical unity of the cosmos shows another such aspect. Our book **reviews** in this issue confirm the need for both of these aspects.

We point out in our editorial that “According to Catholic tradition the priority of Wisdom is found in God Himself”. This should be acknowledged as we strive to find what we call the appropriate “mutual inflow and interplay of the doctrinal, liturgical, spiritual and practical aspects of Catholic faith and life” which is the proximate goal of that “New Evangelisation” to which the Holy Spirit, through the Pope and Synod of Bishops (see **Road from Regensburg**), is “urgently” calling us.

Fr Ray Blake’s internet blog (<http://marymagdalen.blogspot.com/>) is always informative and thought provoking. The post for Friday, October 21, 2011, “Conversation on a train”, ran as follows:

An interesting conversation on a train the other day between a young university student who got on the train with some young Middle Eastern students. I don’t know if the young man was Catholic or Orthodox, he looked southern Mediterranean.

“Yes, I used to go to Church every Sunday. I don’t believe in it now”.

There followed a short discussion on different cultures and family celebrations, including Eid.

“We have Christmas, which is a bit like Eid. We also have Easter”.

“What is that about?”

“Someone betrayed him, I think it was Jesus, so we burn some wood”.

“That’s strange”

“Yeah, it is really weird isn’t it?”

A good priest would have stood up and catechised the whole carriage, I didn’t. I didn’t know how to.

Tragically, scenarios like this, which are far from untypical, sum up the state of Christian formation for many young people across much of the Western world. Leaving aside the humble self-deprecation of the final comment, the post does touch on an important issue which is much debated at the moment. Where and how do we begin to address the appalling ignorance of the faith even among our own? Should we place the main emphasis of our efforts on catechesis or on liturgy? Or indeed should we concentrate on teaching personal prayer, spirituality and devotion, or perhaps on practical Christianity through charitable works and the transformation of society with Catholic values, such as pro-life issues.

Of course these are false contradictions, but a case can be made to support the observation that in the aftermath of Vatican II the Church was driven by competing factions, each emphasizing an aspect of Christian formation at the expense of others. The predominant tendency was to emphasise action over belief, praxis over orthodoxy, ‘values’ rather than moral truths, and ‘story’ in place of doctrine. This was especially evident in our schools, but also in our parish courses for sacramental preparation. The flawed and hackneyed phrase “as long as you’re sincere, it doesn’t matter what you believe” was heard with maddening monotony in Catholic circles throughout the 1970s and 80s.

Catechesis of any kind often concentrated on the experiential to the exclusion of objective content. Catholic identity was presented almost entirely in terms of belonging to the local

Christian Formation: Where Do We Start?

Editorial

community, with little mention of supernatural relationships or a personal spiritual life. Calls for social action and justice rang out loud and clear from pulpits and pastoral letters, although pro-life issues were all too often noticeable by their absence. Meanwhile Catholic teaching and devotional activities, such as Benediction and the Rosary, were sidelined and all but died out in many places.

This is not to say that social witness is unimportant, nor that catechesis should not to have an experiential dimension. The error lay in the downplaying of doctrine and devotion. Underlying this erroneous tendency, as Faith has pointed out many times over the last forty years, is the implicit or explicit denial of the transcendence of God, the Divinity of Christ, the historical objectivity of revelation and the authority of the Church in matters of faith and morals, and also the denial of the spiritual soul as a principle of existence that is distinct from yet integrates the material within the unity of our human nature.

Perhaps in reaction to this loss of a sense of the transcendent and of the spiritual, new movements took flight. One example was the Charismatic Renewal which emphasised the vital importance of having a personal relationship with God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. For many this proved a lifeline and a vehicle of genuine conversion from worldly ways of living, and a challenge to mediocrity and token Christianity.

But there are dangers in concentrating on the emotional, the ecstatic, and on extraordinary spiritual gifts and manifestations, especially if they are held to be greater signs of grace than the true highest gifts of the Spirit which are simple faith, hope and above all charity. Spiritual ecstasies and miraculous gifts are not in themselves alien to Catholic spirituality, being well attested in the lives of the saints. However, within Catholic tradition such phenomena are subject to the correctives of careful discernment and sound doctrine also found in the great spiritual writers and Doctors of the Church, together with a much greater emphasis on purification and contemplative stillness.

“Throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s *Faith* Movement carried the flag in the UK for doctrinal catechesis and the renewal of apologetics.”

For many priests and ordinary people, contact with deep spiritual formation and with the spiritual writings of the saints had been lost well before the Council. In the schools and parishes of the Catholic heartlands rote learning of doctrines and duties – not a bad thing as such – was rarely brought to life in a vision of the personal love of God, with a clear path shown for achieving the heights of sanctity. There were many exceptions of course. We should not over-generalise, nor do we mean to join in the routine caricature of the era “before the Council” as all dust and darkness, any more than we believe that all has been all sweetness and light since 1968.

However, there was – and still is now – a need for renewal on many levels.

It is perhaps not surprising for these reasons that the charismatic phenomenon took its impetus from outside the Catholic tradition, specifically the Pentecostal movement which began among the evangelical Protestant groups in America. As well as the dangers already mentioned, this also meant, especially in the early days, that it had no clear connection to the sacramental and liturgical life, above all devotion to the Holy Eucharist, and all too often doctrinal and catechetical formation were dismissed as mere ‘academics’ or intellectualism; doctrinal formation and apologetics being seen as something purely for those of a ‘theological bent’.

At times this led to unhelpful confusions and excesses which have harmed rather than helped the Catholic identity of some people. But there is no doubting the popularity and fruits of the charismatic influence, with many of its adherents being instinctively on the side of orthodox belief and moral precepts. So, as with many styles of spirituality and popular movements, the Church in her wisdom has brought it under her wing and there has been much progress in integrating all that is good with the full tradition of Catholic faith and life.

“We have seen, many times, the fruits of patient, long term instruction and formation given with personal warmth and intellectual challenge”

That process of integration might have been easier if the liturgical and catechetical life of the Church had been clear, vibrant and stable at the time; but it was not. Liturgy, as is well known, became something of a battle ground, which, sadly, it still is today. It was during the 1970s that liturgical battle lines were drawn between so-called ‘progressives’ and ‘traditionalists’. Of course, liturgical differences were not the only issues at stake on either side of that divide; many doctrinal, moral and ecclesiastical questions became flash points for division, even, tragically, for schism in some cases.

As with so much else, the dominant tendency was anti-traditional, what has now been called the “hermeneutic of rupture”. In terms of the liturgy this meant a culture of “creativity” based on the idea that liturgy is the expression of the local community. Once again, often underlying this has been an immanentist theology that sees the presence of Christ arising from the assembly and the human quality of its celebration. None of this is intrinsic to the *Missa Normativa*, but accretions and excesses have so often become identified with it in practice that it has fuelled the false perception, on both sides of the progressive/traditional divide, that the ancient (Extraordinary) and modern (Ordinary) forms of the Roman Rite embody two opposing ecclesiologies.

Christian Formation: Where Do We Start?

continued

We live in times of reassessment, consolidation and rebuilding after these and other violent storms. Tradition is no longer a taboo word and traditional forms of prayer are once more being rediscovered and recognised as a treasure store and a priceless patrimony handed on to us by the saints of God across the ages. The liturgy is being re-established little by little, in the minds of God's people as the corporate worship not just of the local but of the whole Body of Christ, the *universal* Church, reaching across time and space and into heaven itself:

“You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven ... and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant” (Hebrews 12:22-24).

As we attempt to reconnect with our own history, which is after all a sacred history as far as the Divine Liturgy is concerned, the value of the Church's liturgical traditions are once again being emphasised not just as expressions of sacredness and beauty in the public work of God, but as the embodiment and carriers of the Church's faith.

It is true that the liturgy communicates orthodox faith and fosters true devotion through its language of sign and symbol, its times and seasons, and its repeated formulae and actions. This is precisely why the words and gestures we use and the rubrics we follow matter so much. They express and sacramentally effect a Reality and a Truth that is bigger than ourselves.

“Even regular Sunday attendance at Mass throughout childhood does not necessarily communicate a clear understanding of the mysteries of Christ”

Yet, even if we could count on the faithfulness, obedience and liturgical dignity of all priests, is liturgical activity enough on its own to win back the lost generations and re-form the minds and hearts of God's people? There can be no doubt that authentic liturgical renewal is an essential component of that wider renewal, but the story told on Fr Blake's blog – which could be multiplied by many similar examples of lapsed young adults everywhere – is a cautionary tale.

The young man on the train clearly had experience of the Easter Triduum in some form, but all he had taken with him into adulthood was an incomprehensible memory that “they burn some wood” and that “it's got something to do with Jesus”. The sad truth is that even the language of Christian sign and symbol has largely died out in people's consciousness, so deep is the sterilising effect of secularism upon our culture now. Even regular Sunday attendance at Mass throughout childhood does not necessarily communicate a clear understanding of the mysteries of Christ.

Another priest once told a story of a young boy who came regularly to serve at devotions and Benediction on a Friday night. A sure sign of burgeoning spirituality, perhaps? Then one time when the priest paused for a bit longer than usual before fetching the sacred species, the boy leant over and helpfully prompted in a stage whisper, “Father, you've got to put the stuff in the thing now!”.

What he meant was, it's time to put the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance, but it was clear he had no idea what was really going on.

It emerged that he came mainly to get some respite from a difficult home life, although he had indeed recognised something peaceful and attractive going on in the church. The evenings also gave him an opportunity to shine in a practical way. However, like Samuel, despite being frequently in the Temple he “did not yet know the Lord” (1Samuel 3:7). It became a teachable moment, of course, but again it shows that understanding does not follow automatically from habit, especially in childhood. Without sustained catechesis, youthful involvement in liturgy is no guarantee of deep faith and it can drain away all too easily on growing older in a secularised and worldly culture.

Throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s *Faith* Movement carried the flag in the UK for doctrinal catechesis and the renewal of apologetics. Doctrinal orthodoxy and loyalty to the Magisterium were not fashionable causes, and they were made less so by our calls for a real development of doctrine and a theological expression of Catholicism to revindicate orthodoxy in the age of science.

Times have been slowly changing in these matters too. There are now many voices championing orthodoxy in matters of faith, and new resources for communicating Catholic doctrine at a popular level, using all the creativity and power of the modern media. We still believe that in order to re-evangelise the modern world we do urgently need to develop the Christ-centred vision of Creation and Salvation which we promote and explore in these pages. Nonetheless, all of these new allies in orthodoxy are greatly to be welcomed. Let many flowers bloom.

Of course, there are no more guarantees of winning souls through catechetical formation any more than with liturgical or spiritual activity. Many parents and priests know, often with deep personal sadness, how a young person may readily give notional assent to the words of a respected and loved adult, only to reject what they have learned when other ideas, ambitions and desires overwhelm them.

The seed of faith can spring up without root and wither in the heat of the midday sun, or it can be choked by the cares, ambitions and temptations of the world. On the other hand, we have also seen, many times, the fruits of patient, long term instruction and formation given with personal warmth and intellectual cogency, yet without compromise on doctrinal or moral issues, and together

“Is liturgical activity enough on its own to re-form the minds and hearts of God’s people?”

with a constant encouragement to live the sacramental spiritual life.

As we observed earlier, it is false to set in mutual opposition catechetics, liturgy, spirituality and practical charity as templates for evangelical activity. A fully rounded Christian formation must naturally involve all these elements. Nonetheless there is an order to human life and communication, as indeed there is an order within the Divine Life and in Divine communication.

There is a long-standing debate in the history of theology over the relative priority of the intellect and the will in human nature. The Franciscan schools tended to be “voluntarist” in prioritising the will as the primary faculty by which we grasp God’s Self-revelation to us, whereas the Dominican school, with St. Thomas Aquinas as its greatest champion, gave priority to the intellect. Once again, there is a danger of false contradiction in this debate. It is the whole person that grasps revelation, yet it remains true that you cannot love what you do not know. Charity exercised through the will founded on grace is indeed the terminus of the life of faith, but the knowledge of God recognised and accepted as Wisdom and the Light of Life is its genesis.

So while on other issues, such as the motives for the Incarnation, our own vision is more at one with historically Franciscan streams of thought, on this issue we are clearly with the Thomists. As Fr Holloway, the co-founder of *Faith* movement, would often remark, “Truth without love is cold and heartless, but love without truth is blind and diffuse.” Without a clear vision of truth, faith becomes mere aspirations which have no substance, direction or staying power.

“For many contact with deep spiritual formation had been lost well before the Council”

For too long catechesis in the West has been dominated by the error that the act of faith is something separate and independent from the assent of the intellect to specific teachings. Faith does involve the assent of the mind to the truths of revelation, although it does not rest in the intellect alone. “Faith is caught not taught” runs the popular saying, but actually it is both. Our Lord formed the minds and hearts of the Apostles by his teaching, his example and his sanctifying presence, for Jesus is the Living Word or Mind of God who is the source of Life in its fullness by his communion with us in the flesh.

According to Catholic tradition the priority of Wisdom is found in God Himself in the very processions of the Blessed Trinity. For the Father communicates the fullness of Himself to the Son, who is the Divine Self-possession according to Wisdom; and the Holy Spirit, who is the Living Joy of the Divine Self-possession in Love, proceeds from the Father through the Son. So too all the works of the Father in

Creation are done through the Logos, the Divine Wisdom, who is Christ for us, prompted and sanctified through the Holy Spirit of Divine Charity. This is the vision that informs the whole of the New Testament, most clearly perhaps in the first chapter of the letter to the Ephesians.

To insist on the priority of the intellect over the will is not to reduce faith to a purely academic or intellectual concern. In the processions of the Blessed Trinity, we are taught that there is a “circumincession” or mutual inflowing (*perichoresis* in Greek) of the Divine Persons, as each is fully and wholly God in all Divine attributes and yet all three are distinct in their eternal relationships. So too in Christian formation and evangelisation there needs to be a mutual inflow and interplay of the doctrinal, liturgical, spiritual and practical aspects of Catholic faith and life.

The ultimate priority, in ourselves as in the Godhead, is really the priority of Being. In that sense we must all be existentialist in our outlook. Effective Christian formation requires the total impact of the Word believed and lived in personal conversion, bearing fruit in the absolute love of God and neighbour. The work of evangelisation is a work of seeking, finding, befriending, proclaiming, teaching, guiding, correcting, supporting, suffering with and for, consoling and giving in love that Christ may be all in all.

Yet such Christian existentialism cannot and must not bypass the need for assent to the truths of the Catholic faith and to grasp their meaning at the appropriate level of the believer. Without instruction in those truths, which are saving truths, and without a convincing vision of the truth of the message we proclaim, people will not be convinced and will sooner or later fall away. So catechetical and apologetic renewal remain essential priorities for the pastoral Church. However, unless that vision is rooted in the sacramental and liturgical realities it proclaims, and in a personal life of the spirit, and unless that formation is translated into action in the moral and social life of the individuals and group, there will be little or no harvest.

The ultimate priority of Being reminds us that all evangelisation is a work of grace not simply one of human effort and debate, for it is the work of God the Father through the gift of the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is also a work in which we are all actively involved and for which we all have a responsibility through our union and communion in the Church with the Word made Flesh and the Holy Spirit whom he has poured out upon us.

Fulfilling the Promise of Newman's Second Spring *by James Tolhurst*

Fr Tolhurst offers some timely encouragement from Blessed John Henry Newman for renewal in the British church. He is editing Newman's "Tracts for the Times" for the Edgbaston Millennium edition of Newman's works published by Gracewing in the the UK and Notre Dame in the USA.

On 13 July 1852, John Henry Newman preached what would become one of the most famous sermons in English Catholic history. It was given during the First Synod of the New Province of Westminster, held at Oscott College, near Birmingham. The sermon, known as *The Second Spring*, and published in *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, set out to portray England before the Reformation in a way which has now become familiar to readers of Eamon Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars*. Under the influence of Whig historians people were led to believe that England had always been essentially Protestant. Newman reminds us in his sermon that England possessed ten thousand parishes. Canterbury had numerous churches dedicated to separate saints, and the same could be said of London, York, Durham, Lincoln, Lichfield, Hereford, Worcester, Salisbury, Dorchester and Chichester. The country was dotted by monasteries and convents and was renowned for its universities and its international contacts throughout Europe.

All this was swept away by the Reformation:

"The vivifying principle of truth, the shadow of St Peter, the grace of the Redeemer, left it. That old Church in its day became a corpse ... its priests were cast out or martyred. There were sacrileges innumerable. Its temples were profaned or destroyed; its revenues seized by covetous nobles ... The presence of Catholicism was at length simply removed, its grace disowned, its power despised – its name, except as a matter of history, at length almost unknown." (Quotations are from *Newman's Second Spring*, unless otherwise indicated.)

The remnants of the old religion were poetically portrayed:

"Here a set of poor Irishmen [Newman's first congregation, in Alcester Street, Birmingham, was in large part made up of poor Irish immigrants], coming and going at harvest time, or a colony of them lodged in a miserable quarter of a vast metropolis. There, perhaps an elderly person, seen walking in the street, grave and solitary, and strange, though noble in bearing, and said to be of good family, and a 'Roman Catholic'. An old-fashioned house of gloomy appearance, closed in with high walls, with an iron gate, and yews, and the report attaching to it that 'Roman Catholics' lived there; but who they were, or what they did, or what was meant by calling them Roman Catholics, no one could tell; though it had an unpleasant sound, and told of form and superstition Such were Catholics in England, found in corners, and alleys, and cellars, and the housetops, or in the recesses of the country; cut off from the populous world around them, and dimly seen, as if through a mist or in twilight, as ghosts flitting to and fro, by the high Protestants, the lords of the earth."

The Second Spring

The point of Newman's sermon, though, was not to rake over past injuries, but to hold out hope for the future: "The English Church was, and the English Church was not, and the English Church is once again." Newman saw the second spring beginning with the restoration of the hierarchy by Pius IX in 1850. He asks: "What! Those few scattered worshippers, the Roman Catholics, to form a Church! Shall the past be rolled back? Shall the grave open? Shall the Saxons live again to God?" And he answers: "Yes; for grace can, where nature cannot. The world grows old, but the Church is ever young. She can, in any time, at her Lord's will 'inherit the Gentiles, and inhabit the desolate cities.'" (The Scripture quotation is taken from Isaiah 54:3 in the *Douai Rheims* version.)

"Our efforts to become part of the establishment have made us less visible"

This is something which we must never forget, and which Blessed John Paul II had constantly in mind. People have too often discounted the capacity of the Church to rise again. They regard the human aspect – the obvious failures and frequent sinfulness of her members – and think that it must surely spell the end. But at the very last moment, as Newman reminds us, the Church stages a resurrection and the seemingly imperishable civil institutions crumble into the dust: "Babylon was great, and Tyre, and Egypt, and Nineveh, and shall never be great again ... The past *has* returned, the dead lives."

Learning the Lessons

Newman's sermon to the assembled prelates in the hot summer of 1852 was certainly complimentary: "And so that high company moves on into the holy place [Newman was picturing the procession of dignitaries with Cardinal Wiseman the last to enter the chapel of St Mary's Oscott]; and there, with august rite and awful sacrifice, inaugurates the great act which brings it hither." But he was praising them because he saw their crucial role in the revival of Roman Catholicism. On numerous occasions recent popes have reminded bishops of the need to provide the necessary leadership in their dioceses. One remembers Blessed John Paul's profound words on the prophetic and kingly office of the bishop at the *ad limina* visit in 2004 of American bishops to the Vatican.

This does not seem to give room for a policy of consensus between "conservative" and "liberal" factions, continually mindful of political correctness. It does not argue either for the intrusive ecumenical angle in every diocesan initiative. There was certainly a general feeling in 1970, when the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales were canonised (they were

“After any period of humiliation there is a tendency to shrink into the background”

put to death between 1535 and 1679) that in order not to jeopardise ecumenical relations we should almost apologise for the celebration. The irony is that all this is ultimately self-defeating, as has been shown by our media's preparedness to pounce upon weaknesses in the Church, not least in the lead-up to the Pope's 2010 visit to Britain. The Irish Church is learning a similar lesson, among others, at the present time.

It has taken more than four decades for these lessons to be digested, but the disastrous decline in vocations, in conversions and in Mass attendance may be beginning to hit home. It would hardly be charitable to say that it has been a bitter experience, but “experience”, says Oscar Wilde, “is the name we give to our mistakes”. Nobody would pretend that the Catholicism of the Fifties was perfect. There was a certain complacency, rather too much triumphalism, and a reluctance to renew theology in such a way that it could face up to the new challenges, as St Thomas Aquinas had done in his own way with his *Summa*. But the Churches were full. Not only were they full for Mass but also for rosary, sermon and Benediction.

“Newman sets out to portray England before the Reformation in a way that will be familiar to readers of Eamon Duffy”

When, in the 1960s, I went to a Sunday afternoon service in Preston, in the north of England, where there was a church in every street, it was difficult to find a seat. *Corpus Christi* processions were major events, as were annual parish fiestas and May celebrations. Most priests had a constant stream of people asking to be received into the Church. Vocations exhibitions were held in London, and seminaries were thriving. There was always a long queue waiting for Confessions on Saturday mornings and evenings. At Christmas and Easter there was standing room only for Masses. This is not nostalgia for numbers but a statement of fact; and we need to believe that these signs of life will manifest themselves again, as the spring following the rather long winter: “a restoration in the moral world, such as that which yearly takes place in the physical”.

It is interesting to note in this context that Newman went on to say in his address: “Yes, my Fathers and Brothers, and if it be God's blessed will, not Saints alone, not Doctors only, not Preachers only, shall be ours – but Martyrs, too, shall re-consecrate the soil to God.”

A Third Spring?

Since then our efforts to become part of the establishment have made us less visible, almost incapable of being persecuted. When, in 1906, he addressed the affluent congregation of Mayfair, in the Jesuit Church in Farm Street, Fr Bernard Vaughan regretted that some people would preach reasonableness even to the Lord on the Cross. His uncompromising sermons on “The Sins of Society” attracted large audiences; they also drew criticism, and he was described by a contemporary as a modern Savonarola.

In her book *The Path to Power*, published in 1995, Margaret Thatcher wrote of her instinct for what people feel, “a quality which ... is sharpened and burnished *through adversity*.” We, too, need to recover that “salt”, or savour, which our religion gives to life so that we can recover a joyful confidence in our faith, and face up to whatever is thrown against us: Catholicism does not thrive on a diet of complacency and general beneficence. Acts records that after the apostles had been flogged on the orders of the Sanhedrin, “they left, rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer dishonour for the sake of the name. And all day long, both at the temple and in their homes, they did not stop teaching and proclaiming Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 5:41-42).

Newman concluded his sermon by saying: “To set up the Church again in England is too great an act to be done in a corner.” After any period of humiliation there is a tendency to shrink into the background, but we must always rise to the challenge that Jesus sets us. Are not Newman's words the challenge we need to give new life to our Catholicism? The lamp is not meant to be put under cover, after all, but on the lampstand (Mark 4:21). Achieving this is not purely a question of human effort or management structure (we have had plenty of those over the years). It will require strong, apostolic leadership – but also a humble reliance on divine help.

As Newman reminds us: “One thing alone I know – that according to our need, so will be our strength.” It is time for the third spring to begin and for us to be involved “in a great, a joyful work”. In all this, we need the help of her who was given to us at the foot of the Cross. “Arise, Mary,” Newman prays, “and go forth in thy strength take possession of a land which knows thee not.” Newman did not discount the task but almost relished the opposition that it would engender: “Let ten thousand influences rain down, not to confound or overwhelm, but to persuade, to win over thine enemies.” Referring, maybe, to his Oratorian brethren, he added: “Perhaps they [his opponents] may be familiarised in time with our appearance, but perhaps they may be irritated the more ... [for] in proportion to God's grace is the fury of His enemies.” He was confident throughout that his prayer would be heard: “O Mary, my hope, O Mother undefiled, fulfil to us the promise of this Spring.”

A Synthetic Universe

by Edward Holloway

To mark FAITH movement's fortieth year we publish an extract from a 1950 book written by Fr Edward Holloway, "Matter and Mind: A Christian Synthesis", of which only a dozen copies were made. He brings out the meaning of his use of the word "synthesis" (see also our July/August 2011 Editorial, "Science and Religion: Is Synthesis Possible?"). He also begins to show how his vision of the unity of the cosmos can found an understanding of scientific law which takes account of both its predictive power and its apparent provisionality. This extract is from the beginning of Chapter Four, "Absolute and Relative: The Existence of God." For other extracts see our November 2009 and July 2008 issues.

When a man tries to understand the Universe which modern knowledge has revealed to us, he can easily become fascinated and mentally confused. This is true of the non-scientific layman in particular, but even the expert often loses his way. We begin to lose our grip upon those threads of thought which enable us to interpret the cosmos as a whole. The danger of mental incoherence is the greater because we must take our stand in the present and work backwards; a process necessary for analysis, but one which often retards the opposite requirement which is the synthesis of partial truths. The process of working backwards oversimplifies the reality we study. It is easy to take a radio to pieces and to work out the function of each relative part when you can begin from the radio as a going concern. It would be quite another thing to build a radio from its raw materials if you knew what a radio did but had no idea how the mechanism was related. We are all the time retracing in the Universe what *has* happened and what does happen in a highly complex "going concern", and we can rest too complacently upon the discovery and mathematical expression of laws which are only the reduction of a general equation of relatives to its specific terms. We can fail to realise the quite different aspect the Universe bears when we try to think of it as a process and a progress upwards from primitive beginnings; some scientists consistently ignore this much more important mental process which is synthesis rather than analysis. In this way most important clues to the nature of material being are overlooked. Analysis is always more easy than synthesis: it is easy to break down and relate, difficult to build a complex relativity from more elementary relative entities.

A Synthetic Perspective on the Evolution of the Cosmos

A proper interpretation of the Universe however must consider it as an evolution upwards, and examine the conditions necessary for the eduction of the highly complex from the elemental ultimates. This way alone lies a true understanding of those philosophical issues which lie behind the natures of material entities. Man has learned how to resolve uranium into a fierce flash of radiant energy; that is analysis, exciting, full of newly realised truth. He is not yet able to harness radiant energy back within the compass of the same

fragment of uranium; that is synthesis, even more exciting, and much more difficult. Synthesis calls for more effort than analysis, and requires a far more complete understanding of every factor relative to the construction of the complex from the simple; analysis does not. Synthesis forces the mind to pose more objectively the question of finality and purpose in the coming to be of things, the relation of a result produced to "whys" and "wherefores" that define the thing produced. A man has to work purposively to invent the complex upon the basis of the antecedent simple; he requires also a unity, the concept of the nature to be produced, which controls and directs the purposive work of his hands. We must ask ourselves whether this law that defines the complex inventions of man does not underlie also the evolutionary development of a complex Universe from an elemental Universe.

The Universe in which we live and to which our being is organically relative, is a synthesis. The Universe has been "made" in the sense in which "making" denotes continuous and harmonious development from the simple to the complex. The vindication of the atomic theory is the greatest of modern scientific triumphs and the foundation of all scientific achievement that may follow in this new era of human history. We know that this hard and concrete world is not the sort of continuous solid our fathers thought. We are aware that all material beings are composite, composed of atoms, that these particles are discrete within the continuity they integrate, that in themselves even they are miniature solar systems, and that these orbits are wide open spaces in relation to the miniature elements which are bound within them: bound and determined by the fixed laws that define the still mysterious phenomena of centrifugal and centripetal force. Every year we read more of the unimaginably minute particles such as electrons, protons, positrons, mesons, and others named and described in quick succession as science advances, which form the outer particles and the inner nuclei of the atom. The scientist tells us much, though much of it is still tentative, and we read of the positive or negative electric charge carried by different particles, and the manner of their operation within the atom because of this relationship. We read and we marvel, and often as unspecialised and amateur students of science we get hopelessly lost. Nevertheless we

“Synthesis calls for more effort than analysis”

understand well enough that the explosion which can overwhelm a city in an instant is retracing in that unit of time the synthetic processes built up over long ages of evolution. We cannot doubt today that across the leagues of time the whole cosmos was akin to a vast nebula, a universe of such elemental forces, as yet unsynthesised, but already the fecundated seed out of which has developed the universe we know today. It is not this insight, breathtaking though it is, which constitutes the significance of the atomic theory for us here, but the need there is to link that Universe of Physics with the Universe of Biology and of many other sub-divisions of Science.

Purposive Inter-Relation of Scientific Laws

There is no need to elaborate upon the existence of laws in the Universe, because every science of matter rests upon them. Perhaps nothing is more impressive, when read at length in the context of some definite medical case, than the intimate relation discovered between the psychological and the physical in man himself, and the detailed tracing of the organisation and operations of every organ of the body to the brain as their centre and control tower for stimuli both incoming and outgoing. The main effort of science today consists in the striving to relate a multiplicity of local “laws” to one governing key principle which explains a multiplicity of phenomena. In every science more exact relations of cause and effect are today known, codified, and compared with the phenomena of other related sciences. The only things that admit of expression in coded formulae, and equations are those inferences of cause and effect we know as laws.

We are forced today to interpret the whole Universe in terms of one process of evolutionary development. The evolution of the living thing is only an aspect of a process traceable over the whole order of material being. In the face of the tremendous elaboration of compound and complex being that can be traced from the primordial beginnings of the Cosmos, is there any one principle, any one certainty on which we can lay hold in our efforts to interpret rightly ourselves and our Universe, and to formulate a true philosophy of existence? There is a principle, one too often ignored in its philosophical value, which underlies the research of all the sciences, and the interpretation, especially the mathematical interpretation, of all knowledge gathered by the “exact sciences”. This principle is the postulation, fundamental to all exact material knowledge, of the definition of a substance in terms of the causal relationships of law. There can be no “exact science” without law, order of cause and effect, action and reaction. The scientist seeks to discover these causal relations, and to determine with utter exactitude what it is in the entity of a cause which produces an effect, and what in the effect is partially or entirely determined by a given cause.

Law of Final Determination – Purposiveness

Physics is sufficiently advanced today to define many substances very perfectly, in their very essence, in terms of those causes which constitute them, and in this we see that the active relationship by which, let us say, oxygen and hydrogen are defined as causes of water in a given relativity, is an active potency in those causes of dynamic finality with respect to the composite substance which is water. They are naturally and intrinsically defined as causes of water in a given relationship, and that constitutes a purposiveness, something which is identified with their very natures, and is contained in their definition as substances.

It is interesting to notice that this dynamic finality, the definition of a complex thing in terms of the active natures of its components, is something which while taken for granted in physics, causes a panic stampede among a large class of biologists. They are very concerned not to allow this notion of purposiveness, finality, determinism to a pre-set end, to enter the field of the living, they are far more concerned with denying the possibility than with studying the evidence for the possibility, which is prejudice not reason. Anything which even reminds them of an “*élan vital*” drives them to a fury of dissent. We are no Vitalist or Animist, we do not say the postulate of an “*élan vital*” drives them to dissent, but anything that reminds them of a principle of purpose in any way. Yet the very valencies of the ultimate elements themselves, by which men can make and transmute substances has *some* similarity to an *élan vital*. Atoms themselves have affinities and repulsions, even as some biologists have an affinity for a theory of most pure and orthodox Natural Selection, and a repulsion to anything that smells of Lamarck. If biologists of this temperament were only given rein to their dislike for Animist and Vitalist theories of the living being, there would be some excuse for this panic, because Animism and Vitalism do finally destroy the rational basis of the sciences, but taken by itself their attitude makes as much nonsense of the Universe as any form of Animism does. Natural Selection of random mutations is not a Fairy Godmother who can be waved in at every moment; the “environment” which “selects” is the total impact of other being upon *one* being, and the selection is the better “survival value” of the new mutant.

“Does this law that defines the complex inventions of man underlie also the complex Universe”

The application of such a test to the elements of physics would be laughable. Many elements have a very primitive “survival level” and the new compounds and syntheses which could have formed only in a cool and stable condition of our planet and its atmosphere are much inferior in stability, i.e. in “survival value”, to the elements out of which they are composed. We should then expect either a condition of

A Synthetic Universe continued

“no change” beyond simple elements, surviving very nicely as principles of intense energy, or else a riot of physical “mutations” having neither “survival value” nor any principle of control by “survival value”, a Universe in which so stable and unelastic a thing as complex life could not survive. There is no place for “Natural Selection” in the evolution of the azoic elements themselves from their own primordial origins: you cannot, as we will see in more detail again, explain the Environment by the Environment any more than we can all live by taking in each other’s washing. The process of synthesis by which azoic elements have reached their present multiplicity and complexity is an evolution, the same process entirely as the biologist traces in the order of living things, and the synthetic chemical compound embodies in itself a complex relativity capable of being expressed in most exact laws, which reflect the evolutionary emergence of its substance as much as do the organs of an animal explained in terms of evolutionary development. The science of genetics which is beginning to dominate the study of living forms depends upon very exact laws capable of mathematical expression, and usually so expressed in advanced technical works. These laws express the determination to a certain condition of the living entity, a condition contained within the relations of its genetic facts. This is once more an intrinsic finality, a purposiveness or relation to a pre-determined end. The laws of genetics today are so complex that the Mendelian formulae from which the science began has been reduced to its alphabet.

“This continuum is truly a progression, and one worked upwards: a synthesis. ... we can trace it backwards as a “history” because neither the “environment” nor the natures under our consideration are found to be arbitrary and chaotic”

There is no doubt either of the purposive nature of the urges and impulses of anything that lives. Every organ has a definite function, is framed to that function and performs no other function. Every instinct and impulse of life, the urges of self-conservation, and reproduction, are purposive; they are directed to an end, and the living thing seeks the function to which it is relative. There is law of birth, growth, and decline, the whole order of nature from the ultimate particles to the body of man is a relativity built upon finality and purposiveness.

The reader must bear in mind that this finalism and purposiveness in being, and of being, does not imply any conscious striving or conscious knowledge at all: nor any principle of being existent within the material order distinct from matter. We have already stated that we are not preaching a theory of Vitalism or Animism, this purposiveness means that in the first place every substance is defined by

laws and causal relationships that explain and define its substance, and secondly this finalism implies a Relative Universe in which the purposiveness and relativity that goes through all being, non-living and living, means the ultimate postulation of an Absolute Intellect, the control, direction, and planning centre of a Universe of evolving relative entities. This last, the existence of God, we now foreshadow, the proof consists in the more detailed analysis of data already given, and perhaps already sufficiently indicated for the keen mind.

Towards the Existence of God

These relative entities have evolved in a cosmic totality which is our serial Universe; they represent a process of coming to be in which the composite is built up on the simple; and the process is a continuum; it progresses on and on, from the particles of matter to the most complex synthesis of elements, from these to life, from life to the anthropoids. This continuum is truly a progression, and one worked upwards: a synthesis. It is a progression which we can analyse, which is traceable backwards also, and we can trace it backwards as a “history” because neither the “environment” nor the natures under our consideration are found to be arbitrary and chaotic, even though they are part of a transformist order of being.

“We are in the presence not so much of laws as an equation of entity-values”

If there is an intrinsic finality which defines the substance of a living entity, and the purpose within itself of its component parts, if there is also an external relation of such cause and effect between the entity and the environment which inhibits and stimulates and if there are instincts that rule the life cycle of the living, then clearly we cannot dismiss the possibility that there may be a finality so substantial to an evolving entity and its environmental relationships, that the future specific evolution of the living is pre-determinedly contained in the relativity of its present. This means that the future can be regarded, on such an hypothesis, as a value implicit and potential in a cosmic equation, a value yet to be educated, a value the education of which involves a universal rearrangement of the more generalised value, just as the education of a new value in an equation is a value relationship in a total relativity of values. This concept would not allow of any sort of “random mutation” or random chance of any sort in a mechanistic and determinist order of matter. The future of evolving material beings, both non-living elements and compounds, and living forms, would be completely defined, determined and inevitable: as blind and as pre-fashioned as the multitudinous parts and functions that define a complex electronic machine. These relative entities do not possess within themselves their own explanation. They do not have, anywhere in the Universe of matter, any possible absolute as their overall control and direction to an evolutionary end.

“the new electronic calculators and reactors, are not explicable except in terms of an absolute”

So they must ultimately imply an absolute outside their order, even as the most delicate and wonderful relativities made by man, the new electronic calculators and reactors, are not explicable except in terms of an absolute not contained in the inter-relativity of their integral parts.

It may be, if finalism should be at the very heart of this relative Universe that the future, in the determinist order of matter, is as much contained in the definition of the present as the future adult is contained in the fertilised ovum of the parent animal. In a Universe so shot through with laws that are expressions of the intrinsic causal relativity of being, we cannot ignore this possibility even as a purely a priori hypothesis. Careful reflection will demonstrate that it is more than an hypothesis, it is something that must be so.

Orientation of the Whole Order of Being to a Purposive End

Whatever the superiority of the living over the non-living in the order of existence, which is too strictly philosophical a matter to detain us here, there is no doubt that both orders are conditioned by intrinsic finality and that both orders are synthesised in one totality. The animal body, containing everything from the ultimate elements to the highest perfection of material entity as a unity in itself, sums up in itself all that the material Universe is. It points to the unity and oneness behind the cosmic law of the relative evolution of matter. Every one of the so-called “natural” elements and their recently understood isotopes can be expressed by a formula that is the law of their synthesis. The atoms, the elements of the elements, are likewise distinguished, and then below the atom, to particles that mark the present limits of human knowledge. The practical ability of man to change and even to transmute elements by the separation or addition of a given particle or number of particles demonstrates forcibly enough how law governs the constitution of matter, and how the law of the synthesis of at least non-living matter, contains implicitly also the finalism by which the substance is defined as “this element” with “these fixed properties”.

“the future can be regarded as a value
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involves a universal rearrangement
of the more generalised value”

The laws of astronomy and cosmology too, even those now relegated after correction to the rank of aspects of a more general law of relativity such as Einstein’s formulation, all point to the same fact; progress in science is achieved by the presumption of definite, fixed, and determinate relations of cause and effect between material entities. It is presumed that things have a definite specific cycle of function, or purposiveness. It is presumed that there is finalism in being

and the operations of being. On this supposition alone has science made progress, and in science the results achieved are the supreme test of the accuracy of a theory.

The rule of fixed law, reliable because its subject matter is mechanistically determined, and specific in its reaction, not possessed of free-will nor subject to unpredictable changes of reaction or property, is the foundation of the exact sciences, and by derivation the foundation also of our modern civilised life. We presume such a relation of cause and effect every time we switch on the radio; sometimes even more emphatically when we switch it off. We continue to believe that finalism and purposive relativity exists, but that the conditions of its relation to effect are not being fulfilled every time we flounce out of the car and throw up the bonnet to see what has gone wrong this time. We do not leave the body by the wayside and trudge home philosophising upon the fickle chances which are the rules of Nature’s Comic Opera.

Same-sex Marriage and an Uncertain Church

by Niall Gooch

Niall Gooch places the relentless push for the civil recognition of “homosexual marriage” in the context of the marginalisation of the Church, and our unrequited need for coherent catechesis concerning the nature of man. Mr Gooch, Research and Education Officer at the charity Life, is writing in a personal capacity.

Next spring, the government will begin a consultation on introducing what is often referred to as “full marriage equality”, that is to say legislating to allow two men and two women as well as one man and one woman to form a civil marriage contract. Given David Cameron’s professed enthusiasm for the cause, and his government’s near pathological desire for the approval of the *Guardian*-reading classes, it is inconceivable that it will not happen. The idea seems to be that Britain will have full same-sex marriage by the end of this Parliament. Hot on the heels of this bombshell comes the news that religious buildings will be allowed – though not (yet) compelled – to host civil partnership ceremonies from this December.

This is more confirmation, if any were needed, that the fight about sexuality is not going away. Not very long ago Ben Summerskill of the campaigning organisation Stonewall said “Right now faiths shouldn’t be forced to hold civil partnerships, although in 10 or 20 years that may change.” Chilling words, when you think about it. The coming battle is really several different battles: a struggle within the Church to combat ignorance, misunderstanding and dissent; a political fight to maintain the freedom of religion for Catholics; and a public policy battle to form the law of the land. And, of course, it is incumbent upon the Church to engage on all three of these fronts.

According to a survey published in September 2010 by the Office for National Statistics, the proportion of the British population who self-identify (to use the questionable modern phrase) as homosexual is around 1%. Another 0.5% say they are bisexual, while 3% refused to answer the question or said they “didn’t know”. If this survey is accurate, rather fewer than 5% of the population experience some kind of attraction to their own sex. Even this is probably an overestimate, since there is no reason to suppose that all of those in the don’t know/won’t say column are same-sex attracted. Perhaps we may now see the end of the myth that 10% of adults are homosexually attracted, a pseudo-fact with shady origins in the “scientific” “research” of that mixed-up mogul Alfred Kinsey.

The Catholic Church’s view on sexuality is likely to be a key rhetorical, legal and moral battering ram against the freedom of the Church in the UK. We are seeing a gradual ratcheting up of the pressure to exclude from public life anyone who holds “incorrect” views on sexuality. We face, in effect, a modern version of the Penal Laws, the legislation which for well over a century systematically excluded Catholics from public life by requiring them to publicly deny various parts of the Faith or to take Communion in the Anglican Church before they could hold certain jobs. This parallel may seem

extreme; but such is the direction of our current culture. In many areas of society, Catholics will face the choice of complicity in grave wrongdoing, or dismissal.

It is not much of an exaggeration to say that homosexuality has trumped abortion as the cause – or more accurately the pretext – for most anti-Catholic hostility in Britain. And this hostility is not just cultural or social. It is political. The state is increasingly hostile both to the expression of “incorrect” views on sexuality, and to people behaving in a way that accords with such views. The ruthless attitude taken towards the Catholic adoption agencies – co-operate or close, no room for compromise – was an early indication of this trend.

“The vast majority of Catholics are vaguely aware that the Church disapproves of homosexuality, but have no idea why”

As the conservative writer Peter Hitchens once put it: “Having justly accepted that what people did behind closed bedroom doors was their business, we are now being ordered to step inside the bedroom and applaud. Or else.” There is no right to conscientious objection for registrars who do not wish to register civil partnerships. Bed and breakfast owners who do not wish to let double rooms to same-sex couples have faced steep fines and official censure. There have been media reports of parents whose application to foster or adopt has been refused because of their moral views. Just a few weeks ago a Manchester man named Adrian Smith was demoted and docked almost half his salary for expressing, in a context entirely removed from his workplace, his opposition to religious buildings being used for civil partnerships.

It is already vital that Catholics at all levels of the Church are able to understand and articulate the Church’s doctrine. There are pastoral, catechetical, social and political reasons to clarify and defend the Church’s teaching. The Church must begin the work of challenging and transforming the culture, taking a bold approach to challenging the faulty anthropologies that plague the “debate” over sexuality and marriage in the UK.

GK Chesterton rightly noted that all arguments are theological arguments, that is to say, eventually all political and moral disagreements, if pursued for long enough, get down to the brass tacks of our basic assumptions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of human individuals and human society. “What is man that you are mindful of him?” as the Psalmist asks (Ps 8v4). It is very much true of the marriage debate, which shines a bright light on some of the key anthropological fault lines in our culture.

“We are seeing a gradual ratcheting up of the pressure to exclude from public life anyone who holds incorrect views on sexuality”

Is our experience of bodies mere cosmic accident, merely contingent? Is our “true self” entirely separate from any physical attributes of our bodies? Are there such things as “normal gender roles”? Am I not only the master of my own life, but the very creator and arbiter of what counts as “I”? Why should I accept restrictions on my autonomy? The answers offered to these questions by our society’s key opinion formers are very different from the true answers. Consider the increasing willingness of doctors to mutilate their patients in the name of gender reassignment, or the law which allows the sex recorded on birth certificates to be altered, or for mother and father to be replaced by parent one and parent two.

In some ways, of course, the Church has always existed in a hostile culture. Reading Newman or Chesterton, we see that even a century or two centuries ago, parts of the intelligentsia believed that Catholic dogmas were ludicrous, hateful, indefensible, brutal etc. In Newman’s day there were men like T.H. Huxley; Chesterton faced H.G. Wells and Bertrand Russell. But what has changed in 2011 is that the negative view of traditional Christian morality and metaphysics, once confined to a subsection of the intelligentsia, is now totally dominant among opinion-formers, legislators, academia and the state bureaucracies. Almost every significant lever of cultural and social influence is in the hands of people who are opposed to Catholic moral teaching. It is increasingly clear that they do not just disagree, but disapprove. Civilised co-existence between the Catholic Church and a powerful secular state is beginning to look like a pipe-dream.

The attack on religious freedom is subtle. Catholic objections are met with replies along the lines of “It’s not true that Catholics can’t run adoption agencies, or work as registrars or GPs, receptionists or pharmacists. They can “believe” whatever they like, but they have to keep that belief private. They can’t let that belief affect the way they act, and they certainly can’t discriminate, or restrict the rights of others.” This is a difficult argument to answer; not least because, like most Big Lies or heresies, it contains within it a kernel of truth, in the sense that the right to act according to one’s conscience is not absolute. An extremely poorly formed conscience might, after all, tell someone that he ought to kill every left-handed person he met. It also appeals very strongly to the sentimental and emotive spirit of the age, which demands that no one ever be offended or upset, and to the increasingly deep and ferocious opposition to Christianity.

The Church faces the task of making the more difficult and nuanced argument that the Catholic conscience should be respected on particular occasions, when the extent of the co-operation and the gravity of the moral issue at stake are such that forcing co-operation would be unacceptable. The problem of course is that, despite the rhetoric of pluralism, tolerance and dialogue, few secularists or gay rights activists are interested in staking out a reasonable compromise, or recognising the seriousness and rationality of Catholic objections. One suspects that this is largely because they recognise, on some level, that the sexual anthropology

of our culture collapses into incoherence as soon as a little analytical pressure is applied, and so they resist genuine intellectual engagement, short-circuiting the debate by retreating into insults, relativism and disingenuous blather about Catholics wanting a theocracy.

To some extent, and this is a point sometimes missed, arguing simply for the limited freedom for the Church to act as she desires in her own limited sphere is unsatisfactory, because it appears to abdicate the Church’s responsibility to proclaim the truth for all people in all cultures. The Church’s argument is not that is wrong for practising Catholics to have sex outside marriage, or enter same-sex marriages, but rather that it is not truly good for any human being to do those things, regardless of that individual’s feelings.

“The sexual anthropology of our culture collapses into incoherence as soon as a little analytical pressure is applied”

The idea that you cannot bring any objective ideas about metaphysics or the good of the human being to public debate is sometimes called “procedural liberalism”, or in the words of the late, great R.J. Neuhaus, the “naked public square”. It is a concession to the secularist assumption that arguments about public policy and state behaviour must appeal only to “public reason”; that they must be accessible to all, regardless of their religious or philosophical assumptions. Though atheist thinkers keen to tilt the playing field in their own favour cling to this idea, thinkers such as Neuhaus and Alistair Macintyre have demonstrated its shortcomings. They have shown procedural liberalism does not even work on its own terms. Pre-logical premises are, in the final analysis, a feature of any political argument.

Procedural liberalism is cheating. It is like a cricket match where one side is docked two hundred runs before the game even starts. It begins debates about the human person and the structure of social relationships by presupposing a particular view of the human person and of what the structure of social relationships should be.

The Church has little to lose; why not then be bolder in the fight for truth? The Church has a beautiful, intricate, genuinely liberating vision to communicate. Even those who are fully loyal to the Magisterium can be cagey and reluctant about proclaiming this vision, and how it integrates with the fullness of God’s self-revelation in Christ at the centre of creation. We needn’t be. As noted above, the sexual consensus of our society is an incoherent, inhuman and (literally) sterile dead end. There are so many points where the full beauty and coherence of the Truth can challenge it. But we must understand the argument that we are taking on.

It cannot be reiterated enough that, based on our culture’s assumptions about marriage, there is no real reason to exclude same-sex couples from this institution. Marriage is seen as the state setting its seal on a romantic/sexual/emotional partnership between two autonomous individuals.

Same-sex Marriage and an Uncertain Church continued

As one *Telegraph* columnist who is in a civil partnership wrote recently. "I love, and am loved. Simple." Would that it were as simple as that. For one thing, there are all sorts of loving relationships that are not marriage. There is the love between parents and children; the love between siblings; the love between friends. As a former editor of this magazine used to say, "You don't kiss your grandmother in the same way you kiss your girlfriend."

"It is already vital that Catholics at all levels of the Church are able to articulate the Church's doctrine"

Personal choice and autonomy have become paramount. Marriage has gradually been emptied of objective meaning, although of course there are still relics in the marriage law of an older, fuller understanding (such as the requirement that a marriage be consummated if it is to be valid). Hence the powerful challenge from revisionists: if the generation of life is no longer an important component of marriage, then why should maleness and femaleness be essential?

Just as the Anglican Lambeth Conference of 1930 undermined a key part of the conceptual framework that made potentially fruitful heterosexual intercourse the only acceptable kind of sex, so the gradual degradation in the popular understanding of marriage makes it very difficult for many people to conceptualise the Catholic argument against gay marriage. Marriage, says the modern man, is for two people who love each other and want to make a public commitment of that fact. There's no reason why two men or two women can't love each other, so why can't they get married? And if it is objected that marriage is about children, well lots of "straight" marriages do not result in progeny, for various reasons, and those marriages are not invalid, are they? And in any case same-sex couples can adopt children.

The crisis of catechesis in the Church during the last forty years or so, about which so much has been written in these pages, has made it very difficult for ordinary Catholics to articulate the true view of marriage against this error-strewn account.

There is a vicious loop at work. Priests and others are reluctant to talk about controversial areas of morality, especially the "pelvic issues", with the result that the main influence on Catholic thinking on those issues comes from the surrounding culture. The people in the pew therefore become more hostile to any attempt to reaffirm the orthodox teaching, which further inhibits priests from speaking out and so prevents good formation. The result is that the vast majority of Catholics are vaguely aware that the Church disapproves of homosexuality, but have no idea why, and so are highly susceptible to plausible-sounding counter-arguments. Worse still, the perception that the Catholic "policy" is irrational and prejudiced or has been "disproved by science" leads to the Church becoming further discredited. After all, if Lady Gaga can assert that people

with same-sex attractions are "Born This Way", who is the Catholic Church to disagree?

It is, of course, of the utmost importance that the watchwords of the Catholic approach should be charity and clarity. We must be honest and forthright about the Church's teachings, but this honesty is a manifestation of an intense love and concern for our brothers and sisters who experience same-sex attraction. After all, when the sound and fury of the debate has died away, this is about individuals who are children of God; it is about God's love for them, and His desire that they truly flourish in this life and for all eternity. We need to be honest, clear and compassionate about what God asks of those of us who experience homosexual attractions and what resources and friendship we offer to those struggling with issues of sexual identity. As the Evangelical writer Peter Ould has noted, the priority ought not to be changing one's "sexual orientation", something which has been shown to be of somewhat limited use, but changing the orientation of oneself towards prayer, holiness and godliness. In some people, this may mean they discover a vocation to marriage, but this is unlikely to be the case in general.

"Civilised co-existence between the Catholic Church and a powerful secular state is beginning to look like a pipe-dream"

The response by the Scottish bishops to the same-sex marriage proposals has been a powerful start to a renewed proclamation of the truth. Movements like Catholic Voices, originally set up to defend the Holy Father during his visit last year, are increasingly prominent in the media, unashamedly but sensitively communicating the timeless teaching of the Church. The time for ignoring sexuality, or fudging the issue and trying to talk about something else, is past. The Church will be attacked whatever she does. Accommodation of, and acquiescence to, the sexual revolution has not filled the pews – quite the opposite. Why not then proclaim the absolute fullness of truth? The whole, glorious truth that helps us find identity not in our disorderly desires, but in our Saviour Christ – the keystone. We have a faithful promise that the gates of hell will never prevail against the Church.



The Truth Will Set You Free

Catholic Doctrine in the Pastoral Context

SINGLENESSE AND UNION

The below is an extract from the upcoming revision of the book, "Sex, God and Marriage" by Bruderhoff community pastor, Johann Christoph Arnold, published by Plough.com

The disciples said to him, "If that is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry." To this Jesus replied, "That is something which not everyone can accept, but only those for whom God has appointed it."
Matthew 19:10

The gift of unity, whether with other people or with God, does not depend in any way on marriage. In fact, the New Testament teaches that those who renounce marriage for the sake of Christ are not deprived, but blessed. Jesus says that if we give up everything for him, he will be near to us at his return (Rev. 14:1–5). Whether such people find themselves without a life partner because of abandonment, death, or lack of opportunity, they can find a much greater calling than marriage if they are able to accept their singleness in the depths of their hearts. They can dedicate their lives in a special way to undivided service for God's kingdom.

In the lifelong struggle for purity, those who remain single are no different from those who marry. Just as marriage is no safeguard against lust, neither can a vow of singleness keep a person pure. For every heart, purity demands constant watchfulness, a daily fight against the flesh, and a firm attitude against sin.

The Scriptures do not promise us the removal of temptation, but we do have the assurance that it need not overcome us (1 Cor. 10:13). If we prove ourselves in patience and faithfulness, God will help us. We cannot remain pure by the strength of our own will. Yet by the power of the Holy Spirit, it is possible to find freedom and victory (Gal. 6:1–2).

Those who remain single only because they cannot find a marriage partner can become bitter. In a way, this is not unexpected: loneliness and unrequited longing can harden any heart. But even such people can find peace, as Elisabeth Elliot asserts:

"Accept your loneliness. It is one stage, and only one stage, on a journey that brings you to God. It will not always last. Offer up your loneliness to God, as the little boy offered to Jesus his five loaves and two fishes. God can transform it for the good of others. Above all, do something for somebody else!"

The solution, then, is service rendered to others. Teaching, nursing, counseling, or social work – any of these can lead to a fulfilled life. The world is full of souls dying for need of love, and those who are single are uniquely free to take up the task of being there for them.

Ultimately, we have to be willing to be used by God as he wills, and find contentment in whatever circumstances we find ourselves (Phil. 4:11–13). But we should never think that God does not love us. To doubt his care for us is to

doubt the essence of his gospel: that every heart can find peace and rest in him.

Singleness can be Accepted as a Burden – or as a Higher Calling

Single people must not stifle what is best in themselves, nor give themselves over to dreams that cannot be satisfied. They must not let self-circling fantasies block the unfolding of all that God has given them. If they are able to accept their singleness as a gift or a special calling, they will let none of their energy or love go unused. Their longing will be fulfilled in giving and showing love to Christ and to others. As Paul says:

An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs – how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world – how he can please his wife--and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world--how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord (1 Cor. 7:32–35).

Earlier in the same letter, Paul refers to another blessing of singleness: the lack of care and worry over spouse and children, especially in times of hardship. "Those who marry will have pain and grief in this bodily life, and my aim is to spare you" (1 Cor. 7:28).

Widows, like the unmarried, are also able to serve when a married person cannot. Paul says, "A woman who is really widowed and left without anybody can give herself up to God in hope and consecrate all her days and nights to petitions and meetings for prayer" (1 Tim. 5:5). In the early church in Jerusalem, widows were therefore appointed to serve the poor, or entrusted with other responsibilities.

How sad it is that today, widows are so often neglected and lonely! If we care about "family values," we will then find new ways to show single people that we love them, by caring for them and drawing them into our fellowships and activities. We need to welcome their gifts and services, and provide them with meaningful tasks.

Those of us who are married should share our happiness with others. If fulfillment and joy can be found only in service to others, then we are called to a love that gives unconditionally. We should want to reach out to those who struggle with loneliness.

...What we need is Christ as a living force in our daily lives ...



The Truth Will Set You Free continued

CHRISTIAN UNITY IN A POST-CHRISTIAN WORLD

by *Brendan MacCarthy*

Canon MacCarthy makes an appeal for a pro-life ecumenism. This piece is based on a well-received sermon given to an ecumenical gathering in his parish of All Saints, Hersham, Surrey.

Christians are related to each other through the Sacrament of Baptism. We share many Christian values, in differing ways and degrees. However, our communion with each other, if it is to be full communion, needs to go beyond the Sacrament of Baptism. Understanding what this might mean is part of the challenge of our work and prayer for Christian unity.

The Acts of the Apostles tells us that the early followers of Christ “held all things together in common”. This can mean something equivalent to a common purse. It also indicates a faith where Christ was central to people’s lives, as He is central to our lives today. But since some of our beliefs can be in contradiction with each other, the work for Christian unity can never be easy. Yet we remember St Paul’s words: “The charity of Christ urges us on.” Jesus in his own words says: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” The quest for Christian unity invites our exploration of Christ’s personally expressed identity.

Dignity of the Human Person

There is something else we hold in common. It is our humanity. Each of us has an immortal soul. It is the life principle within us. The powers of knowing and willing, including our ability to evaluate information and make choices, mark us off as rational beings. We are unique in God’s order of creation.

The society in which we live has become highly influenced by secular values. Some can be in harmony with God’s law. But not all. There are many areas in modern life where popular attitudes clash with truths that uphold the dignity of the human person. The promotion of such contrary attitudes causes tension, setting the culture of life in conflict with the culture of death, the culture of reverence and respect in conflict with the culture of selfishness and exploitation. These conflicts merit our Christian concern.

It is fair to ask: “How can we respond to these assaults on the dignity of the human person?” A look at the burning issues of today in the light of God’s word would, I believe, be a positive start.

The Anti-life Mentality

An example of such issues is the legality of a “woman’s right to choose” where unborn human life is concerned. Almost 200,000 unborn children are aborted in the United Kingdom each year – a legalised slaughter that hardly gets a mention. In this context the law recognises two rights: the right to kill and the right to keep. But choosing between killing and keeping is not something that is morally neutral,

like choosing between different brands of tinned beans in the supermarket.

In defending the right to life from conception to natural death, we are also defending the dignity of every woman. It was in the womb of Mary that Jesus grew for nine months. Her womb was the “tabernacle of the Most High”. The womb of every woman is a sacred place, and the life that grows within it is sacred too. It is men’s duty to honour and reverence women. This reverence is expressed, in a special way, through the chaste mastery of their manhood.

Marriage, too, is much happier when wives are blessed with the peace and security that such reverence brings to home and family life. Yet the Christian concept of marriage, as a life-long covenant between a woman and a man, has been undermined by the legal recognition given to same sex unions, as an alternative to what God has established in nature. “Faith schools” too are the target of those who dismiss their specific ethos, in an attempt to secularise all education.

Virtuous Living

Many people, especially the young, are influenced by the media in all its forms. And the permissive attitudes presented distort the moral conscience of viewers and listeners. Virtuous living, once a noble tradition, is often neglected. With this neglect can come – and often does come – unhappiness, and an inner turmoil that destroys peace of heart. It is control of self that speaks the language of authentic love. This love is not self-seeking. Motivated by a Christian approach, this becomes a mutual sharing of interpersonal harmony, of a deepening peace and of a responsible reaching out to others in need. Man’s duty is to reverence the sacredness of life. Modern society needs to rediscover the true worth of every person.

Virtuous Action

In considering how we might respond to our shared concerns, it is helpful to remember that our civil laws, for good or evil, are made by elected and non-elected politicians. Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese Nobel Peace Prize winner, was released from house arrest in November 2010. In the course of a long address to her many supporters she said: “It is not enough to think only of oneself or one’s own family. Please do not have the attitude that politics is not our business. You may not be concerned with politics, but politics will be concerned with you. You can’t avoid this”. Although her remarks were tailored to an audience in a country where political freedoms are severely limited, we who enjoy such freedoms in the United Kingdom need to know how best to use them for the common good of humanity.

During his visit to Britain last year Pope Benedict addressed politicians, diplomats, academics and business leaders in Westminster Hall. Among other things he highlighted the relationship between religious belief and secular rationality. He urged a “conversation”, saying that reason and faith needed each other for the common good. But he also

“Does the moral turmoil prompt us to do something?”

expressed his concern at the “increasing marginalisation of religion, particularly Christianity, that is taking place in some quarters”. He added: “There are those who would advocate that the voice of religion be silenced, or at least relegated to the purely private sphere.”

Hearing these words it is fair to ask: “Is there something here that speaks to us Christians? Does this moral turmoil prompt us to do something? If it does, what should it be?” The level of Christian unity we share should surely move our individual communities to search for principled answers. The benefits provided by the modern media permit us to make our views known to our MPs and to anyone we think has influence in framing law and in forming, and informing, public opinion. A well-known phrase comes to mind: “For evil to triumph it is sufficient that good people do nothing.”

The Christian Vision

In all ecumenical endeavours there are concerns that go beyond the strictly religious. One, as I have said, is reverence for all human life. This motivates us to re-create that deeper respect for all men and women that has been so badly damaged in modern Britain, and in the wider European context as well. Our attachment to Jesus can never be exclusive of the needs of others. The culture of life blesses our society, its people and communities. The culture of death does the opposite and must be firmly confronted with objective truth.

At the conclusion of St Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus says: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Then, in the light of this authority, he tells his disciples to “go and teach all peoples all the things I have commanded you”. This is our duty too. To quote St Paul: “We are ambassadors for Christ.”

I will finish with the gracious words of the Archbishop of Canterbury, addressed to Pope Benedict at Evening Prayer with the Pope at Westminster Abbey. “We pray that your time with us will be a further step for all of us into the mystery of the cross and resurrection, so that growing together we may become more efficient channels for God’s purpose to heal the wounds of humankind, and to restore once again, both in our societies and in our environment, the likeness of his glory as revealed in the face of Jesus Christ”.

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Letters to the Editor

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PURE HISTORICAL CRITICISM?

Dear Father Editor,

I welcome the letter from John Leonard (November 2011), querying the positive review in *The Catholic Herald* (29th July) of Maurice Casey's 2010 book *Jesus of Nazareth* published by T&T Clark.

In a 1991 book *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God* Casey, the Emeritus Professor of the New Testament at Nottingham University, presents a subtly argued case. Jesus was a Jewish prophet who aroused so much opposition that he came to a sticky end. His followers, deeply grieving, invented all kind of wonderful stories and even imagined that he came to visit them from the dead. Rejected by the orthodox Jews they turned to the gentiles who began to revere Jesus as a god, even the "Son of God". Apparently this was a three-stage development. The third stage is succinctly recorded in Mark's Gospel, and was filled out by Luke and Matthew. John's Gospel was written much later and was largely fiction. So the exact date of the crucifixion did not matter to him, and "that the resurrection occurred at all is a statement of faith rather than history" (p.173). This is all part of the "re-writing of history" on which the Christian faith is based.

This general argument has been around for centuries. Casey gives it a new, twist, which is "lucidly and cogently organised – both logical and startling" (publishers blurb). It is of course most welcome to those who reject the historicity of the Gospels.

Recently Pope Benedict, aka Professor Josef Ratzinger, published two volumes entitled *Jesus of Nazareth*.

The publication of Casey's book with an identical title might be taken as a head-on challenge. Perhaps he is aligning himself with the anti-Pope coalition described by William Oddie (*A Year of Papal Caritas*, November 2011).

Yours faithfully,
Hilary Shaw
Port Navas
Cornwall

THE SEX-ED FALL-OUT

Dear Father Editor,

I would like to thank you for your work, especially the "GCSE Lessons in Catholic Marriage: A Syllabus of Errors" piece in your November issue. I am the mother of youngish children who ask me questions. I try always to give an honest answer suitable for their age. If children want more information they ask. I also have adult stepchildren. They were told and shown far too much as young children and started sexual activity very young. They, and their children, now have to deal with some of the serious traumas that commonly follow sex divorced from public commitment.

I am not afraid to promote the sexual relationship within marriage to my children, without going overboard with information. My eldest is now in senior school and knows that we can talk openly about anything. Parents need to build good relationships with their children and not leave it to teachers or the media.

Yours faithfully,
Name and Address Supplied
Essex

PROCREATIVE AND UNITIVE

Dear Father Editor,

Recent correspondence concerning sexuality and love draws me to argue that, surprising as it may seem, sexual activity cannot by itself generate or increase human love. All real, stabilising bonding depends on the conversion of our confusing emotional forces.

Surprising, too, is that this conversion is utterly dependent on purifying the mind by its growth into the indelible Voice of Conscience (confirmed by the Lord, Matt 5.8) concerning the fact that sexual activity is to do with procreation.

This all means that celibate periods inside marriage, as well as the celibate state outside it, actually encourage bonding. Well-motivated abstinence is good for reasons other than birth regulation. This is truly amazing. That's why the Redeemer put a definite big tick beside the idea of living in celibacy (Mt 19.12). I can remember the late Malcolm Muggeridge's astonishment in his investigations as the TV cameras revealed the creases of contentment and love in the faces of dedicated Religious.

I lived in the same house as the late Father Holloway for a year as his student. I was also his neighbour as a curate when chairman of the Arundel and Brighton Catholic Marriage Advisory Council (1964-1971). We continued to discuss these things and occasionally corresponded over many years. Father Holloway would have been the first to admit he needed to amend some of his expressions but would maintain that the thrust of his point was correct. Indeed it was and is. Sexuality can only promote love through a procreational mentality. How incredible it is to us fallen ones that sexuality bonds through emotional purification and not through sexual activity. Married sexual activity transmits the amount of love already generated, no more and no less.

Yours faithfully,
Father Bryan Storey
Tintagel

Dear Father Editor,

I would like to propose that married couples who engage in sexual intercourse with recourse to infertile periods do so in no less perfection than when intending pregnancy.

I do agree that there has been a tendency toward excessive emphasis on sexual pleasure in how Blessed

“*Humanae Vitae* does not say that the unitive aspect is in any way inferior to the procreative”

John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* has in some quarters been presented; however, I fear that the article's expressed view might represent an over-correction.

I, too, rankle at how casually the term “making love” is thrown about. Today it can mean interchangeably sex between married partners or adultery. I would see it appropriately used with the former meaning intended.

The article states, “[Fr Holloway] argues that love is spiritual and is ‘made’ ‘through the spiritual soul’ ‘not through the body as [the] principle of eliciting.’” I think that the Catholic principle of “not either/or, but both/and” could be applied here. There seems to be an eschewing of the bodily involvement, thereby distorting the incarnational principle that *Faith* so (rightly) emphasises: Christ is both divine and human, *both* body and soul. I perceive a trace of what might be termed an anthropological monophysitism here.

The article states: “(T)he body is not apt to be the cause of spiritual union per se.” I would argue that in the marital act the union is not intended to be exclusively or even primarily spiritual, but bodily, as well (cf. the principle of “both/and”). It states: “To further illustrate his point Holloway notes that angels (as spiritual but non-bodily beings) ‘know love and joy, but not sex’ and similarly ‘God loves... but in God there is no sexuality.’ Angels do not know sex because sex is a phenomenon requiring corporality. We read in Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (*RSVCE*) Of course God loves without sexuality: creating man in two complementary genders accomplished the bifurcation of His image. Since His being is prior to this bifurcation He is not thereby bound to love in a manner required by existence in one of two genders. What, then, does the article's statement demonstrate?

The article states: “(S)ex is a function in an office of love, namely marriage, but in itself sex ‘is not a function of human

love.’” By its thereby diminishing the dignity of sex within marriage is the article implying that such sex is merely an unfortunate, peripheral appendage to marital love? Furthermore, this statement seems to contradict *Gaudium et spes* 49: “The actions within marriage by which the couple are united intimately and chastely are *noble and worthy* ones. *Expressed in a manner which is truly human*, these actions promote that mutual self-giving by which spouses enrich each other with a joyful and a ready will” (my emphasis).

In the following paragraph Fr James points out (again, rightly) that there are expressions of love between a married couple that are “not specifically sexual”, but would he therefore consider these expressions on the same level of dignity as marital sexual intimacy?

The article states: “(T)hough the body is involved it is not ‘the principle of eliciting’ love.” I would answer that although the body may not be sufficient for eliciting love it is obviously necessary, even in his example of a domestic non-sexual activity, given that humans have a body as an integral component of their being.

It further states: “The ‘spiritual soul draws the body with it in a common consent of matter and spirit.’” This statement has a bit of a dualistic ring to it, as though the otherwise unfettered spirit is required to drag its obligatory corporal burden as it seeks to love.

The article states: “Pleasure and deeper union are thus secondary ends that are part of the marriage act.” However, according to *Humanae Vitae* 11: “The sexual activity, in which husband and wife are intimately and chastely united with one another, through which human life is transmitted, is, as the recent Council recalled, ‘noble and worthy.’” *Humanae Vitae*, in discussing the unitive and procreative aspects of marital sex, gives no indication that, in the mind of the Church, the unitive aspect is of less dignity than the procreative. It is not described, at least therein, as secondary.

The article's discussion of what the sexual urge was like before the Fall seems to beg the question, rather than strengthen the argument. One would have to enter this part of his discussion believing the unitive aspect of marital intercourse to be of less dignity than the procreative in order to be inclined to accept this description of *ante-lapsum homo*'s sexual urge.

Certainly disordered appetites are part and parcel of our sad *post-lapsum* heritage. To denigrate a given appetite in its essence *post-lapsum* goes well beyond saying that, while the appetite itself is still good, it is subject to excess. For example, if I go into the local restaurant hungry, having worked a long day without a meal, because I am a member of *post-lapsum* humanity would it be fair to describe my appetite for food as immediately/inherently excessive? To do so would seem to me to be subscribing to the old Protestant view of humanity after the Fall as being totally depraved.

If, after having had a good nourishing meal in my restaurant and topping it off with a piece of French Silk pie, I decide that the pie was so good that I want six more pieces, *that* would manifest a secondary, depraved appetite.

I see it to work the same for the sexual appetite. If a single person who, it will turn out, has a vocation to marriage experiences sexual attraction towards a potential spouse, need we really say that this attraction is immediately depraved? Let us say that our hypothetical couple marry. Thereafter if one or the other experience a sexual attraction towards someone else this would certainly constitute a secondary, depraved appetite.

Fr James states in the “Good, but Imperfect” section of his article, “(T)he Church teaches that a couple should only aim to space out the births of their children when there are ‘serious motives’ (*Humanae Vitae* n.16) or ‘just reasons’ (*Catechism* n. 2368) for doing so.” I think the argument could be made that this Church teaching is not based upon the idea that marital sex intentionally practised during infertile

periods is intrinsically “imperfect” – read, “somewhat bad” – but upon the divine command of Genesis 1:28: “Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth.”

Again, I don’t find any indication in *Humanae Vitae* that the unitive aspect is in any way inferior to the procreative even in cases where there is intentional recourse to marital sex during infertile periods. There are numerous couples of child-bearing age who have discerned that God is not calling them to have more children. In parish ministry I would find it difficult to inform a couple having so discerned that it constitutes an imperfect use of their sexual faculties to engage in marital intimacy during infertile periods.

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen says: “In married life the two are to be united. Sex is the highest expression of the love between a husband and wife” (recorded radio program, “Life is Worth Living”). Can we really assert that the noble activity of marital intimacy which indeed manifests and promotes the unity of the couple (thereby “making love”) is imperfect when a couple has recourse to it in a manner consistent with their understanding that God’s will is that they are not being called to have (more) children at a given point? To do so would seem to imply that the end of generating children is more noble than the end of a couple trying to maintain or deepen their love for one another. Again, I think taking a “both...and...” approach here is more balanced.

Perhaps another perspective on the question might be provided by looking at Our Lord’s observation of His creation in Matthew 7:18: “A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.” With the divorce rate among couples using NFP being less than 10 per cent of that of the general population – whether NFP is used to facilitate or space births – there’s no obvious indication of imperfection.

Overall, my concern is that the view propounded by the article seems to have a dualistic, Jansenistic flavour to it. I hope I have not misread the article

and therefore misrepresented its thesis. I would be grateful for any correction or clarification.

Yours faithfully,
Fr Robert Grabner
South St Paul
Minnesota

FR DYLAN JAMES REPLIES

I thank Fr Grabner, and Fr McDermott in the November/December issue, for taking the time to engage with my overview of Holloway’s position. They seem to me, however, to have misunderstood some of the points I, no doubt imperfectly, presented.

First, Holloway’s description of Natural Family Planning’s use of the marital act as “imperfect” should in no way be read as if, as Fr Grabner suggests, he thought this use was “somewhat bad”. Holloway is simply intending to create a terminology to express the fact that NFP, when practised for the sake of avoiding pregnancy and precisely because it is avoiding pregnancy, involves engaging in an act that is not all that it fully could be, and is thus in this sense “imperfect”. Consciously to choose to engage in an act that lacks its fullness is significant, and Holloway is attempting to articulate this, but he does not mean to suggest that the act is thereby somehow not “good”. My article’s comparison of the secular and religious states was intended to convey something of this, in that the secular state is in no sense “somewhat bad”.

Secondly, with respect to the notion that the marriage act is only one of many ways that a couple “make” love with their bodies, Fr Grabner asks whether Holloway would have seen such other acts as “on the same level of dignity” as sexual intercourse. Fr McDermott similarly questions whether I had adequately articulated that sex unites love and procreation in a way that other acts do not. My article might have addressed both points if I had examined whether Holloway would have seen such non-sex acts as on the “same level” of *effectiveness* as sex in “making” love. While Holloway did not elaborate

on this point, I think it is reasonable to say that Holloway most certainly saw sexual intercourse as uniquely “the” marriage act and thus not just on the same level as other acts a couple do together. Holloway’s principal point, however, is that there is no *automatic* mechanism by which sex “makes” love. For sex to “make” love it must truly be an act of spiritual love. Given that love is a spiritual act it must involve, as Holloway put it, the “spiritual soul draw[ing] the body with it in a common consent of matter and spirit”. There is thus no reason to think that Holloway somehow “contradicts” *Gaudium et spes* 49’s teaching that the marital act is “noble and worthy”.

Thirdly and finally, Fr Grabner suggests that Holloway sees the unitive dimension of the marital act as “of less dignity” than the procreative. Holloway does not say this and I see no reason to infer this. Holloway does not speak of “dignity” since this was not the focus of his argument. What he does say is that the procreative meaning is primary relative to the unitive meaning, a point well and repeatedly made in the Catholic Tradition. Further, as my article outlined, it is precisely *through* the procreative meaning that the marital act has its unitive meaning. This later point is made by none less than Pope John Paul II himself who manifests how this procreative dimension, which bonds a couple together, is what makes their relationship different from other friendships. To say this is to indicate why sex is truly “noble and worthy” rather than to imply that it isn’t. Further analysis of John Paul II on this point can be found in Janet Smith’s book, *Humanae Vitae A Generation Later*, pp. 107ff, where she also outlines how the marital act retains this “unitive through procreative” meaning even when the act is known to be infertile.

Notes From Across the Atlantic

by Peter Mitchell, Lincoln, Nebraska



Youthful About-turn on Abortion

"Who was Adolf Hitler?" This question opens a new provocative documentary called "180" that has been spreading across American college campuses in recent months. The thirty-minute film shows producer Ray Comfort, an evangelical pastor, interviewing young adults on the streets of southern California and asking probing moral questions. He takes the fateful step of linking the Holocaust of the Jews in Nazi Germany with legalised abortion in the United States. Some 200,000 copies of the DVD were handed out at over one hundred of America's top universities in late October 2011, and in the weeks following word of the film has spread like wildfire across the US. As of late November the film already had over one and a half million hits, and rising fast, on YouTube. Fasten your seatbelts for a fascinating, somewhat frightening, yet ultimately hopeful tour of the moral landscape of 21st-century America.

"180" opens with a rather embarrassing glimpse of the ignorance of the "average" American college student about the history of Nazi Germany. When asked to identify Adolf Hitler, young people stopped on the street respond with blank stares, confused looks, and variations on the theme, "I have no idea", even when shown Hitler's picture. Others take a stab that he might have been a communist and even venture to ask uncertainly, "Was he German?" Some of course immediately identify him as the perpetrator of one of the greatest crimes in the history of humanity who conceived and ordered the "Final Solution".

The questioner rapidly moves on to confront the interviewees with a moral dilemma, describing an actual slaughter of 1,600 Jews that occurred in 1942: "If a Nazi soldier put a rifle to your head and demanded that you bury Jews alive with a bulldozer, would you do it?" Some respond with horror and say they would

flatly refuse others bluntly declare that to save their own life and family, they would probably do it. When those who say they would refuse are asked to give their rationale, each of the people being questioned state in some way that they value human life.

Having established that the Holocaust was an unspeakable crime against humanity, the questioner then invites those being interviewed to make a provocative connection: "How do you feel about abortion?" Immediately the moral clarity which the interviewees have about the value of human life evaporates: "That's a difficult question;" "That's a very personal thing;" "I would never have one but I believe it's a woman's right to choose"; et cetera. The questioning continues: "Do you believe it is a baby inside the mother's womb?" When most of the interviewees admit that it is indeed a baby, they are asked to finish the following sentence: "It's okay to kill a baby in the womb when..." Various responses follow: "That's very hard to say..."; "It should never be done lightly..."; "If the mother cannot provide for the baby..."; "If the mother was raped..." The questioner presses the issue: "When asked about the Holocaust, you said that you valued human life, so why is this situation any different?" More hedging in reply: "Well that's between that person and God;" "That is the mother's decision alone and I don't think we should judge anyone;" "It's not for me to say." But, the relentless logic continues, would people ever speak that way about Hitler? Would people say, "I would never kill the Jews, but I respect Hitler's right to choose to kill them and I don't think anyone can judge that what he did was wrong?" When put to them in this way, the interviewees begin to acknowledge that perhaps the questioner has a point – perhaps saying that a woman has a right to choose *is* the same as saying that the Holocaust was not morally wrong. Seen from this perspective, the interviewees

admit that they agree that abortion is never morally justifiable: a "180" in their thinking about the legalised killing of over 53 million persons in the United States since *Roe v. Wade*.

"180" demonstrates quickly, clearly and obviously that there is absolutely no reasonable justification for abortion. It also exposes the abortion industry as an extremely lucrative machine, not unlike the way Hitler profited from the Jews to finance the Nazi war effort. In the short time since the release of "180," word of its powerful impact on secular, non-religious audiences abounds. Many students have posted comments sharing how the film completely changed the perspective of their pro-abortion teachers.

Having convinced his interviewees of the evil of abortion, Comfort then launches into a blunt attempt to convince them that they are in danger of going to hell and of their need for salvation through Jesus. While this pitch may ring as a bit too Protestant-sounding in Catholic ears and weakens the clear message of the film to some extent, it is nevertheless admirable to see someone on the street inviting passers-by to faith in Jesus Christ.

Not surprisingly, three of the largest billboard companies in southern California have refused to allow advertising promoting "180" on its signs. According to Comfort, one company is owned by a Jewish family that is outraged that any comparison should be drawn between the Holocaust and abortion. "If they don't [like] the comparison of the killing of six million Jews with the slaughter of nearly sixty million Americans through abortion," he said, "it's probably because they don't consider a baby in the womb to be human." The good news is that thanks to "180," more and more Americans are realising that the killing of a baby in the womb is never justifiable.



Comment on the Comments

by William Oddie

The Acceptance of “Gay Rights”

Are “gay rights” now the most prominent defining issue delineating – at least in Europe and the US – the gulf between the Catholic Church and the modern world?

Thirty years ago, for instance, marriage was universally seen as being essentially between one man and one woman, not just by Christians but by everyone else, almost without exception. In this country at least, this has not been the case for some years: homosexual “marriage” is more and more envisaged as a human right which ought to be enshrined in legislation. We have gone very far indeed along that road when a Conservative leader can say, at the Tory conference itself, something as mind-bendingly foolish as “Conservatives believe in the ties that bind us... So I don’t support gay marriage despite being a Conservative. I support gay marriage because I’m a Conservative.” This did not go down well in the Tory heartlands, but so what? Cameron knows the way things are going: and he will lose few votes by saying what he said.

That is where we now are; and that, increasingly, is where the Americans are, too; in fact, they led the way. Hence, the homepage on a rather good new website www.marriageuniqueforareason.org put up by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, and entitled “Marriage: unique for a reason”, opens thus:

What is marriage? *Are a man and a woman really essential to marriage?* (my emphasis) What about the child ... and the role of mothers and fathers? Is it discriminatory to defend marriage as the union of one man and one woman? What impact does the redefinition of marriage have on religious liberty?

These are just a few of the many questions about marriage today. They all hinge upon the first question: What is marriage? When the answer to this question is understood, everything else falls into its proper place.

Well, indeed, so it does: but only Christians, or at least the religious, are going to ask such questions, I fear. The USCCB’s website, it seems to me,

is however a rather successful attempt at answering them. It contains teaching at various intellectual levels, including a somewhat sentimental video (well, they are Americans, bless them) entitled “Made for Each Other: Sexual difference is essential to marriage”, in which a handsome married couple with perfect teeth “talk about why men and women matter for marriage”. “Their dialogue and interactions”, claims the website, “illuminate the beauty of sexual difference and complementarity between man and woman as husband and wife.”

Well, maybe. But one thing is clear: though the website gives the Church’s immemorial teachings about marriage (and does it, it seems to me, mostly rather well) the point is that this is very clearly – as the Church’s constant restatement of its unchanging beliefs for each new generation always is – a response to our current situation. In particular, it is a response to the threat against the family represented by secular society’s accelerating movement towards accepting what were, only a generation ago, simply demands by a small minority of activists for the legalisation of what they insist on describing as homosexual “marriage”.

The new reality has been arrived at by means of the quite extraordinary success of the gay lobby over the last three decades. Only the Catholic laity in this country (and some evangelicals) are still putting up any kind of resistance to this lobby (the bishops, as those conducting the Soho Masses are well aware, have now simply capitulated). But lay resistance has become a rearguard action, with fitful support from such as *The Daily Mail*, and total silence from Ambrosden Avenue. In early November, for instance, Francis Phillips, in her *Catholic Herald* blog, scored something of a bull’s eye, with a post in which she pointed out that Tesco had ended its support for a major cancer research event, but instead made a large contribution to London’s main annual gay pride event.

Her blog was picked up by *The Daily Mail* in a strong piece on the subject,

headlined “Outrage as Tesco backs gay festival... but drops support for cancer charity event”. The piece ran, in part as follows:

Tesco has triggered outrage by ending its support for the Cancer Research ‘Race for Life’ while deciding to sponsor Britain’s largest gay festival.

Some religious commentators and groups have condemned the decision and are calling for a boycott of the supermarket chain.

Tesco has worked with Cancer Research for more than ten years, raising hundreds of millions of pounds to help combat an illness that will affect one in three of the population...

Francis Phillips, a commentator at *The Catholic Herald*, condemned the shift, saying: “Tesco is a supermarket. Its remit has been to sell good-quality food and other items at very reasonable prices, and in this it has been hugely successful.

“Why has it now aligned itself with an aggressive political organisation such as Pride London? Why has it given up its sponsorship of Cancer Research?”

What puzzled me about this story was the simple question of why Tesco was doing this? It seemed like such an obvious own goal. The sums involved, for instance, are quite disproportionate. Tesco, actually, still gives a very large amount every year to charitable causes, far more than they are giving to the London Pride day: this year they gave £64.3 m. This represents 1.8% of Tesco’s pre-tax profits.

Now, what’s interesting about all this is the way Tesco has handled the Gay Pride furore. In fact, they didn’t (as you might think from *The Mail*) just switch from normal charitable giving to support for Gay Pride. They’ve ended their “headline support” support for a particular fund-raising event, the “Run for Life”, and around the same time announced their support for the Pride day. But there’s been no actual switch from one to the other. It just looks like that.

So why didn't they say so more convincingly?

They had a ready defence after all: that their charitable giving has not diminished at all. They could even have protested, in the face of Catholic attacks, that they were and are still major donors to a large third-world charity founded by Catholics, Mary's Meals (yes, it's that Mary), which feeds about half a million third-world children every day. Tesco's support for Mary's Meals feeds over 4,000 schoolchildren in India, Kenya, Malawi and Thailand every year.

So, there's the question: why didn't they defend themselves, as they so easily could have done? Francis Phillips' question remained unanswered: “Tesco is a supermarket; its remit has been to sell good quality food Why has it now aligned itself with an aggressive political organisation such as Pride London?”

Well, there's a simple answer to that. They were absolutely delighted by the whole furore. They wanted, and want, to be thought aggressively pro-gay, if necessary at the expense of their well-deserved reputation for charitable giving. First, because there's money in it: the pink pound is now a substantial economic factor in these things, just as in London, at least, the pink vote has to be courted by politicians seeking election.

But another factor, quite simply, is that the “gay and proud of it” movement is well established within Tesco itself, as may be seen from the website of “Out at Tesco: supporting our Lesbian, Gay and Transgender staff”, an in-house site set up by members of Tesco's main board, one of them chairman of Tesco Bank, the other its chief executive.

And the fact is that annoying the Catholics is a very clever thing to do, if getting the support of the gay lobby is what you want. I have no doubt that Tesco delighted at the furore the comparatively inexpensive gesture of supporting London's “Pride Day” stirred up; certainly, they did nothing to calm it down. So where does that leave us? What should we have done? Simply ignore their probably deliberately provocative act: or boycott them, almost certainly to very little effect?

Either way, I have an uneasy feeling that there are those within Tesco who are still laughing all the way to the Tesco bank.

Furthermore (and this bears repeating) you will hear no support for the likes of Francis Phillips, or any other lay Catholic swimming against that particular tide, from the English bishops, if for no other reason that it might cause the faithful to call to mind an (at the moment) dormant issue: their continuing support for the Soho Masses, at which homoerotically active homosexuals (self-proclaimed as such) regularly, and some say blasphemously, receive the Sacrament of the Altar.

But the worldwide Church is nevertheless still fighting this battle. The USCCB website invites us a little coyly to “Dive in deep into the Church's teachings”: this can be done by going to one of the site's most valuable pages, which gives links to statements on marriage by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Second Vatican Council, Pope Benedict XVI, Pope John Paul II, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Pontifical Council for the Family and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

Here are just two passages germane to the question raised by the site's introductory paragraphs about the impact of the redefinition of marriage on religious liberty and much else besides. The first is from a document snappily entitled “Declaration of the Pontifical Council for the Family regarding the Resolution of the European Parliament dated March 16, 2000, making de facto unions, including same sex unions, equal to the family”:

.... the European Parliament has approved a Resolution ... which ... considers de facto unions, including the registered cohabitation of persons of the same sex, and the need to recognise “legal marriages” between persons of the same sex.

This Resolution represents a grave and repeated attack on the family based on marriage, a union of love and life between a man and a woman from which life naturally springs.... Doesn't making “de facto” unions, and all the

more homosexual unions, equivalent to marriage, and inviting Parliaments to adjust their laws in this sense, represent a refusal to recognise the deep aspirations of peoples in their innermost identity?

We tend to give Vatican documents issued by dicasteries like the Pontifical Council for the Family a miss, assuming that they will be written in the usual impenetrable Vaticanese: but this passage is pretty close to being a *cri de coeur*. Here's another, scarcely less oratorical in character, from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: the title of this document (another wonderful example of Vatican bogus academic language when what is needed is a competent journalist used to writing informative headlines) is “Considerations regarding proposals to give legal recognition to unions between homosexual persons” (2003):

The Church's teaching on marriage and on the complementarity of the sexes reiterates a truth that is evident to right reason and recognised as such by all the major cultures of the world. Marriage is not just any relationship between human beings. It was established by the Creator with its own nature, essential properties and purpose. No ideology can erase from the human spirit the certainty that marriage exists solely between a man and a woman....

Well, you would have thought so, wouldn't you? But we seem, all the same, destined to live through a period during which that certainty will more and more become clouded for many. In the end, it will, we may be sure, reassert itself: but only because of the many human casualties which will emerge as our deeply confused society blunders around, continuing to undermine the stability of the traditional family based on marriage between a man and a woman.

In the end, the tide will turn; and once more, the Church will be seen to have been right all along. But it will take several decades: I will not live to see it.



Book Reviews

The Loser Letters, A Comic Tale of Life, Death & Atheism

Mary Eberstadt, Ignatius Press, 2010
Gracewing, 150pp, £9.99

Mary Eberstadt's *The Loser Letters* was described by the National Review Online (where earlier versions of the eponymous letters were originally serialised) as 'a Screwtape for our screwed up time'. And while this book is unlikely to replace Lewis's classic in the canon of Christian apologetics, Eberstadt presents a convincing critique of what is often referred to as the 'New Atheism' and an entertaining and accessible defence of Christianity in particular and religious faith in general.

Eberstadt's narrator is A.F. (A Former) Christian, a young woman, a lapsed Catholic and a convert to this New Atheism. In a series of letters to her atheist heroes (Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens *et al*), she attempts to explain where they have been going wrong in encouraging others to abandon God or 'Loser' and embrace atheism. In doing so she gradually reveals the catastrophic events that led to her 'conversion' and present incarceration in a mysterious rehabilitation centre.

The areas Eberstadt explores will come as no surprise to those familiar with the arguments of these near ubiquitous 'spokesmen of the New Atheism'. In Letter One, 'The Trouble with Experience', A.F. Christian looks at the effects of the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s where the atheist sexual ethic has its roots. She points out that while an older generation might have

been enamoured of sex without consequences, their younger counterparts often associate such an outlook with dysfunctional relationships, broken families and personal unhappiness and by extension see the Christian vision of love as fulfilling and ultimately liberating. In subsequent letters she writes on logic, good works ('*the actual evidence for claiming that atheism will do as much good in the world as Christianity and other religions is embarrassingly against us*'), the arts, families and women (or rather their conspicuous absence in the ranks of prominent atheists). Eberstadt's satire portrays atheist rhetoric as inconsistent and built on fallacy.

Undoubtedly it is as a resource for young people that this book is most valuable, especially at a time when they are exposed on a near daily basis to the anti-religious tropes of much of the British media. Eberstadt covers many of the questions and accusations that Catholics in particular often face – for example, the Inquisition, the Church and the Holocaust etc – in a clear and comprehensible manner.

Some readers might find it difficult to engage with the chatty, informal tone of the letters which can occasionally come over as slightly forced. Also, *The Loser Letters* is clearly aimed at younger people and the pages are littered with pop culture references and teenage slang. Unfortunately these will probably date the book and may prove off-putting to older readers or those (perhaps fortunately) unfamiliar with television programmes such as *Project Runway* and *Pimp My Ride*.

That being said, Eberstadt does not talk down to her readers. Sitting alongside *American Idol* are quotations from Christian thinkers ranging from Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas to G.K. Chesterton and G.E.M. Anscombe. The book contains a great deal of useful information and a new edition would benefit from some form of referencing and perhaps study questions or a reading guide. More superficially, a different cover might attract a wider range of readers.

One minor annoyance is the heavy-handed treatment of certain topics. For example, A.F. Christian is given a set of Rosetta Stone discs to assist her in learning German or '*the language of atheism*' and later letters are peppered with German phrases, often with Nazi overtones. In drawing – and labouring – an explicit link between atheism and Nazism Eberstadt utilises similarly lazy tactics to the atheist pedagogues she rightly criticises. In the same vein, Eberstadt's capitalisation of pronouns when referring to or addressing atheist thinkers makes it clear that for A.F. Christian and those like her, atheism has effectively become a new religion. While valid, both points could have been made just as effectively in a subtler manner.

Overall, *The Loser Letters* contains much that is positive and valuable. At just under one hundred and fifty pages it is a quick and easy read and funny enough to interest even reluctant readers. Ultimately Eberstadt achieves her goal of showing that atheism is not beyond satire and in fact contains much that is laughable. In doing so she snatches back much of the intellectual and moral high ground that the new atheists have claimed for themselves.

Amanda Brennan
Wishaw
North Lanarkshire

Pure Attraction: A Guide to Human Sexuality

Fr Peter Murphy, Gracewing, 2009
117pp, £6.99.

This book provides a good summary of important topics related to sexuality. Father Peter Murphy explains that sexuality is not what we do but who we are. This basis, founded on the good habit and the strength and power of purity, points us towards happiness and holiness. He explains that we need chastity in order to avoid sin. The first half of the book provides an examination of the history of purity and the power and pursuit of this gift. Aquinas defined chastity as the virtue which moderates the desire for sexual

pleasure in accordance with right reason. Murphy remembers the Early Church Fathers who extolled the state of virginity. Saint Cyprian of Carthage, Saint Basil, St John Chrysostom and Saint Ambrose all wrote highly of the state as a most worthy vocation. Later, Murphy mentions the life of Father Lapide S.J. (1566-1637) who divided the virtue of purity into three categories: *puritas corporis* (purity of the body); *puritas mentis* (purity of the mind) and *puritas cordis* (purity of the heart).

“There is a physical, spiritual, psychological and emotional dimension to our sexual identity as male and female”

The second half of the book is more of a practical guide for living a pure life, through spiritual preparation, self-knowledge and spiritual combat. A game plan is proposed to challenge the culture of teenage promiscuity, internet pornography and physical and sexual abuse. The plan is based on self-knowledge and avoiding temptations and deception. As our sexuality has a purpose, man and woman complement each other as collaborators with God in the work of creation when sexuality is used in the right context. There is a physical, spiritual, psychological and emotional dimension to our sexual identity as male and female. The author does not deny that being a Christian involves a spiritual and moral combat. He also describes the different type of personalities (sanguine, melancholic, choleric and phlegmatic) and how this relates to self-knowledge and sexuality. This is because the formation of character is closely associated with the psychology of habit formation and the theology of the virtues and vices. Guidelines as to how to stay on track provide a useful summary of how prayer, sacraments and habits can help lead towards purity.

The author also has time to praise Blessed John Paul II's valuable contribution towards this topic with the *Theology of the Body*. John Paul's catechesis has explored the meaning

and purpose of shame and the sexual urge. Sexual shame provides protection from being exploited and used as an object of pleasure. The sexual urge, due to original sin, is prone to exploit pleasure for its own sake. Murphy also explains how love as attraction, desire and goodwill help us appreciate the higher domain of love to which we are called in the communion of persons. All in all the book provides an excellent read with some unique testimonies, anecdotes and insights into a wise and mature approach to human sexuality.

Robert Colquhoun
London

The Rage Against God

Peter Hitchens, London And New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010, 168pp, £10.99

This is the story of someone who whilst at school was what was sometimes known as a “clever so-and-so,” and who whilst there renounced any religious belief in a very public manner. Peter Hitchens is quite upfront about the “braggart sinner” that he became. He clearly found his liberation from the dusty old Anglicanism of his public school to be intoxicating. In the public domain he found that his individual decision was endorsed for him by the failure and dishonesty of public officials. This was the sixties, the era of the Profumo scandal, Christine Keeler, Mandy Rice-Davies et al.

Hitchens describes the failure of the Christian aspect of his education, and the attractions of a supposedly all-encompassing modern science taken as explaining everything, morality being replaced by utilitarian expediency. What need for God? He then describes a further layer of pseudo-religion built upon this and characterised in Britain by the “cult of Churchill”, and culminating in a confusion of patriotism with Christianity.

All of this is followed by a “rediscovery of lost faith”, as Hitchens puts it, though this reads more like a loss of faith in secularism. Chronologically it is linked in part with the depressing

experience of living in the then Soviet Union. In this process the first substantial intellectual move occurred for him on a visit to Beaune in France and specifically a viewing there of the great painting of the Last Judgment by Rogier van der Weyden.

“I scoffed. Another religious painting. Couldn't these people think of anything else to depict? Still scoffing, I peered at the naked figures fleeing towards the pit of Hell, out of my usual faintly morbid interest in the alleged terrors of damnation. But this time I gaped, my mouth actually hanging open. These people did not appear remote or from the ancient past; they were my own generation. Because they were naked, they were not imprisoned in their own age by time-bound fashions. On the contrary, their hair and, in an odd way, the set of their faces were entirely in the style of my own time. They were me, and the people I knew. One of them, and I have always wondered how the painter thought of it, is actually vomiting with shock and fear at the sound of the Last Trump.”

This dramatic experience (and he describes it very movingly) leads Hitchens to a specific rediscovery of Christianity itself. But what sort of Christianity? He sums it up close to the start of the book:

“I want to explain how I became convinced, by reason and experience, of the necessity and rightness of a form of Christianity that is modest, accommodating and thoughtful – but ultimately uncompromising about its vital truth.”

Hitchens, on exploring his new-found faith, states that he can not help but be disappointed by its continuing decline since he was last a part of it. How on earth is such an anodyne force to defeat the new atheists against whom he is purporting to write the book?

None of this is explained and analysed. Instead we are taken on a gentle tour of three arguments put forward for atheism: “[T]hat conflicts fought in the name of religion are always about religion; that it is ultimately possible to



Book Reviews continued

know with confidence what is right and what is wrong without acknowledging the existence of God; and that atheist states are not actually atheist.”

These arguments are duly dispatched in the following three chapters. There is no attempt at a rigorous analysis of the atheist case, which is more extensive than Hitchens puts forward. Also, the perhaps more disturbing anti-religious stance of indifferentism is hardly touched upon at all. It is possible to move an atheist from his or her position.

The final chapter is taken up with the claim of his brother, Christopher Hitchens, that “Communist absolutists did not so much negate religion, in societies that they well understood were saturated with religion, as seek to replace it”. It also takes on Richard Dawkins’ claim that religion is child abuse. Peter Hitchens brings out well the totalitarian intolerance of the new atheists of today. In a sense, as he says, they did their work too well.

“In the names of reason, science and liberty they had proved, rather effectively, that good societies need God to survive and that when you have murdered Him, starved Him, silenced Him, denied Him to the children and erased His festivals and His memory, you have a gap which cannot indefinitely be filled by any human, nor anything made by human hands.”

The book ends with a quite touching note on the relationship between the two brothers, so far apart in belief, the shadow of Christopher Hitchens being a continuing presence throughout the book.

So, what is one to make of such a book. Well, it does have some worthy objectives and the arguments used are sometimes effective. But, a number of points come to mind, notably that what is needed is a complete and effective rebuttal of the atheist case. And not only that. What is also missing here is any real sense of the beauty and richness of the true religion. The negative needs to be supplemented by the positive.

If the threat posed to religion and outlined by Peter Hitchens is to be contested and bested, this is certainly not going to be done by the Church of England or any other form of Protestantism. They are no longer coherent streams of thought and are divided by splits and hundreds of splinter groups. I recall the reaction of a priest friend to a text setting out the conservative version of Anglicanism, one which espouses fidelity to the monarchy, to the liturgical tradition of the Book of Common Prayer, and to the rural pastoral tradition, of such great comfort to the people. The priest’s reaction was to say straight out that the writer seemed to have no idea of what a religion is.

Nowhere was there a hint of God’s revelation to man, of God’s saving sacraments or of the hierarchy instituted by Christ to save and direct men and to defend the Church against ravenous wolves. In short, there is nothing of the seriousness of a religion that saves men without asking their opinion.

Only the Catholic Church, weakened though she is by many attacks from outside and in, is going to be able to face up to the great challenges of today. This is because her indefectibility is something divine and not dependent on human processes.

It is interesting to note that, well before now, certain notable characters who were part of the rebellion against Christian ethics began to see the downside of what they had set in motion. A good example is John Maynard Keynes. As he told Virginia Woolf in 1934:

“Our generation – yours and mine... owed a great deal to our fathers’ religion. And the young...who are brought up without it, will never get so much out of life. They’re trivial: like dogs in their lusts. We had the best of both worlds. We destroyed Christianity yet had its benefits.”

When the whirlwind of the new atheism strikes, then an institution built on sand, as is the case with Anglicanism, cannot withstand the storm. But when this

whirlwind strikes against the Catholic Church, it strikes against a Rock. Hitchens sees nothing of this and therefore fails to appreciate the central issues bearing upon the phenomenon which he is trying to describe. He needs to know that there is even yet an authority that will not let us down. This is the authority of Christ still working through his vicar on earth, the successor of Peter, Pope Benedict XVI. Yet, nowhere is he mentioned here.

John Beaumont

Apperley Bridge
Bradford



The Road From Regensburg

Papal Inspired thoughts towards a new apologetic

THE YEAR OF FAITH 2012-2013

11th October: From the Motu Proprio Porta Fidei declaring a Year of Faith from 11 October 2012.

2. Ever since the start of my ministry as Successor of Peter, I have spoken of the need to rediscover the journey of faith so as to shed ever clearer light on the joy and renewed enthusiasm of the encounter with Christ ... It often happens that Christians are more concerned for the social, cultural and political consequences of their commitment, continuing to think of the faith as a self-evident presupposition for life in society. ... Whereas in the past it was possible to recognise a unitary cultural matrix, broadly accepted in its appeal to the content of the faith and the values inspired by it, today this no longer seems to be the case in large swathes of society, because of a profound crisis of faith that has affected many people.

4. My venerable Predecessor the Servant of God Paul VI announced [a Year of Faith] in 1967 ... [that] the whole Church could reappropriate "exact knowledge of the faith, so as to reinvigorate it, purify it, confirm it, and confess it". ... so as to bear consistent witness in historical circumstances very different from those of the past.

5. ... the texts bequeathed by the [Second Vatican] Council Fathers ... need to be read correctly, to be widely known and taken to heart as important and normative texts of the Magisterium, within the Church's Tradition ... "if we interpret and implement guided by a right hermeneutic".

12. In this Year, [then], the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* will serve as a tool providing real support for the faith ... To a greater extent than in the past, faith is now being subjected to a series of questions arising from a changed mentality which, especially today, limits the field of rational certainties to that of scientific and technological discoveries.

THE NEW EVANGELISATION

1 December to the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family.

The new evangelisation depends largely on the domestic Church. In our time, as in times past, the eclipse of God, the spread of ideologies contrary to the family and the degradation of sexual ethics are intertwined. And just as the eclipse of God and the crisis of the family are linked, so the new evangelisation is inseparable from the Christian family.

*20 November, Benin, at signing of Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus*.*

There is also an urgent need to work for the new evangelisation in Africa, especially among people who have distanced themselves from the Church or who do not behave in a Christian fashion. African Christians, and in particular the clergy and consecrated persons, are likewise called to support new evangelisation in secularised nations. This is an exchange of gifts, because African missionaries are already at work in countries which once produced missionaries who went forth to announce the Good News in Africa.

From the preface to the Lineamenti for the 2012 International Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelisation. Issued 2 February 2011.

In recent decades much has been said about the urgency of the new evangelisation ... today [it] has not been sufficiently accepted to result in the Christian transformation of persons, families and societies. Though these situations were duly treated in the Special Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops of a continental and regional character, which were celebrated in preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000, the subject still remains a great challenge for the entire Church. For this reason, ... [the Pope] decided to convoke the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops from 7 to 28 October 2012 to discuss the topic: The New Evangelisation for the Transmission of the Christian Faith ... to examine the ... new methods and means for transmitting the Good News to people in our world today ... to bring forth things new and old from the precious treasury of Tradition (cf. Mt 13:52). ... At the end of each chapter some questions appear which are aimed at generating discussion at every level of the Church.

Some representative questions from those at section ends:

The Introduction: Q2. In the process of discerning events in history, what should be shared with the universal Church, so that, by mutually listening to these happenings, the universal Church can recognise where the Spirit is leading her in the work of evangelisation?

Chapter 1: Time for a "New Evangelisation": Q8. What have been the principal obstacles and the most challenging efforts to raise the question of God in today's discussion? What have been the results?

Chapter 2: Proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

In response to the Second Vatican Council, many episcopal conferences, in recent decades, have undertaken the work of reorganising the programming of catechesis and the revision of catechetical texts:

Q11. What benefits have resulted in the process of transmitting the faith? What work was entailed and what obstacles have been encountered?

Chapter 3: Initiation into the Christian Experience:

Q2. Do Christian communities plan pastoral activity with the specific aim of preaching conformity to the Gospel and conversion to Christianity?

Q16. How have parish communities avoided the temptation of leaving the work of instruction in the faith to other agents of religious education (for example, their passing the responsibility to schools, thus confusing instruction in the faith with possible cultural forms of religiously oriented education)?

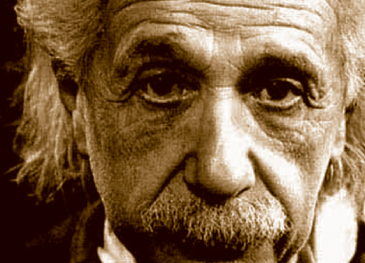
In our Churches, the challenge of education is a true and proper emergency:

Q18. Is the presence of Catholic institutions in the academic world an assistance in responding to this challenge? What changes in these institutions are of interest? What resources are available to respond to this challenge?



Cutting Edge

Science and Religion News



A Spiritual Atheist

A recent online article by Adam Frank – an astronomer from the University of Rochester in New York state – waded into the huge current debate over the “new atheism” espoused with “evangelical fervour” by such advocates as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens etc. In his regular column on the “13.7” blog (which number refers to the estimated age of the universe in billions of years), Frank describes his own response to the wonders of nature, the physical world, and of just “being human”. Whilst not himself holding to a religious faith he argues against despising the “mystery” that is human life.

In “The Mystery I’m Thankful For” (22 November) he describes himself as “an atheist with sympathies for the sacred character of human experience”. He once was involved in a public debate with another scientist, a professed atheist. Frank writes:

“At one point in the discussion I tried to convince him that inclinations to ‘spirituality’ or a sense of ‘sacredness’ (with or without an institutional religion) were a response to the essential mystery that came with being human. He paused for long moment and then replied, ‘There is no mystery’.”

Frank argues that that is just untenable. However one interprets the “mystery” of existence, the mystery of being, and of being human, there is palpably a real mystery. He goes on to describe the effect that it has on him, when he comes to reflect on it: “We just find ourselves here. With our individual birth we just ‘wake up’ and discover ourselves in the midst of an extraordinary world of beauty and sorrow. All around us we see exquisite and exquisitely subtle orders played out effortlessly. From the lazy descent of fall leaves to the slow unfolding of cloudscapes in empty blue skies, it is all *just* here and we are just here to see it.”

At the point where anyone of religious faith would then attribute the goodness and power of creation to an omnipotent and loving God, Frank chooses to step

back from that conclusion, and just revel in “the mystery”, and bemoan its sudden passing when we die. Yet given that the world with its wonder of human experience needs explaining, it is surely rational for a scientist to continue to use his powers of intelligence and deduction to interpret the world as a whole and man’s place in it. Given the meaningfulness of the mystery we regularly wake up to it is not a much bigger step to acknowledge its completeness in the mystery of an always wake-ful, self-explanatory being.

The Ongoing Quantum Problem

Linked from the same “13.7” blog hosted by “npr.org”, again noted by Adam Frank, is a fascinating paper on the ongoing problem of the interpretation of quantum mechanics (QM). The paper itself is by Christopher Fuchs, of the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo, Canada. He begins by noting an aspect of the immense problem of interpretation in QM:

In the history of physics, there has never been a healthier body than quantum theory; no theory has ever been more all-encompassing or more powerful. Its calculations are relevant at every scale of physical experience, from subnuclear particles, to table-top lasers, to the cores of neutron stars and even the first three minutes of the universe. Yet since its founding days, many physicists have feared that quantum theory’s common annoyance – the continuing feeling that something at the bottom of it does not make sense – may one day turn out to be the symptom of something fatal.

There is something about quantum theory that is different in character from any physical theory posed before. To put a finger on it, the issue is this: the basic statement of the theory – the one we have all learned from our textbooks – seems to rely on terms our intuitions balk at as having any place in a fundamental description of reality. The notions of “observer” and “measurement” are taken as primitive, the very starting point

of the theory. This is an unsettling situation! Shouldn’t physics be talking about what is before it starts talking about what will be seen and who will see it? Perhaps no one has put the point more forcefully than John Stewart Bell:

“What exactly qualifies some physical systems to play the role of ‘measurer’? Was the wavefunction of the world waiting to jump for thousands of millions of years until a single-celled living creature appeared? Or did it have to wait a little longer, for some better qualified system ...with a PhD?”

One sometimes gets the feeling – and this is what unifies many a diverse quantum foundations researcher – that until this issue is settled, fundamental physical theory has no right to move on. Worse yet, that to the extent it does move on, it does so only as the carrier of something insidious, something that will eventually cause the whole organism to stop in its tracks.

Fuchs goes on in his paper to discuss some possible models of taking forward our thinking on the “reality” of the probabilities in QM. The complete paper can be viewed on the arXiv.org website.

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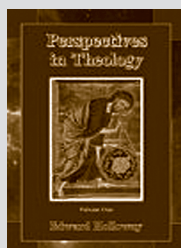
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Faith Movement offers a perspective upon the unity of the cosmos by which we can show clearly the transcendent existence of God and the essential distinction between matter and spirit. We offer a vision of God as the true Environment of men in whom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

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

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