

faith

September and October 2010
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PROMOTING A NEW SYNTHESIS
OF FAITH AND REASON

Catholicism: A New Synthesis: Forty Years On

Editorial

The Primacy of Christ in Creation

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Tracey Rowland
Richard Conrad
John Gavin
James Swetnam

Henrik Ibsen, Pope John Paul and the Battle Over Marriage

Kathleen Curran Sweeney

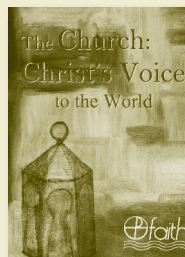
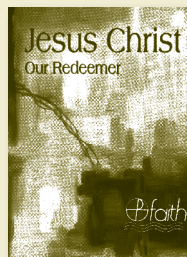
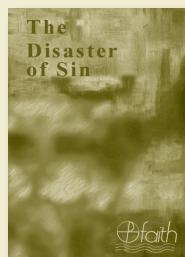
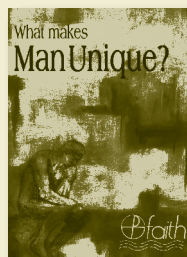
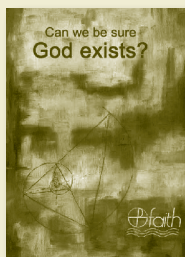
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Catholicism a New Synthesis

by **Edward Holloway**

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

Deputy Editor Kevin Douglas

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

Book Reviews Mark Vickers, St Peter's, Bishop's Rise, Hatfield, Herts AL10 9HN, reviews@faith.org.uk

Advertising Manager Scott Deeley, Holy Cross, 11 Bangholm Loan, Edinburgh EH5 3AH, advertising@faith.org.uk

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For a Catholic it is hardly earth-shattering to be reminded that the future of civilisation depends upon its understanding of Jesus Christ. It is a perennial point for a faith that believes Christ is God and that faith and reason are in harmony. Yet, in the opinion of this magazine, this truism is particularly vital today, for at least two reasons.

First, western culture is frenetically engaging in an agnostic and hedonistic realignment. This is now tending to become a global revolution, and there is little effective opposition: see William Oddie's latest instalment on ecclesial "opposition". Second, the most prominent Christian understandings of Jesus Christ must be developed if they are to become sufficiently convincing to renew our culture.

In the words of Cardinal Pell in this issue, in the context of "the grave errors of this time", we need to ponder more deeply the fact that Christ is "the centre and fulfilment of what it means to be human". Hence the Christological focus of this issue, which we present on the 40th anniversary of the publication of Edward Holloway's *Catholicism: A New Synthesis*. Holloway's seminal and speculative tome was, and the material in this magazine is, openly submitted to the judgment of reason and, more importantly, of the Church's magisterium.

Over the last 40 years *Faith* movement has been gradually developing a school of thinkers who share this diagnosis of, and prescription for, the sickness in our culture, and who are also firmly rooted in the busy, concrete realities of pastoral and familial work. But we have had little serious discussion with prominent and influential thinkers inside or outside the Church. We are thus especially grateful to those, writing in this and forthcoming issues, who have responded to our request to discuss the identity of God made Man – and more specifically our belief, described in our editorial article, that the key to re-evangelisation is to work through the understanding of Jesus' humanity, and thus his personality, as *the fulfilment of creation*.

We are pleased to be presenting in this issue what we think is a consensus on some of the key points we emphasise, as well as some important warnings from our contributors. As ever, in our Cutting Edge column (which takes on a new look in this issue), our correspondence discussions and our editorial, we highlight some of the danger signs of a false philosophy of creation inside and outside the Church.

In our Road to Regensburg column, we continue to follow Pope Benedict as he responds to John Paul II's "urgent" appeal for an orthodox development in philosophy and theology; we also note the work of the Cardinal Van Thuan Institute in exposing the ignorance surrounding the Pope's important anthropological developments, which were central to his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*. Benedict has recently spawned two initiatives which aim to open a discussion with interested agnostics and atheists in the West. We ignore such initiatives at our peril.

Our next issue will focus on Catholic approaches to the impact of modern science upon our understanding of physical being. Again we will propose that the flesh of Christ is central.

"I came that they may have life."

John 10:10

A Seminal and Challenging Work

It is now forty years since Fr Edward Holloway, the founder of Faith movement and the first editor of this magazine, published *Catholicism: A New Synthesis*. This book is the most comprehensive statement of his ideas and the theological vision that inspired *Faith* movement, although his thinking was also elaborated, sometimes more accessibly, in his editorials for *Faith*. (The first volume of a selected collection of these articles is published as *Perspectives in Theology: Christ The Sacrament of Creation*).

Catholicism is not always an easy read. For most of his life Holloway was a busy parish priest. Although marked out as an exceptional student by his professors at the Gregorian University, he was denied the opportunity to pursue further studies, so he does not write in the academic style and precise terminology of the professional theologian. Nonetheless there can be no doubt that he was a truly original thinker with a penetrating intellect and an intense grasp of philosophical and theological principles, able to project their implications across multiple aspects of truth and life. His style is frequently poetic, his methodology like a painter sketching his vision onto a huge canvas.

Yet, perhaps for this very reason, he can be prone to lengthy digressions and at times he can appear repetitious as he is at pains to show the relevance and impact of his seminal insights on the whole of Catholic theology. Karl Rahner is notoriously difficult to read for similar reasons. Both Rahner and Holloway were attempting to synthesise the scholastic tradition with modern philosophical insights, these latter being much more established in Rahner's case – namely emerging from the Existentialist tradition. Yet Rahner's neologisms and convoluted sentence structures can be couched in mind numbingly technical terms. Holloway's occasionally idiosyncratic prose contains some insights which will be somewhat novel to most readers as well as being rooted in personal, pastoral and spiritual experience.

Pastoral and Intellectual Inspiration

The whole thrust of Holloway's work was to move away from the perception of truth as abstract. A vital underlying theme of his thought was to make a synthesis between the essential and the existential. For him the development of doctrine does not simply derive from progress in thought and ideas, but is an aspect of deepening in being and communion of both mind and heart with God in Christ, which is the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Much of the perceived challenge of reading his text comes from the fact that his ideas were, and perhaps still are, so much ahead of their time.

At the same time, Holloway is often, at least implicitly, in dialogue with his own neo-scholastic theological formation

Catholicism: A New Synthesis – Forty Years On *Editorial*

during the first half of the twentieth century. He was deeply familiar with the writings of St Thomas Aquinas, St Augustine and of many other saints and fathers. He also possessed the works of most major post-scholastic philosophers – Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Bergson, Sartre et al – and modern philosophers of science like Heisenberg. He often expects his readers to share the same level of familiarity with the language and issues raised. All of this means that those who have grown up in the post-Conciliar Church may miss some nuances of his language at first.

Holloway also acknowledged that his thinking was a work in progress, the pioneering outlines of a new synthesis between the unchanging truths of the Catholic faith and the emerging scientific culture in which we now live. This is why those of us who are dedicated to continuing Holloway's project welcome debate.

The Ongoing Crisis

While recognising the limitations and the ongoing nature of Holloway's theology we believe that he has provided both a vital and illuminating road map out of the intellectual crisis that has engulfed the Church and the blueprint for a new apologetic that will prove indispensable for the much needed New Evangelisation so close to the hearts of recent popes.

There is no disputing that the last forty years have witnessed an unprecedented collapse of Catholicism in Western Europe and much of the developed world. The root cause of this collapse is an intellectual crisis that has affected every aspect of the Church's life. True and lasting reform will not come until the intellectual roots of the crisis are addressed and resolved. Any reform in the Church's life that fosters the fervour of her members is to be welcomed, but real cultural renewal will not come until the intellectual roots of the crisis are addressed and resolved.

Transcendence and Immanence

The question around which the crisis in most modern theology revolves can be summed up as that of immanence and transcendence, the historical and the timeless, the relative and the absolute. This could be put in a much more concrete form simply as: "*how much is matter and how much is mind?*" For if matter is all – or if there is only one fundamental energy which defines both the 'material' and 'spiritual' – then everything must be always evolving into some new and unknown form. All 'truth', therefore, is relative to our own minds, limited by our time in history and our particular culture. This presumption all but dominates the intellectual and social landscape of our times.

On the other hand, if we maintain a clear distinction between matter and spirit, but fail to relate them in any intrinsic way, then the criticism made by 'modernity' that the older world view was static and formalist, leaving an arbitrary dislocation between God 'up there' and historical and personal experience, can seem to hold some validity.

Matter and Mind

The working title of *Catholicism: A New Synthesis* was in fact '*Matter and Mind: A Christian Synthesis*' (an earlier version with this title is soon to be published we hope). The published title came about because Holloway realised that this question underlies the whole contemporary interface of faith and culture. He by no means rejects the scholastic tradition of philosophy and theology, believing it to be the only sound basis on which to proceed, but he does present a comprehensive realignment of its details.

The major achievement of the system he offers is that it captures the truths of divine immanence and created relativity without compromising the transcendence of spirit and objectivity of truth. By the same token he can uphold the priority of the supernatural without making it distant or only arbitrarily related to historical reality. It is at this important level that Holloway's claim to offer a new synthesis stands at its most profound and fruitful.

"Holloway is able to preserve the essential distinction between matter and spirit, body and soul, yet maintain the unity of the nature and personality of Man"

Creation as One Wisdom, One Law

The principle which allows him to achieve this is termed "*The Unity Law of Control and Direction*". Creation is not all of one order and energy, and yet it is all ordered according to one principle of Wisdom, which means that nothing controls itself and nothing is its own fulfillment. In philosophical terms, the immanent and material must always find its principle of integration and identity in the transcendent and spiritual. Or to express this more concretely again: "*Matter is that which is controlled and directed. Mind is that which controls and directs.*" That which is controlled and directed must also come into contact with that which controls and directs it, but the latter cannot thereby be controlled by the former. This requires much reflection to realise the power and accuracy of the concept. It has many implications.

Far from evolution being random and open ended, the cosmos is a vast, ordered equation which unfolds according to a specific purpose under the creative *concursus* of the Mind of God. Each created entity also functions according to the same law of the principle of control and direction, seeking its proper good within the environmental influence of other creatures.

God the Environment of Man

The relationship between matter and mind naturally comes most sharply into focus when considering human nature. The spiritual soul does not evolve nor emerge from the potential of matter, but neither is it an arbitrary add-on to an otherwise complete creature. The principle of the Unity Law ensures the direct integration of the human body into its own personal

Catholicism: A New Synthesis – Forty Years On continued

spiritual power of control and direction. Thus Holloway is able to preserve the essential distinction between matter and spirit, body and soul, yet maintain the unity of the nature and personality of Man.

According to the same principle of control and direction, the organic/spiritual creature that is Man must look beyond himself for the answer to his own need for existential wisdom and fulfilment. God is to man, directly and personally, what the environment is to lower creatures. *“In him we live and move and have our being”* (Acts 17.28).

The revelation of The Word, the building up of the Church and the ‘Covenant’, or family bond of communion between heaven and earth, these are natural to the constitution of the universe. Yet they are works of grace, guaranteed not by material laws or human effort, but by the play of Divine wisdom and love on human hearts and minds through Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

“This ‘one magnificent sweep of creation’ renews the Church’s theology of creation as well as filling out our insight into the identity of Jesus Christ”

Christ at the Heart of Creation

Christ too comes to fulfill the Unity Law of Control and Direction which frames the whole creation. And yet he is not the product of evolution or of the human religious spirit. He is the Living Mind of God coming into his own things and gathering it to himself in order to complete their communion with the Father and, because of the Fall, also to buy back and restore his broken inheritance among men.

This conviction that the whole of the cosmos is not just oriented through Man to God, but rather is made through and oriented to God *Made Man*, is one of the pillars of Holloway’s theological approach. It is here, above all, that the transcendent and the immanent integrate. The source and summit of Creation is not just the Word, but the Word made flesh.

A Welcome Debate

In order to mark the fortieth anniversary of the publication of Holloway’s book, we invited some leading academics to write on this question of the primacy of Christ. Not all agree with Holloway’s position, of course, but we are grateful for these generous contributions and happy to publish them in the hope of stimulating debate. In our next issue we will publish some philosophical responses.

The idea of the Incarnation theologically preceding the Fall of Adam can be found in many of the Fathers of the Church going right back to St Irenaeus, as Fr John Gavin SJ notes in his article. It finds its most classic formulation in the theology of Blessed John Duns Scotus, who argues:

“I declare however that the fall was not the cause of Christ’s

predestination. In fact even if no man or angel had fallen [...] Christ would still have been so predestined.”¹

As yet the Church has made no official pronouncement on the issue and great saints and theologians do not always agree – St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas, for example.² As Fr Swetnam points out in his article, some passages of Scripture do suggest the motive for the Incarnation is atonement for sin. However, other passages lend weight to a ‘Scotist’ interpretation, such as when Colossians 1:15 speaks of Christ as the “firstborn of all creation.” (Our November-December issue last year presented the case more fully).

No Distraction From the Cross

Fr Gavin points out that the hypothetical terms in which Scotus’ thesis is often expressed can be a distraction from the gritty reality of redemption under the present dispensation marred by sin. For Holloway it is not a question of theoretical speculation, but of filling out our understanding of the majesty and meaning of our Lord Jesus Christ as the “Master Key” who unlocks the meaning of all orders of creation, material as well as spiritual. This he regards as essential for presenting a convincing and coherent account of Christ to the modern world.

If the very laws of matter are aligned upon the Body of Christ and humanity finds its identity and fulfilment in the Incarnation, this does not distract from the drama of redemption but rather gives it a fuller context. By clarifying what it means for Christ to share our nature it clarifies our understanding of the cross. By the deliberate choice of evil, the first generation of human beings did not just lose “preternatural gifts”, they tore themselves away from their true source of control and direction, damaging their own integration and ontological harmony as creatures of body and soul. The crucifying impact of sin on the whole human race will inevitably have a devastating impact upon the sacred humanity of Christ precisely because he is – by right, vocation and very ontology – our final and plenary union with God. He now gives himself freely to apologise, reconcile, heal and refashion us from his own energy as both Son of God and Son of Man.

Preaching Christ in an Age of Science

The Scotist thesis is in fact, as Fr Gavin remarks, the predominant perspective in contemporary theology. Moreover, as Cardinal Pell notes, it is to be found at the heart of some of the key pronouncements of the Second Vatican Council. Pope Benedict, in his audience of 7 July this year, commented upon Scotus’ “great Christocentric vision” in which “the Incarnate Word appears as the centre of history and the cosmos”.

However, the importance of this perspective is only now beginning to come to light as modern science has revealed a dynamic and developing universe, which some scientists recognise in the “anthropic principle”. In its strong form,

“The major achievement of the system he offers is that it captures the truths of divine immanence and created relativity without compromising the transcendence of spirit and objectivity of truth.”

this affirms that the laws of matter are framed precisely to produce human nature. Holloway’s perspective of the Unity Law of creation centred on Christ unveils the coherence and meaning of that dynamism. The material order makes no sense without the spiritual order. The spiritual order finds its fulfillment in the supernatural order of God’s self-giving to his creatures, which culminates in the Incarnation.

This “one magnificent sweep of creation”, to use Holloway’s words, re-founds and renews the Church’s theology of creation as well as filling out our insight into the very identity of Jesus Christ. It is a powerful and meaningful apologetic for our scientific age. It offers the Church a way out of the impasse of subjective apologetics, which has so damaged the life of the Church. To use Professor Rowland’s term, it is “a master narrative” that convincingly vindicates the centrality of Christ in our world.

“clarifying what it means for Christ
to share our nature clarifies our
understanding of the cross”

New Theological Horizons, eg the Theology of Gender

In *Catholicism* Holloway explores a range of implications of his Christ-centred vision of the Universe for ecclesiology, sacramental theology, moral theology and social teaching. Among other controversial teachings of the Church, he developed a much needed line of thought about the sacramentality of the sexes in the plan of God (more fully outlined in *Sexual Order and Holy Order*, Faith Pamphlets).

“If the consummation of the material creation is man, and the consummation of man is to be found in the adoption of the sons of God in Himself, then the expectation of the Incarnation should be fundamental to the developmental plan of the universe. The natural means by which creation can co-operate with God in the consummation of the Unity-Law should exist in physical nature. There ought to be a vehicle, at once natural and supernaturally aligned, through which the Heir of all the Ages may come into His own. The means is there, and that means is the womb of woman. Catholics at least will not be surprised if we write at once that the means is the Womb of the Woman.

“It is not possible that God should take flesh through the mutual vocation and intercourse of man and woman. For this, even when sacrilegiously exercised outside the holy sacrament, is an office of nature and an office of grace. It is the determination through the human will of the coming into being of a new, created personality. God, however, cannot be determined to exist through the will of the creature. Nor in becoming a man does the Word of God become a human person, a human being. He is always God.

“What is required for the Incarnation is that the vehicle of human nature should exist which can be determined directly by the Will of God, and that the individual concerned should be given the office in nature and in grace to co-operate with God in a unique manner for the doing of that work.”³

We cannot develop this at length here, yet this insight has quite spectacular ramifications in the field of the theology of the sexes. It offers a rationale that could underpin an explanation of the reservation of the priesthood to men only, and that could develop an orthodox and fruitful understanding of the role of women in the Church.

Only a Beginning

Holloway’s “Unity Law” perspective subsumes the Scotist perspective, or better say the Primacy of Christ in creation – but considerably expands it by making the dynamic laws of the material cosmos aligned on the coming of Christ. The horizons and possibilities thus opened up are vast and exhilarating to contemplate.

We have not tried to answer exhaustively all of the issues raised by the articles in this edition. Our intention is to stimulate debate and reflection. In the closing chapter of *Catholicism: A New Synthesis* Holloway stressed that his ideas needed to be further developed. He exhorted his readers to do so. It is fitting then that we leave the final words of this editorial to this magazine’s first editor:

“This book, and its guiding principles, is offered to all men of sincere goodwill, in the belief that it does, in principle, at least, and whatever may be the human errors it contains, indicate the guiding lines of a true, indeed unique development of Christian and Catholic theology for the needs of the age. It is for men of goodwill, theologians and scientists, Christians and non-Christians, to add, correct, deepen and enrich. For his own part the writer yearns to listen and exchange more than expound. Long years as a busy curate and parish priest, for all their joy and fulfilment, nevertheless have not afforded the time or the status needed to meet many deep scholars and deep hearts who were also deep scientists or theologians. There have been some of course but not as many as could be desired. It is certain that better scholars and deeper, holier men could much improve and further refine on what is written in this thesis. God grant that they may do so and quickly!”⁴

Notes

¹Cf. John Duns Scotus, *Opus Parisiensis*. 3.7.4.

²Cf. St. Augustine, *Sermon* 174, 2.

³Holloway, E. *Catholicism: A New Synthesis*, Surrey 1976. p. 149.

⁴Holloway, E. *Catholicism: A New Synthesis*, Surrey 1976. p. 503.

Restoring the Primacy of Christ in the New Evangelisation *by Tracey Rowland*

Professor Tracey Rowland, Dean of the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family in Melbourne, Australia, discusses the centrality of Christ in the “new anthropology” that is animating an international revival in Catholic family life.

At a launch of his latest book, *Test Everything: Hold Fast to What is Good*, Cardinal Pell announced that at the recent Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference all the bishops agreed that their most important job was to proclaim Christ as our Lord and Saviour. The three hundred or so laity present laughed. Cardinal Pell read our minds and said, well, this *is* progress given what *some people* think we should be doing.

Cardinal Pell did not specify who those people are or their alternative suggestions, but my mind turned to those theologians known as “correlationists” who for several decades have been trying to “correlate” and “accommodate” the Catholic faith to trends within secular culture. One gets the impression that for the common or garden variety correlationist, evangelisation is merely another word for “marketing”. This kind of thinking has dominated the theology academies in the western world for several decades. One of its leading proponents was Karl Rahner and one of its strongest critics has been Joseph Ratzinger.

In his *Principles of Catholic Theology* Ratzinger noted that no one has ever used the formulas of the faith in the Old and New Testaments for the purposes of “advertising”. Contrary to Rahner's promotion of the idea of using pithy “short formulae” to publicise Christian ideas, Ratzinger wrote that “borrowing from the instrumentarium of consumer economics explains nothing where there is a question of transmitting the faith”. The catechumenate is not merely a process of intellectual instruction, but a conversion requiring prayer, and through prayer, a personal encounter with the persons of the Holy Trinity. In the first paragraph of his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, he reminded the faithful that truth is a person. While there is such a thing as Christian morality, Christianity is not primarily an ethical framework, but rather it is about participating in the life of the Trinity.

Decades of “renewal” programmes in parishes which have taken the form of marketing fresh insights to small “encounter groups”, often under the banners of buzzwords written on posters reminiscent of the kind which were used to promote five-year plans in the Soviet bloc, have done nothing to increase the numbers of practising Catholics. The empirical data shows that they don't work. Moreover the people who participate in them often do so because they are lonely and want to make friends. The successful professionals don't go anywhere near them. The ultimate effect lends credit to Nietzsche's thesis that Christianity is the religion of losers.

Some younger theologians are starting to acknowledge that the whole correlationist project was a failure. These tend to fall into two groups: those who follow Ratzinger's reading of the issue and those who continue to share the dream of the

generation of 1968 of making the Catholic faith popular in the world, but who understand that to be popular today means being “post-modern” rather than “modern”. Whereas the moderns believed in “truth” so long as it could be scientifically verified, the post-moderns have given up on truth altogether and eschew belief in any kind of absolute.

For the post-moderns one of the worst things in the world is a “master-narrative” – something which holds itself out as offering the truth for all people of all ages. Christianity is often criticised for being one of these. It is hard to market Christianity to post-moderns when its founder made comments like: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.”

It is therefore important to distinguish between those theologians who are interested in post-modern culture because they want to better understand its effects upon the human person's openness to evangelisation, and those theologians who think that Christ should be just another option at the market of meaningful symbols, no more or less significant than Buddha or Krishna.

For the younger theologians who follow in the trajectory of Karol Wojtyła and Joseph Ratzinger, the solution to the problems of both the Church and the World is to preach Christ as the alpha and omega of all creation, even if this amounts to the presentation of a master-narrative. One of the best summaries of this theological outlook can be found in paragraph 50 of *Dominum et Vivificantem* – Pope John Paul II's encyclical on the Holy Spirit:

“The Incarnation of God the Son signifies the taking up into the unity with God not only of human nature, but in this human nature, in a sense, of everything that is “flesh”: the whole of humanity, the entire visible and material world. The Incarnation, then, also has a cosmic significance, a cosmic dimension. The “first-born of all creation”, becoming incarnate in the individual humanity of Christ, unites himself in some way with the entire reality of man, which is “flesh” – and in this reality with all “flesh”, with the whole of creation.”

Embedded within this paragraph is the idea expressed in *Gaudium et Spes* 22, that “it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear... Christ...in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself.”

It is a well-known fact that paragraph 22 was the most often quoted of all the paragraphs in the documents of the Second Vatican Council by the late Pope John Paul II. In an essay published in 1969 Professor Joseph Ratzinger, as he was, described *Gaudium et Spes* as offering a “daring new theological anthropology” which he applauded, although he thought it had not been well expressed in the document, which is renowned for its theological imprecision.

Thirty years later, the International Theological Commission, under the chairmanship of Cardinal Ratzinger, expressed the Christocentric nature of all human history in the following terms:

“In the last times inaugurated at Pentecost, the risen Christ, Alpha and Omega, enters into the history of peoples: from that moment, the sense of history and thus of culture is

“The solution is to preach Christ as the alpha and omega of all creation”

unsealed and the Holy Spirit reveals it by actualising and communicating it to all. The Church is the sacrament of this revelation and its communication. It re-centres every culture into which Christ is received, placing it in the axis of the world which is coming, and restores the union broken by the Prince of this world. Culture is thus eschatologically situated; it tends towards its completion in Christ, but it cannot be saved except by associating itself with the repudiation of evil.”

Such an approach to culture and evangelisation is described in the academic jargon as “interruptionist”. One does not “correlate” the Catholic faith to something else, or “recontextualise” the faith to some new cultural condition, but rather one “interrupts” the non-Christian culture with the message of the divine mediatorial office of the person of Christ as expressed so powerfully in the *Letter to the Hebrews*.

If one takes the message of the *Letter to the Hebrews* and of *Gaudium et spes* 22 and indeed of the whole of corpus of the Christian scriptures seriously, then this primacy of Christ influences every dimension of theological reflection.

The territory in which it has been most discussed is that of moral theology, though even here it has been subject to different interpretations. As Livio Melina explains in his article “Christ and the Dynamism of Action: an Outlook and Overview of Christocentrism in Moral Theology”, *Communio: International Catholic Review* 28 (Spring 2001), “the spectrum ranges from an affirmation of the primacy of Christ as exemplary model to an acknowledgement of a Christic ontology of the moral subject, from a reference to the critical mediation of anthropology up to an affirmation of his concrete human existence as the categorical norm”.

Wojtyła and Ratzinger, along with Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar, tended to be found at the Christic ontology and categorical norm end of the spectrum. What Ratzinger in 1969 called a “daring new theological anthropology” now lies at the core of the curricula of the world-wide network of John Paul II Institutes for Marriage and Family. Thus one finds on the website of the Washington session of the Institute the statement that the mission of the Institute “begins in the abiding conviction of its founder that love reveals the meaning of the person and, through the person, of all ‘flesh,’ the whole of creation” (cf. *Familiaris consortio*, 11; *Redemptor hominis*, 10; *Dominum et vivificantem*, 50).

Apart from the John Paul II Institutes where this theological vision is central, there are numerous individual scholars who have taken it on board and are reflecting upon its implications for different areas of theology. Many of their publications can be found in the *Communio* journal, and in the Lateran’s *Anthropotes*. The expression “nuptial mysticism” is also used as a short-hand code for this anthropological vision. Two of its leading proponents within the Sacred Hierarchy are Angelo Cardinal Scola of Venice, and Marc Cardinal Ouellet of Quebec City. The works of Archbishop Javier Martinez of Granada also explore the ramifications of Christ’s sovereignty.

The spirituality of many of the new ecclesial movements is deeply embedded in a Trinitarian anthropology which assumes

the vision of *Gaudium et Spes* 22. This explains the importance of personal prayer and Eucharistic adoration in many of these movements. Implicit within them is the attitude, expressed by Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate*, that a “humanism which excludes Christ” is inhuman. Implicitly they tend to be “interruptionists” even if they have never heard of the term. Their approach is to foster a lay spirituality which is conscious of the work of the Holy Spirit and of Christ’s mission in revealing the Father’s love and mercy. They live a life immersed in the sacramental practices of the Church and seek to bear witness to the truth by their love for one another and for those they meet outside their own circles. There are no gimmicks or marketing techniques, at least not among the more successful groups.

Cardinal Ratzinger once wrote that the new ecclesial movements are a sign of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church but he also acknowledged that they are young movements and have “their share of childhood diseases”. By this he meant that they are still in their infancy and have issues to resolve over time. Many lay faithful can tell stories of some strange policies and customs they have encountered in some of these groups. Nonetheless, whatever “childhood diseases” they have, being embarrassed to proclaim Christ as their Lord and Saviour is not one of them.

The generation of ’68 effected a cultural revolution in the countries of the Western world and two generations have now been the guinea-pigs in its social experiments. Wojtyła and Ratzinger stood against the revolution both politically and intellectually. One finds in Wojtyła’s works on human love and sexuality an alternative to both pre-Conciliar Jansenism and the fiction of “free love”; in it he develops an explicitly Trinitarian anthropology which elevates human life and love to the level of a dramatic participation in the Divine life itself. Ratzinger took this on board and worked on responding to what he has identified as the most serious theological issue of the twentieth century – understanding the mediation of history in the realm of ontology. He acknowledges that Rahner understood that this issue was a major problem for the Church and one that could not be dismissed or ignored, but he believes that Rahner’s mode of dealing with the problem opened the Church’s own institutions up to the forces of secularism. As Pope he is now trying to heal the schism created by a generation that was, paradoxically, open to history but closed to tradition.

If these theological projects are taking some time to filter through the seminaries, parishes and academies it is because the Church too has her own children of the revolution whose lives have been dedicated to versions of the correlationist project and to what Benedict XVI calls the “hermeneutic of rupture”, which they applied to the documents of the Second Vatican Council. The correlationist project ends up with “billabong theology” – something cut off from sources of fresh water. By the time someone has worked out what is in fashion and tried to correlate the Catholic faith to it, the fashion has already changed. As Hegel famously noted, the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk. ■

Christ's Primacy in Creation as Resource for the New Evangelisation *by Richard Conrad OP*

Richard Conrad, O.P., Vice-Regent at Blackfriars, Oxford, and Reader in Dogmatic Theology at Maryvale Institute, Birmingham, argues that the New Evangelisation should focus upon the access to the life of the Trinity which we gain through the Incarnation.

If we are to preach the *Christian* Gospel, it is not enough to prove that God exists. The central mystery of Christian faith and life is the *Most Holy Trinity* (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 234), into whom we are baptised. I will locate the theme I was given, Christ's Primacy, within a Trinitarian perspective on creation and humanity. Christ is the Creative – and Re-creative – Word. His mission, and the Spirit's, are inseparable (CCC 689f).

To prove that God exists is a hard enough task, made harder by the lack of concerted witness. Muslims suspect we do not take God's Unity seriously; maybe some Christians don't realise the extent to which we can stand *with* Jews, Muslims and Sikhs in proclaiming the world's One, transcendent Creator. But what I call the "A Team" of theologians – Athanasius, Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas – insist that our faith *into* the Holy Trinity involves absolutely *no* watering-down of God's Unity.

Many modern Christians have abandoned the widespread conviction of Mediaeval Jews, Christians and Muslims that the Unchanging God holds each and every reality in existence, moment by moment. Jon Sobrino, among others, holds that an omnipotent God would not be worth worshipping – He allows too much injustice and suffering. We have to help Him in His struggle against evil. While avoiding that error, we do need to address the problem of evil if evangelisation is to be effective.

Other theologians perpetuate the Deist view of a Watchmaker God who sets the cosmos going then steps back – even limits His knowledge of the future so that the Uncertainty Principle may hold. No wonder that Richard Dawkins can imagine that we suppose God has an impossibly large bandwidth.

Dawkins also objects to the notion that God demands His Son be punished for human sins. For the concept of a transferred punishment is alive and well (if not always expressed bluntly) despite having little (I should say *no*) basis in Scripture, Liturgy or Tradition.

Jesus Christ is the Divine Wisdom who took flesh and dwelt among us. Retaining the Divine Nature, He took on human nature, including a real human psyche. He revealed the Father who sent Him, above all by His Sacrifice, the New Covenant, God's irrevocable pledge of loyalty. Jesus had explained beforehand that He must "go away" if the Holy Spirit were to be given. In *Dominum et Vivificantem*, Pope John Paul affirmed Augustine's insight that the Holy Spirit is the Divine Love in Person, and explored how the Spirit came

as the fruit of Christ's Sacrifice. The new Rite of Mass makes it clear that the Spirit still comes as the fruit of the Sacrifice. How can all this help evangelisation?

Unlike the Creator's existence, none of these specifically Christian truths can be proved without revelation. So teaches Aquinas, so affirms Vatican I. But though faith is not *sight*, it is *enlightenment*. Once we believe into the Holy Trinity, "things fall into place". The cosmos takes on a new lustre as held in being by the One God who is Father, Son and Spirit.

Augustine and Bonaventure delighted to find *vestigia*, footprints, of the Trinity in creation. We must not pretend they prove the Trinity. We may point to form, structure and beauty in the cosmos as the created reflection of the Divine Logos, just as things' being reflects the Father, and their goodness the Spirit. The creation is that much more "personal" when seen in a *Christian* perspective: Aquinas suggests that in uttering His Word, the Father expresses both Himself, and the truth of all creatures, as an Artist conceiving "beforehand" what to craft. In breathing forth the Spirit, Father and Son delight both in each other and in the whole creation.

"If we can say: 'The Wisdom that creates the whole cosmos has lived on earth to enable us to live in a *divine* way – then we have a Gospel worth preaching'"

An aside: the Uncertainty Principle is not due to God's self-limitation; as Fr. Holloway suggested, it is due to the "littleness" of things like electrons. They have less being, hence they have less truth. But the Divine Wisdom is in them, sustaining the patterns of interaction that are expressed by the formulae of Quantum Mechanics.

For Athanasius, we are in the image of the Logos. We are "*logikoi*", rational, able to discern the world's form, structure and beauty, though in the Fall we became warped in our thinking. Augustine went further: we are in the image of Father, Son and Spirit. There are *vestigia* of the Trinity in the structures of our psyche; in its core activities we find an irreducibly *trinitarian* structure that *mirrors* the Divine Trinity. In particular, our power to love reflects the Holy Spirit, as our power to know reflects the Divine Word. Thus Augustine refuted pagan philosophers who found pure unity in the heights of the mind, pointing to The One. Only once we believe into the *Holy Trinity* can we see how we are fashioned, and who by – and who for. Aquinas agrees: *Prima Pars* 93 says the goal of man's creation is to be *in the image of the Holy Trinity*, an image that comes to perfection in communion with the Archetype. This is what makes Christianity worth preaching, this offer of *friendship* with the Divine Trinity, where unity and personhood enhance each other, and our thirst for life, truth and love is alone satisfied.

“This is what makes Christianity worth preaching, this offer of *friendship* with the Divine Trinity.”

Modern theology sees the Holy Trinity as Archetype not only for the individual, but for the Church, the Family, the Religious Community. For Vatican II, we find ourselves in giving ourselves. Pope John Paul helps us see the Holy Spirit, the Bond of Love, as binding husband and wife, perhaps inspired by the Polish custom of singing *Veni, Creator Spiritus* before the exchange of vows. This development taps an insight of Augustine's; this in turn should warn us off a modern emphasis on “models” of the Trinity that tend towards tri-theism. We don't have to water down God's Unity for fear He won't inspire community. On the other hand, a suggestion of Rahner's does not seem to have been much tapped. As I understand him, he sees us as made for the Trinity's self-gift *in our historicity*. Humans look back to our origins, and forward to our future. Thus we are receptive to the Incarnate Word as foundational Covenant, and can be led by the Paraclete into the Future the Word has pledged – into God.

Some people who doubt God's existence, or find the Church unconvincing, are attracted to Jesus. Too many scholars are not liberated from the prejudice that Jesus did not say (or even know) that He is God, so that the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation were developed by the early Church (for orthodox scholars, *authentically* developed). This makes it harder to locate Jesus' moral teaching within His offer of a share in His Divine Sonship, and so to preach His unique message. I think it is becoming more possible to reaffirm that Jesus *did* know, and *did* say, Who He is. Of course, He (and His earliest followers) drew on *Jewish* categories; the arguments of subsequent centuries, I should say, were due to the difficulty of adapting non-Jewish thought-forms to express the same truth.

Jesus is the pure, peaceable, gentle Wisdom from Above (i.e. from God; James 3:17). He taught the Beatitudes; He lived and died by them. If we can say: “The Wisdom that creates the whole cosmos, from its tiniest structures to its greatest, the Wisdom that enables the human mind to grasp and use these structures, has lived on earth to enable us to live in a *divine* way, now and for ever” – *then* we have a Gospel worth preaching, a truth to offer that is attractive by its beauty.

If we confidently proclaim Jesus as *God Incarnate*, we can to some extent defuse the problem of evil. God does not simply permit suffering; *God quite literally suffers with us*. He suffers as man, not as God; but it is God who suffers. God is in solidarity with us, both to redeem our suffering and to be our Friend as intimately as possible – hence the value of the Eucharist as an extension of this friendship, and pledge of eternal divine friendship.

As Fr. Holloway saw, Jesus' Agony in the Garden is not due to an imaginary guilt for which He must be punished, but to a profound compassion. As Pope John Paul explained, in Jesus, God's mercy takes flesh – to ennoble us by asking us for mercy! On the Cross, the Word reveals the Father: Jesus is not the Man looking at an angry God,

but God looking at angry men – with forgiveness, with compassion, not merely inviting our contrition but handing over the Spirit (John 19:30) to create our conversion so that Jesus may powerfully draw all things to Himself (John 12:32) and work a cosmic redemption.

The defined doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, and what I call the Johannine-Thomist view of Redemption (Jesus as the “blue-print” who traces out the divine plan for us, and accomplishes it by being the Channel of the Holy Spirit's coming), do not cause problems for evangelisation. If presented both *authentically* and *accessibly*, they amaze us by the attractive Friendship that God is and that God extends; they meet objections; they reveal our humanity and destiny in a new light. Despite much good modern theology, I fear these doctrines are not getting across as they should – neither to the secular world, nor to other Monotheists. Not always to Christians! – who remain under-nourished.

“Echoing St. Paul, Fr. Holloway envisioned Christ *Incarnate* as key to the *whole* sweep of creation and new creation”

Augustine and Aquinas attribute creation to Christ as the *Divine* Wisdom; in His *humanity* He causes the new creation, eternal life. As Man, He is Lord of *all* history: what precedes His Incarnation is drawn forward by His Sacrifice. We need to show how Christ impacts on the *whole* of humanity: the Spirit is only ever given, to arouse the thirst for truth and goodness, because of Christ's Sacrifice at the centre of history. When Christ is preached explicitly, He fulfils all valid insights – but also calls forth *metanoia*, since the Spirit must purify what is false, and enlarge what is narrow, as well as bring home into Christ those “seeds of the Gospel” He has planted.

Echoing St. Paul, Fr. Holloway envisioned Christ *Incarnate* as key to the *whole* sweep of creation and new creation. For Vatican II, the Final Adam reveals to humanity both humanity and its destiny, as He reveals the Father's love and bestows the Spirit as down-payment on eternal sonship (GS 22). His human life and work blesses all human life and work; it is not to be opposed to God, even though this world's life and work is a *pilgrimage*. Christ, then, validates everyday concerns, as well as human science, but “relativises” them in the light of eternity, that we may not idolise finance or technology. He is with us in our everyday struggles, and points us through death to eternal life. We have a Wisdom to offer, a perspective that makes sense of the whole – Christ, the Divine Wisdom. ■

Is the Primacy of Christ in Creation an Idea Which is Crucial to the New Evangelisation? *by George Cardinal Pell*

Cardinal Pell, Archbishop of Sydney, Australia, responds to two questions we posed. He explains how the primacy of Christ is a crucial part of the Church's response to today's challenges and traces its implications for seminary formation.

A. The Primacy of Christ in Creation: Vatican Council II

The primacy of Christ in creation was crucial to the aims of John XXIII and the Council fathers. One passage in particular of *Gaudium et Spes* highlights this truth:

"In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear. For Adam, the first man, was a type of him who was to come, Christ the Lord, Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling."
(*Gaudium et Spes*, 22)

The connection here between the first and second Adam and its implications for a theology of creation is obvious. Adam, created by God, is real, but also a "type" – a "shadow," a "sketching" – of Christ himself. Humanity finds its *source* and *summit* in Christ himself.

In reading this passage of *Gaudium et Spes* it is important to take stock of the footnote. In the Flannery edition it is footnote twenty. It fills out most fittingly the typological claim. Two references are found in the footnote. Romans 5, 14 is the first. It reads:

"...Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come."

The second comes from Tertullian:

"For in all the form which was moulded in the clay, Christ was in his thoughts as the man who was to be."

In other words, it is only in Christ that we understand who man is and what he is called to be. What could be more central and meaningful for the new evangelisation? *Gaudium et Spes* chose to confront modern-day atheism by referring to Christ, not only as the centre, but as the fulfilment of what it means to be human. Since humanity is the pinnacle of the creative and free act of Almighty God, Christ is the primordial figure in the entire creation.

Marxists had long peddled the idea that religion was the opium of the people. What the Council fathers discovered was that in fact the Church has always had a theology and language to deal with the grave pastoral issue of atheism. The language was a person – Jesus Christ – who revealed to us not only the tenderness of the merciful Father, but the preciousness of humanity. The revelation, therefore, was two-fold. Vatican II wanted to remind Catholics and the world of this profound truth, at once so ancient and so new.

True religion, therefore, according to the teaching of Vatican II, is not some form of medication, alleviating pain and worry,

but rather a profound answer not only to the perennial question concerning death (eternity), but about man (human life). The claim is that Christ is truly human and truly divine and that his appearance among us is not only as mediator of the new covenant – something only a man-God could do – but that his manifestation in the flesh is something that God has desired for humanity for all eternity.

Adam was a shadow-man, Christ the real-man. God the Father created the material and spiritual universe in and through his Word, with the precise intention that Christ was the "man who was to be". His appearing among us was thoroughly necessary, both for the forgiveness of sin (and the healing of humanity) and for the revelation of what it means to be human. Christ, the image of the Father, discloses to us what it means to be in the image and likeness of God and how we should "be what we are" in and through human action.

"The desired renewal of the Church to a large extent depends upon the renewal of the ministerial priesthood"

Not only, then, is modern atheism addressed in the most plausible of ways, but so too now is postmodernism, one of the great challenges the Church faces as the 21st century unfolds. This latter heresy is a threat that should not be underestimated. It divests the human person of any identity. In this it shares a common consequence with atheism. By attacking the notion that at the heart of the human person is a spiritual centre – what St. Thomas would call the "spiritual substance" and what John Paul II would call "self-possession" – postmodernist thought betrays the essence of humanity.

In his excellent work *The Genius of John Paul II*, Richard Spinello (Boston College) details three great challenges the Church is facing with respect to morality:

- i) ethical relativity and postmodern thought
- ii) proportionalism and consequentialism
- iii) false notions of freedom or autonomy.

After reviewing some postmodernist authors Spinello reaches this insightful conclusion:

"[T]he poverty of postmodern ethical relativism should be evident – a missing ethical subject and hence no possibility of genuine moral responsibility or accountability, desire as the basis for ethics, ethics as pure self-creation with the vaguest of boundaries, ethics without principle, or ethical conduct measured by how well one "copes with the flux" of the postmodern world."¹

What can be stated clearly is that the Church's response to the grave errors of our time – atheism, relativism, postmodernism, the sexual revolution, the culture of death (abortion, euthanasia), marriage *break-up* and family *break-down* – has been consistent from the time of the Council until now. Only in Christ – truly human and truly divine – will the

“Humanity finds its source and summit in Christ himself”

Church, and thus humanity, be able to sail amidst the storm. The barque of Peter has led the way. John Paul II was persistent in directing the Church’s gaze towards Christ, because Christ is the fullest revelation of what it means to be human:

“The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly – and not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial, and even illusory standards and measures of his being – he must with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ. He must, so to speak, enter into him with all his own self, *he must “appropriate” and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption in order to find himself.* If this profound process takes place within him, he then bears fruit not only of adoration of God but also of *deep wonder at himself.* How precious must man be in the eyes of the Creator, if he “gained so great a Redeemer”, and if God “gave his only Son in order that man “should not perish but have eternal life”.” (*Redemptor Hominis*, 10 – emphasis added)

B. How Seriously do Contemporary Theology and Seminary Studies take this Idea?

Pastores Dabo Vobis, published in 1992, after a Synod of Bishops that was devoted to priestly formation, is a watershed for the Church. The Church has outlined clearly that formation of priests has four foundations or pillars: human formation, spiritual formation, pastoral and apostolic formation and intellectual formation. Human formation is recognised as the basis of the others.

Talis grex qualis rex – As the leader, so the flock: the desired renewal of the Church to a large extent depends upon the renewal of the ministerial priesthood.² Logically, the renewal of priestly identity depends to a great extent upon seminary formation.

Human Formation at Good Shepherd Seminary

Leaving aside the mandated programme of studies required of seminarians worldwide by the Holy See, I want to focus briefly on the human formation programme now in place at Good Shepherd Seminary, Sydney, Australia.

In accord with the desire of the Church expressed in *Optatam Totius*, 13, and *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 62, a spiritual year precedes formal intellectual education at Good Shepherd. Seminarians are immersed in the deposit of faith as expressed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, they undergo formation courses in Christian anthropology, psychological counselling, John Paul’s *Theology of the Body* and *Lectio Divina*. The year begins with a three-day silent retreat, includes an eight-day silent retreat during Holy Week and the first few days of the Easter period, and the year culminates in a thirty-day retreat in accord with the Ignatian method. The year and the long retreat are then reviewed in a five-day period at the beginning of second year. There is little doubt that seminarians grow considerably in their knowledge of themselves and Christ during this time.

The Foundation of Human Formation

Importantly, first-year seminarians receive formation concerning the human emotions in accord with the teaching of St. Thomas’ mature work – the *Summa Theologica*. There is now renewed interest in this section of Thomas’ work and for good reason. Take for instance Robert Miner’s work *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*.³ He notes that students of moral theology who are lucky enough to be exposed to Aquinas’ thought will begin with study of human action, its purpose and principles. The pursuit of happiness is the hermeneutic. Then they will normally move to Thomas’ treatment of habits and the virtues that will fulfil their desire for happiness.

“Christ is the primordial figure in the entire creation”

What is missing? *Aquinas’ treatment of passion.* Miner comments:

“For many of the same readers, nothing is more habitual than to skim through, or skip entirely, the ‘Treatise on the Passions.’ This neglect has not gone entirely unnoticed. Servais Pinckaers observes that the twenty-seven Questions containing 132 Articles on the passions comprise ‘une oeuvre unique, classique ...et trop négligée.’”⁴

Is it true that passion and emotion have nothing to do with human action? Thomas thought otherwise. Emotions are movements of the soul itself. Nowhere is this more clear than when St. Thomas treats of the emotion of love. True, we humans try to love God, says Thomas. We call this *dilectio*. It is important. But for Thomas, God is more interested in *amor* – the emotion or passion of love.

“The reason that some held that, even in the will itself, the name of *amor* is more divine (*divinius*) than the name *dilectio*, is that *amor* conveys a certain passion, chiefly according as it is in the sensitive appetite; *dilectio*, however, presupposes the judgment of reason. But man is more able to tend toward God through *amor*, drawn passively in a way by God himself, than he can lead himself to God by means of his own reason (*ratio*), which pertains to the character (*ratio*) of *dilectio*, as said above. And on account of this, *amor* is more divine than *dilectio*.”⁵

Amor, dilectio, caritas – they are all critical in the life of Christ and of every human being. However, *amor* is primordial. God is able to draw us to himself through this passion of love in a most excellent and subtle way, and it takes precedent over any attempt (*dilectio*) that we may make in our search and striving for God. Rationalism has obscured our vision. The tradition encourages us to *accept* human nature as God has created it. Trying to re-fashion human nature through *will-power* is a doomed project – particularly in the formation of priests.

Is the Primacy of Christ in Creation an Idea Which is Crucial to the New Evangelisation?

continued

What is at stake, then, is not only the renewal of moral theology called for by the Second Vatican Council, but also the formation of young men who enter our seminaries. Young men need to *know* themselves, to *discover* themselves as men, to *accept* themselves as men as the basis of their formation for priestly ministry.

An example may be helpful. During a formation period at the beginning of the seminary year in 2010, Wayne Bennett – a famous professional football coach in Australia – visited the seminarians. He spoke to them about the importance of knowing oneself as the basis of any professional work. He told the story of Ian Chappell, one of Australia's past cricket captains. Chappell had some advice for an upcoming Australian cricketer years back whose name was Shane Warne. Warne went on to be Australia's highest wicket taker.

“Christ is the centre and fulfilment of what it means to be human”

Chappell spoke with Warne at the beginning of his cricketing career. He told him that he had many talents, but that if he really wanted to be great, then it was essential that he know and understand himself. Warne reflected on the advice years later and admitted that he simply couldn't get his head around what Chappell was talking about. Warne's off-field behaviour indicated as much.

To sum up, what is being stated here is nothing more, nothing less than what the great pope expressed in *Fides et Ratio*. The introduction of that marvellous encyclical is headed *Know Yourself* and John Paul II has this to say after a few brief words about human consciousness:

“The admonition *Know yourself* was carved on the temple portal at Delphi, as testimony to a basic truth to be adopted as a minimal norm by those who seek to set themselves apart from the rest of creation as ‘human beings’, that is as those who ‘know themselves.’” (*Fides et Ratio*, 1)

Of course the obtainment of self-knowledge is not an egotistical pursuit. Rather, its purpose is to help the seminarian to become a *bridge*. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* is clear about the matter when it notes that if the priest's ministry and mission is to be credible and acceptable “it is important that the priest should mould his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ the Redeemer of humanity”.⁶

Virtue-Based Formation

The philosophical tradition has often emphasised the intellectual and volitional centre of the person. Boethius is not wrong when he says that the human person is an individual substance with a rational nature. But earlier Augustine noted that rationality serves something more foundational to the human person. The person is substantial *relation*. Here then is the plentiful definition of the human person.

Ratzinger in his *Introduction to Christianity* sides with Augustine. “Christian thought,” he says, “discovered the

kernel of the concept of the person” and in doing so “describes something other and infinitely more than the mere idea of the ‘individual.’” It is the doctrine of the Trinity that elevates human reason and metaphysical thought:

“Let us listen once again to St Augustine: ‘In God there are no accidents, only substance and relation.’ Therein lies concealed a revolution in man's view of the world: the undivided sway of thinking in terms of substance is ended; relation is discovered as an equally valid primordial mode of reality.”⁷

This deep, abiding tradition shown forth in Augustine's thought, which Pope Benedict XVI has uncovered, is a classic example of *faith* elevating and purifying *reason*. We must be true to who we are. We are undoubtedly intelligent and volitional beings. We are rational. But we are profoundly relational, proved oddly enough, by our somatic and emotional structure. We simply cannot exist without others at our side in the most basic of human matters.

Conclusion

Putting it all together – body and soul – we discover the profound truth of the human person, made in the image and likeness of God. Formation that is either too intellectualised or too psychologised falls short. As always, the balance lies in the middle and that is why St. Thomas' method is crucial. It is why Augustine's insight should be pondered anew. God is subsistent relation and human beings are made in his image and likeness.

Knowledge of Christ and knowledge of self gives way to love of Christ and love of self. That is the foundation for our first year programme at Good Shepherd Seminary. Christ is the centre of our efforts, since he is the centre and fulfilment of what it means to be human.

It is from this foundation that our seminarians then progress through the following formation cycle at the seminary:

Year 2	Psychosexual Development
Year 3	Four Cardinal Virtues
Year 4	Celibacy in the <i>Theology of the Body</i>
Year 5 & 6	Three Theological Virtues
Year 7	<i>Pastoral Rule of Gregory the Great (Books 3 & 4)</i>

The human and spiritual formation of future priests is absolutely essential, since *Talis grex qualis rex* – “As the leader, so the flock.” ■

Notes

¹Richard A. Spinello, *The Genius of John Paul II: The Great Pope's Moral Wisdom* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 2007), p. 39-40.

²Cf. *Optatam Totius*, Introductory Paragraph, (Vatican II: Decree on the Training of Priests, 28 October, 1965).

³Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas On The Passions: A Study of Summa Theologiae 1a2ae 22-48* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁴Miners, *Thomas Aquinas*, p. 5.

⁵*Summa Theologica*, I-II, Question 26, Article 3, Reply Obj 4. (As quoted in Miner).

⁶*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 43.

⁷Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), p. 132.

The Primacy of Christ and the Cross: Some Considerations From Ambrose of Milan

by John Gavin SJ

John Gavin SJ, a faculty member of the Pontifical Biblical Institute and the Pontifical Oriental Institute, brings out the need to harmonise our vision Christ as the ahistorical Lord of the cosmos and as the historically crucified one.

Today, when many speak of the primacy of Christ in creation, they are referring to the Scotist interpretation of the divine motive for the Incarnation: the Incarnation is the primary end of all creation.¹ Thus, if man had not fallen into sin, the Incarnation would have still taken place. This view is not lacking in Scriptural support: “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him” (Col. 1:16). One can also consider the teachings of such Fathers of the Church as St. Irenaeus of Lyons or St. Maximus the Confessor, and such later thinkers as Henri de Lubac or Hans Urs von Balthasar. In fact, one may argue that it is the predominant viewpoint in contemporary theology.

This perspective has much to commend it. First, it demonstrates that the Incarnation took place for man’s *deificatio*, the union of man with the divine nature. The primary end of the Word’s enfleshment is divine adoption and union: “God became man, in order that man might become God” (St. Athanasius). Second, some believe this understanding of primacy allows for a Christological framework conducive to the contemporary scientific conception of the universe. In a sense, Christ provides the grand unifying theory long sought by physicists, since creation unfolds within the Word’s dynamic and personal assumption of human nature, “the microcosmos”. All things exist in order to be united and transformed in Christ, and Christ serves as the key for understanding the end of the universe.

But this position is not without its dangers. The Scotist position, as one might call it, often leads to an a-historicism that reduces *the person* of Jesus Christ to alpha and omega points that enclose the divine economy. In fact, this perspective itself is a-historical and counterfactual, as evinced by the very hypothetical nature of the proposition: if man *had not fallen*, the Incarnation *would have* still taken place. While a hypothetical stance allows us to perceive important aspects of the divine plan (e.g., the *deificatio* of man), it unfortunately requires a certain abstraction from the Jesus of history, from our own reality as sinful creatures, and from the salvation won for us upon the Cross.² One can get a glimpse of how far this can go in some of the more extreme interpretations of Maximus the Confessor, in which it is suggested that, without the fall, the Incarnation would not have taken place in the person of Jesus, but in a “universal” incarnation in human nature through man’s free co-operation with divine grace. The Incarnation, in such an interpretation, becomes purely “final” at the expense of the person of Jesus.

The primacy of Christ in creation requires a stronger historical grounding than this hypothetical perspective alone will allow. Perhaps St. Ambrose offers another manner of understanding this point. In his *De Paradiso*, the bishop of Milan describes Adam and Eve as living in “the shadow of life”, that is, poised for a deeper union with God, as opposed to the “shadow of death”, that is, our own lives within sin and suffering. He then asks an important question: “Did God know that Adam would violate His commands? Or was He unaware of it? If He did not know, we are faced with a limitation of His divine power. If He knew, yet gave a command which He was aware would be ignored, it is not God’s providence to give an unnecessary order.”⁴ Moreover, one must ask why God would follow through in creating a creature that would become an abomination to him. Some would say that “a God who is good is bound to prevent the birth of him who shall have to introduce the substance of sin”.⁵

Yet, God does will this creation, with all its selfishness and all of its tragedy, because “the Lord Jesus came to save all sinners”.⁶ The primacy of Christ in creation emerges not simply from his being the beginning and end of the cosmos, but also from his being the saviour and justification of this cosmos of intellectual creatures free to give themselves to the creator. Jesus of Nazareth, the Word incarnate, who was born, grew in strength and wisdom, preached and performed mighty signs, freely gave his life on the cross, was raised and is now seated at the right hand of the Father – this Jesus justified creation in himself, since God created *this* cosmos “with the means of obtaining remedy for our sins”.⁷ God made this world despite Adam’s disobedience because the Word became flesh and gave his life in obedience to the Father, thereby subjecting all creation to the Father (1 Cor. 15:28). In this created order redeemed by Christ, even suffering becomes a pedagogue that awakens man to his true nature and calls him to respond to God’s mercy. One must say, therefore, that God made this universe on the basis of the free and loving sacrifice of *Jesus*, not solely on the basis of a vision of the “cosmic Christ”.

The Church, in her wisdom, favours neither the perspective of Scotus, Maximus and others (“If man had not sinned...”) nor the perspective of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and many Fathers of the Church (“The Son became incarnate in order to save man from sin”). Each of these considerations of the mystery of Jesus Christ offers essential meditations upon the centrality of the Incarnation in the economy. Thus, a teaching regarding the primacy of Christ must not limit itself to a hypothetical stance that, despite its importance, runs the risk of reducing Christ to a final cause or to a unifying theory. It must balance such a view with the tradition that highlights the crucified and risen Lord of history, Jesus of Nazareth, who came that we might be saved (“O felix culpa!”). Jesus is not only the one “through whom and for whom” all things were made, but he is the one who has redeemed this cosmos in which we work out our salvation “in fear and trembling”. ■

For notes see bottom of page 15.

Motives for the Incarnation in the Epistle to the Hebrews *by James Swetnam SJ*

Fr. James Swetnam SJ, vice-Rector Emeritus of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome, offers an exploration of the motives for the Incarnation as presented in the letter to the Hebrews.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is one of the least understood writings of the New Testament corpus.¹ The present note will outline the motives for the Incarnation as presented in Chapter 2 of the epistle. No attempt will be made to “prove” what is presented, but an attempt will be made to make a plausible case for all that is asserted.²

Hebrews is a classic example of the importance of structure for ascertaining meaning.³ The present writer’s construal of Heb 1,1 – 3,6 is as follows:⁴

1,1-4 Prologue

1,5-14 Exposition on Christ as Son [of God]⁵

2,1-4 Exhortation Based on 1,5-14

2,5-18 Exposition on Christ as “Son of Man”

3,1-6 Exhortation Based on 2,5-18

The structure indicates that the author of Hebrews is consciously and deliberately distinguishing between Christ as divine and Christ as human.⁶ The section 2,5-18 is where the detailed motives for the Incarnation are presented.

“Son of Man” in 2,5-18 is understood with reference to a midrashic interpretation of Ps 8,5. This verse is understood in Hebrews not as referring to mankind in general, as in its original meaning in Ps 8, but as made explicit in Heb 2,13a: Jesus is being viewed in 2,5-18 as one who “trusts” in God the way Abraham “trusted” in God in Gen 22. (The word “man” in Ps 8,5 cited at Heb 2,6 is understood midrashically of Abraham and not of mankind in general as in the original meaning of the psalm.)

The structure of 2,5-18 is as follows:⁷

2,5 Introduction to 2,5-18

2,6-8a Citation of Psalm 8,6-8

2,8b-9 Jesus as Heavenly Victim

2,10-12 Jesus as Heavenly High Priest

2,13a Thematic Verse for 2,5-18: “I shall be trusting in Him”

2,13b-16 Jesus as Earthly Victim

2,17-18 Jesus as Earthly High Priest

This is a passage packed with theological meaning. Here is the classic treatment of Jesus as “high priest” in the New Testament. It should be noted that this treatment occurs in the section presenting Jesus as human, not as divine,⁸ for only as human does he have the wherewithal (blood) to expiate sin (cf. Heb 9,22).

Requisite for understanding this passage is knowledge of the Old Testament cultic rite of the *tôdâ*.⁹ Briefly put, the *tôdâ* (short for *zebach tôdâ*, “sacrifice of praise”) was an Old Testament rite involving: 1) a bloody sacrifice in the temple of Jerusalem offered by the temple priests; 2) a ritual public consumption of bread; 3) accompanying public hymns and prayers. The ritual involving the consumption of bread and hymns/prayers could be performed by any believing Israelite male. The motive was the public rendering of thanksgiving/praise to God by the person commissioning the ritual in the presence of relatives and friends for God’s signal intervention in saving the man (and his family, if the occasion called for it) from death in war or in some similar grave danger such as famine. The divine salvation could be past or future. Both, obviously, involved trust in God’s providential care.¹⁰

“The expiation of sin achieved by Jesus’ priestly sacrificial death on the cross is brought to fulfilment in the Eucharist”

In the New Testament adaptation of this ritual, Jesus at the Last Supper looks forward to the salvation which he believes (as human) that God will grant in the death he realises as imminent. The bread and hymns/prayers which mark Jesus’ cultic action at the Last Supper are the New Testament fulfilment known as the Eucharist of the Old Testament *zebach tôdâ*, with the unique bloody death of Jesus on the cross taking the place of the temple sacrifices. The unique death of Jesus on the cross anchors each Christian *zebach tôdâ* in a supernatural unity, while the bread and prayers/hymns of the Christian *zebach tôdâ* are infinitely multipliable.

An allusion to the Christian *zebach tôdâ*, i.e., Eucharist, is found at Heb 2,12 in the allusion to Ps 22,22. In the original meaning Ps 22,22 is a *tôdâ* prayer uttered by the psalmist to celebrate his deliverance from a pressing danger by God.¹¹ In Hebrews, of course, the prayer is an allusion to the Eucharist as the thanksgiving by Christ for the salvation granted him by the resurrection.

The citation of Ps 22,22 at Heb 2,12 is crucial for the understanding of the entire section 2,5-18: the priesthood of Jesus is not intelligible apart from the Eucharist. In Heb 2,10-12 Jesus is portrayed as the heavenly high priest (i.e., as he exists in his risen state) officiating at the Eucharist, and at 2,8b-9 Jesus is portrayed as the heavenly victim (i.e., as he exists in the Eucharist). Parallel to these presentations of Jesus as heavenly victim and heavenly high priest are Heb 2,13b-16 which portrays Jesus as earthly victim, and Heb 2,17-18 which portrays Jesus as earthly high priest.¹²

Heb 2,13b-16 is fulfilled in Heb 2,8b-9. In Heb 2,13b-16 Jesus is said to have taken on “blood and flesh”¹³ in order that through death he might destroy the power of the devil (2,14) and free those suffering from a fear of death, i.e., all mankind (2,15). These purposes of the Incarnation are fulfilled in Heb 2,8b-9. By gazing at the heavenly Jesus as victim, i.e., Jesus in the Eucharist, believers are able to profit from Jesus’

experiencing death for each of them, thus enabling them to appreciate Jesus’ earthly victimhood, which resulted in his heavenly victimhood in the Eucharist. Their faith-trust will be similarly brought to completion by God and thus their fear of death in their earthly life, and the power of the devil over them, will be eliminated.

Heb 2,17-18 is brought to fulfilment in Heb 2,10-12. The expiation of sin achieved by Jesus’ priestly sacrificial death on the cross is brought to fulfilment in the Eucharist of which Jesus is the heavenly high priest. The purpose of Jesus’ heavenly high priesthood in the Eucharist is portrayed as consisting in “announcing God’s name”. That name would seem to be “Father”.¹⁴ In this way Jesus “sanctifies” those who share in his faith-trust in God in the face of personal death.¹⁵ In doing this in the context of the Eucharist Jesus the heavenly high priest “sanctifies” the believer (“the one sanctifying and those being sanctified are from one” – Heb 2,11).¹⁶

These motives for the Incarnation are summed up in Heb 10,5-14 where the Son is portrayed as “entering”¹⁷ into the world “to do God’s will”. Thus God’s “will” is associated, ultimately, with the priesthood of Christ and its exercise.

In summary it can be said that the Incarnation has as its global purpose the doing of God’s “will” which, in the context of Hebrews (and perhaps elsewhere in the New Testament), has a connection with the priesthood of Christ. This global purpose can be broken down into two sub-purposes:

1) Bringing about Christ as earthly victim in order to defeat the power of the devil and free mankind from the fear of death. This earthly victimhood of Jesus is achieved in the heavenly victimhood which permits the believer, in an atmosphere of faith-trust, to look on the Eucharistic Christ and see in him the result of faith-trust in God brought to fulfilment by God’s gift of the resurrection.

2) Bringing about Christ as heavenly high priest in order to sanctify the believer by announcing God’s name of Father in the context of the Christian *tôdâ*, i.e., the Eucharist. This sanctification is achieved by union with the risen Christ in the faith-trust in God as Father which Christ showed as he offered himself on the cross. ■

Notes

¹The standard reaction by knowledgeable persons to mention of “the Epistle to the Hebrews” is “Hebrews is not written by St. Paul”. The present writer begs to differ from this standard reaction which, of course, expresses the standard view. But for the purposes of the present paper the author is irrelevant. Hebrews is part of the New Testament canon and is the inspired word of God to be received by faith by every believing Roman Catholic.

²For a much fuller treatment of the material presented in this note the reader may consult the author’s website: http://web.mac.com/jameshwetnam/Site/Home_Page.html (on the Google search engine, “James Swetnam’s Close Readings”). There one finds a detailed commentary on Hebrews entitled “Hebrews – An Interpretation” with ample bibliographical references.

³The coincidence of a meaningful structure and the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church enhances the plausibility of the interpretation being advanced for those whose faith is guided by the Roman Catholic faith tradition.

⁴Cf. James Swetnam, “Tw’n lalhqhomevwn in Hebrews 3,5”, *Biblica* 90 (2009), pp. 98-99.

⁵The section speaks only of Christ as “Son”. But the understanding is that the word “Son” is meant as the primary analogate of all sonship, so that the explicit use of “of God” is unnecessary, given the context.

⁶It would be anachronistic to say that the author is speaking of Christ’s divine “nature” and Christ’s human “nature” in the context of a divine “person” – such terminology and understanding will come only later with the ecumenical councils of Nicaea I, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon. But the foreshadowing of these terms and this understanding, based on Greek philosophical terminology, is present in Hebrews.

⁷The argumentation behind this structure is laid out in detail in James Swetnam, “The Crux at Hebrews 2,9 in Its Context”, *Biblica* 91 (2010), pp. 103-111. In this article references are given to previous treatment of the section 2,5-18 by the author.

⁸This is not to imply that Chalcedon was innovating in understanding Christ as having divine and human natures united by a divine person (“hypostatic union”). The union between divine and human in Heb 1,5 – 3,6 is expressed by the use of a *gezera shawa* uniting Ps 110,4 at Heb 1,13 and Ps 8,7 at Heb 2,8a, as explained in “Hebrews – An Interpretation”.

⁹Cf. “Hebrews – An Interpretation” for ample discussion.

¹⁰Cf. the present writer’s understanding of Chapter 13 of Hebrews as presented in “Hebrews – An Interpretation” in his website.

¹¹Cf. the first 21 verses of Ps 22, with expressions of extreme suffering alternating with expressions of faith-trust in God.

¹²The priesthood of Christ has two stages, earthly and heavenly, depending on the ontological status of his body. The heavenly priesthood, i.e., the risen Christ, “incorporates” the earthly priesthood and all that was achieved by it.

¹³The inversion from the usual “flesh and blood” is probably designed to emphasise the role of blood in the expiation of Jesus as high priest in 2,17.

¹⁴Cf. James Swetnam, “oj ajpovstolo” in Hebrews 3,1”, *Biblica* 89 (2008), pp. 256-261.

¹⁵Cf. James Swetnam, “jEx ejnov” in Hebrews 3,1”, *Biblica* 88 (2007), pp. 521-524.

¹⁶In the Bible only God can sanctify. Hence this attribution of the act of sanctifying to Jesus implicitly indicates the belief of the author of Hebrews in the divinity of Jesus even in the act proper to his humanity of acting as a priest. Again, a foreshadowing of Chalcedon.

¹⁷The word “enter” (eijsevrcomai) has liturgical connotations in the New Testament.

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¹cf. John Duns Scotus, *Ord.* 3.7.3.

²Thomas Aquinas acknowledges that it would be fully within God’s power to become incarnate even if man had not sinned. But such a speculation goes beyond what is revealed in the scriptures and abstracts from the reality of our experience. The primary end of the incarnation is the redemption of man. “For such things as spring from God’s will, and beyond the creature’s due, can be made known to us only through being revealed in the Sacred Scripture, in which the Divine Will is made known to us. Hence, since everywhere in the Sacred Scripture the sin of the first man is assigned as the reason of the Incarnation, it is more in accordance with this to say that the work of the Incarnation was ordained by God as a remedy for sin; so that, had sin not existed, the Incarnation would not have been.” Thomas Aquinas, *ST III*, q. I, a. 3.

³cf. J. M. Garrigues, *Le dessein d’adoption du Créateur dans son rapport au fils d’après S. Maxime le Confesseur*, in *Maximus Confessor: Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur*, ed. F. Heinzer and C. Schönborn, Fribourg 1982, p.185.

⁴Ambrose of Milan, *De Paradiso*, 8, 38, trans. J. Savage, Washington, Washington 1961.

⁵ibid, 8, 39.

⁶ibid, 8, 38.

⁷ibid, 8, 38.

Henrik Ibsen, Pope John Paul and the Battle Over Marriage

by Kathleen Curran Sweeney

Kathleen Sweeney uncovers, in Henrik Ibsen's influential plays, some of the existentialist ideas at the root of the current deconstruction of the family. She shows how some seeds of the needed response have been sown by Pope John Paul II. Miss Sweeney is a freelance writer and graduate of the John Paul II Institute in Washington.

"When Nora closes behind her the door of her doll's house, she opens wide the gate of life for women, and proclaims the revolutionary message that only perfect freedom and communion make a true bond between man and woman, meeting in the open, without lies, without shame, free from the bondage of duty."

On Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in *The Social Significance of the Modern Drama* by Emma Goldman.¹

In the Victorian era in which Henrik Ibsen lived, the plays he wrote shocked many but fascinated others. Today, his ideas on women and marriage are deeply embedded in the culture and taken for granted. What is the validity of his views? Have they borne positive fruit?

Ibsen challenges his theatrical audience to probe more deeply into marital relationships. He seems to question the validity of marriages that, upon examination, appear to be only contracts established for financial reasons or social standing, maintaining a facade of propriety. Complete and open truth between spouses and freedom of choice for women are central values expressed in his plays. His critiques of relationships between men and women opened up serious questions for the culture in which he was writing. Ibsen said he wanted his plays to dramatise the problematic position of women in a male-dominated society. "A woman cannot be herself in contemporary society; it is an exclusively male society," he wrote.² This was indeed a problem to address, but unfortunately Ibsen did not provide any positive solutions. Deeper understandings of women and marriage that could be helpful are missing from Ibsen's plays. This lack has led to some poisonous conclusions.

The theme of self-fulfilment of women which pervades several of Ibsen's plays is a theme central to the feminist movement. In our day, Pope John Paul II, in his theology of the body and other writings, has given us a more profound understanding of true fulfilment so that we can answer the questions Ibsen raised in a way that does not undermine marriage but supports it. Let us look at these aspects in a couple of Ibsen's plays and then in the theology of the body.

In *A Doll's House*, a young married woman, Nora, seems very happily married, in love with her husband Torvald, as he is with her, and delighted with their children. Yet it is clear there are serious defects in the relationships. Torvald is dominating and patronising toward Nora, whom he treats like a child. Nora is constantly telling him little lies and fearful of telling him about money she has borrowed. Her children seem to be playthings for her, just as she seems to be a pretty doll to her husband. Torvald fails to respect his wife and grant her the dignity of mature and responsible womanhood, spoiling her and indulging her, which only stultifies her growth. When he

finds out that Nora's loan transaction involves an illegality which would bring a public scandal, he appears to care more about his own reputation than about Nora, rejecting her in a scathing, angry attack. Nora is shocked at how quickly her own need for understanding and support is ignored in favour of his ego. What is the resolution of this conflict? Instead of portraying an attempt to understand each other better and grow into a more mature love, Ibsen's play ends with Nora abruptly leaving her husband, her children and her home, considering her marriage ended and her husband a stranger and handing back her ring, despite the fact that Torvald apologises for his anger and promises to change. She declares: "I must stand quite alone, if I am to understand myself and everything about me. It is for that reason that I cannot remain with you any longer." When Torvald asks her how she can neglect her most sacred duties to her husband and children, Nora responds that her most sacred duty is to herself. She no longer accepts that "before all else, you are a wife and a mother", but believes that "before all else, I am a reasonable human being". She is not sure about religion either and says she will have to find out "if it is true for me".

In this play, Ibsen has correctly pinpointed problems in marriage that call for change: domineering and patronising husbands, failure to acknowledge with respect the intelligence, responsibility and self-direction of wives, dishonesty and childish behaviour, duty without love that can leave a marriage relationship superficial. But the influence of rationalistic and individualistic ideologies results in a failure to find a positive basis for marital love. According to Martha Fletcher Bellinger in her analysis of Ibsen's moral principles, he believed that "we alone can help ourselves; no help can come from without".³ Can one really "find oneself" alone in a rationalistic search for one's identity and maturity? Or is it rather, as the Vatican II document, *Gaudium et Spes*, states, that man "cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself". (GS 24)? Before exploring this further, let us look at another play by Ibsen.

In *The Lady from the Sea*, Dr. Wangel seeks "a true life together" with his wife, Ellida, but for three years there has been an estrangement between them which he is seeking to understand, sensing there is some deep psychological obstacle within his wife. Circumstances arise that lead Ellida to tell Wangel about a strange alliance with a seaman which she had entered into before her marriage to the doctor. This seaman, who had visited her village, had an understanding of the sea that Ellida shared with him, such that they seemed soul-mates and agreed to an engagement which the seaman enacted by putting each of their rings on a key-ring and tossing it into the sea. Then he had to leave with his ship but he promised he would return for her as soon as he could.

“Missing is a recognition of the importance of the vow”

Afterwards, Ellida realised that this had been “mad and meaningless” and wrote to the seaman that all was finished between them. When Dr. Wangel came to her village and proposed, she accepted. Yet the strange man from the sea continued to have a strange “power over my mind,” Ellida told Wangel and after experiencing a mysterious dream, she lived with “the dread of the strange man”.

When this seamen suddenly appears from a ship that arrives in their town and comes to claim her according to their promise to each other, Ellida is alarmed and Wangel wants to protect her. But Ellida feels she must face the seaman and make a free decision about marriage. She seems to be full of contradictory feelings, telling Wangel, “I love no one but you,” yet also saying to him, “You came out there [to her village] and bought me. I accepted the bargain and sold myself to you.... It was not of my own free will that I went with you... the secret lies in those words...I see that the life we two live together is really no marriage.... We should release each other of our own free will—to cry off the bargain.” Wangel protests, “I have no right to set you free. I exercise my right to and my duty to protect you... You have no right to choose, no right without my permission.” But Ellida, says, “you can never prevent the choice... The longings and desires of my soul—you cannot bind these....” Wangel asks her if she wants a divorce, but Ellida responds that “It is not formalities like these I care about. Such outward things don’t really matter, I think. What I want is that we should release each other, of our own free will.”

When the seaman arrives at their house, he says: “Both Ellida and I agreed that what we did should have all the strength and authority of a real and true marriage.... If Ellida wishes to be with me, she must come of her own free will.” The turning point in this drama comes when Wangel says: “I cry off our bargain. Now you can choose your own fate in perfect freedom.” Ellida now feels this changes everything, and she freely chooses to stay with Wangel, telling the seaman: “Your will has no power over me now.” The seaman responds: “There is something here stronger than my will...”

What is being said in this scenario? What is being considered as the basis for a true marriage? The main character Ellida asserts that the formalities of a wedding ceremony are irrelevant and that a traditional marriage may only be a financial contract, a “bargain” that one can “cry off.” The seamen makes the assumption that a freely given promise can be just as binding as a marriage. What is most valued is freedom of choice. Neither the romantic passion of the seaman, which had a “strange power over her” such that she felt she had no will of her own “when he was near,” nor the marriage with Dr. Wangel, which Ellida thought she had made for financial and social reasons, made a space for a truly free choice, the play implies.

Missing from this, or perhaps purposely excised, is the Christian understanding of marriage as an institution established by God, a sacramental reality in the Church, ordered to the happiness and spiritual growth of the spouses

and to the procreation of children for the good of society. Also missing is a recognition of the importance of the vow taken in a formal marriage ceremony in the presence of witnesses. This vow and these witnesses show the recognition of their importance to marriage and family by both Church and State. The indissolubility of this union of man and woman guarantees that children will be raised by a mother and father whose love will seek to prepare them for their contribution to society and to the building up of the kingdom of God. Peace and security for the couple’s love is underwritten by the permanence of the relationship sealed by the vow before witnesses. Moreover, the fidelity of a married couple is called to be an image of God’s fidelity to His people. The marriage of baptised Christians is an image and participation in the total self-giving love by which Christ gave himself to the Church as her Spouse, accomplished in his sacrificial death on the Cross.

“In this play, Ibsen has correctly pinpointed problems in marriage that call for change”

The marital relationship, therefore, is not just a private arrangement. While deeply personal and intimate, it is also ordered to the good of the Church and of the whole society. Vatican II states that “the well-being of the individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of marriage and the family”.⁴ John Paul II pithily summarises this in *Familiaris Consortio* (75): “The future of the world and of the Church passes through the family.” The family is where the character and virtue of society’s members are formed. Yet in Ibsen’s plays, the highest value the characters express is the individual’s freedom of choice, regardless of when or how it is exerted or with what consequences. We should recall that the importance of free consent in the making of a marriage vow has been insisted upon by the Church just as much as the permanence and indissolubility of a valid marriage. Moreover, within the nourishment of grace that the Church provides, marriage attains the freedom to become what it is called to be: “the most effective means for humanising and personalising society”,⁵ which includes the married couple themselves, their children, relatives, friends and the wider society. It is also called to be a means by which the couple and their children help each other reach their final destiny of eternal life with God.

A further issue for marriage is raised in this play by the characters Lyngstrand, a young man with artistic yearnings, and Bolette, Dr. Wangel’s daughter by an earlier marriage.

Lyngstrand: “A woman should gradually change until she is like her husband.”

Bolette: “Has it never occurred to you that the man too might be drawn over to his wife in this way? Grow like her, I mean?”

Lyngstrand: “No, man has a calling in life that he lives for. She must live for his [calling].”

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Bolette: Oh, you don't know how really selfish you are!"

Later, Bolette, in remarking about her desire to read in order to know something about the world, likens her life to the carp in their pond in contrast to the wild fish of the open sea: "We live very much like the carp in the pond. The poor tame domestic fishes know nothing [of the fiord where wild fishes pass in and out]. We've got to be good and live our lives here in the carp pond."

Here we find the theme of women's liberation that runs through several of Ibsen's plays. Does marriage imply the enslavement of women to men and the confining of her abilities to the domestic chores of a household? Much of the feminism movement has been built around this thesis. Certainly a corrective has been needed to an imbalance between men and women that can occur in marriages and in social attitudes. Pope John Paul II has given recognition to this imbalance in his writings such as *The Dignity of Woman*, and *The Genius of Women*. But there has also been an exaggeration in the women's liberation movement which has contributed to a breakdown in marriages. What is the solution to these challenges?

Both men and women desire "to find themselves" in some way and contemporary culture often suggests this is a search one must do by oneself, isolated from compromising influences. The emphasis is on an individualistic freedom, devoid of content. But such freedom can lead to wrong choices as well as right ones. Freedom is not an absolute in itself. It must be oriented to the good for it to be real freedom – freedom *for* something. Since this is so, the goal should be to seek what is good, and in this case, what the good of marriage is, what is good in the relationship of man and woman, and what is the good of one's own being.

To address the question of "self-fulfilment", which Ibsen's characters are seeking, we must ask what human fulfilment is. Fulfilment implies a perfection of what one is meant to be. This requires an understanding of the human person's nature and purpose of existence. It is not just a subjective or arbitrary decision, but needs to be grounded in the reality of our existence. Uncertainties about God, creation, the gift of femininity and masculinity, and the destiny of human life to live eternally with God, leave men and women adrift in knowing how to arrive at their own perfection or fulfilment. Morality is often presented as an extrinsic requirement imposed by an external authority or social convention, rather than the realisation of the dignity and purpose intrinsic to human happiness and true fulfilment.

Pope John Paul II, in his theology of the body, speaks of self-possession. The first element in self-possession is awareness of my own being standing before God, realising that I exist because God gave me the gift of existence to be the particular person I am. The appropriate response to this reality is gratitude and a sense of responsibility to God for my life. The second element of self-possession is being accepted by another for one's own sake. When a woman is accepted by the man "for her own sake, through her humanity and

femininity, she comes to the innermost depth of her own person and to the full possession of herself," John Paul II writes.⁶ If she is accepted in this way, she "discovers herself", she can realise that she is a gift to another and she is drawn to make a gift of herself. The woman's femininity is revealed in the presence of the man and the man's masculinity is revealed in the presence of the woman. This is one of the ways a person "finds himself by making a sincere gift of himself".⁷ Thus begins a true communion of persons.

The human person "finds" him or herself through relationships with other persons, which stir an interior response resulting in change and growth into a fuller self. We need each other in order to grow into this fuller self. The child, for example, grows in personality within the home when he is loved, accepted for himself, and given positive challenges. The classic world understood that "anyone is free who belongs to the house; freedom is being at home". The slave is not free because he is not a member of the family. Pope Benedict tells us that St. Augustine learned from his own experience that:

"In the indeterminate and apparent freedom of an existence in which everything was possible but nothing made sense, he was enslaved by an illusory image of freedom: banished from his true self and unfree in an utter lack of relationship that was founded on being distanced from his own self, on separation from the truth of his own self."⁸

When marital relationships are considered within an understanding of creation as gift, and of the gift which the spouse is, then a central key has been found to living these relationships with a firm love and peaceful joy. Why is it that married men and women have difficulty living this conjugal gift in complete happiness? The late pontiff speaks of the "freedom of the gift". For man to be able to give himself, to become a gift, it is indispensable to see freedom as self-mastery.⁹ Rather than being willful self-assertion, his gift of self needs to be "disinterested," i.e. not self-centred, but for the sake of the other who was willed by the Creator "for his/her own sake", and who has a destiny in God. Threats to this freedom of the gift of self are found in the dominance of selfishness (egoism), concupiscence and undue appropriation of the other for one's own purposes. The freedom of self-dominion is an interior freedom. This interiority of the freedom of the gift is linked to the existence of man and woman as personal subjects, and to their acceptance of each other in the fullness and mystery of the whole person, which includes recognising the particular dignity of being created by God and for God, and an appreciation of the differences between being a female human being and a male human being. A common failure occurs when it is not recognised that the unique gifts of womanhood differ from the particular strengths of men. Another kind of failure can occur when the full dignity of human personhood with its spiritual vocation is not accorded respect or attention.

In John Paul II's analysis of the first chapters of Genesis, he describes the state of "original innocence", in which the man

“Nora appears to have begun her marriage without firm self-possession”

and the woman are free to perceive the full reality of the person of the opposite sex without the “shame” that arose after the first sin. This “shame” is not about nudity but about the nakedness of living without God, which is sin. This sin leads to reducing the other person to “an object for myself”. Without sin, it was possible to have the purity and peace of the “interior gaze which creates precisely the fullness of the intimacy of persons”.¹⁰ This is what married couples seek, but this fullness is now only possible through grace won by Christ, who came to restore this interior peace and purity (although we cannot return to the first state of innocence since we live in a world corrupted by sin). This is why marriage needs to be lived within the community of grace as a sacramental order of the Church. This is what Christ came to restore from the “hardness of heart” which led Moses to allow divorce (Mt. 19:8). To persevere in this grace, to grow in the love and understanding needed, marriage requires the duration of permanency, the commitment of the vow.

“It is not recognised that the unique gifts of womanhood differ from the particular strengths of men”

Ibsen’s women, Nora and Ellida, are willing to forsake their marriage and ignore the vow that they made in order to assert their own will and self-realisation. But will this assertion bring them true happiness? The views they express call into question the foundation of marriage, the commitment to life-long love of a spouse, the importance of the marriage vow and what is required to make it a valid guarantee of the indissolubility of the marriage. The validity of this vow is not just a vague choice of the mind or a romantic promise. Nor is it an empty formality. It is composed of both an interior freedom of consent to the reality of married life as an indissoluble union, and a concrete consummation of bodily conjugal unity. In the theology of the body, the expression “spousal meaning of the body” indicates that the body itself reveals that it is created for the gift of one-flesh unity of man and woman, a gift of the fullness of their humanity, their womanhood and manhood, their destiny in God, and the fruitfulness of children. This concrete, physical reality with its spiritual dimension is not something that can be taken lightly or lightly tossed away. Tearing it apart has painful repercussions, not only for the couple and their children, but also for society. The social fabric is seriously weakened when marriage is destabilised. “What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (Mt. 19:6).

What is important for a woman in making this commitment and living it out is a strong sense of self-possession rooted in an awareness of her human dignity before God and the importance of the gift of her womanhood in marriage. When this is firm, she will be able to require respect from her husband and to give him respect for his gift of masculinity. Nora appears to have begun her marriage without firm self-possession, but this does not mean she needs to leave her husband to acquire it. If the husband has entered into

marriage with a lack of self-mastery over his egoism, concupiscence or domineering attitudes, he can be helped to develop greater respect for the dignity and free personhood of his wife. If a couple realise they started their marriage on a poor basis, it does not follow that they can reject their marriage vow; it should lead them to seek the grace to ground their relationship in the real freedom of the truth and goodness of their being, lived for God and for each other. Ibsen’s plays notably lack any inference that there is a need for grace, repentance for sin, or forgiveness – all of which are essential for living the reality of indissoluble Christian marriage in a fallen world.

Many of Ibsen’s plays end darkly, often with a divorce or suicide ending a relationship. This creates a lack of hope or confidence in the institution of marriage, provides poor models for women, and lacks positive social and moral norms. Nora reacts against being only a wife and mother, and thereby rejects both marriage and family. Rudolf Binion, professor of Modern European History at Brandeis University, quotes Ibsen as saying: “In time, all people will live on the sea when the land becomes swallowed up. Then family life will cease.”¹¹ Ibsen apparently viewed the family as a constriction on the individual, whose nature was to be a free and wild species. “Marriage...has ruined the human race,” Ibsen stated.¹² His plays *Hedda Gabler*, *Ghosts*, and *Wild Duck*, for example, contain tragic views of marriage betrayed by characters who are imprisoned in self-centered seeking and lack the real self-possession of a person who knows he is created by God and who “finds himself by making a sincere gift of himself”.

Notes

¹Emma Goldman, *The Social Significance of the Modern Drama* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1914), 25.

²Henrik Ibsen, *Four Major Plays*, Translated by James McFarlane and Jens Arup (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) viii.

³Martha Fletcher Bellinger, *A Short History of the Drama* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1927), 320.

⁴Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 47.

⁵John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 43.

⁶John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them, A Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), Sec.17.5.

⁷Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 24.

⁸Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 57.

⁹John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them, A Theology of the Body*, Sec.15.2.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 13.1.

¹¹Rudolph Binion, *Past Impersonal* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005) 15. Binion includes Ibsen with a large group of writers of the 1879-1914 period who described catastrophic family situations in their literature. This phenomenon Binion traces to guilty tensions originating in the radically new practice of contraception. “Smaller tighter families, at closer emotional quarters but divided generationally, made for heightened domestic tensions that for the most part got spelled out or acted out only in novels or plays,” Binion concludes. In *A Doll’s House*, he notes, “unpregnant Nora, eight years married, her three children all old enough to run on stage, had apparently put a halt to childbearing before the curtain rose.”

¹²Ibsen, *The Wild Duck* (New York: Norton, 1968), 83.



Letters to the Editor

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

SRE FOR A HEDONIST SOCIETY

Dear Father Editor,

Thank you for printing the article by Antonia Tully, "Pro-Life Education for Children", in the May/June edition of Faith magazine. The "This is my Body" programme sounds like an excellent resource for Catholics who take their children's education seriously and want to promote a healthy understanding of the great gift of sexuality. I am convinced that if such programmes are augmented by the vision presented by the Theology of the Body such as that put forward in "Called to Love" by Carl Anderson and Father Jose Granados, then Catholic children will not only be better able to resist the false attractions of the Culture of Death and the nihilistic philosophies of modern youth culture, they will also go on to live more complete and happier lives.

With this said, I would like to raise a few concerns about the suitability of such programmes for contemporary schooling. There will be undoubted benefits in using schemes like "This is my Body" for home schooling and in schools which have a strong Catholic ethos and excellent links with parents but I doubt their effectiveness outside of this context if used in isolation. I am referring to Catholic schools which do not regard the Church's social and moral teaching as pillars of education, and those which include a significant number of children from families which are nominally Catholic, non-Catholic, broken, lacking in child supervision or neglectful.

Many children are brought up on a diet of sexually explicit and violent material through the media – how can we possibly hope to provide a positive message under such a bombardment? How do we uphold our view on

fatherhood in relation to the Almighty Father if a child comes from a broken home? How do we promote respect for women as mothers and wives if a child sees their own mother let down by a series of men?

Here are some telling statistics from the Channel 4 Teen Sex Survey, which confirm the recent Home Office one you surveyed in your March editorial:

- 58% of all 14- to 17-year-olds have viewed pornography online, on mobile phones, in magazines, movies or on TV
- 40% of all 14- to 17-year-olds are sexually active
- 20% of those surveyed had their first sexual experience at 13 or under
- 1 in ten 17-year-olds has had sex with a stranger (one night stand)
- Just 6% of teens would wait until marriage before having sex

Many if not most schools are faced with the need to deal with a majority of pupils who have suffered the consequences of assaults on a holistic understanding of human sexuality. They need the resources to challenge effectively the potency of implied, overt and pornographic references to sex in popular culture if children are to have any chance of realising their full potential. Also methods of healing those suffering from the consequences of such exposure need to be integrated into SRE if it is really to address the issue.

I would therefore hope that future Catholic SRE programmes would develop a three-fold strategy to this important aspect of Christian Education: A vision of human sexuality founded on the teaching of the Church, a means to help children combat the conflicting messages of modern society and a recognition of the need for healing in many of those under their care.

Might I also take this opportunity to thank you for the excellent Road from Regensburg article exploring the nature of the media attack on the Pope.

Yours faithfully
Luke O'Sullivan
Beverley Close
Fforestfach
Swansea

A KEY PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE ISSUE

Dear Father Editor,

The possible harmful pastoral consequences of a new scientific theory should not have any bearing on whether it is accepted by the Church. New scientific theories, when proven indisputably, must be acknowledged. Galileo's bombshell that the earth is not the axis around which the universe revolves but a mere satellite of the sun must have disturbed Catholic minds at that time and the Fathers of the Church must have seriously considered its effect on the good of souls, their prime duty. In this case science was right and its findings had to be accommodated.

Darwin's theory of evolution, on the other hand, now 160 years old, is still by no means proven and its effect on souls has been, and continues to be, horrendous! It is the mainstay of atheistic communism in that it conveniently edges God out of the Creation process and thus out of existence altogether. This theory (conceived by an atheist) has been in great part responsible for the slaughter of millions, body and soul. Has any other idea by a scientist had anywhere near such appalling fruits? Nuclear bombs do not kill souls. Why flirt with such a thing?

Dom Aldhelm and many others do not think that evolution in some form is incompatible with faith; maybe not but it weakens it disastrously! It helps massively the great current heresy, "When I understand it, I will believe it"; "Credo ut intelligam" back to front. Even simple ordinary folk today put reason before faith, unlike before the "enlightenment" when theology was accepted as the "queen of sciences" and science its handmaid.

If, when Jesus fed the 5,000, He had said, "This will take a little time, lunch will be ready in about half an hour", He would still have demonstrated that He was the almighty God, but not quite so almighty as when performing the miracle instantly. All of Jesus' miracles were rapid; I think that the miracle of creation was similarly rapid. Gradual evolution by introducing a long time frame into the

“Influential Catholic thinkers do not permit science to affect the traditional Catholic metaphysical vision”

process insidiously erodes our perception of God as almighty.

The mere suggestion that a rational explanation of creation is possible, and indeed probable in the future, is enough to destroy the tender shoots of faith in immature souls and has done so on a vast scale and not just in atheistic regimes. Therefore wriggling out of that now discredited part of evolution (natural selection) but still clinging on to a general belief in a still not proven theory is still to be responsible for weakening the Faith. A more subtle, sophisticated but still speculative theory on the subject might satisfy certain academics, but it is lost on the millions in the pews.

I suggest therefore that, since an unproven theory is doing such terrible damage to souls, the Faith Movement should play down evolution until proof (intermediate fossils please) is forthcoming, or better still, abandon it altogether. Priest/scientists have an enormous responsibility to get this one right.

Yours Faithfully
Jim Allen
Seymour Drive
Torquay

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Mr Allen captures an approach that is present, we think, beyond the Creationist movement. It can also be discerned in the thought of influential Catholic thinkers who accept much of modern science including evolution but only on the condition that this knowledge is not permitted to challenge the traditional Catholic metaphysical vision (see our next editorial).

At the heart of the idea of evolution is the fact that all physical things are intelligibly connected across time. Mr Allen implies that this latter insight “conveniently edges God out of the Creation process” and that “a long time frame” precludes its immediate creation by God. But this flows from a philosophy of science that is, unwittingly, akin to that which has accompanied the rise of atheism, namely the position that intelligibly relating things across time and space removes the need for a

transcendent creator of those relationships. One of the most popular and influential of such philosophies of science has been nominalism which denies the ontological reality of the natural relationships between things.

To try to find gaps in the cosmic web (woven without seam) in order to introduce the creator God is to play the game on an atheistic philosophical field and is thus a massive hostage to fortune.

The vision proposed by this magazine implies that it is those dimensions within Indo-Greco-Catholic metaphysics which deny the thoroughgoing overall intelligibility and inter-relativity of the physical being of the universe which have been the seed of modern (nominalistic) individualism and agnosticism. It is such false philosophies of science that have been behind the Marxist, and the secularist, use of evolution. How tragic for our Church if, in the name of fighting atheism, we continue to foster some of its key presumptions.

NEWMAN AND CONSCIENCE

Dear Father Editor,

Thank you very much for Fr. Tolhurst’s article on Newman and the Magisterium, providing as it does a much needed clarification of our great and holy cardinal’s teaching on conscience.

The only thing all too many Catholics seem to know about it are his unfortunate throw-away lines in his Letter to the Duke of Norfolk about drinking first to conscience and afterwards to the Pope. One realises the point he was trying to get across.

Not everything a Pope or Bishop says has in all circumstances to be obeyed.

But his words were bound to be misunderstood in Rome, as well as distorting his teaching in a way that for generations has allowed Catholics anxious to challenge the magisterium on some point of faith and morals to claim that they have Newman on their side. Newman would have been horrified

if he could have foreseen the use his ‘verbal aside’ would be put to.

The essence of the matter is surely this. If a man’s conscience, after due inquiry under the influence of grace, tells him the Catholic Church is what it claims to be he is not abandoning the use of his conscience when he subjects it to the direction of the magisterium (papal or collegial) in matters of faith and moral. In this case conscience and the voice of the magisterium have become one. It is like a perfect marriage. Should anyone feel inclined to toast the two parties it should surely be simultaneously; the magisterium as the voice of Christ, conscience for having recognised the fact.

Yours faithfully
Philip Trower
Stansted Bury
Ware
Herts

EDITORIAL COMMENT

We would add Newman’s actual words from the “Letter to the Duke of Norfolk”: “Unless a man is able to say to himself, as in the Presence of God, that he must not, and dare not, act upon the Papal injunction, he is bound to obey it, and would commit a great sin in disobeying it.” See our last Truth Will Set You Free for other relevant quotes.

FOYERS FOR BRITAIN?

Dear Father Editor,

Joanna Bogle’s conclusion in her book review of Martin Blake’s “Marthe Robin and the Foyers of Charity”, that it would be rather good to have one in Britain, is absolutely correct. In 1979 I met this French mystic, Marthe Robin, who died in 1981. It was by pure chance or providence. I had my wallet stolen, including my passport, on the Paris—Marseilles train. Left with very little, a priest, who lived near Valence, took care of me.

Continued overleaf

He persisted in encouraging me to make a Foyer retreat at Chateauneuf de Galaure. It was on that retreat that I was introduced to Marthe in her farmhouse, a mile or two away.

The retreat was a week of almost absolute silence, with four conferences each day giving an overview of Church teaching. Our Lady had revealed to Marthe that an unevangelised France of the future would need such contemplative schools of catechesis.

Prior to 1979 my main concern was justice and peace, liberation theology and all the horizontal realities of the Church. It was the conference on spiritual warfare, by Fr. Finet the co-founder of the Foyers, that underlined for me what had been lacking in my theological training. Marthe Robin was an icon to that spiritual reality. Favoured with extraordinary and miraculous gifts she battled with the Evil One until her final hours. For fifty years she had no food or drink, no sleep, was blind, absolutely handicapped, never leaving her tiny cot of a bed.

Her only sustenance was to receive the Body of Christ once each week. Then for a few days she would enter into sharing the mystical passion of our Saviour, with our Lady. Amidst the horrors of the twentieth century, she was a scientific contradiction, but blessed with stigmatisation.

Her life influenced many people who were encouraged to begin many renewal movements and many new ecclesiastical communities in the later part of the twentieth century. For me, by the grace of God, I hope one day to thank in glory the thief on the Paris-Marseilles train who caused me to encounter the Foyers and their founders.

*Fr Michael Kelly
St Martin de Porres
Wakefield
Yorkshire*



Conformed to Christ Crucified

by Fr Joseph Carola SJ, Gregorian & Biblical Press, 163pp €15

It was common knowledge at the Gregorian University in Rome that one did not subscribe to Fr Carola's Patristics Seminar if one wanted a quiet life in the final year of first cycle Theology. Those of us who ignored that advice knew ourselves to be amongst the most fortunate of seminarians. As a Jesuit, Fr Carola does not exercise pastoral ministry in a parish. Yet his love of Scripture and Tradition, his insistence on intellectual rigour, prayer and charity, his spiritual paternity and friendship, amply equipped scores of priests for this role. We owe him a huge debt of gratitude.

In this volume the fruits of his learning and wisdom are available for all. These homilies were delivered mainly to seminarians, deacons and newly ordained priests. They are beautifully crafted reflections, in the Ignatian tradition, on prayer, humility, obedience and celibacy. There are profound insights into the priestly mercy of the Sacred Heart viewed from the perspective of the dying Penitent Thief. Diaconal service of the Body of Christ is movingly illustrated by reference to the ministrations of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus on Calvary. Our Lady, St Joseph, Peter and Paul and many others are enlisted to bear witness to the high dignity of the priestly calling.

Yet these homilies not only please; they are also purposefully designed to disturb. Even for the diocesan priest, the concept of material poverty must have substance. In our lifestyle we are "to aim for a *noble simplicity*" not merely that which "is simply noble."

Book Reviews

Also included are the Lenten homilies preached by Fr Carola at the station church of San Clemente. How often are those faithful to the Church accused of "judgmentalism"? How pertinent, how encouraging, therefore, is his 2009 reflection: "Judging in order to forgive". Of course, eternal judgment belongs to God alone, but, citing Matthew 18:15, Fr Carola reminds us of the evangelical precept of fraternal correction. Forgiveness *presumes* judgment. "For before we can forgive those who have offended us, we judge their deed offensive. Without such judgment, forgiveness would be meaningless."

This book comprised part of my reading for my priestly retreat this year. I commend it most warmly to my brother priests and to all those in formation. Expect to be uplifted as Fr Carola exhorts us to be "conformed to Christ crucified" – always in the light of the Resurrection. Expect also, as Christ's priest, to be challenged: "Now you must live this."

Fr Mark Vickers

St Peter's
Hatfield

Christian Perspectives on the Financial Crash

edited by Philip Booth, St. Paul's Publishing, 2010, 191 pages, £12.95

It is tricky to talk about any economic topic from a truly Christian perspective. The standard professional approach springs from intellectual traditions that are distinctly non-Christian: utilitarianism, enlightenment rationalism, Hegelian dialectic and Marxian materialism. The responses to nearly a century of papal appeals for an economics based on a more Christian vision of society – solidarity broken by sin – have been inadequate, or at least have not created a lively school of thinkers.

Christians have a particularly hard time talking about finance, for three reasons. First, this is one part of economics where there seems to be a longstanding Christian view – the condemnation of usury – but that tradition is probably

“the assumption that social policy will be improved by giving freedom of choice to self-interested individuals is not obviously very good Christianity.”

more harmful than helpful. It is not at all clear how to apply the unequivocal Biblical words to a modern economy. The ubiquity of fiat money (money created by governments and through the credit system) and the expectation of fairly steady economic growth seem to invalidate many of the objections to lending at interest. The Church's doctrine on usury is, like the practice it condemns, largely unfruitful.

Second, it is hard to get or keep a full Christian perspective on questions which are unavoidably technical. Even a quick summary of the recent financial crisis, the starting-off point for the book under review, would require a reasonably sure grasp of such arcane matters as cross-border capital flows, fixed and floating exchange rates, securitisation, bank capital requirements and regulatory arbitrage. Professionals almost never explain or analyse these terms in terms of virtue and vice or solidarity and selfishness, leaving the would-be Christian commentator to face the daunting challenge of simultaneously understanding and re-interpreting the signs of the times.

Finally, a superficial analysis often hides a quite different underlying reality. It is easy to condemn the wild excesses that led up to the crash, but, even in the midst of them, overall the financial system effectively and virtuously helped keep societies together. In finance, greed may hide under the appearance of generosity and generosity under the appearance of greed. For example, it is easy, and in part correct, to mock bankers who defend their practices as “God's work”, but a well-run banking system is much more a sign of social solidarity than of untrammelled individualistic greed. The moral commentator has to proceed with care.

Those difficulties help explain why this book is disappointing. None of the 12 chapters could be considered required reading for a Christian interested in understanding what went on and what it should mean.

The introduction by the editor, Philip Booth, is well argued, but is marred by

Booth's unquestioning faith in the ideal of free markets. This may be good finance – although I am not persuaded. To me, this line of thought leads only to a peculiarly modest sort of utopianism. In any case, the assumption that social policy will be improved by giving freedom of choice to self-interested individuals is not obviously very good Christianity. Booth's government-out approach is not accepted by most of the contributors, as his quite elegant final summary chapter makes clear.

Booth at least has the virtue of seeing the big picture. Most of the other essays suffer from a narrow perspective, starting with the overly technical description of the causes of the crash by Catherine Cowley. In other essays, there is much talk of usury, but almost no awareness of the underlying economic and social issues, or even of the history of the debate. The many references to charity and solidarity are virtuous but stray pretty far from the theme of the financial crash.

I would make a partial exception to the negative judgment for the contribution of Andrew Lilico, the chief economist of the Policy Exchange think tank. His discussion of usury shows imagination and his moral condemnation of bank bailouts makes sense. Although the argument could have been more refined, it is certainly encouraging to see an economist who works in a mainstream organisation try to integrate belief and finance.

Edward Hadas
Bethnal Green

Incapacity and Care. Controversies in Healthcare and Research.

edited by Helen Watt, The Linacre Centre, 146pp, £11.95

This book is the report of the Linacre conference of 2007. For those of us who are embroiled in the day to day issues of euthanasia, care of the elderly and care of the unborn it is good to take a step back and to look at some of the key philosophical issues that arise in day to day medical ethics.

The book gets off to a good start with David Jones having spotted some of the problems of the concept of personhood. If personhood is mis-defined by ability and not seen as a fundamental trait that all humans have, then we can move radically to a position where it is at least less immoral to kill the unborn or elderly who have lost their ability to value their own existence. As a psychiatrist I have seen many people who are incapable of valuing their existence as a result of depressive illness, and such philosophies are both lethal and widely ascribed to. We tend to link autonomy with dignity in our society and that too sets out difficulties for those who lack autonomy. Parents who are responsible for children often feel they lack autonomy, but they know that the lack of freedoms that our responsibilities bring is among the most dignifying assets we have. St Thomas Aquinas saw dependency as a great source of dignity.

John Finnis sets out some of the difficulties of the Mental Capacity Act and the way in which the use of best interests may be subverted into requiring poor care. But as a non-clinician Finnis has written a very dry and theoretical treatise full of threat and dismay but without the practical solutions that clinicians are now putting in place. As an aside, the interesting thing is that having (unfortunately and stupidly) had UK legislation that merely stated that an advance decision to refuse treatment (ADRT) is binding, lawyers and others now point out the duty of clinicians to question ADRTs when the patient may come to harm. But the recent case of a lady who wrote an ADRT, took an overdose and went to A+E so that she could die with company, and who was left to die, does show what a dire situation we are in just now.

The discussion of assisted nutrition and hydration in dementia is good too, though it's a bit of a shame that the expert came from the US (where tube feeding is prevalent) and did not come from the UK, where it is almost prohibited, and where there is a real



Book Reviews continued

fear that tube feeding may be a burdensome and inappropriate intervention to the point where people may be treated less than they should.

Medical ethics is important for us practising clinicians, but it is also important for priests and the laity. The experience of all of us is that we bumble along in life hoping these dark clouds are not really there and then suddenly, with a clap of thunder, we find ourselves in the midst of a serious ethical storm. A knowledge of medical ethics must be available to support the faithful in these crises. To be ignorant of the issues is rather akin to standing in that thunder storm without even a tiny umbrella for protection.

So if you do not read this book, find a better one. But do not, please, be unprepared.

Adrian Treloar
Sidcup

Apologia – Catholic Answers to Today's Questions

by Fr Marcus Holden and Fr Andrew Pinsent, CTS, 112pp, £2.95p

This attractive small booklet is a follow-up to the authors' successful *Evangelium* which was – and is – part of a popular set of resources for parish evangelisation. People ask questions during evangelisation sessions – this new booklet focuses on some of the topics most frequently raised and offers answers.

It is useful because it tackles the questions that often irritate, or which seem absurd, but are genuine enough to those posing them. Thus we get "Does Christ's Ascension mean that the Bible implies heaven to be above our heads?" and "The Mass doesn't seem to be in the Bible, so where does the Mass come from?" The answers are clear, well presented, and backed with suitable references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which in turn, of course, point to Scriptural and other sources. There are some good illustrations, including reproductions of some glorious religious art –

Rembrandt's *Return of the Prodigal Son*, for example – and some attractive photographs. Among the latter, I particularly liked one of CS Lewis, and also one of the Holy Father with a kneeling First Communicant.

The booklet is small and neat – pocket-sized – and well bound. It has a pleasant, light, modern feel, and is a fine example of what the Catholic Truth Society is producing these days. All those dog-eared booklets with old-fashioned print and rather over-formal language that I remember from my first encounters with the CTS in the early 1960s, and the oh-we-want-to-be-trendy-now attempts at updating in the 1970s seem light years away.

We hear a lot about the need for a New Evangelisation. This little book will be invaluable to all who take this call seriously. An excellent book to distribute to members of a Confirmation class, or a youth group preparing for the next World Youth Day: buying a set of these books in bulk would be an excellent parish investment.

Friendship with Jesus

edited by Amy Wellborn, CTS, 32pp, £9.95

This is an absolutely delightful book, enchanting to use and handle.

Not long after Pope Benedict was elected, he invited First Communion children to meet him in St Peter's Square. The invitation was, I think, meant to be for the children of the diocese of Rome, but they poured in from many parts of Italy, and even from further afield, some in their white First Communion dresses and some in jeans and trainers. A representative group was chosen to put their questions to the Holy Father – questions about God, about why we need to confess our sins, about going to Mass on Sunday, about Christ's presence in the Eucharist, and more.

The Holy Father answered the children's questions with simplicity, understanding, and wisdom. The scene was a very attractive one – this

grandfatherly figure seated with a crowd of children gathered around, against the magnificent backdrop of St Peter's.

Now a book has been made which includes the children's questions, and the pope's answers, and is charmingly illustrated with scenes of the event. Ann Kissane Engelhart, the artist, has produced beautiful drawings which bring out the flavour of the day – the children's eagerness and the happy atmosphere, coupled with the sometimes comic nature of the questions they posed.

My personal favourite among the questioners was the small girl who told the pope that her catechist had explained the importance of going to Mass every Sunday: "And I'd really like to go, but my mummy and daddy like to sleep late – and then we generally go to lunch at Grandma's." One could just picture the couple in the crowded square – initially thrilled that their child had been chosen to talk to the pope, and then squirming with embarrassment when their failure to get to Sunday Mass was revealed to the world. The pope's reply – gentle and with quiet wisdom and common sense – is among those reprinted here.

Amy Wellborn has done a real service in putting together this book. It would be the perfect souvenir for any child making his or her First Communion, and also something special to buy for any Catholic child in Britain to commemorate the 2010 papal visit. I just wish that something of this sort had been produced when I made my First Communion – I remember beautiful white-bound missals and rather over-sentimentalised pictures of girls in old-fashioned white frocks and boys in Norfolk jackets but that's about all. This book shows modern children in the magnificent setting of St Peter's, meeting a real pope and asking the questions that we all have about some of the big mysteries of our religion. It's a book that teaches, inspires, and enchants – and it is good to see a Catholic publisher producing something

of exceptional quality, making a real contribution to the world of children's book illustrations. This book is one that will last.

Joanna Bogle
New Malden
Surrey

Covenant and Communion

by Scott Hahn, Brazos Press, £21.99

Scott Hahn offers us an overview and understanding of the approach to Scripture developed by Joseph Ratzinger both before and after his election to the Papacy.

Those of you who have read other, more popular works by Hahn, may be surprised by the much more academic, foot-noted nature of this work. Gone are the punning chapter titles and painful jokes. Here we find a detailed and exhaustive introduction to the use of Scripture by our present pope.

The book attempts to draw together themes from the pope's writings, from his early doctoral work until his papal homilies, addresses and encyclicals. The chapter headings give us an overview of the work: Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ: the theological project of Joseph Ratzinger; The critique of criticism: beginning the search for a new theological synthesis; The hermeneutic of faith: critical and historical foundations for a biblical theology; The spiritual science of theology: its mission and method in the life of the church; Reading God's testament to humankind: biblical realism, typology, and the inner unity of revelation; The theology of the divine economy: covenant, kingdom, and the history of salvation; The embrace of salvation: mystagogy and the transformation of sacrifice; The cosmic liturgy: the Eucharistic kingdom and the world as temple; The authority of mystery: the beauty and necessity of the theologian's task.

Hahn points out the Holy Father's view of the inadequacy of the historical-critical method as an approach to the study of Scripture. The critique of

historical criticism's limit the standard one: it is reductionistic, it claims to subordinate the text to scientific methods when in fact it has philosophical presumptions, and it tends to read the biblical text as a set of fragments rather than as a unified whole. He reminds us that Benedict sees this form of criticism as removing the Bible from its natural 'habitat' in the Church (p.35). He points us to the story of the Emmaus Road as epitomising the way the Christian should read Scripture "Only by walking with Christ, by re-interpreting all things in his light, with him, crucified and risen, do we enter into the riches and beauty of sacred Scripture" (p.82). Benedict, and Hahn with him, believes that however useful aspects of the historical-critical method may be, we have to approach the Scripture in faith if we are to find its true meaning: "Only by conforming ourselves to the mystery of God, to the Lord who is the Word, can we enter within the Word, can we truly find the Word of God in human words" (p.191).

Hahn points out the crucial role of the Church, the qahal, ecclesia, in Benedict's thought, and the crucial interrelationship of his Christology and his Ecclesiology. He quotes Benedict's re-casting of Loisy's jibe as "the kingdom was promised and what came was Jesus". For Benedict the Church and the Kingdom are one in the person of Jesus Christ (p.135). He looks at Benedict's thought on the dating of the Last Supper, especially in his Homily for Holy Thursday 2007, when he suggested that Jesus followed the Qu'mran community's dating for Passover, so that "Jesus celebrated the Passover without a lamb and without a temple; yet, not without a lamb and not without a temple. He himself was the awaited Lamb... and he himself was the true Temple" (p.148). He goes on from here to look at the Holy Father's understanding of the cross, often a problem for many exegetes, quoting him as saying: "People do not crucify the average professor" (p.149).

Hahn sees the importance for Benedict of the liturgy, and the liturgy's relationship to Scripture: "In the unity

of the Last Supper and the crucifixion, Benedict is able to articulate the true depth of Scripture as the saving Word of God, for the redemption of the cross is renewed in the Eucharistic Prayer, the *oratio*. At the heart of the prayer is the scriptural Word" (p.172).

Hahn enables us to enter into many aspects of Benedict's thought and allows us to encounter many streams from his copious writings. Certainly for this reviewer it was helpful to be directed to this meditation on Psalm 118: "The history of salvation is not a small event, on a poor planet, in the immensity of the universe. It is not a minimal thing which happens by chance on a lost planet. It is the motive for everything, the motive for creation. Everything is created so that this story can exist – the encounter between God and his creature. In this sense, salvation history, the covenant, precedes creation. During the Hellenistic period, Judaism developed the idea that the Torah would have preceded the creation of the material world. This material world seems to have been created solely to make room for the Torah, for this Word of God that creates the answer and becomes the history of love. The mystery of Christ already is mysteriously revealed here.... One can say that, while material creation is the condition for the history of salvation, the history of the covenant is the true cause of the cosmos" (p.23).

At the 2008 Synod of Bishops, Benedict says: "Just reading it does not necessarily mean that we have truly understood the Word of God. The danger is that we see only the human words and do not find the true actor within, the Holy Spirit" (p.189).

Hahn does us a service by opening up this area of Benedict's thought. And even if once or twice we may wonder whether this is more Hahn than Benedict, it is a worthy addition to the understanding of the Holy Father and of the Sacred Scriptures.

Fr David Standen
Stafford



Comment on the Comments

by William Oddie

Ecclesial Co-operation with Homosexual Activism

The affair of the Soho Masses has rumbled on for years now; and it has become one of the defining issues of the Catholic Church in England at the beginning of the new Millennium. That sounds a little pompous, maybe: but I predict nevertheless what, at my age, I will not live to see – that when the history of the English Church in this dire period for its fortunes is written, this subject will merit more than a passing footnote.

The question the affair poses is very simple: are those set in authority over us, the bishops, at this juncture in our history prepared to defend the teaching of the Church as though it were indeed, as Catholics have always believed, part of a body of faith given by God and not constructed by men?

The latest phase in the story began in February 2007. *The Telegraph's* headline was "Cardinal's permission for gays' Mass dismays Catholic traditionalists":

"Homosexual rights campaigners have gained permission from the head of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to hold Mass for gay parishioners.

"While the Church has allowed celibate gays to receive holy communion, traditionalist Catholics believe that practising homosexuals should be barred from the sacramental rite because their way of life defies Church teaching.

"Now, however, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor has taken the controversial step of allowing fortnightly Masses in his Westminster diocese specifically for homosexuals.

"A statement from the diocese stressed that the move did not represent a shift in Church teaching, which says that homosexual practice is a sin and that non-celibate gay people should not be given Communion."

In fact, the masses had been going on for some years in a nearby Anglican church. Their move to a Catholic church was taken as meaning only one thing: that despite the lip-service being paid by

the diocese to the teaching that "non-celibate gay people should not be given Communion", the diocese of Westminster was in fact giving its tacit approval and support to a situation in which that was *precisely* what was happening, in a setting in which the Pope and the teaching of the Church were regarded with hostility and held up to contempt.

These are serious accusations, but I think they can be substantiated. I can do so most simply by referring to the astonishing reaction to a blog on the subject of the Soho Masses I wrote in July for *The Catholic Herald*. The blog was brief, a mere 426 words. The comments, passionate on both sides of the argument, added up to a word count of nearly 11,000 after a week, and they were still coming in as I wrote this.

There were two main themes. Firstly, how did I know that those who attended these Masses were "non-celibate"? "Unless" as one correspondent commented "you are in possession of intimately-acquired knowledge of every Soho Mass-goer's sex life." Well, of course I wasn't, as another pointed out, any more than he knew who at Mass was using condoms and who wasn't. My original correspondent returned to the charge:

"William, have you or *The Catholic Herald* put the question: 'Are the vast majority of your attendees at the Soho Masses practising, non-celibate homosexuals?' or indeed a similar question to the Soho Masses Pastoral Council? If not, how can they possibly deny the charge unless you put the charge to them?"

– to which I replied that in my blog I *had* in effect put the charge; that the said Soho Masses Pastoral Council (SMPC) had not denied it; and that it was clear to me that they weren't going to. (Nor did they, and nor have they yet.) At this point, the evidence of those opposed to the Masses who had actually attended one started pouring in. "I can confirm," wrote one correspondent, "as one who

went along to one of these Masses, and then went 'downstairs' (to the hall underneath the church) for tea afterwards, that the vast majority of the men there were quite open about a) their dissent from Church teaching; b) their disliking of the Pope; c) the fact that they had 'boyfriends'. If you want proof, just go to one of these sacrilegious Masses yourself, and you'll soon shut up".

Another recounted that "My friends and I were there ... when those Masses began. I myself chatted with various members of the Gay Attendees after Mass. All of them that I spoke to admitted that they were practising sex. Two Lesbians told me that they were very much in love and to defend their undying love for each other, they told me that they have been sleeping together, sharing the same bed for over 20 years. I have seen men actually kissing in the congregation. I have actually seen with my own eyes, a man fondling another man's backside, rubbing him and squeezing him on the way up to Holy Communion. I have witnessed overt flirting amongst homosexuals. They seem to get extra FLIRTY when Fr Timothy Radcliffe is the celebrant."

The other main theme was the more fundamental one of what Catholic belief actually consists of. It emerges with stark clarity that the Soho Masses are built on the unshakeable foundation of a belief that what the Church teaches, as defined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and other manifestations of the Magisterium, is not to be taken seriously as an expression of what Catholics ought to believe.

One correspondent expressed what was clearly the dominant view among those who attend the Masses, that "It is not the teaching of the 'Church' that we should refrain from sexual activity outside of marriage, but the doctrine of the Vatican. The 'Church' includes all Catholics, from the Pope in Rome, down to ordinary lay people in the pews. Research shows clearly that most Catholics differ from the official doctrine on virtually all matters of sexual ethics.

“The Soho Masses Pastoral Council is now legitimised by the diocese”

The overwhelming majority reject and ignore *Humanae Vitae*, and most Catholics in the UK and the rest of Europe, and the US are also known (from research evidence) to disagree that sexual relations before marriage, [by] masturbation, after divorce, or between same sex couples are morally wrong”.

One reply offered the following statement by John Paul II to establish that the teaching of the Catechism was more than just that of “the Vatican”: “It can be said”, the Pope had asserted, “that this Catechism is the result of the collaboration of the whole Episcopate of the Catholic Church, who generously accepted my invitation to share responsibility for an enterprise which directly concerns the life of the Church. This response elicits in me a deep feeling of joy, because the harmony of so many voices truly expresses what could be called the ‘symphony’ of the faith. The achievement of this Catechism thus reflects the collegial nature of the Episcopate; it testifies to the Church’s catholicity.” To which, depressingly but predictably came this: “Your response simply confirms my point: it may have been extensive collaboration between Cardinals and bishops – but where were the rest of us?”

A new correspondent now said what needed to be said. You’ve heard it and said it all a thousand times, but it’s worth putting on the record that in this extended online debate it was clearly and lucidly said again:

“That the Church is or should be some kind of democratic club where we all have a say in what is taught, is patently ridiculous.... In the simplest possible terms, God reveals His will to us through the Church, as long as it is teaching what has been believed from the beginning. He’s not revealing to us that any old religion will do, because, whatever the ecumenists tell you, the Church has ALWAYS condemned false religions, from the beginning. And, from the beginning the sexual aberrations that are now almost mandatory in our society – contraception, abortion, sodomy – have ALWAYS been condemned by the followers of Christ. So, sorry... we can’t just take a show of hands on the matter. The Soho Masses

are an almighty scandal and the Archbishop is totally, one hundred percent in the wrong to permit them to continue. Puts a massive question mark over his mitre. Massive. Catholics must accept that Christ meant it when He promised to be with his apostles – that is, His teaching Church – until the end of time. Those who don’t are, *de facto*, Protestants.”

There are two points to be reiterated here: firstly that it is clear that sexual activity is normal among those who attend the Masses; secondly, and much more seriously, that though the diocese told *The Telegraph* that “non-celibate gay people should not be given Communion”, it has not enforced this and indeed *didn’t* once point out to the SMPC that Church teaching should be faithfully fostered, not effectively undermined, by official celebrations of the Church’s definitive offering to God the Father. The SMPC (as one comment on my blog pointed out) have made a big point of this fact: “Martin Pendergast (founder of the SMPC) said: ‘I can assure others who have commented that there was no demand on us to remain celibate and agree that homosexual acts are wrong’ and also Terence Weldon (Eucharistic Minister and SMPC committee member) said: ‘I agree with my friend and colleague Martin...who notes that during the extensive consultation process around the Soho gay Masses, *Bishop Longley at no time expressed any demand that we remain celibate or agree with Church teaching.*’” [My italics]

Bishop Longley is consequently something of a gay icon, and when he was translated to Birmingham attracted the main “front page” story in the *Pink News* online news service, with the splash headline “New Archbishop of Birmingham *helped organise gay Masses*”. “The man tipped to be named as the new Archbishop of Birmingham today”, reported the paper, “has played a strong part in reaching out to gay Catholics. In 2007, Rt Rev Bernard Longley, currently the Auxillary [sic] Bishop of Westminster, *helped integrate the Soho Masses Pastoral Council into the diocese*. The group puts on special Masses for gays and lesbians” (my italics).

So, the Soho Masses Pastoral Council, through the Masses it officially organises, is now “integrated” into and legitimised by the Westminster diocese, and its practices and beliefs have received the implicit endorsement of that diocese and of its previous and present archbishops. That is the bottom line; the diocese of Westminster has now driven a wedge between the divine liturgical proclamation and some Church teachings. This effectively denies the notion that the Church’s teachings are those of God himself.

It should not, perhaps, surprise us: the intellectual and spiritual formation of our clergy has for many years been officially or semi-officially subverted in numerous ways.

There is one very significant straw in this particular wind, one probably unnoticed even by deeply orthodox clergy as they say their daily office: as this magazine pointed out in its last edition (p.20), in the version of the breviary used in Australia, Ireland, England and Wales, verse 4 of Newman’s great hymn “Firmly I Believe and Truly”,

And I hold in veneration,
For the love of him alone,
Holy Church as his creation,
And her teachings as his own

has been clinically excised. Why is that? The answer will tell you everything you need to know about the issue of the Soho Masses. As Newman also wrote (same page):

“Deeply do I feel, ever will I protest... that in questions of right and wrong, there is nothing really strong in the whole world, nothing decisive and operative, but the voice of him, to whom have been committed the keys of the kingdom and the oversight of Christ’s flock.... if ever there was a power on earth who had an eye for the times....such is he... who sits from generation to generation in the Chair of the Apostles, as the Vicar of Christ and Doctor of His Church.”

That doctrine has now been dropped in its public, ecclesial activity by the diocese of Westminster. And as one who lives in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, I await developments here with some trepidation. Watch this space.



The Truth Will Set You Free

Marian Catechesis for the Papal Visit and for the month of the Rosary

THE PRIMACY OF CHRIST by Fr Hugh MacKenzie

Why Mary? Why do we Catholics place so much emphasis on her? First and foremost for the simple and obvious reason that without Mary we would not have Jesus. Without the Mother of God we would have no Saviour. Well that is true of course, some might object, she was indeed God's instrument in coming to save us, but can't we go *directly* to God? Isn't Christ our only Mediator? To answer this way of thinking we must first understand that nothing and nobody can go 'directly' to God, if by this we mean 'immediately'. Only God is God. No one and nothing is His equal. Only the Father, Son and Holy Spirit can go directly to one another (so to speak) because they *are* the One Eternal Communion of the undivided Godhead. Every gift of God to His creatures must necessarily be given according to the creature's way of receiving things – that is, mediated through the creaturely nature. Such is God's generosity that in creating things other than Himself, God also bends Himself to their needs. He 'mediates' Himself to them.

We human beings have a shared, physical nature. We come into being through one another, through our parents, and ultimately we live and grow by the ministry of the whole human family. This means that we naturally mediate life from God to one another in a shared way. God did not save us by uttering a word of command from the heavens. He came to share our nature by his birth. It is true, therefore, that we come to God (or rather God comes to us) most directly and immediately in Jesus Christ, who is God made Man. But this means that He comes to us in, through and together with the whole of what is human. He comes as part of our whole human family, with all its natural bonds and structures of mediated life and love. The first and most obviously essential relationship with humanity that he enters into is with Mary.

She is central to the saving plan of God. That may be true historically speaking, some may continue to object, but why do our Catholics pray to her and honour her as if she *continues* to be important to salvation history here and now? Well, first of all God does not merely use people as instruments then cast them aside. He gives people a *vocation* to share in his own loving plans for the world. It would be natural for Mary, as a mother, to care about the people her Son cares about, to love them for His sake, just as she loves God more perfectly than any of us through her uniquely intimate relationship with God the Son. But the other mistake people make when raising this sort of objection is to think that our vocation comes to an end when we die. In fact our vocation comes to its perfection when we enter heaven and continues, together with Christ's own vocation, until the end of time. Our personalities do not change with death.

In fact, it is a sobering thought that we will be for ever who we have become by the time we die. Whatever in us is not in conformity with God will then be burned away in the purification of Purgatory, and whatever is conformed to Christ will be confirmed and glorified and become supremely active. The things and the people that mattered to us on earth will continue to matter to us. This is why there are patron saints of this, that and the other. It is not some silly superstition, it is the reality and glorious diversity of human beings. In Mary there is

nothing, and never has been anything, that is not in conformity with Christ, so everything about her co-operates perfectly with her Son's mission, on earth and in heaven. We could say that Mary is the *patron saint of everything and of everyone*. Wherever Mary is honoured and loved, there Christ her Son will always be present and active in a most direct and powerful way.

The fact that Jesus is the one redeeming Mediator between heaven and earth does not override the mutual belonging, influence and intercession of human beings upon each other: it is this whole fabric of humanity that he redeems and brings back to the Father by his perfect mediation between heaven and earth.

Jesus is the Head and Heart of the Church, from which all wisdom, life and blessing flows. He is the Saviour and Redeemer without whom we are all lost. Far from competing with Him or distracting from Him, Mary was the first and greatest recipient of the grace He brings. She is now, and for ever, the Mother to whom he has entrusted the care of the whole Church. Her prayers mediate and distribute within the human household of God the graces that he has won for us.

Christ was not born for us without Mary. How could he be? Christ did not die for us without Mary at the foot of his cross. How could she not be there? And Christ does not bestow on us any grace from heaven without the prayers and intercession of Mary whom he has made Queen of Heaven. How can we not love her and ask for her help? For when we speak the name of Mary, she replies with the name of Jesus.

NEWMAN ON FAITH AND REASON

From The Mystery of Mary by Paul Haffner Gracewing 2004 p.98

In the last of his University Sermons, preached on the Feast of the Purification in 1843, Newman provided a penetrating analysis of the relations between faith and reason. His starting point was the scriptural passage: "As for Mary she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Lk 2:19). Newman proposed that Mary's faith "did not end in a mere acquiescence in Divine providences and revelations: as the text informs us, she 'pondered them.'" He shows how Mary is a model for relating faith and reason: "She does not think it enough to accept, she dwells upon it; not enough to possess, she uses it; not enough to assent, she develops it; not enough to submit the Reason, she reasons upon it; not indeed reasoning first and believing afterwards, with Zacharias, yet first believing without reasoning, next from love and reverence, reasoning after believing. The genius of Newman's idea is that Mary comes to symbolise not only the faith of the unlearned, but of the Doctors of the Church also, who need "to investigate, and weigh, and define, as well as to profess the Gospel; to draw the line between truth and heresy; to anticipate or remedy the various aberrations of wrong reason; to combat pride and recklessness with one's own arms; and thus to triumph over the sophist and the innovator."¹

Notes

¹J.H.Newman, 'The theory of developments in Religious Doctrine, 1843', in J.H.Newman, *Conscience, Concensus and the Development of Doctrine: Revolutionary Texts by John Henry Cardinal Newman*, ed. J. Gaffney, (New York:Image/Doubleday, 1992), 6-30; § 3.



The Road From Regensburg

Papal-inspired dialogue in search of a new apologetic

New Council to Re-Propose Truth

In his homily for the vigil of St Peter and Paul the Pope announced:

"The [spiritual] challenges of the present time [...] are certainly beyond the human capacity. ... Even in the deserts of the secularised world, man's soul thirsts for God, for the living God. It was for this reason that John Paul II wrote: 'The mission of Christ the Redeemer ... is still only beginning' (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 1). ... [the] complex dynamic [of] the secularisation process has produced a serious crisis of the meaning of the Christian faith and of belonging to the Church. From this perspective, I have decided to create a new body, in the form of a 'Pontifical Council', whose principal task will be to promote a renewed evangelisation in the countries ... [which] are experiencing the progressive secularisation of society and a sort of 'eclipse of the sense of God', which pose a challenge to finding appropriate means to propose anew the perennial truth of Christ's Gospel."

New "Court" to Foster Search For God

Meanwhile Archbishop Ravassi, Prefect for the Pontifical Council for Culture, had already announced that a "Court of the Gentiles" will be inaugurated in Paris next March, hoping "to create a network of agnostic or atheistic people who accept dialogue". This was in response to the Pope's words to the Roman curia on December 21, 2009:

"In Paris [see *this column Nov 2008*], I talked about the search for God as the fundamental motive from which Western monasticism was born, and with it, Western culture. As the first step in evangelisation, we must try to keep this search alive ... I think that the Church should open today a sort of "court of the gentiles" ... to dialogue with those for whom religion is something foreign, to whom God is unknown, and who nonetheless would not like simply to remain without God, but at least to approach him as the Unknown."

In a 25th February *Avvenire* interview Ravassi stated

"Attention must be paid to the different forms of atheism ... On one side there is the great atheism of Nietzsche and Marx, ... with its own ethics ... It is a serious and courageous vision, for example, in considering man alone in the universe. Then there is an ironic-sarcastic atheism that takes aim at marginal aspects of belief, or at fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible. This is the atheism of Onfray, Dawkins, and Hitchens. In the third place there is an absolute indifference born of secularisation"

Scrutiny of Papal Phrase

In late June the prominent Catholic BBC journalist Edward Stourton, who presented the BBC's 1997 documentary attack upon *Humanae Vitae* and papal authority "Absolute Truth?", presented an interesting Radio 4 reflection upon Pope Benedict's phrase "dictatorship of relativism". The Pope used this to describe Western culture in his April 2005 sermon at the opening of the conclave which elected him. Fr Stephen Wang, Dean of Studies at Allen Hall seminary, London, spoke about an example of the State gradually enforcing its absolute dogma of no absolute dogmas, namely trying to force Catholic adoption agencies to offer children to homosexual couples. Now the Church cannot do what it believes is right, which is to try and give a mother and father to a child. We've actually narrowed the possibility of freedom and pluralism."

This is based upon the absolutisation of human rights and freedom:

"when you suck all content out of freedom and you're just left with competing freedoms, then you don't have any moral foundation for the goods that your society is trying to strive towards. You don't even have anything to found the notion of the value of freedom."

Two philosophers from Oxford and Cambridge respectively, Simon Blackburn and Leslie Green, presented the main argument against the validity of Pope Benedict's phrase, simply pointing out that *in practice* very few people *at present* are radically relativist in *all* morality to the point of being anarchic and care-less of cruelty.

Green was allowed to make the unopposed penultimate point suggesting that just as religious dictatorial fundamentalism and theocracy are causing "enormous violence" around the world hierarchical Churches believing in "one fundamental and absolute truth" are places where child abuse flourishes.

Celibacy Debate and Catholic Voices

A welcome public debate on priestly celibacy is to take place on the Tuesday before the Papal Visit at Leicester Square's Odeon cinema. It will occur after a well reviewed film, *Conspiracy of Silence*, which in effect presents an anti-Church and anti-celibacy case. The debate is scheduled for just 90 minutes, a short time it would seem given that there are six "leading Catholic" speakers. Arguing against "compulsory celibacy" will be Professor Tina Beattie, Helena Kennedy QC, Fr. John McGowan (OCD) taking on Bishop Malcolm McMahon, Jack Valero and Fr. Stephen Wang.

Jack Valero commented "We've decided with Catholic Voices that we're going to tackle head on all criticisms of the Church, and explain our position in a reasonable manner."

Forgetting the Ontology of Gift

Stefano Fontana, on the Cardinal Van Thuan Institute website (19th July), argues, like Edward Hadas in these pages last March, that "few are those who appreciate [*Caritas in Veritate*] in depth, and many are those who contest it." Fontana, the Institute's director, highlights the June 2010 issue of the Parisian Quarterly *Liberté Politique* entitled "Liberating civil society. An appeal of *Caritas in Veritate*". He writes:

"In calling for the liberation of civil society *Caritas in Veritate* proposes a truly peaceful revolution. ... civil society alone is the place where gratuitousness and the logic of gift are experienced, which are the main and truly new themes of the encyclical. Neither economics nor politics are exempt from this, insofar as the logic of gift is proper to man as such. Man needs meaning, and meaning is not something he can produce on his own; it has to come his way in a gratuitous manner."



Cutting Edge

Science and Religion News

New Scientist Detects the Spiritual (a bit) Edward Hadas

Ernst Fehr has garnered attention for doing something that should not be noteworthy – using dubious experimental methods to confirm common sense. In academic economics, however, the dedication to pure theory is so strong that the work of Fehr and his school seems almost revolutionary.

What Fehr has observed, largely through asking willing subjects to play highly artificial “games” which are supposed to test their motivations, is that the explanation of human nature assumed in conventional “neoclassical” economic theory is wrong. It turns out that men are not, as the economists imagine, simply self-interested and calculating.

The news should come as no surprise to any Christian, but economists often live in a world of their own, one in which men have but one motivation: themselves. Fehr made his reputation through discovering another one: a sense of fairness. The Austrian, now based in Switzerland, has moved on, according to a recent *New Scientist* profile (4 May 2010, “How I found what is wrong with economics”, interview by Mark Buchanan), to explore compassion.

Christians, novelists, mothers – indeed, pretty much every human – could have saved Fehr much trouble. Advanced game theory is not required to uncover the existence of all sorts of non-selfish motivations. Even Adam Smith, often either praised or castigated as the father of the self-interest assumption, had a complex understanding of “moral sentiments”.

Only a discipline in thrall to peculiarly simple mathematical fixations and a wilfully reductive and anti-nobility ethos could manage to ignore reality so thoroughly. Academic economics fits that bill. The discipline’s willing suspension of observation and common sense has been so great that Fehr was long considered a revolutionary and his research was ignored.

That total isolation has ended, but the discipline’s intellectual poverty is still

great enough that Fehr’s contribution remains worthwhile. Unfortunately, his “fairness”, which is essentially the same as the “altruism” cited as a motivation by other dissident economists, is unlikely to have much influence on the theoretical work of academics. The simple assumption of a universal desire to maximise self-interest makes the mathematics much more tractable. Fortunately, economic policy of governments and actual economic practice is not much influenced by the basic economic theory, so this reality-shy approach does relatively little harm in the non-academic world.

Fehr’s contributions are real enough, but for Christians, and anyone who worries about the ontological, moral and epistemological dimensions of economic activity, his gaps are probably more concerning than his accomplishments.

For a start, the method is suspect. Fehr’s preference for experiment over theory may sound admirably modern, but the value of studies in “behavioural game theory”, which try to isolate and replicate purely economic choices, is questionable. This sort of research assumes away the rich social context and great social and practical ambiguities of the real world. Broadly speaking, the results are mostly unobjectionable, but like so many efforts to develop quantifiable observations of human nature, they largely produce spuriously precise elaborations of fairly obvious observations about how people behave in rich Western societies.

Then there is the philosophical confusion about what counts as an explanation. It is not clear what the discovery that brain waves change along with emotions such as pity is supposed to demonstrate, but Fehr seems to think it is important. It may be impertinent, but I would suggest that Fehr would have benefited from spending a little less time compiling interviews of German mothers with children in day care and a bit more studying the mind-body problem. Fehr also refers enthusiastically to evolutionary psychology, a discipline which fails almost any conceivable test of scientific validity other than the use of complicated words. It is hard to see how rank speculation about pre-historic

human experience can clarify anything. Such thinking easily leads to a worrying moral determinism – men cannot help acting that way, thanks to natural selection.

Fehr’s work is fine as far as it goes, but the effort to dress simple truths and half-truths with glamorous mathematical formulae and largely spurious scientific evidence is unlikely to provide much insight. If anything, the piles of numbers make it difficult to get at the core moral questions – how virtuous and how selfish are people, and how and to what extent can their ethical disposition be improved? It would be better to abandon physics-envy and enter into a clear philosophical and anthropological debate.

In *Caritas in Veritate* (36), Pope Benedict XVI suggested a distinctly moral approach to economics, one which casts out completely the selfish anthropology of conventional economics:

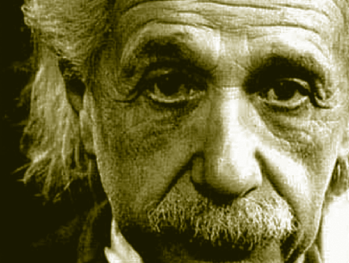
“The great challenge before us, accentuated by the problems of development in this global era and made even more urgent by the economic and financial crisis, is to demonstrate, in thinking and behaviour, not only that traditional principles of social ethics like transparency, honesty and responsibility cannot be ignored or attenuated, but also that in commercial relationships the principle of gratuitousness and the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity can and must find their place within normal economic activity. This is a human demand at the present time, but it is also demanded by economic logic. It is a demand both of charity and of truth.”

Fehr’s thinking about human behaviour is pointing the discipline in roughly that direction, but there is much more to be done.

New Scientist Recoils From the Spiritual Fr Chris Findlay-Wilson

New Scientist reviews Matt Rossano’s book *Supernatural Selection: How religion evolved* in which he makes the claim that it was religion that conferred vital survival benefits on the human race: imaginative children were better suited

"Singham believes science can provide explanations for all areas once seen as off-limits to scientists"



to navigating complex social relationships as adults for example; humans who participated in healing rituals were healthier; ritual increased the brain's capacity for working memory. Above all, Rossano sees religion primarily in terms of relationships, which apparently explains why it persists even in the face of today's atheistic reductionist arguments. The *New Scientist* reviewer is intrigued but not convinced: "From so far away, the line between causality and correlation can look very blurry". Perhaps Rossano's hypothesis is as near as a materialist gets to appreciating religion without conceding the reality of the supernatural order. Still, it sounds as though Rossano is looking in the right direction; it's about time we had a wide exploration of religion's unique rôle in civilising human society.

The New War Between Science and Religion

Last May Mano Singham, the President of the Center for Inquiry, an American secularist campaigning organisation, set out for us the key camps in the latest stage of the science and religion debate. In the Boston-based *Chronicle Review* he suggested that on one side we have the Accommodationists, who view science and "moderate" religion as compatible. On the other are the New Atheists. As one of the latter, Singham believes science moves inexorably to provide explanations for all areas once seen as off-limits to scientists. He is clearly upset that the National Academy of Science has sided with the Accommodationists, agreeing with Richard Dawkins that this may in America be "good politics. But it is intellectually disreputable". He somewhat clumsily concludes that if science concedes the Accommodationist position, it will inevitably also have to accept witchcraft and astrology (although Accommodationists clearly do not). In the end his claim that no religious scientist can ever provide a valid argument for their position sounds remarkably like a blind act of faith...

Abusing Science

... Indeed, the agnostic philosopher

Mary Midgely is famous for her critique of 'Dawkinsist' orthodoxy as in itself "a strange faith"; a reductionist ideology. Writing in *The Guardian* on 12 June, she argues that an 'infallible' scientific stance that just rejects all religious truth is an abuse of human knowledge. The answer to Christian fundamentalism, for example, is to get to the vital truth it contains and combine it with more modern thinking. What a shame that her article does not ponder those mainstream Christians embracing authentic scientific knowledge.

Reductionism and That Elusive 'God' Particle

Graham Farmelo writes in *The Daily Telegraph* (20 July 2010) about the rush to find this most hidden of scientific holy grails:

"Since the existence of the Higgs boson particle was first predicted almost half a century ago, thousands of physicists have spent many millions of pounds in an attempt to pin it down, as yet to no avail. Experimenters at Fermilab, near Chicago, recently had to quash rumours that they had finally discovered it. If nature really has chosen to involve the Higgs in its grand scheme, it is doing an excellent job of keeping it secret.

"At first glance, it seems odd that an obscure subatomic particle has attracted so much attention. It's not just that it would be much too small for any human being to see – theorists predict that it will weigh billions of times less than a typical dust particle, and will have only the briefest of lives. After each one is born, death should follow about a hundred trillionths of a trillionth of a second later as it falls apart to produce other particles.

"Yet physicists care deeply about the Higgs, because its putative existence follows from an elegant theoretical idea that helps explain why almost all of the most basic particles have mass. The Higgs theory, named after its co-author – a distinguished, now-retired theoretician at the University of Edinburgh – does a lot to explain why you and every material thing around you are not as insubstantial as light.

At a deeper level, what makes the Higgs particle so important is that it represents the one unconfirmed part of perhaps the greatest triumph of modern science – the theory describing fundamental particles and the main forces between them."

And why is it called "the God particle"? The Nobel-winning experimenter Leon Lederman once called it that, but "has never successfully explained why". Might not the reason lie in the apparent convenience of such a fundamental particle to reductionist philosophers such as Richard Dawkins. His reduction only to the level of "The Selfish Gene" has been easily shown to be entirely arbitrary. Stopping at the fundamental Higgs might appear to such mindsets a bit more comfortable.

Another Professor Turns Back on Embryonic Stem Cells Fr Philip Miller

A very significant step away from embryonic stem-cell research was taken recently when a previously forthright advocate of such research softened his stance on other ethical alternatives. In 2005, before a Congressional hearing in the U.S., Prof. George Q. Daley of Harvard spoke forcefully and influentially about the necessity for embryonic stem-cell research to go ahead, and dismissed suggestions that one could work instead with "induced pluripotent stem cells" ("iPS", i.e. stem cells reprogrammed from some cells of a living adult). We reported on iPS cells in *Cutting Edge* of the Jan/Feb 2008 issue, concerning Prof. Ian Wilmut's volte-face in his attitude to cloning, after embracing iPS research. In the June 2010 issue of *Nature Medicine*, in an interview with the Boston-based researcher, Daley tells how he further changed the focus of his work after Prof. Shinya Yamanaka of Kyoto University, who won the 2010 Kyoto Prize for advanced technology, made known his successes with iPS cells in 2007: "Once Yamanaka solved the problem, I turned around virtually my entire programme to take advantage of that breakthrough," he says. "There's no reason in my mind to think that we're not going to have iPS cells that function as well as embryonic stem cells". This can only bode well for the future of medicine.

Notes From Across the Atlantic

by Joseph Bottum



MERITS OF ABSTINENCE-ONLY ED

A recent study at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine suggests that abstinence-only education can be effective in delaying sexual activity among sixth- and seventh-grade children. An abstinence-only programme was, in fact, more successful than either “health promotion education” or safe sex-only education. The study involved children who attended an eight-hour intervention programme emphasising that abstinence prevents pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. No “moralistic arguments” were made, and it was not suggested to the children that they abstain from sex until marriage. The study found that the children were 33 per cent more likely to abstain from sexual activity over a two-year period than children who attended interventions stressing the importance of safe sex or of maintaining good health generally.

While the study emphasised that the abstinence-only classes “would not be moralistic”, there was an underlying assumption in those classes that the children themselves were moral beings – a striking difference between the abstinence-only and safe sex-only interventions. In the abstinence-only program, it was emphasised that “abstinence can foster attainment of future goals”. In contrast, the safe sex-only intervention concentrated on education about sexually transmitted diseases and condom use – that is, it focused on the present only. The first programme assumed that children look forward, anticipate and hope. The second assumed that, like the lowest animals, they are aware only of the here and now. These results provide

more evidence that children are, indeed, of the species *Homo sapiens* – creatures who are capable of checking natural desires and planning for the future and who are illuminated, to some degree, by the light of natural reason, by which they recognise the good and make choices accordingly.

LANGUAGE AS SPURIOUS DEFENCE

A Gallup poll published in May reveals that, for the second year in a row, more Americans identify themselves as “pro-life” (47 percent) than “pro-choice” (45 percent). It’s not entirely clear what these results reveal about the American people; the difference in opinion is within the poll’s margin of error, and there has been no attendant increase in moral condemnation of abortion to explain the growing popularity of the pro-life label.

Nancy Cohen of *The Los Angeles Times*, however, believes she has the answer. The adjective *pro-life*, she laments, just sounds so much more appealing than *pro-choice*: “Who, after all, could be against life? Between life and choice, life should win every time.... ‘Pro-choice’ has turned into a tone-deaf rallying cry.... It essentially cedes the moral high ground to the anti-abortion movement.”

The solution, Cohen suggests, is a change in nomenclature: The pro-choice movement should market itself as the pro-freedom movement – a euphemism for a euphemism now sullied by the reality it signals. And after *pro-freedom*, what? The infinity of language as the best hope for preserving the abortion licence?

HOPE FOR CATHOLIC SCRIPTURE SCHOLARS

Gary Anderson’s astute essays on biblical topics are familiar to many readers of this journal. They will be pleased to know that the University of Notre Dame has elevated him to the rarified realm of a named chair in the theology department, the newly founded Hesburgh Chair of Catholic Theology. As the old models of biblical study break down, Gary – along with his former colleague at Harvard, Jon Levenson – has been at the forefront of efforts to rethink the relations between the historical-critical project and the living realities of contemporary Christian and Jewish faith. It’s a good sign for the future of Catholic theology that a scholar so intellectually gifted – and committed to the theological future of the Catholic Church – has received such an honour.

WORDS OF WISDOM

Remember Richard John Neuhaus’ 1971 book *In Defense of People*? On page 205, you can still find: “Curiously, few of the more ardent crusaders are demographers, and demographers do figure prominently among those who counter the contentions of the crusaders. Paul Erlich, for example, is a biologist, as is Garrett Hardin. John Holdren, Ehrlich associate and super-hawk on population control, is an expert on plasma research.” Perhaps that name, John Holdren, sounds familiar. He’s now the czar of science for all these United States.

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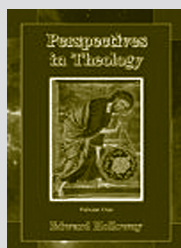
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