

# faith

March and April 2010  
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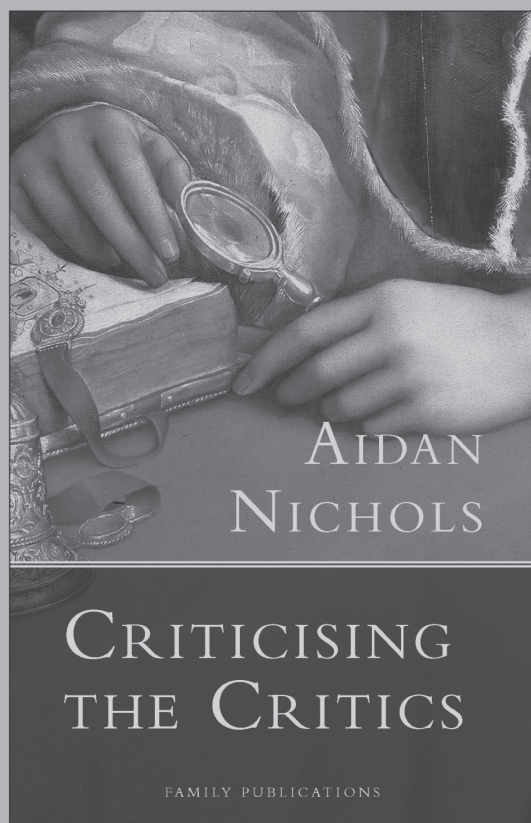
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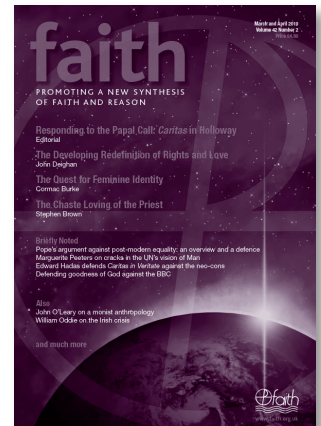
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# faith

**March and April 2010  
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# Responding to the Papal Call: *Caritas* in Edward Holloway *Editorial*

“Development requires a transcendent vision of the person, it needs God.”

*Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate 11*

“Let man seek for and recognise his own personal Law of Life, for man is not his own God and without God he is the tragic fool of all nature.”

*Catholicism, a New Synthesis, (p. 351)*

“Lose a sense of God and the sense of man will be quickly lost.”

*Pope John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae*

Several times recently Pope Benedict has spoken of the “urgent” need for a “new humanist synthesis” in order to resolve “the succession of crises that afflict the world today” (*Caritas in Veritate*, CiV, para. 21, cf. our last and current *Road from Regensburg* column).

The disintegration of community cohesion and family life is, sadly, a well documented fact in the technologically developed world. One could also argue that the cohesion of the family of humankind at the level of international relations has been equally problematic over the last hundred years.

At the beginning of Chapter Five of CiV, “The Cooperation of the Human Family”, Pope Benedict analyses the cause of this breakdown as the rejection of the God-centred, relational nature of man:

“One of the deepest forms of poverty a person can experience is isolation. [...] Poverty is often produced by a rejection of God’s love, by man’s basic and tragic tendency to close in on himself, thinking himself to be self-sufficient or merely an insignificant and ephemeral fact, a ‘stranger’ in a random universe. [...] Pope Paul VI noted that ‘the world is in trouble because of the lack of thinking’. He was making an observation, but also expressing a wish: a new trajectory of thinking is needed in order to arrive at a better understanding of the implications of our being one family; [...] a deeper critical evaluation of the category of relation. [...] metaphysics and theology [are] needed if man’s transcendent dignity is to be properly understood.” (n.53).

We thus urgently need “a metaphysical interpretation of the *humanum* in which relationality is an essential element” (n.54). David Schindler of the Washington John Paul II Institute argues that “The implications of the constitutive relationality affirmed in CiV are stunning.” (See our current *Road from Regensburg* column).

## New Developments

The Pope makes a couple of specific contributions to this proposed “new humanistic synthesis”, both new emphasises for the magisterium (see Edward Hadas’s piece later in this issue). In Chapter Three he proposes the theme of “gratuitousness” as fundamental to man’s life and self-conscious knowing, and so to the just balance of market and state. And in Chapter Six he affirms the crucial

place of a proper interpretation of technology. At the end of that Chapter he calls us to develop “new eyes and a new heart, capable of *rising above a materialistic vision of human events*” (n.77, his emphasis, as with all such quotes below). Schindler notes “the encyclical’s call for a new trajectory of thinking informed by the principles of gratuitousness and relationality, metaphysically and theologically conceived”, as well as “integrating” technology “into the idea of creation as something first *given to* man, as *gift*, ‘not something self-generated’ (n.68), or *produced* by man.”

In his 1970 book, *Catholicism, A New Synthesis* – a title that resonates strongly with Pope Benedict’s phrase quoted above – Fr. Edward Holloway recognised the crisis of relationship at the heart of modernity: “... the heart of belonging and surety of being loved and wanted has gone out of human society” (p.355, *Catholicism: A New Synthesis*, Faith-Keyway, CNS). He also offered the outlines of a philosophical and theological “new synthesis”, which, in our view, meets all the CiV criteria we have just noted.

Holloway made relationality central to his new metaphysics, partly because it is central to the constitution of “matter” as rediscovered by modern science and technology (see our editorials for Sept 2006 and July 2009). For Holloway, to be is to be in relationship. Not only is all material being mutually correlative within the equation that is the universe, he *defines* matter as that which relates to Transcendent Mind as its source of being, meaning and finality. At the peak of that unfolding equation, matter is gathered into ontological unity with directly created spirit to form human nature, which exists in direct and personal relationship to God who is the Living Environment of grace and providence for every human being and for mankind as a whole. For all created being, in Holloway’s vision, is in the irreducible relationship of being known by God.

The crowning glory of that relationship, and of every material relativity too, is the gift of the Incarnation when God the eternal Word takes human nature – material body and spiritual soul – to himself in ontological and personal (hypostatic) union. In Christ we can see revealed with total clarity how the whole cosmos, and every aspect of creaturely existence, depends on the gratuitous love, yet utterly coherent Wisdom of the Creator. Through such a



## “Society for Holloway is part of the Unity Law of Control and Direction, which is his new name for and conception of the Natural Law.”

vision the metaphysics of relationality and gift proposed by CiV can be rooted once again in physics, and at the same time be put at the service of a renewed Christ-centred theology and catechesis.

### Modern Neurosis

If it is true, as Holloway argues, that the very foundations of matter and the identity of human nature are aligned upon the coming of the Word made flesh, then a society which is uncertain about the existence of God and whether Man has any meaning or purpose must be subject to crisis, alienation and chaos even more inevitably than CiV is able to show. It will be starved of the bread that nourishes Life and life more abundant within the individual heart and mind; it is cut off from the life-blood that sustains true social progress. The bonds of trust that bind communities together in shared faith, hope and charity will be corroded from within as human nature itself withers like branches detached from the Vine. (See the Pope's 11 January powerful words about the Berlin Wall in current *Road from Regensburg* column).

If people are uncertain about God as the source of their own identity and fulfilment, they are bound to be more uncertain about relationships with one another.

“All social institutions are the extension of the family which is ontological, not just functional or extrinsic”

The “opium of the people” is not religion, but any philosophy which denies God as a principle of man's inner well-being and communal destiny. Opium, like its modern equivalent heroin, produced a temporary pleasure that ends in nausea and self destruction. That is also the fruit of any ideology which denies the spiritual nature and supernatural vocation of Man. Holloway described the children of modern liberalism as “serfs of the Freudian overlord”. Regarded at the time of publication as negative and pessimistic, these words now have the grim ring of truth:

“It is the personalities marked in the features which so appal: the way of life so meaningless, the sensualism so without love, the pathless drift, the degradation of the image of God so without hope. Over it all is the angry scorn for their very selves. This last is virtue, it is God's own ironic triumph upon their seducers. This is an act of contrition wrung from outraged nature for its own detestable corruption, and God will accept it unto a state of grace.” (p.359)

### The Social and Religious Nature of Man and of Creation

According to Schindler, the most “stunning” implication of CiV's anthropology is that “*no relations taken up by human beings in the course of their lives are purely contractual.*” Holloway makes the same point. He says that the family is the primary unit of community because all human

relationships derive from the familial bond within which we minister being and existence to one another. Chesterton called the family “the small state founded on the sexes [which] is at once the most voluntary and the most natural of all self-governing states.” (*The Superstition of Divorce*, p.23).

All social institutions, including the state, are in one way or another the extension of the family – of mutual dependence and belonging – which is ontological, not just functional or extrinsic. This is why the state is a legitimate organ of human organisation, but it is also why the state derives its authority upwards from the individual and the family, via intermediate groups and institutions, and not the other way round.

We can see in this the traditional Catholic balance between solidarity and subsidiarity (cf. CiV Chapter Five), but again Holloway goes further. The whole of nature is ‘social’ in character, the very term ‘environment’ implying ontological inter-definition and mutual belonging. Human society is the natural outgrowth and expression of human nature which, like all created natures, is set within the Unity Law of Control and Direction, which is his new name for and conception of the Natural Law. But humanity is spiritual as well as physical, and so human society is founded on the absolute value of the individual and the need for a direct relationship with God as the Environment in which men find their Life-Law and their fulfilment:

“The institutions of men are, by analogy, the sacramentalisation of society in the natural relations of men one to another, and thus even the civic institutions of men, to be totally focused, must embody something of this underlying relationship to God as the source of human truth and the dynamism of natural human happiness.” (p.356)

Society, then, is the total human framework within which men administer control and direction to each other from God, acknowledged and loved in their personal consciences. And the Church, by corollary, is the public and objective body of relationships by which God ministers life and life more abundantly to men through one another in Christ.

### No True Humanism Without Christ

The Incarnation was intended to bring about the perfection of the individual and of human society through the integration of the whole human race as a family which takes its name from God the Father. This consummation of life on earth is delayed and resisted by the incursion of sin, yet, for all the struggles, setbacks and betrayals, the defining goal of creation and of human history remains – the bringing together under Christ as head of all, everything in heaven and on earth. This was never meant to be just an “other worldly” reality.

## Responding to the Papal Call: *Caritas* in Edward Holloway continued

The cosmic and eschatological synthesis sketched in *Caritas in Veritate* is remarkably similar:

“God is the guarantor of man’s true development, inasmuch as, having created him in his image, he also establishes the transcendent dignity of men and women and feeds their innate yearning to ‘be more’. Man is not a lost atom in a random universe: he is God’s creature, whom God chose to endow with an immortal soul and whom he has always loved.” (n.29)

This plan for man is centred upon Christ, who “reveals to us in all its fullness the initiative of love and the plan for true life that God has prepared for us” (n.1). It is written into nature which

“expresses a design of love and truth. It is prior to us, and it has been given to us by God as the setting for our life. Nature speaks to us of the Creator (cf. Rom 1:20) and his love for humanity. It is destined to be ‘recapitulated’ in Christ at the end of time (cf. Eph 1:9-10; Col 1:19-20)” (n.48).

### Charity and Community – Relationships as Gift

CiV speaks of human relationships coming under the “logic of gratuitousness”,<sup>1</sup> a gratuity which is another name for the *Caritas* which even more profoundly marks all God’s dealings with us.

The greatest expression of *Caritas* as gift and relationship lies in the Eucharist, which is why the “holy communion” of God with men is realised most fully on earth among those gathered around the altar for the Eucharist.

For Holloway, the Eucharist not only feeds the personal love of God as a living experience, it also engenders love and care for others in the measure that we are conformed to the personality of Christ whom we have received. Holloway often emphasised, too, how all our loves, concerns and charitable efforts are brought back to the Eucharist as an offering to the Father through the hands of the priest, to be united, to be purified and perfected in Christ.

True love, of whatever kind, will take delight in all that is good, which means all that is of Christ in the Holy Spirit, which is why it finds its true home and its wellspring in the great offering of Love that is the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Personal communion with God through grace will always lead to a *social* love, as witnessed in the lives of the saints, although in different kinds and degrees, whatever a person’s state of life. For,

“the first requirement is not to write books on wisdom or to address men over the television. Until the end of time men will be nourished and fostered in personality only in the attention of a truly individual love.” (p.352)

### The Interplay of State and Church in God’s Plan

The state, then, is ultimately based on these natural and supernatural relationships which make us human and children of God. The authority of the state derives *upwards*

from the communion of men under God, in God and with God via intermediate groups and institutions, not the other way around.

St Thomas Aquinas recognised that all citizens should have some share and say in government, whether the system be a monarchy, aristocracy or some variety of electoral democracy (S.T. I-II Q.105 art. I). Today the Church upholds the value of democracy because it maximises the participation of individuals in social development and is seen as the best way to hold politicians to account (cf. *Centesimus Annus* 46). However the democratic process cannot determine or alter fundamental human values or truths. Democracy is the pooling of individual free choices at a given moment in history and those choices are still circumscribed by the Law of God (cf. *Evangelium Vitae* 70).

“*Caritas in Veritate* makes it startlingly clear that the call to change is unintelligible without a coherent vision of human identity”.

Catholic social teaching does not advocate the identification of Church and state, but neither can the sacred and secular be absolutely separated. In effect that would mean the elimination of God from human history. That is of course the real intention of the secular humanist.

In an address to the Diplomatic Corps assigned to the Vatican on the 11 January last, Pope Benedict criticised any notion of “secularity” which

“den[ies] the social importance of religion. Such an approach creates confrontation and division, disturbs peace, harms human ecology [...] There is thus an urgent need to delineate a positive and open secularity which, grounded in the just autonomy of the temporal order and the spiritual order, can foster healthy cooperation and a spirit of shared responsibility.”

Like the family, the Church is not the creation of the state. It has its own divine origin and its own natural place at the heart of the human community under the Unity Law of Control and Direction. The Church does not claim independence from or immunity from the rule of local laws. However, when laws are passed which infringe fundamental human values like the right to life of the unborn, or the privileges and duties of the Church, which are God given (e.g. the right of the Pope to appoint bishops), this is without any legitimacy. For “the usurpation of the authority of God in society by the power of the state is essentially the transfer of the divine Life-giving environment to the creature.” (p.377)

### One Lord, One Church, One World

One final point that follows from this line of thought, which is also common to both Holloway and Pope Benedict, is that just as the Incarnation has already unified the family of man in a new way, society needs structures of government



**“The true ‘opium of the people’ is any philosophy which denies God as a principle of man.”**

that reflect its increasingly globalised unity. For Holloway this flows from the fact that “in a mysterious way, God has united himself to every man” (*Gaudium et Spes* 22), and this unity is also a visible, social reality in the Body of Christ which is the Church. As “Christendom” was to medieval Europe, so a federation of all nations and races needs to be forged for the good governance of the world.

The Pope has been criticised by some prominent Catholics for saying that

“In the face of the unrelenting growth of global interdependence, there is a strongly felt need, [...] that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth”. (CiV, n.67)

A better translation of those last three words would seem to be “become a concrete reality”, but the intention is clear. As we have become a global community of communities, so humanity needs to be organised and governed as a single “family of nations”.

Holloway wrote that:

“Man, who began as one community of origin under the blessing of God, is destined at the consummation of human society to find again the same unity and community in one society on earth. Eventually this will need a governmental centre which is the supreme authority of a federated world.” (p.481)

As CiV points out, such an

“authority would need to be regulated by law, to observe consistently the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, to seek to establish the common good, and to *make a commitment to securing authentic integral human development inspired by the values of charity in truth*” (n.34).

Clearly, there are many factors in our current social and political climate which threaten to subvert this aim and impose a secularist, anti-life agenda on the global community. Yet the Pope does not decry the idea and aim of an international government for that reason. Rather he warns of the consequences of excluding the voice of God from the commonwealth of nations and urges us not to lose hope that the Christian vision of Man in Christ can be realised in the modern world.

## Conclusion

For Pope Benedict and for Holloway, the Church is the sacramentalisation in history of the natural relationship of humanity to God. The Church belongs at the heart of the human village as naturally as the marketplace and the town hall. The Church embodies a “dynamic relationship [of God to men] not an intervention” (p.373). Despite frequent opposition and persecution through the ages, she will not fail in the one thing necessary: “to bring forth his children in her womb through Christ, to dedicate them as sons and daughters acceptable at the font and at the altar.” (p.353).

Church and state are co-relative, transcendent and immanent powers, directed to foster the good of men. *Caritas in Veritate* makes it startlingly clear that the call to change how we live as individuals, as communities and as a human family is unintelligible without a coherent vision of human identity and destiny. Secular humanism lacks any such vision, making every man the subjective measure of his own truth and destiny.

Pope Benedict highlights the inherent freedom and relationality of human nature to underpin a renewed social vision of Man in Christ. Holloway would concur with this, but goes further, rooting his Christian anthropology in the intrinsic relationality of all being, including the material creation. He can show a continuity of principle running through the material cosmos that leads to the body and brain of man. It is a principle of interrelativity in control and direction, meaning and purpose that relates the whole cosmos to the Mind of God as Creator. It also makes perfect sense of the direct creation of the human soul at the peak of the development of life on earth. Man is thereby made as a single living being in two orders – material and spiritual – whose true environment and final destiny lies in a freely given and freely received relationship of grace with God. That relationship is perfected, and also redeemed from the disaster of sin, in the ultimate gift of love which is Christ crucified and risen. In him alone, above all in the Eucharist, do we find the key to love: the vision, the wisdom and the energy we need to build a civilisation of love.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Mostly in chapter three – see the article by Edward Hadas in this issue. David Schindler also identifies: “the encyclical’s central category of relation as gift”. In our September editorial we looked at some implications of the idea of truth as a “*gift* received” (CiV, 34 & 77) but apart from Stratford Caldecott and Tracey Rowland, very few have taken up this profound idea from Pope Benedict’s encyclical (See our November *Road from Regensburg*).

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# Global Governance and Recognising Need for New Vision *by Marguerite A. Peeters*

*The below are extracts from last January's "Interactive Information Services (IIS) Report 287", entitled "On the State of Global Governance: Contradictory Trends", from the Brussels Institute for Intercultural Dialogue Dynamics.*

[...] Twenty years have passed since the fall of the Berlin wall, when the UN undertook to build a "new global consensus" on the norms, values and priorities of international cooperation for the post-Cold War era and the 21st century. Global governance then took a Copernican turn, away from the paradigms of western modernity (such as national sovereignty and interest, the primacy of reason, growth, progress, representative democracy, the authority of government, western universal values, hierarchies), towards a new postmodern ethic. Five years separate us from 2015, the "target date" for the implementation of some of the goals of the new postmodern consensus – of the *Millennium Development Goals* and of the 1994 Cairo conference on population. [...]

## 1. What is "Global Governance"?

[...] Global governance can be "described" as the new global political regime which informally came about in the course of the post-Cold War conference process of the United Nations (1990-96), when a new "global consensus" was built, not primarily by governments themselves but through a historical and strategic partnership between the UN and so-called "non-state actors", mainly powerful western-based NGOs. [...]

As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon put it: "Our times demand a new definition of leadership – global leadership. They demand a new constellation of international cooperation – governments, civil society and the private sector, working together for a collective global good" (speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on 29 January 2009).

[...] Global norms are, more often than not, forged by expert networks, informal partnerships, consultative processes, lobby groups, "retreats" of world leaders behind closed doors. Governments themselves too often just follow suit. Hence the "collective global good" radically differs from the traditional notion of "the common good". [...] "New multilateralism" is another name for global governance. [...]

## 2. Two Contradictory Trends: Success of Informal and Soft Processes vs. Failure of Formal and Hard Processes – But is "Soft" Turning "Hard"?

How effective and efficient is global governance today? IIS distinguishes two contradictory trends. Global governance's undeniable and historic success in leading global cultural change (language, global norms and policy direction...) since the fall of the Berlin wall sharply contrasts with global governance's inability to reform its institutions and/or create new institutions for itself and to reach legally binding agreements: [...]

Consensus, accords and other soft agreements (such as the 1994 Cairo consensus or the recent Copenhagen Accord), while not being "legally binding", do substantially determine the direction of global governance, establish a "global normative

framework", are often "enforced" – effectively implemented, as if political and cultural agreements had become more "binding" than hard law. [...]

## 3. Global Governance's Success: Global "Soft" Change, Leading to "Hard" Juridical and Institutional Change in Some Instances

As an "informal global political regime", global governance has proven remarkably efficient in the last fifteen to twenty years in changing the language of governments, academia, the media, and NGOs, and in setting new political and cultural goals (such as "sustainability" and "good governance"), thereby creating a new global culture that quietly transforms all cultures *from within* (see IIS 279-81). The new language has spread horizontally to all parts of the world and is vertically sinking in the fabric of societies, operating irreversible cultural change. More and more "partners" have come aboard. In fact, which significant political force still resists or remains an outsider?

[...] In her remarks on the 15th anniversary of the Cairo conference, US Secretary of State Clinton announced that [...] the "centerpiece" of US foreign policy, "the Global Health Initiative", commits the US to "spending \$63 billion over six years to improve global health by investing in efforts to reduce maternal and child mortality, prevent millions of unintended pregnancies, and avert millions of new HIV infections, among other goals." The Global Health Initiative will "employ a new approach": it will integrate family planning, maternal health services and HIV-AIDS screening and treatment. Clinton said paying attention to the needs of women and girls was "in America's national security interests". She views the task of the Obama administration and reproductive health advocates as not only to "provide services to those who need them, but to change the minds and attitudes of those who can be responsible for delivering those services in countries around the world."

Decisive steps have been taken to reinforce the UN's gender architecture. (see *Faith*, Sept 2009) [...]

## 4. Failure of Copenhagen

Not only did the Copenhagen Summit not usher in a binding pact, it failed even to take a decisive step towards a pact that would be adopted at the next meeting (COP-16) in Mexico at the end of 2010. [...]

## 5. Widening Cracks in the System: "Global" Does Not Work

IIS has identified major and widening cracks in the system of global governance:

- 1) Copenhagen demonstrated that global governance has overreached itself;
- 2) The crisis provokes a shift away from idealistic globalism, back to pragmatic concerns;
- 3) "Global consensus" established by "experts" is not and has never been genuine;
- 4) The institutions of global governance prove unable to resolve their identity crisis and to reform themselves; they are fragmented;



**“The institutions of global governance have stopped searching for what is real, true and good.”**

- 5) Global governance pays the bill for not taking into account non-western cultures and civilisations;
- 6) Displaying an incapacity to provide real leadership, produce a vision for the world, new ideas/ideologies, global governance opts for a survival approach.

## **6. Worrisome Inability of Governments, Citizens and Cultures to Declare Independence from Global Governance's Normative Frameworks**

What is the root cause of the current drifting? Would it not be that the West and the institutions of global governance, having closed themselves to transcendence, have stopped searching for what is real, true and good for humanity as a whole and for each individual person, and therefore prove unable to forge any genuine consensus? Indeed, doesn't the current drifting reveal the fakeness and ideological character of the post-Cold War consensus?

As IIS often highlighted it, the UN consensus-building exercise of the 1990s, which set the framework in which global governance operates today, hijacked humanity's universal aspirations at the end of the Cold War.

What is worrisome about the current situation is that governments and global governance, confronted with drifting, do not draw appropriate conclusions and do not declare independence from the ideological normative framework which has led to the implosion of the system. Postmodern experts continue to rule the show, with further drifting as a consequence. [...]

IIS also believes that de-hijacking is the key to unblocking the global governance situation. The more manifest it becomes that the “global consensus” built after the end of the Cold War was hijacked and is therefore fake, the more de-hijacking becomes a real possibility.

[...] What is new about the current situation, IIS underlines, is the fact that global governance actors are starting to recognise the need for clarification and more political realism. They haven't yet, though, identified clear and consensual solutions to the problems of conceptual fuzziness and impracticality.

## **7. Whatever the State of Global Governance, Cultural Globalisation Continues to Gain Ground**

[...] the process of cultural globalisation inexorably moves forward, picking up speed. The culture of the “freedom to choose”, channeled by the Internet, movies, television, music, fashion, slogans, publicity, education programmes, NGOs, seduces ever more young people in all cultures, mainly in urban areas, but it manages to filter down to the local country areas. This produces a fast and irreversible transformation of all cultures from within, globalising the western cultural revolution and its primary consequence, secularisation. Young people in non-western cultures want to “free themselves” from traditions, moral norms, the political oppression of certain regimes, constraints due to poverty, obligations and responsibilities. Unlike what happened in the West in the 60s, most of these young people do not need to launch a revolution: they just need to follow suit, jump on the band wagon of cultural globalisation.

Today the people of all nations, races and cultures have to deal with the crisis of the family, the decline of marriage as an institution, the exponential rise of the rate of divorce and abortion, the fast relinquishment of traditions such as respect for the elderly. Doesn't the Chinese government advocate a return to Confucianism and traditional Chinese values to deal with the moral crisis of Chinese society?

## **8. A Positive Outlook on the Current State of Global Governance: Cracks in the System Render De-hijacking Politically and Culturally Possible**

The current implosion and drifting of global governance, combined with the accelerating forward movement of the globalisation of the West's new postmodern culture, generates a malaise and creates a global political, cultural, anthropological and spiritual vacuum. This vacuum is becoming perceptible by a majority of citizens. In the absence of political and moral leadership, people are left to themselves, so to speak. The times are favourable to self-determination, a return to reality, de-hijacking the “global normative consensus” built not by real people, but by the enlightened despots of our global age. The task ahead of us is to help disentangle from ideology the issues that make up the themes of this consensus – inter alia, man's relationship to creation, the role of woman in society, people's participation in governance, a global ethic, North-South solidarity, the role of business, cultural identity, holism. Open to transcendence, searching for what is true and good, consensus-building could become genuine and lead humanity to a civilisation of love that no longer has anything to do with the “top-down” and doctrinaire paradigms of modernity.

The *World Economic Forum's* report, *Faith and the Global Agenda: values for the post-crisis economy*, states that “over two-thirds of people believe the current economic crisis is also a crisis of ethics and values. But only 50% think universal values exist”. Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the *World Economic Forum*, said the report underlines “the need for a set of values around which our global economic institutions and mechanisms of international cooperation must be built”. He said world leaders meet in Davos “to rethink values underpinning the global system of cooperation”. In other words, the “global consensus” of the 1990s failed to do just that and leaders admit it has already become irrelevant. [...]

*(See the last entry in our Road from Regensburg column.)*

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# The Developing Redefinition of Rights and Love *by John Deighan*

John Deighan, the Parliamentary Advisor to the Scottish Bishops, builds upon his previous pieces in this magazine to draw out the anti-Christian contradictions involved in some recent judicial decisions. They would seem to be examples of what Pope Benedict recently called a “forgetfulness” of Europe’s founding “anthropological vision”, which risks “seeing great and beautiful values compete or come into conflict with each other” (see our *Road from Regensburg* column).

The view that same-sex relationships are wrong is not one that will be tolerated in public life. My previous contributions to *Faith* have examined the promotion of the agenda which has now brought us to the situation where opposition is inadmissible in public policy. The recent cases of Gary McFarlane and Lillian Ladele instruct us that the situation has gone further than silencing dissent, it now demands cooperation. McFarlane worked with the relationship counselling organisation Relate until he was sacked for his unwillingness to counsel same-sex couples. The Employment Appeal Tribunal upheld his dismissal. Lillian Ladele suffered a similar fate in her case to save her job as a registrar with Islington council. She was unwilling to perform civil partnership registrations and was duly sacked. In December the Court of Appeal ruled against her application that she was discriminated against in being compelled to perform civil partnership registrations contrary to her religious beliefs. McFarlane’s failure to overturn his dismissal was greeted with typical understanding by one *Pink News* website contributor, Jane:

“Failed to accommodate his faith”! Here we go again.

No, it’s that increasingly society will not accommodate your bigotry, your prejudice, your hate.

Get over it, there’s an easy way, go back to your bible and read about how Jesus accepted everyone without reservation and without discrimination. Then you would have the right to call yourself a ‘Christian’.”<sup>1</sup>

McFarlane clearly doesn’t pass muster as a good Christian in Jane’s book. Invective is not uncommon in efforts to “persuade” Christians of their error.

Typically, supporters of our equality regime, which gives rise to these scenarios, will argue that employees who refused to conduct services for those of a particular race would be similarly disciplined for their racism. For example, another contributor to the *Pink News* Website, Luke, argues:

“Just imagine that someone used their religious beliefs to argue they couldn’t officiate ceremonies between non-white people, or non-religious people, or muslims. Quite rightly, there would be outrage. But somehow, not officiating ceremonies between same-sex couples is deemed different, by a fair number of people.”<sup>2</sup>

It is an attractive argument and most definitely one that convinces the equality campaigners who would have Gary McFarlane and Lillian Ladele suffer the loss of their livelihood for adhering to their beliefs. It is tempting simply to show

where Luke has got it wrong, but there is more than reason at work and simply winning a rational argument is not enough. If we are seeking a system of true fairness then situations such as those described above need to be resolved to ensure that people can live as harmoniously as possible in our society even when we disagree, as Luke and I do. We know that the equality movement has been driven by concern for minority groups. This has typically meant that we have ensured through legislation that minorities are not unduly disadvantaged in society because of their status or circumstances. Tolerance has been a by-word of the enlightened approach to ensuring that women, disabled, racial groups etc have been able to participate fully in society and been suitably accommodated. Sexual orientation has been the focal point for quite some time for special attention in law to overcome disadvantage (real or alleged) for those with attraction to persons of the same sex; and now, increasingly those who wish to change sex or dress as a person of the opposite sex.

“The Church’s social vision presents values which serve much better.”

## Dealing with Dissent

The solutions currently arrived at, as we can see, lead to the glaring disadvantage for those, such as Gary McFarlane, who dare to hold dissenting views. This is quite a development from the accommodation which was once used in relation to minority groups.<sup>3</sup> For example that given to Sikh motorcyclists who need not wear motorcycle helmets as it would require removal of their turbans. Halal butchers are permitted differing standards to permit meat to be prepared in conformity with the religious dietary requirements of Islam.

In the past, accommodation did not jeopardise the freedoms and well-being of other groups in society, but alas we see that orthodox Christians are now to suffer considerably for not conforming to the establishment values on sexual behaviour. In truth there are many who see this as just dessert for those who, they feel, persecuted homosexual people in times past. For them the shoe is on the other foot and vengeance is an added bonus. It was such a view which seems to have prompted another reader of *Pink News* to opine of Lillian Ladele:

“She has failed the remit of the purpose of her job. Throw her out! Bringing this to court is a waste of time and taxpayers money. The law is the law, and must and should



## “What if Ladele is wrong? Does it mean that she has no place working in our society?”

always takes precedence (sic) over religious scribbles, I am fed up of holy homophobes telling us they know better.”

Stonewall's support for the sacking of Lillian Ladele was for “the sake of [Islington Council's] lesbian and gay council tax payers”.<sup>4</sup> The Court of Appeal in Ms Ladele's case recognised that there was nothing to stop these taxpayers accessing the service<sup>5</sup> – it is just only that they could not demand the service of a particular individual. Orthodox Christian taxpayers in the area seem, in contrast, not to have their interests preserved in the case. The judge could find no support for the position of Ms Ladele in a “modern liberal democracy”.<sup>6</sup> The council's insistence that she perform civil partnership registrations “did not prevent her from worshipping as she wished”, stated Lord Neuberger.<sup>7</sup> This does not instill confidence that religious freedom is seriously understood even by a man described as one of the brightest legal minds in the country.<sup>8</sup> One supposes that Thomas More should have approved Henry VIII's actions as long as he could still get to Mass on a Sunday.

In approving her dismissal another commentator, Rose, states: “Too right. She has spent a year appealing an (sic) re-appealing and getting her name in the papers about it. It's time she accepted she was in the wrong.” This perhaps gets to the nub of the problem. What if Ms Ladele is wrong? Does it mean that she has no place working in our society? Rose may be happy to see her values of right and wrong imposed on society at present but what will it mean when she herself is deemed at some time to be wrong on a socially disputed issue? Should her livelihood be removed from her to underline the point? Is there to be no room for dissent?

### False Utopia

Such punitive measures hardly reflect the values of an authentic liberal democracy. Rather, they betray the totalitarianism of a false utopia, warned of by John Paul II, which arises when justice is detached from freedom.<sup>9</sup> The Church's social vision, built on principles of justice, peace, freedom and solidarity,<sup>10</sup> presents, this writer would submit, values which serve much better if we want to uphold the dignity of the human person. Intrinsic to that dignity is the rich understanding of religious freedom elaborated by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council:

“This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits.”<sup>11</sup>

Since religious freedom is based on the inherent dignity of the human person there is no question of it permitting the treatment of individuals to be based on the view that some are of a lesser dignity than others. One commentator makes the important observation that homosexual feelings are not chosen. For example, the contributor Luke cited above continues his comment by stating:

“People need to understand that, just because people choose to engage in homosexual behaviour does not mean people choose to have homosexual feelings. Having these feelings is a deep-rooted phenomenon, far more deep-rooted than having particular religious beliefs (and this is important, considering that Ms Ladele would never be allowed to refuse to marry people because they are of the wrong religion).”

That feelings of same-sex attraction are not chosen is indeed, as far as I am aware, often true. However, human dignity is not based simply on our feelings but is linked to our radical capacity rationally to direct our actions. Some may argue that it is right to follow homosexual feelings while some may argue it is wrong. The secularist may see little reason for self-restraint but compare that with feelings of anger. The secularist no doubt will, in contrast, see very good reasons for controlling those feelings. In short, some issues are more easily agreed upon because the social interest is more easily understood. When addressing issues around sexual feelings we are dealing with a subject where the answer on how to deal with feelings is not sufficiently clear to everyone that a consensus can be found. Albeit I may believe that I have strong arguments with which I may wish to convince others of my opinion. Opponents think likewise, so how does a liberal society resolve the point?

“It will be the Church which defends the dignity of all persons when the levers of power move from the present hegemony that favours the homosexual lobby to another hegemony that may just as easily not.”

The value of a Christian approach to issues of conscience is that they permit those who disagree still to have a place in our society, subject to the due limits of public order.

Many within the homosexual movement are individuals who have been alienated or hurt; they typically have little chance of hearing an authentic version of the Christian view on sexual relationships or to understand all the temptations and confusion that can arise in this area. It is not surprising that their attempts at achieving acceptance have been marked with great emotional vigour which can turn to hostility when opposed.

Thus Christians may be a convenient target for the wrath of the equality movement, but attacks on Christianity are misplaced. It will be the Church which defends the dignity of all persons when the levers of power move from the present hegemony that favours the homosexual lobby to another hegemony that may just as easily not. Where then will their calls for tolerance find support when they have used the principle that might is right and those who are in power determine the minority rights which must ‘trump’ the rights of other minorities. But sadly those in power have no room for doubting the rightness of their views and are intent on imposing conformity of views through their equality legislation.

# The Developing Redefinition of Rights and Love continued

Religious freedom is willingly sacrificed and will be increasingly so when the Equality Bill introduced by Harriet Harman is implemented. Mark Foster, minister for equality, gives an Orwellian spin to the new legislation as an opportunity for Churches to challenge secularism.<sup>12</sup> They will do this because the law will give the green light for Churches to be prosecuted by homosexuals who disapprove of Christian views such as that which holds that only couples born of the opposite sex should marry each other. This “opportunity”, he claims, allows the Churches to show how strong their arguments are. They will of course be judged by courts typically secularist in mindset and now at the cutting edge of introducing a new, inappropriately labelled, “liberal democracy”.

Lillian Ladele and Gary McFarlane’s experience highlights that the current legal framework and the extension it is about to be given are greatly in need of a corrective built on a thorough understanding of Man in general and of religious freedom in particular. Only this can provide an authentic key for the tolerance which secular advocates of equality champion so vociferously. Tolerance is in fact coherent with, and has flowed from reflection upon, the teaching of the Catholic Church, which inherently calls for charity in all things. Acceptance that there is a truth makes it possible to be tolerant. Without this it inevitably leads to a battle to impose the views of the powerful on the rest.

“The homosexual lobby has a victory for the time being but they are in fact following the path of their intolerant predecessors who they blame for not tolerating their behaviour.”

The homosexual lobby has a victory for the time being but they are in fact following the path of their intolerant predecessors who they blame for not tolerating their behaviour. The truth is that society frequently fails to deal in a balanced way with ideas that it does not approve of or support. It may be that those in the past who did have same-sex attraction did not get the support or understanding that was needed. There is unfortunately a subtlety which can be hard for society in general to grasp in relation to social norms. It is for such reasons that in the past those who were deserted by a spouse were stigmatised in some communities; the fact that divorce was viewed as wrong made it easy to conflate feelings for those involved with disapproval of the objective evil of divorce. Likewise those who genuinely find that they are attracted to persons of the same sex have been unjustly stigmatised and alienated. That had to be wrong.

Article 9 of the European Convention of human rights supports religious freedom. It is testimony to the fact that rules and institutions cannot ensure the maintenance or creation of justice. The liberal elite who occupy the positions of influence in deciding cases under human rights or equality laws tend to use them as a tool to achieve the results that conform to the fashionable values they have absorbed or which prevail in the social environments in which they live, are educated and work.

## Renewing Civilisation

The challenge is therefore to have religious freedom more widely articulated and more deeply understood by public authorities and those who contribute to creating social norms. Promotion of religious freedom is not special pleading by people of faith; rather it is an effort to protect the precious core of the human person, the conscience, which is the deepest forum of human freedom.

The reality is that those really concerned about human dignity are those who are willing to place faith in moral absolutes which safeguard that dignity against the uncertainties of cultural trends. The new orthodoxy does a very different thing; it places faith in the whims and trends of the culturally influential. Unfortunately, their belief in their own righteousness, on their own authority, gives them a disdain for those who dare disagree. We who disagree, aware of the frailty of each individual person, especially ourselves, rely on the tolerance of that weakness. The Church, contrary to the caricature, greets weakness with the recognition that we are all so afflicted, and offers forgiveness, while also remaining ready to diagnose truth and falsehood.

Christian values have been in the dock for some time in our society. On the defensive they can at best stand still but the last decade has shown that they are more likely to retreat rapidly from public life. Gary McFarlane and Lillian Ladele would probably have laughed ten years ago at the idea that they might lose their job for failing to cooperate in supporting homosexual relationships. Many are oblivious that a similar fate could befall them if they happen to stand in the path of the equality juggernaut. Preventing more people suffering for their faith will require Christian values to be taken onto the offensive. At present this urgently requires a well-argued case for religious freedom;<sup>13</sup> without it Christians will certainly suffer but society will suffer immeasurably as it loses the spirit of Christianity which has contributed so essentially to the freedoms and values which have benefited it for so long.<sup>14</sup>

N.B. This April the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is due have its delayed debate and vote upon the document, “Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity”.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup><http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2009/11/30/christian-counsellor-loses-appeal-over-gay-couples>.

<sup>2</sup><http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2009/12/15/ruling-expected-on-christian-registrar-lillian-ladele>.

<sup>3</sup>Dan Boucher gives a thoughtful account of the change in approach under the current legislative approach in the briefing paper ‘A Little Bit Against Discrimination?’ produced by CARE, available at <http://www.care.org.uk>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2009/12/15/ruling-expected-on-christian-registrar-lillian-ladele/>

<sup>5</sup>*Ladele v London Borough of Islington* [2009] EWCA Civ 1357 (15 December 2009).

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>Lord Neuberger named Master of the Rolls, Times Online, 23 July 2009.

<sup>9</sup>*Ecclesia in Europa*, John Paul II 98.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>*Dignitatis Humanae*, Second Vatican Council, Paragraph 2.

<sup>12</sup>*Daily Telegraph*, 19 Dec 2009.

<sup>13</sup>*Cf Ecclesia in Europa*, John Paul II, 41.

<sup>14</sup>*Cf Ibid*, 121, and Pope Benedict to EU rep.s, 19.10.09.



# Church Social Teaching: An Inconvenient Truth? *by Edward Hadas*

Edward Hadas takes George Weigel to task for criticising *Caritas in Veritate* concerning the context of the free-market and technology. Mr Hadas is Assistant Editor of the leading source of financial commentary Reuters BreakingViews.

Many American, and a few British, Catholic intellectuals have long believed that the Church should stand firmly to the right on almost all political and economic matters. In the United States, their views can be found in the *National Review* and *First Things*. In the UK, the Institute for Economic Affairs is a sympathetic think-tank.

This approach has two big problems. First, it is wrong. The Magisterium has, from the 1891 Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* onward, consistently endorsed many left-wing ideas: the rights of workers, the value of international authorities, the virtue of sharing wealth within and across political borders, the futility of war, the need to constrain “market” forces. Even in his 1979 speech repudiating the Marxist political-theological matrix of liberation theology, Pope John Paul II reminded the bishops of Latin America that “internal and international peace will be assured only when a social and economic system based on justice takes effect”.

“The thought is a clear development of John Paul II’s observations”.

Second, it is confused about reality. In a world of huge bureaucratic governments and highly regulated bureaucratic economies, calls for “free markets” are little more than utopian fantasies. Complaints about the intrusive and demoralising welfare state have more validity, but these social programmes do much good and could not be eliminated without threatening the whole social order.

The weak thinking of the right was all too evident in the response to Benedict XVI’s *Caritas in Veritate*. George Weigel, writing in *National Review Online*, explained that the document was written by two hands, the Pope’s and that of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. He has no time for the latter’s supposed contributions.

His complaint is centred on the right’s shibboleth: free markets. The document does not endorse them. In fact, it suggests that the commutative justice of free exchange is not a sufficiently strong foundation for a successful economy. The justice that comes through enforced sharing (found in the tax and benefit systems of welfare states) is higher – since it reflects a consensus of social solidarity – but still not enough. As befits men made in the image of a freely loving God, something more generous is needed:

“When both the logic of the market and the logic of the State come to an agreement that each will continue to exercise a monopoly over its respective area of influence, in the long term much is lost: solidarity in relations between citizens, participation and adherence, actions of gratuitousness, all of which stand in contrast with giving in order to acquire (the logic of exchange) and giving through duty (the logic of public obligation, imposed by State law).

In order to defeat underdevelopment, action is required not only on improving exchange-based transactions and implanting public welfare structures, but above all on gradually increasing openness, in a world context, to forms of economic activity marked by quotas of gratuitousness and communion. The exclusively binary model of market-plus-State is corrosive of society ... The market of gratuitousness does not exist, and attitudes of gratuitousness cannot be established by law. Yet both the market and politics need individuals who are open to reciprocal gift.” (39)

According to Weigel, the call for gratuitousness is “clotted and muddled”, carrying the danger of “a confused sentimentality”. That is silly. The language may not be stirring, but the thought is a clear development of John Paul II’s observations in his great social encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*: “[P]rior to the logic of a fair exchange of goods and the forms of justice appropriate to it, there exists *something which is due to man because he is man*, by reason of his lofty dignity” (35).

Weigel is right to ask for more thought about what “gift” might mean in the big, bad world of the modern economy. He is wrong to suggest that it means nothing. Without freely offered gifts, there could be no marriages, families, schools, hospitals, churches or police forces. Unless economic activity is completely different from all other human endeavours, it too must be marked by gratuity.

For the most part, the right-wing critique simply ignores Chapter Six of *Caritas in Veritate*, “The Development of Peoples and Technology”. Perhaps this important statement about a key element of modern society is too European and complicated. For those of a philosophical bent, this chapter looks like a Magisterial response to Martin Heidegger’s 1953 essay “The Question Concerning Technology”, which suggested that the modern fixation with technology has made men think falsely that they can control the mysteries of Being.

Unlike Heidegger, the Pope sees much that is good in all technology: “In technology we express and confirm the hegemony of the spirit over matter” (69). Like Heidegger, Benedict sees something wrong in the intense modern interest in technology. It can be a search for a non-existent “absolute freedom”, which “seeks to prescind from the limits inherent in things” (70). Benedict explains why the refusal to show wonder and gratitude towards the Creator leads to disregard for the environment, the horrors of bio-technology and a limited instrumental approach to such apparently non-technological challenges as peace and psychology.

*Caritas in Veritate* is a remarkable document. It offers a unified analysis of the challenges of contemporary society. As one should expect of a statement of the Church’s Ordinary Magisterium it is also soundly based on the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching and anthropology. The right-wing critics of the encyclical seem to miss the point. ■

# The Quest for Feminine Identity

(Part One) by Cormac Burke

Mgr Burke offers a profound meditation upon the role of the feminine and of gift of self in reaching human fulfilment. He brings out some of the inhuman tendencies in this regard promoted by our culture. This paper was presented at the Ethics and Public Policy Center Conference, in Washington D.C. last April. We plan to publish Part Two in our next issue. Mgr Burke is a former Judge of the Roman Rota, the High Court of the Church, and now lectures at Strathmore University, Nairobi, Kenya. His best known books are *Covenanted Happiness* and *Man and Values*, both published by Scepter Press. His website is: [www.cormacburke.or.ke](http://www.cormacburke.or.ke)

To Henry Higgins' expostulation, "why can't a woman be more like a man?", the brief answer is of course that she can; but then she will be less like a woman. Is that progress? Is she made richer or poorer by that? Is humanity made richer or poorer? Or is everyone made richer if woman is more like a woman?

But – do these questions make sense? A woman is born a woman, isn't she? Can she, as she grows, become more like a woman or less like a woman? Does it make a difference? I think she can; and I think it makes an immense difference. This implies – as I believe – that sexual identity, masculine or feminine, is not just a 'given' at birth, but also a goal to be sought; and to be achieved – or not. Some aspects of feminine identity and its achievement are what I propose to consider in this study.

## 1. A Disenchanted, Disconnected World

We live in a thoroughly 'disenchanted' secular age (as Charles Taylor brings out so well).<sup>1</sup> There is nothing beyond what I see, nothing underlying what I feel, nothing that promises more than what I have... Things, events, relationships, have no more meaning than what I choose to give them. I decide their value. But, at the best, that value is limited, for I do not, I will not, believe in absolute values. I identify things by how they suit me – my satisfaction my advantage – not by any value they have in themselves.

But there is an enchantment in creation. God himself, the Bible tells us, was pleased, very pleased, with what he had created. He saw it all as good, very good (Gen 1:31). For God, it is a very good world. For man, the summit of his creation, God wished it to be an enchanted world, a world where everything, as an *imago Dei*, can point to the hidden, ultimate and infinite wonder of God's existence and life.

It was Adam's experience when he saw Eve. He was thrilled, she was an enchantment for him; something that seemed to come from another world, or to promise another world. And similarly when Eve saw Adam. In that mutual attraction of theirs, the physical differences were seen, undisturbedly, as a sign of a much richer human reality; and indeed as imaging an infinitely higher reality.

Male and female God made them; and the closer they are, the more they live in mutual understanding, the more they reflect something of the image of God. This closeness is only secondarily expressed in physical coupling. It is in the

meeting of souls more than of bodies, in the harmonising of a masculine and a feminine way of being, that they image a perfection much higher than anything either can achieve on his or her own.

There is, or was, truth in that old saying that 'woman promises to man what only God can give'; truth also if the promise is expressed the other way round. Today it is not clear what the sexes promise to each other, and less still what they mean to each other. Romance, so it seems, is almost gone. The enchantment is gone, as is also the sense that there is something of magic in sexuality that has to be protected. Something of good magic that, if not safeguarded, can be reduced to something of dark magic. We have to restore the good magic, the ideal of a noble love, the awareness too of the threat of the dark side, and the resolve to restore and protect the goodness. We have to restore the enchantment.

That, I maintain, is not possible without a restored sense of sexual identity; a sense of what it means to be a man, what it means to be a woman, what it can mean to show together a better image of God.

A few further preliminary considerations may be helpful.

## Does 'Identity' Matter for the Person?

Modern life makes us all quite used to describing our identity; filling in ID cards, making up CVs. And when we need to portray ourselves, e.g. in applying for a job, we try not to omit any important detail; a degree, a special quality or skill, and perhaps we cover up or omit what might be considered a defect, like being shortsighted or suffering from asthma.<sup>2</sup>

Subjectively speaking, one's identity is one's awareness of oneself as a separate conscious entity.

Is it not enough to say "I'm me; that's who I am; that's my identity"? It would seem not, for it says nothing more than the obvious, and really says nothing concrete at all. Of course, you're you and I'm me, but that does nothing to identify what or who or how you and I are. This is what identity is all about.

Moreover, one's identity is not something static. It is in a certain flux. It is not only a present reality, it is also a goal – to be achieved or to be botched and frustrated. I may identify myself as an athlete. But that is not enough.



**"If there is no connection in my self-awareness, then I am a life without a plot, a tale signifying nothing."**

Am I just an athlete in training? Am I a successful, or a mediocre, or a failed athlete?

On the other hand, since my identity is in constant transformation, if I cannot identify myself as I am now, I do not know what I am building on, or building towards, or what I am likely to be in 5, 10 or 20 years time. For each one of us is an unfolding story, a narrative of daily and distinct episodes; but one without meaning or coherence if I can't connect my self-story of yesterday with that of today and with the continuation of it I will write tomorrow. If there is no connection in my self-awareness, then I am a life without a plot, a tale signifying nothing. If I cannot sense or propose some linear connection between my past, present and future, then there is no continuity, no development between different chapters of my life-story. There is in fact no story; my life is no more than a succession of dis-connected episodes. I am or am becoming a disintegrated being.<sup>3</sup>

## **2. Identity and the "Givens" of Nature**

So, one's identity is made up of certain characteristics which we have in common with others, and certain characteristics we have differently: and again of some qualities we have as "givens" and others we have acquired. It is only by knowing these that we can identify ourselves. The person incapable of self-identification just does not know himself or herself.

The current confusion about identity is mainly rooted in the idea of the self-identifying or the self-defining person. 'My life is mine and I can make whatever I want of it'. This is not so, in the first place because I only possess my life precisely insofar as it has been given to me; it is a gift.

When I receive a gift, it becomes mine; yes, that is true. But if I am sensible, I want to know the nature of the gift so as to use or handle it wisely; for it can be spoiled, even completely, by bad use. If I am given a paperweight of gold, I may drop it and nothing is lost. If the gift is a precious porcelain vase and I drop it, the gift itself is lost. It is important to know that some things given to us in life are both precious and breakable, and not easily recovered if broken.

Of the elements, then, which characterise the human person in her or his particular identity, some are given, some are acquired; some are foundational and inalienable, others are accidental; some identify the person positively, others negatively. Some may be virtues, some may be vices. Some may be treasured, some may be despised (in both cases, for the right or the wrong reasons). Further, the less some feature important to a person's identity is esteemed and possessed the less that person is likely to fulfil himself or herself.

The question before us is whether sexual difference, femininity in our concrete case, is an important and positive element in self-identification; and, I would add, an even

more important element in reaching an identity worth achieving, in attaining a worthwhile self-fulfilment.

## **3. Human Sexual Identity**

Now we enter more properly on our theme. Is sexuality, as a 'given', an important part of my identity, of my personal makeup?

One is born male or female. Does the difference matter? Is male identity an advantage over female? Can full personal identity be achieved without any reference to sexual identity? Do men and women fulfil themselves (identify themselves in fullness) in much the same way, or is the mode of proper fulfilment also conditioned (and therefore differentiated) in each case by sexually given elements?

Human sexuality is more than animal sexuality. The man-woman relationship cannot be reduced just to male-female. Male-female denotes just physical differences; it is a distinction apt for the animal world. Masculine-feminine is peculiar to the human world.

What main elements go to make up human sexual identity? I wish to dwell on four. Human sexual identity: a) is a relational identity; b) is tied up with creativity; c) suggests complementarity; d) implies a power regarding others.

### ***a) Sexual identity is a relational identity.***

Each of us is an individual. But the individual in isolation, by himself, shrinks. He only grows in relation to others. No one is meant to be an island. If we don't open out to others, appreciate them, discover values in them, connect and build bridges with them, each will remain a desert island, floating – or sinking – in a desolate sea.<sup>4</sup>

**"It is important to know that some things given to us in life are both precious and breakable, and not easily recovered if broken."**

Among the various forms of human relationship there is one that can draw people together in a unique way, one bridge that can unite (though it can also separate), one where the sense of mutual need is strongly present. And that is human sexuality. Without in some way understanding how masculinity and femininity stand in relation to one another, without admiring the values each sexual mode should incarnate and letting oneself be enriched by that appreciation, one can never achieve a full human identity.

### ***b) Sexual identity is tied up with creativity.***

Humanity is at its highest when it gives itself. And self-giving is at its highest when it is creative. The person who sees nothing worth giving himself to, is trapped in a valueless life. The person who does not want to be creative lacks one of the fundamental aspirations of humanity. Not to want to create betrays a lack of vitality which reflects or facilitates the culture of death.

## The Quest for Feminine Identity (Part One)

continued

Love is creative. The sculptor hews his vision of beauty into lasting stone. Only a man and a woman together can create living works of art, with each child a unique monument to the creative love that inspires and unites them.

Disesteem for the procreative wonder of sexuality reflects a devalued human outlook.

### *c) Sexual identity suggests complementarity.*

Initial feminism made the totally logical and totally human demand of equal rights for women as for men. When part of that feminism let itself be radicalised into demanding not just equal rights but equal roles, it lost both logic and humanising power.

Equality in the sense of equivalence, where everyone is the same, would turn society into an assembly line. The awareness and cultivation of complementarity is vital for the development of a society that is truly human. Some people, who don't understand what a human society means, and simply want one that is efficient and scientific, see it the other way round. Differences can be hard to manage; so let's have the minimum number, those necessary for the orderly management of things; e.g. the alpha, beta, gamma differences of Brave New World, each at its proper level – with an “identical” identity – trained for a particular type of job, to slot in there and nowhere else.

Such a gray and uniformed prospect should appal us. What we need to foster is a society where people rejoice in variety, being so formed that differences are a source not of friction but of joy. How boring if everyone were the same! And how exciting if everyone is different and we are able to rejoice in those different qualities that fill out and complement our own.

Yet some people today want functional, mechanistic, complementarity, but not personal, me-to-you, complementarity. That approach is hostile, in the first place, to the idea of friendship which finds a special complement in a particular person, and still more hostile to the notion of a distinctive complementarity between the sexes, all the more so if it were to lead two people to want an exclusive union between themselves (since the assumption is “everyone belongs (and is useful) to everyone else”).

There can be no complementarity between identicals nor between absolutely disconnected beings. Hence, while sexuality points toward differences, it is toward differences that are correlative and can so serve to build a new and more perfect wholeness.

We should all seek to develop all the human qualities or virtues. But it is easier to learn some virtues from a woman – from a well-identified woman – and easier to learn others from a well-identified man. Sexual complementarity implies mutual learning in the process of growing toward all-round human maturity. “It is not by imitating the opposite sex, nor by seeking to dominate it, but by learning from it that

a person grows in that sexual identity which is so important for maturity in life”.<sup>5</sup>

Rather than detailing various virtues that might be considered more appropriate to each sex,<sup>6</sup> I will limit myself here to one broad observation as to how true masculinity can help form true femininity, and vice-versa. Man needs taming, the acquisition of the “humility of strength”, which is truly strong only when placed at the service of fidelity and love. For her part, woman needs the “strength of humility” which leads he and woman, the more they complement each other, the more each helps or inspires the other to make the effort toward personal wholeness. Man without the inspiration of femininity is lost; he has no heroine to worship, no queen to serve; he is left with just the stimulus of femaleness, and no ideal with which to counterbalance his sensuality and so learn to be humbly strong in the service of others. For her part, woman, if she has no appreciation for the gift of masculinity, will have no hero to worship, no one to care for, no one to be proud to serve, nothing to help her forget herself and her vanity.<sup>7</sup>

### *d) Sexual identity implies a power concerning others*

Sexuality involves an attraction between persons, and hence a certain power in their mutual relationship. Where there is power, there needs to be responsibility, for power can be used well or badly. Power can fascinate; power can exhilarate. Power can also corrupt – not just political power; but sexual power too.

Women realise that men are attracted to them; and they like the sense of dominion this gives them. It works vice-versa of course, but not in the same measure. A fundamental truth that sociology and anthropology tend to pass over is that man is weaker than woman before the powerful fascination of sex, more easily succumbs to it; and hence is more easily exploited.

“Not to want to create betrays a lack of vitality which reflects or facilitates the culture of death.”

Sexuality in our age is almost completely dominated by the stimulus of bodily attraction, that is, the male-female mode of sexual power or that power of attraction which humans have in common with the animals. What is being so alarmingly lost today is that other mode of human sexual attraction or sexual power, the feminine-masculine attraction. It is normal that both be present in men-women relations. But when, as today, the male-female mode becomes dominant, then the sexual attraction itself tends to become an instrument of domination or of exploitation.

So we need to distinguish between the power of the female vis-à-vis the male, on the one hand; and on the other, the power of the feminine vis-à-vis the man. The power of the female generates physical desire in the male: once satisfied he withdraws into that satisfaction, into himself,



**“If a woman reverences the mystery of her body, it will be easier for men to do so too.”**

until desire is aroused again. The power of the feminine generates respect that can grow, even to a form of veneration, which draws a man out of himself and inspires him to higher things.<sup>8</sup>

But if a woman, by emphasising her femaleness, capitalises on her particular power of attraction, she will provoke the mere male instinct; men will be attracted to her, or rather to her body, out of simple physical sexual desire. She is inviting them to treat her as an object of lust inasmuch as she is a female, never of admiration as a woman, as a truly human and feminine woman.<sup>9</sup>

Recently, in a family I know, the teenage daughter had a date with a young man her parents too happened to like. Just before going out, she appeared dressed in a somewhat provocative way. Her dad called her aside. You like this boy, don't you? – Yes. And he likes you? – I think so. Look, honey, you've got a pretty face and a nice smile. But if you want to be sure of that boy you've got to observe the way he looks into your eyes. (For love is specially spoken through the eyes). But as you are dressed now, you won't get much chance to see the look in his eyes, because his eyes will be going elsewhere. Is that the sort of date you want, so as to know him better? She got the point and went off to dress differently.

Women have power, great power, over men. One can largely identify and even classify a woman by how she uses this power, especially though not exclusively by her way of dressing and walking. The identity of the prostitute used to stand out in this way. One sign of the times is that many men find it hard to distinguish the ordinary woman from the prostitute; to distinguish the true woman whom the more noble part of their masculine nature wishes to look up to, from that other woman whom the lower part of the same nature seeks simply to possess.

Given that, it should be clear that 'sexual harassment' has a two-way application.

#### **4. Fecundity as a Key to Feminine Identity**

Masculine identity is not our topic; and in any case, man, to achieve his sexual identity, depends more on woman achieving hers, than vice-versa.

To this writer's mind, feminine identity is first bound up with woman's radical orientation towards child-bearing. This of course is evident on the physical level – the makeup of the female body. In terms of corporal sexuality, the female body is much more fundamentally configured toward maternity than the male toward paternity. Along with the whole complexity of her genital apparatus, her breasts also show this; she is made not only to bear but also to nourish.

A woman can never establish a true feminine identity unless she in some way senses the greatness of this potential for maternity, and holds it in reverence. Unless a girl grows in awareness of the creative mystery of her

body, she will remain at a subhuman level and will never be able to develop her proper sexual identity.

This is borne out too in that human motherhood (and pride in motherhood) is what most inspires reverence in men. It is there that they sense that women are the special depositaries of the power of creation and of the mystery of life. Motherhood resulting from merely laboratory techniques may stir wonder at technology, but not reverence for maternity.

If a woman reverences the mystery of her body, it will be easier for men to do so too. The natural instinct of modesty (or that which used to be natural to women) shows that reverence, and moreover stirs up a reverential attraction in man. In contrast, the immodest woman, who treats and regards her body and her sexual parts as a bait and not as a mystery, just stirs a sensual attraction in man causing him both to desire her and to despise her.

[to be continued]

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#### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup>Cf. *A Secular Age*, Harvard University Press, 2007.

<sup>2</sup>In slight anticipation of our main theme, let me confess to the impression that some women today feel it would be an advantage if they did not have to identify themselves as women.

<sup>3</sup>Not thinking about what I am meant to be, or what I mean myself to be; pretending not to care about what I am or am becoming: that is the problem of so many today. No goal, no challenge, no idea of a story to be told or an identity to be conquered; just letting self drift, as if one became oneself by drifting. The drifter dissipates self, disintegrates self, loses self. We have largely been educated into this. In so much of modern psychological and educational theory the goal of education is that of forming 'independent' persons, persons whose maturity is shown in being self-sufficient, non-committed, non-connected, having no bonds, being directed to nothing, being dedicated to no one...

<sup>4</sup>The self-sufficient, non-connected, I'm-my-own-good-cause mentality rejects the idea that we are inter-dependent, that we need one another. There it is wrong, with a wrongness that can totally frustrate personal as well as social development. And then emerges the lonely crowd, the lost people, the faceless generation. There can be no true human relationship or bonding principle between faceless people, people who can't look into each others' eyes and see something there that can complete or complement their own lives.

<sup>5</sup>C. Burke: *Man and Values*, Scepter, 2007, p. 135.

<sup>6</sup>Something which I tentatively consider in *Man and Values*, pp. 101ss.

<sup>7</sup>I did not quite see eye to eye with a recently reported theological opinion that man's besetting sin is lust, while woman's is pride. Pride, after all, is the besetting sin for all of us. Nevertheless, it may be true that in matters sexual, woman sins more through vanity, while man does so more through lust.

<sup>8</sup>Why does one offer a flower to a woman and not to a man? The girl who does not appreciate the gift of a flower, who perhaps laughs at it, shows a deficient sexual consciousness. Perhaps she has never sensed the connection between the giving of a flower to a girl and the placing of a flower on an altar.

<sup>9</sup>An important point here. Feminine grace is a quality that all women can cultivate, even if today few seem to do so – or even to understand the concept. When it is genuine, it reflects, also on the outside, a particular feminine trait capable of evoking the best in men. See *Man and Values*, pp. 106-107.

# The Chaste Loving of the Priest

by Stephen Brown

Fr Stephen Brown, chaplain to Bradford University, draws upon Edward Holloway's thought to provide an inspiring reflection upon the appropriateness of celibacy to the ministerial priesthood. This is a developed extract of a talk given to *Faith* movement's Winter Conference at Stonyhurst College, last December.

Sixteen years ago at diaconate ordination, a youngish seminarian made his promise of celibacy. Did he know what he was doing? He could not have known all the ramifications, just as people getting married don't know exactly how its all going to pan out after the wedding. But he had sensed the call of Christ to priesthood, he knew celibacy was integral to that vocation, therefore it was his will to embrace it – wholeheartedly – because he wanted to imitate Jesus Christ. That (very) young man was, of course, this writer.

Looking back it seems that seminary formation concerning celibacy was inadequate. The practical advantages were laid out, and of course we were told that it was all done for God, but one was left with the impression that celibacy was something you just had to do, and a bit like embracing an iron bar – rather cold.

Far more inspiring during seminary years was listening to Edward Holloway who linked priestly celibacy directly to Jesus Christ and to priestly loving, making it emerge clearly that celibacy is not something a priest grits his teeth and does, but is more a continual state of being, in relationship to Christ, which has its own specific way of giving and receiving love.

## Degrees of Loving

Well there are a range of types of love and degrees of love are there not? Some of them are closer to the perfection of love than others – the perfection of love is, of course, found in God. So we have love of chocolate, love of football, love of walking, love of deep fried squid, which is really a misuse of the word "love." On another level, we have love of persons – of family relationships: the love of husband and wife, the love of parents for their children, the love of children for grandparents, the love of brothers and sisters, which latter is indeed unique! We have the love which exists between friends too. Catholics have a unique love towards the Holy Father, the Pope, whoever he may be at the time. There is our love for God's Church, including its heavenly members: Our Lady and Mother, and other saints. Overarching them all, there is, or should be in a human being, the love of God. These are all distinct types or degrees of love; though they all have their source and summit in God.

And where does the priest's love fit into all this? Is a priest's love also unique? – or is it the same as an uncle would have for a nephew or niece? Does it make him happy and fulfilled? Or does his state of celibacy mean that he must just hug the iron bar and wait for heaven?

## Redemptive Loving

If a priest is another Christ, a living icon of Jesus Christ, which he is by virtue of his ordination, then it's not rocket science to work out that his way of loving must in some way be related to Jesus Christ's way of loving. The Servant of God Pope John

Paul II wrote a letter to the priests of the world, starting with a passage from St. John: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." This is the definition of love in its redemptive meaning," wrote the Pope, "and we priests find ourselves particularly close to this redeeming love which the Son brought to the world – and which he brings continuously." So we learn that Jesus Christ gives an ordinary man His own identity, as Head of His Body the Church. This makes the man's soul a reflection of Himself so that He – Jesus – can continuously minister His redeeming love to the world. That, then, is the type of love which must "inhabit" the priest. The priest's love is tied in a unique way to Jesus Christ – or in other words, the way a priest loves is unique to that vocation, just as married love is unique to that vocation.

"The Fathers of the Church spoke of chastity under vow as 'reverencing the flesh of Christ.'"

## Mirroring of Christ

So if it is Christ's own redeeming love which must inhabit the soul of the priest, does it make a difference whether the priest is married or not? It matters. It is true that a priest *represents* Christ, but even more than that. Prince Charles can represent the Queen at certain events she can't attend, but his identity is not that of Elizabeth II – he can only ever be Charles. It's different with the priest, he *mirrors* Jesus Christ, in Our Lord's office as Head and Bridegroom of the Church, and that is a much deeper identification. Therefore, all that Jesus Christ is for us is reflected there in the soul of the priest. Edward Holloway wrote that if the priesthood is to be lived with greatness of soul, then it matters whether a priest is celibate or not. It allows a certain delicate intimacy of love by which the priest, to quote Holloway "can knock on the most private doors of the human heart." That is what Christ did, as our Lord and God. With the love of the Good Shepherd, He gently probed people's hearts and souls in order to draw them to Himself or free them from what held them captive. He asked people for faith, He told them clearly where they were wrong, He invited to a closer relationship with Himself.

The priest can and should do the same: challenge and ask questions of people which, if anyone else asked them, would probably be told to mind their own business. The priest can go up to a person and say, for example: 'Hello, I've noticed you coming to Mass here for a number of weeks, but you never come to Communion. Are you a Catholic? You are? Then is there some reason stopping you from receiving the Lord? And he may discover, as I've done, that the person is a divorced Catholic who had mistakenly believed for years



**“We were left with the impression that  
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that that alone prevented them from receiving Communion. After explaining that only if they had remarried would it prevent them, they went to Confession and were restored to full Communion with the Church. People can ask the priest for teaching and guidance regarding the most intimate areas of their lives that nobody else will ever know about. They can tell him of their most private relationship with Christ in spiritual direction – matters never to be brought into the public forum, as there is nothing more intimate than an individual's relationship with God. The priest can ask a boy, out of the blue or on a first meeting, if he has considered a vocation to the priesthood. He can pester a reluctant youth that they ought to go on a retreat he is organising, or on a *Faith* Conference. I'm pretty sure many of the priests involved in the *Faith* movement can testify to a case of finally getting someone to agree to come on an event, dragging them into the minibus kicking and screaming and then at the end of the event to be told “Thanks Father, I really enjoyed that!” It'd be good to see visually the internal effect such a reaction has on the priest; outwardly he may look measured and mildly pleased. Inside, it's 41 gun salutes, balloons and party poppers. And an interior glance to, and from, the Lord.

To be able to do all this in a deeply fruitful way, it is necessary that the priest be alone *as Christ Himself was*, and not joined intimately to another in marriage.

### **Chastity Under Vow**

Celibacy – or as Fr. Holloway preferred – a *personal vow of chastity for the sake of the Kingdom of God* – provides the means, or framework for specifically priestly loving. Most emphatically, it is *not* a denial of love. Priestly celibacy is never *just* celibacy – it is chastity embraced for the sake of the Kingdom. It is a *positive* choice, expressing a willingness to love in the way that Christ loved.

Celibacy is the only right and pure state of life for all the unmarried: put another way, the unmarried are morally *obliged* to be celibate. That doesn't just mean ‘no sex’ – it means there can be no deliberate sexual arousal, because that sort of act can only accompany sexual intercourse, and sexual intercourse is reserved to husband and wife in the bond of marriage. That is celibacy.

But ‘chastity under vow’ is when a person *consciously and personally* dedicates all the powers of body and soul to God, for the sake of His Kingdom. It is a *positive* consecration to God, not merely a sort of negative promise not to marry. It operates on an altogether different and higher level

Christ Himself made and makes this very invitation, to enter into a higher relationship of love towards Him and His people, when he spoke to his disciples regarding those “who have made themselves this way for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Let anyone accept this who can.” (Mat 19:12). This is the basis on which the Church seeks out her priests.

Chastity under vow is indeed a sign that sex is not love, and that love, of its very nature, transcends sexuality and the erotic function and pleasure. Chastity under vow is that type of human love which reaches its perfection independently of sex. This indeed is the basis on which Christ recommends it: not

just for its sign value but because in itself, it is the path to the highest human love.

The Fathers of the Church, the great writers and commentators on the Faith of the First Millennium, spoke of chastity under vow as “reverencing the flesh of Christ.” There are two things to draw out of this idea. First, chastity as total consecration, in the image of Christ the Bridegroom who is wedded to mankind, and to the Church as His Bride. Chastity is the manifestation of the Priestly and Kingly love of Christ for all flesh, especially those who belong to Him. His Self-giving is complete, or as we say with regard to Christ Our Lord in Holy Communion, it is the “whole Christ” – Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

In addition to this, there is another interesting insight: the role of chastity as the healing or “remedying in our own mortal flesh of the wound of concupiscence.” In other words, in Fallen Man, wounded and damaged by sin, who experiences many disordered desires in his heart and in the domain of sex, chastity can take on a healing role. It is a way of loving in which nature works through grace to restore the love in human relationships to God's original intention. It was the original intention of God that every human pleasure – including sex – should be governed by the soul, which in turn was meant to be in peace and communion with God. That was thrown into disorder by humanity's Original Sin. Our love arises within the soul, not the body. It was always meant to be ruled by the peace of God's presence within us. Therefore it is love that must rule sex – sex should never rule love, in any relationship. It is in a life of chastity under vow that this law is made strikingly visible: in its faithful living, we “reverence the holy flesh of Christ,” through which His perfect love was expressed, and work to heal the disorder in the soul and body of Man.

### **Giving Up Sex is Not Giving Up Love**

There is a very widespread belief that there is no greater expression of love between human beings than having sexual intercourse. It is an extremely narrow vision of love. In its purely biological meaning, sex is for the generation of a family – to bring new human beings into existence, precious in the sight of God, and called by Him to share His life. It is also an enaction and expression of the self-giving love between husband and wife. However, we are all created as sexual beings and sex, or sexuality, also has a much wider sense in which the love held within the soul is expressed through our sexuality in warmth, affection and tenderness, without an erotic element, and done so in an appropriate way depending on the persons involved. So for example, it exists in marriage in the everyday, usually little ways that a husband and wife show that they cherish each other and make sacrifices for the sake of the other. Having sex isn't the only way they express love! A hug or a cuddle between a parent and child expresses a real love with physical warmth. Friendship is a different type of love, which is expressed in its own appropriate way – this love can be very deep, but it doesn't involve any erotic arousal. The point is, love does not equal sex in its narrow biological meaning. Neither does sex in that sense “make love” – it is one form of expressing love in one particular kind of relationship, i.e. marriage. One has the feeling that there is an assumption abroad that every gesture of

## The Chaste Loving of the Priest continued

friendship or affection must inevitably lead to jumping into bed together, and we're all on this same road without distinction. Films and TV no doubt contribute to this mistake: how often have you watched a scene where two people meet, say, in the street and after a few pleasantries and greetings, the next scene is of them thrashing about in bed? No – there are different types of love, and they all have their own proper way of being manifested through our sexuality, which gives joy to the ones who receive it, and fulfilment to the one giving it.

What does this mean for the priest and his unique way of loving? It means that he has voluntarily renounced sex in the narrower sense, the way of expressing love and creating family as is proper to marriage. But he is not therefore deprived of love or unable to love in an appropriately deep, warm, or affectionate way. This can be sensed physically, because of the unity between soul and body, and expressed too – always according to the truth of God, and with honest prudence in the light of His grace; we all have to be aware that we live with a fallen nature, that our bodies can be victims of disordered drives.

### Marriage and Priesthood: Ministries of Joy

The Lord promised that those who have left everything to follow Him will be repaid a hundredfold in this life and inherit eternal life. He is quite capable of fulfilling what He has promised. While giving up a wife and family of his own, the priest does indeed receive a hundredfold in terms of love. I would say he shares in the love that people have for God, which is a love beyond all others, there is nothing else like it on the planet. For the type of relationship which it creates between priest and people is precisely a *Christ, The Bridegroom* relationship.

Marriage is between one man and one woman who have freely consented to bind themselves to each other in love, permanently. In choosing each other, the couple involved have excluded all others: their love is necessarily “possessive” in a good sense, because they are now fused into each other; this self giving, the one to the other, holding nothing back, seeking the good of the other and in so doing finding their own happiness, this is their path to holiness. Their love is the love of two equals.

The love of the priest for his people is different, because it is fused into the love which Christ, the Eternal High Priest, bears towards His people. It is wide ranging and carries a personal authority which comes from God. This kind of love sees what is good and true and of God in others and wants to build that up, take it further and deeper into the life of God and even challenge people to relinquish what is spiritually harmful to them. It is not a love between equals, as married love is; it necessarily has an element of leadership in it, precisely because it is a *Christ relationship*. The priest cannot be possessed in love by any one human person.

It obviously is possible for a married man to be a Catholic priest too – the Church has allowed it in certain cases. But it does not seem that the unique type of loving which is priestly loving, can be lived to its perfection if the priest's heart is being pulled two ways: towards all that is expected of him by Christ and His people, and towards his wife and family, who have every right to expect a primary, radical commitment to them from husband

and dad. St. Paul wrote very clearly on this potential problem in his first letter to the Corinthians. It's not hard to see what tensions might be generated: the married priest may well form very deep spiritual friendships with others, including women and young people; people who may be more advanced in the spiritual life than his wife or children. How is she or the priest's children going to react seeing all this, entirely innocent and pure though it be?

Yet the vocation of priesthood does not stand without the vocation of marriage. A man is taken from among the people of God, transformed into a living icon of Christ and given back to the people in this new relationship. He is then called to carry Jesus Christ into their lives, so that people may come into contact with the One in Whom they were designed to live. Through his preaching, teaching and especially the sacraments, husbands and wives receive from God the life they need to live out their vocation and go deeper into it. Parents do not simply beget children, but must also see to their formation in love and truth and knowledge of God. Through the priest, Christ takes and perfects what parents have begun. Without loving their parents any the less, children may open their soul to the priest simply because of the Christ-relationship that exists between them. The same applies as children get older, and their own moral and spiritual lives unfold, and the first stirrings of vocation are perhaps sensed. In this relationship of trust, the priest may speak the words and the love of Christ, the Good Shepherd, and leave the person in question free to respond to Christ as they will. What is absolutely required is that the priest does indeed *speak for Christ, and reflect the love of Christ*. Living thus, the priest finds his own fulfilment and path to holiness.

“While giving up a wife and family  
of his own, the priest does indeed  
receive a hundredfold in terms of love.”

This writer is a university chaplain, and so most of my daily life is taken up with ministering to twenty-somethings. I find this wonderful. As I'm twice their age, I could easily be their biological father, and I suspect for a few of them I am a kind of surrogate parent. Moreover, there is enough age difference between me and them so that I don't have to worry about being “cool” – the very adjective applied to me borders on the grotesque. And I have this unique relationship to them because I'm a priest. They expect me to put before them the Truth, they expect me to be available for them whenever they happen to need to speak to a priest, or have their sins forgiven. I take their needs and worries to the altar and offer them up with Christ's sacrifice. This is my ordinary bread-and-butter daily ministry. They also expect me to display a divine patience with their weaknesses and a similarly Christ-like compassion for their sorrows. Fr. Holloway wrote that though this can be “hard on our pettiness of heart, it is a wonderfully exhilarating experience.” One could add that it is the same in whatever scenario the priestly ministry is exercised. What it all boils down to, is the formation of people for God; the only really worthwhile task on this earth. These are the riches we store up for eternity, the tending of the great harvest of souls.



**“This can be sensed physically, because of the unity between soul and body.”**

## Minister of Christ

There are many very ordinary instances, not particularly dramatic, which I could relate of reflecting the truth of Christ and the love of Christ to various people, day in day out, which have given great joy. At the risk of blackening my image, I will note one of my pastoral disasters, and illustrate the point negatively! I recall being asked by a distraught lady whether she would ever again see her dog which had just died. I was reluctant to answer (couldn't think how!), and was in a flap because late for a school governors' meeting. But she kept on insisting and eventually I turned round and said bluntly “No – you won't, it's gone.” She didn't take that too well.... Christ would not have responded thus, so I failed to mirror Him to that woman. Moses once got so impatient and frustrated with the people of Israel that when God commanded him to *order* a rock to produce water to drink, Moses *struck* it twice with a branch, and the water flowed out as God wished. No big deal, you might think. But it was in God's eyes – He said to Moses “Because you did not display My holiness in the sight of the sons of Israel, you shall not enter the Promised Land.” Moses had allowed his own very human impatience to override his obligation to reflect God to the people, and God is never petulant, huffy or impatient. The priest is “another Christ” in his soul – he must also hope to reflect this in his psychological and personal relationship with God's people, or there is a danger of becoming a religious bureaucrat or policeman.

A Catholic priest is not a guru. He is not to be approached and asked “So what's your take on God, life and the universe?” or “What do you believe about euthanasia?” The priest is approached because he is, as Scripture says the “Messenger of the Lord of Hosts” and men “seek instruction from his lips” on the mysteries that *Christ* has revealed – he has no authority whatsoever, other than to speak the Truth of Jesus Christ, or more simply – to communicate Jesus Christ to His people.

Bringing salvation into people's souls – salvation in its fullest sense – or, if you like, carrying Jesus Christ into people's souls involves exercising this unique love, a wonderful love. To be aware of Christ loving people through your ministry, which you do for love of Christ and His people, is profoundly humbling and fulfilling. This is most fully and objectively true in the sacraments. At such times, it's as if I the priest-servant, step aside to let Christ the Lord act (not wholly accurate, because nothing would happen if I wasn't there). I think too that when He has acted, Christ looks at me in gratitude (who am I for God to be grateful to me??) for allowing Him to use me to minister to his people.

## Sacrifice

Was Jesus Christ lonely and bitter and frustrated because He was not married? No! He was alone in the sight of the people, and yet He was never truly alone for, as He said: “The Father is always with me.” Just so, the priest is “alone” but not lonely because through the character of soul he receives at ordination, Christ is always with him.

Yes indeed, priestly love carries its own specific fulfilment in joy, and warmth of relationships. Christ's love was life-giving because when human hearts opened up to Him for whom they

were made, the result was inevitably an increase in the life of the soul, a freeing from sin, the lightening of a burden, and the joy that comes from knowing you are close to God, or that you are loved by God.

Because priestly love most closely mirrors the love of Christ Himself for His people, it has its own specific sorrows too, just as does married love, the love of parent for child, and the apostolate of one called to be single. It couldn't be otherwise in a fallen world. Just as it gives a priest immense joy to see a soul deepening in its love for God, becoming more noble and beautiful, so to watch a soul gradually fall away from God, becoming indifferent to His love or degenerating into vice causes a very deep pain. Again, most apostolic priests and religious will have experienced this – something of the sorrow that Christ felt when He wept over Jerusalem because it would reject Him, or when He encountered real hardness of heart towards the things of God, or watching the rich young man whom He had invited to follow Him walk away.

I can remember Fr. Holloway telling of when he was a young priest and knew a good lad, very keen on his faith, who was possibly a candidate for the priesthood. Fr. Holloway, after investing much prayer and time in him, said he saw him one day engaged in a lustful action with a girl in a park, and after that the lad lost all interest in God. As he said this, a wave of pain went across the priest's face, and I thought “See how much he loved him, if even after decades, the memory of this still hurts him.” Every priest will have sorrows like this, but it is part of his complete identification with Jesus Christ and thus part of his priestly fulfilment. And just as Christ's sorrow was never wasted, but always fruitful, so in a mysterious way is the priest's. It is part of his sacrifice, offered in love to God. It is a carrying of Christ's Cross which every disciple of Christ must be willing to do. This is how God heals the wounds of the world and draws good from evil.

## Conclusion

When we see the true greatness and the depth of the call to celibacy, or chastity under vow, then the bleatings to allow the poor lonely, loveless priests to marry seem so defeatist, blind and niggardly. Celibacy does mean that a priest can be more easily moved around, and no doubt it does cost the Church a lot less money, but it is not entered into for these purely pragmatic reasons. Christ calls no one to loneliness or lovelessness. He calls to greatness of soul and to sacrifice, He invites a man to fully imitate *Him* and to walk a path *with Him* which leads to the perfection of love. On this path, Christ the Great High Priest provides the sweetest intimacy with Himself, and the possibility of deep and holy loves with His people. If celibacy were understood in this way by mothers and fathers, and proposed thus by bishops, priests and teachers, I don't think we would have a vocations crisis.

When the world ridicules celibacy and shouts and clamours for its abolition, it does so in a state of spiritual sickness and ignorance. That alone should lead us to conclude that we should do the very opposite – re-affirm the importance, meaning and necessity of celibacy in the catholic priesthood.



# Letters to the Editor

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## WAYS OF DEFENDING THE CHURCH

Dear Father Editor,

Your editorial in the January-February 2010 issue seems a little exaggerated. I fully agree that it is desirable to have more believing Catholics and who are experts in their fields involved in the media. But I was not aware of that debate and imagine that few people now remember it: attacks on the Church in the media are so normal that they are not really "news".

What I did see was Ann Widdecombe speaking about the Ten Commandments (an hour long programme on Channel 4, on 7 Feb 2010). She was first class. She put her case (that the Commandments, having guided society for three thousand years, are still fully relevant today) convincingly, while at the same time letting the "opponents" have their say. She referred to the debate you mentioned and, with lighthearted humility, admitted her side had been defeated, but then she showed two interviews of Prof Hitchens and Stephen Fry she had made immediately after the debate and the two atheists seemed rather pathetic to me. Fry said he did not want to accept commands from anyone: what about the command of driving on the left hand side of the road? She also talked to an attractive and liberated scripture scholar who rejected the existence of Moses and the Exodus. Widdecombe let her speak and the scholar's views sounded ridiculous. We also heard a female psychologist rejecting the Commandment "Thou shalt not covet", defending the modern consumerist society. It was a wonderfully counterproductive interview (perhaps especially applicable to our present moment of general indebtedness). And then there was an interview with a Cambridge historian who pointed out how English law, going back to the days of King Alfred the Great, is

solidly based on the Commandments. Widdecombe may not be a theological or philosophical expert but she is a woman of faith and such witnesses are also needed and very effective.

May I also thank you for publishing, in your previous issue, William Oddie's piece on Conrad Black. I have not had personal contact with Lord Black, but admire the improvements introduced by him (or I assume they were due to his influence) in the *Daily Telegraph*, *Spectator* and *Catholic Herald*. I was astonished in the months of his trial to see him vilified by some sectors of the media, with virtually no recognition of his positive contributions. I wondered to what extent those attacks were due to his being so open in his aim to give a stronger role in journalism to believers, both Catholics and from other faith backgrounds.

Yours faithfully  
Fr Andrew Byrne  
Leopold Road, London W5

Dear Father Editor,

Thank you for your first-rate editorial about the London Debate, *Why We Lost and What We Must Learn*, in the January issue of *Faith*.

May I offer a piece of ammunition for anyone in the future finding themselves in the position of Ann Widdecombe or Archbishop Onaiyekan. I quote from a letter from the economist and member of the Bloomsbury group John Maynard Keynes written in 1934. "Our generation – yours and mine.... owed a great deal to our fathers' religion. And the young ... who are brought up without it will never get so much out of life. They're trivial: like dogs in their lusts. We had the best of both worlds. We destroyed Christianity yet had its benefits." One hardly knows which to be most astonished by: the author's almost prophetic prescience or his frivolity. What did he think life would be like when the last traces of Christianity had been wiped out of the public domain? The quotation is from the Introduction to Vol 2 of Robert Skidelsky's three-volume biography of Keynes.

May I also make three suggestions:  
1. that, if possible, your 'Recent Relevant Articles' be published in book form by

the CTS; 2. that our bishops be urged to form a panel of highly qualified men and women for handling any future incidents of this sort (they should not only be well informed but well used to debating), and also for seeing in a more general way that the Catholic case is properly presented or defended in the media: one thinks for instance of men like Professors Peter Hodgson and John Haldane or Father Aidan Nichols; 3. that we turn the tables with a detailed examination of the record of modern atheism, a sort of true 'black legend'.

For instance, the Church has been in the world for just over 2,000 years, modern atheism, as a major social and political force, for just over 200. Yet the number of people tortured and unjustly put to death by atheists of one breed or another during two centuries must exceed the victims of misguided ecclesiastics during two millenia by millions. It is also the deepest hypocrisy for any supporter or promoter of the sexual revolution to express shock or disapproval at clerical misdemeanours. By eroticising the whole culture in a way unknown to previous history they are partly responsible for them.

All this, of course must be done in the right spirit. We are to love and pray for our opponents, as well as rejoicing when they ill-treat us. But this has never prevented the Church from defending herself against unjust attack.

Yours faithfully  
Philip Trower  
Stansted Bury, Ware, Herts

Dear Father Editor,

The Jan/Feb 2010 edition of *Faith* is excellent – thank you. Your editorial about the "debate we lost" provoked me to consider "what I would liked to have said".

There should be no dispute from any atheist or humanist about the past and present vast "force for good of the Catholic Church in the whole world". I will briefly list: the option for the poor, 2,000 years of welfare services, schooling, hospitals and charitable works, and all these often against the vengeful opposition of secular forces.

## “Local Authorities are to be given a duty to monitor the education of all home schooled children.”

The Catholic Church supports and supported proper justice for everyone, worker's rights, women's rights, honest and responsible leadership in government and commerce, the successful promotion of social mobility and a long history of opposition to tyrants (causing many Catholic martyrs). As Pope John Paul II pointed out, these characteristics contributed to the development of modern democracy, as they did in recent times in Eastern Europe.

*Yours faithfully*  
Philip Audley-Charles  
York Way, London N7

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*Dear Father Editor,*

I thought your editorial comments on that disastrous debate were very good. The lack of preparation was disgraceful. A crash course at The Catholic Evidence Guild would have been helpful.

It would have been a good idea to ask our opponents if they had read the Vatican Year Book for 2009. Catholic institutions world wide could have been quoted; so many thousand hospitals, schools, leprosaria, etc. etc., double the number from non-catholic Christian churches. A world wide mainly free welfare state!

*Yours faithfully*  
James Allen  
Seymour Drive, Torquay

### EDITORIAL COMMENT

One interesting initiative that has emerged following the debate is at [www.catholicvoices.org.uk](http://www.catholicvoices.org.uk), headed by Lord Brennan, Austin Ivereigh, Jack Valero and Kathleen Griffin, under the banner of the Catholic Union. It intends “to create a bureau of well-informed Catholic speakers able to articulate with conviction the Church's positions on major contentious issues in the quick-fire environments of media interviews and public debates”.

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### NEWMAN ON THE PRIMACY OF CHRIST

*Dear Father Editor,*

Your November editorial on the Primacy of Christ was reinforced for me by a

Little Sisters of the Poor Christmas card which contained this quotation from John Henry Newman's Discourse 17, ‘*The Glories of Mary for the Sake of Her Son*’:

“He once had meant to come on earth in heavenly glory, but we sinned; and then He could not safely visit us, except with a shrouded radiance and a bedimmed Majesty, for He was God. So He came Himself in weakness, not in power.”

Now that, to me, sounds pure ‘Scotist’ (if that's the right word).

*Yours faithfully*  
Frank Swarbrick  
Garstang Road, Preston

### EDITORIAL COMMENT

In Fr Nesbitt's article “The Christ-Centred Vision of Creation”, in last November's issue, he pointed out that Newman “found the Scotist perspective to be truest to the Greek Fathers he studied so closely” (*Discourses to Mixed Congregations* 32, 1-2, and 358), and that in *The Development of Christian Doctrine* Newman says that “the Incarnation ‘establishes in the very idea of Christianity the sacramental principle as its characteristic’ because: ‘It is our Lord's intention in the Incarnation to make us what He is Himself.’ It also teaches us ‘that matter is an essential part of us, and, as well as mind, is capable of sanctification’” (Chapter 7, ss.1).

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### IN THE IMAGE OF A MEASURING MIND?

*Dear Father Editor,*

Many things in nature, particularly in sub-atomic reality, have given life-spans. Though these can be stated in terms of man's way of measuring time, the laws of nature stipulating them obviously do not refer to man's units of time. The times which the laws stipulate, and when each period of time has run its course, are the preserve of God.

*Yours faithfully*  
Damian Goldie  
Church Hill, Totland Bay

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### CONTROLLING GOVERNANCE

*Dear Father Editor,*

As the Children's Schools and Families Bill 2009/2010 hurtles towards Royal Assent via the debating of committee stage amendments, there is a great deal at stake for home schoolers in particular and liberty in general.

Despite a massively negative consultation on the subject last autumn, and the contrary assurances to parliament by the Education Secretary, Ed Balls, local authorities are to be given a duty to monitor the education of all home-schooled children. If that happens, failure to meet standards could lead to demands to attend some formal schooling, and failure to register could become a criminal offence, with inspectors able to enter family homes and interrogate children without parents or other adults being present.

This is a further step down a certain path, and home-educating families will likely be joined shortly by the rest of us in Gordon Brown's real plan for “hard working families” – an intrusive national home-life surveillance programme, fresh territory for Gordon's “equality” *Stasi* to sexualise and corrupt.

How has it come to this? How has the State come to amass such power that it now feels free to assault the most fundamental relationship of all, that between parent and child? In the Gulag Archipelago Solzhenitsyn asks how Russia came to the point where innocent people could be dragged out of their houses in the middle of the night. The answer was simple: “Because we did not love freedom enough”. The past 12 years of socialist “government” have removed many of Britain's historic freedoms, grabbing powers with unparalleled potential for domination and control. We are nearly a dictatorship of political bureaucracy over a society levelled economically and socially. Natural human institutions like families, churches and nations have no place in this brave new world.

*Yours faithfully*  
Giles Rowe  
Fernside Road, London SW12

[Ed: see *Truth Will Set You Free*, p.25]





# Comment on the Comments

by William Oddie

## Horror and Hope

This column often has, by the time it is in print, a certain retrospective air about it: it has usually discussed the media coverage of some story which was topical when written, and which may still be relevant, but is no longer of overriding current interest.

But there is one recurrent story from which, if I am honest, I have repeatedly averted my gaze when considering what to write about in these columns: the seemingly never-ending story of the world-wide pandemic of paedophile scandals among the Catholic clergy, and the apparently universal practice of episcopal cover-up, involving as it did (I use the past tense hopefully) a – to put it mildly – less than adequate concern with the sufferings of the victims. And though, as I have said, this is a world-wide story, it centres on Ireland, for reasons we will go on to discuss, the most immediate of which was the publication last year of the report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse set up by the Irish government at the turn of the century. It was a story you could not miss: if you Google the words “Irish Church Scandal”, you will come up with nearly two million results.

The BBC website recorded the terrible story in May:

An inquiry into child abuse at Catholic institutions in Ireland has found church leaders knew that sexual abuse was “endemic” in boys’ institutions.

It also found physical and emotional abuse and neglect were features of institutions.

Schools were run “in a severe, regimented manner that imposed unreasonable and oppressive discipline on children and even on staff”...

The five-volume study concluded that church officials encouraged ritual beatings and consistently shielded

their orders’ paedophiles from arrest amid a “culture of self-serving secrecy”.

One after another, the halting excuses many of us found ourselves uttering – for the way in which, for instance, offenders were moved about – the way in which time after time they were given a second chance, then a third and then on and on – are ruthlessly eliminated by this report, which is truly one of the most terrible documents I have ever experienced. I quote from the “executive summary” of the report’s cold and methodical scrutiny of schools run principally by the Christian Brothers but also by some other Congregations, written after an examination in detail of the documentary evidence of abuse contained in the records of the establishments concerned. The most chilling thing about the summary is the restraint it employs when speaking of institutionalised enormities which were routinely committed for decade after decade:

The documents revealed that sexual abusers were often long-term offenders who repeatedly abused children wherever they were working. Contrary to the Congregations’ claims that the recidivist nature of sexual offending was not understood, it is clear from the documented cases that they were aware of the propensity of abusers to re-abuse. The risk, however was seen by the Congregations in terms of the potential for scandal and bad publicity should the abuse be disclosed. *The damage to children was not taken into account. [My italics]*

The damage done to the Irish Church has, of course, been immense. As the latest development in the story (the resignation of two more Irish bishops) hit the news pages, just before Christmas, there was barely disguised (but I suppose understandable)

*schadenfreude* in the way in which the latest events were reported. As Conor O’Clery reported from Dublin on the internet news outlet *GlobalPost* (and truly, there is nobody more bitter than a lapsed Irish Catholic), “As the few remaining faithful in this once mass-going nation set out for midnight services on a freezing cold Christmas Eve, two bishops announced their resignation....” The bishops, he continued,

...are the latest casualties of a civil war within the purple-clad ranks of the once-dominant Irish Catholic Church hierarchy that could have ramifications in the Vatican itself.

Bishops Eamonn Walsh and Raymond Field offered their resignations to Pope Benedict on Christmas Eve only after fighting a rearguard action against the Archbishop of Dublin, Dairmuid Martin, who has pressurised them publicly and privately to quit. They are accused of being part of a culture of silence and denial about abusive priests that is not peculiar only to Ireland but is worldwide.

This last assumption is worth some attention in passing: if you do internet searches for cases of paedophile abuse involving the Catholic clergy in continental Europe, for example, there is nothing remotely on the same scale. We have to conclude, as Damian Thompson did in his *Telegraph* blog, that

The question of Irishness has been hovering over the Catholic abuse scandals for years, ever since journalists noticed (but scarcely dared point out) that they seemed concentrated among the Irish Catholic diaspora of the United States, Canada and Australia. We always knew that terrible things happened in Ireland, too, though it was not until the publication of a 2,600-page report last week that we realised their extent.

The question, said Thompson, was this: “how Irish was the abuse and how Catholic? It should go without saying that these crimes are an utter perversion of Catholicism – but unfortunately it has to be said, because the hierarchical structures of the Church made it easy to conceal them, and religious arrogance and paranoia persuaded the authorities that they *should* be concealed.” His explanation for the scale of the abuse was focused on the allegedly brutal character of the Irish peasantry; “the culturally and intellectually impoverished class from which many of the Christian Brothers were recruited.” “On the other hand”, he went on “I was educated by Irish brothers (not Christian Brothers), most of them lovely men. Some of their predecessors may have been violent and ignorant, but not one of the brothers who taught me fitted that description. Their order once ran some brutal institutions in Ireland, and it will take courage for my old teachers to face up to the inevitable besmirching of their reputation and the wiping out – in the eyes of the public – of so much of their own good work.”

What has been the effect of all this on the attachment of the Irish to their Church? Church attendance was falling in any case, as part of a general process of secularisation, and support for protestant churches appears to have fallen, if anything, even more. In 2005, the website *Christian Today* published the results of a joint study by academics from Queen’s University, Belfast and the University of Ulster, which found

...a dramatic decrease in the numbers going to church in Ireland.... According to the report.... the Catholic Church in Ireland has seen a sharp drop in attendance from 90 per cent to 62 per cent in 15 years.

The report, based on numerous surveys from the period between 1989 and 2004, found that whereas Catholics were more likely to stay with the Church but simply attend less, Protestants tended to move away from churches altogether.

The numbers are probably even lower now: one recent report has them at around 46 percent, but records, nevertheless, that they are now rising rather than falling; the *Irish Times* headline was “Mass attendance in Ireland is up”. So perhaps the figures are less discouraging than might be supposed: and certainly, 46 percent of the population in Church on Sunday is vastly higher than anywhere else in Europe with the possible exception of Poland; and after everything that has happened might be thought extraordinary. Certainly, Conor O’Clery’s jubilant crowing about “the few remaining faithful in this once Mass-going nation [setting out] out for midnight services on a freezing cold Christmas Eve” (as though even the weather was the bishops’ fault), has more to do with his own obvious animus against the Church than anything remotely to do with reality.

Despite these terrible revelations, I still have a firm belief that Catholicism in Ireland will recover from the nightmare it is passing through. I have a personal interest to declare here: I spent five years of my life, in the late fifties and early sixties, first as an undergraduate then as a postgraduate student at Trinity College, Dublin, still a firmly protestant institution. I was then a militantly atheist critic of the Irish Church, with (as I saw it) its interference in people’s lives, its puritanical censorship of the theatre, its declaration that for a resident within the Archdiocese of Dublin it was a mortal sin to attend my university, and any number of other restrictions on personal liberty. But little by little, living in a thoroughly Catholic country began to get to me. I had to accept that this was a genial and tolerant culture, and that this had a great deal to do with its dominant religion. The dreadful things that we now know about were still, though none of us knew it then, going on in many Irish schools (though the numbers given in the report indicate that they were in a minority). What has to be remembered is the high quality of the education in most Irish schools (nearly all run by the Church). I remember an emphatic

pronouncement by the firmly French professor of his own language and literature at TCD, E.J.Arnoold (who had lived for many years in Ireland), to the effect that the Irish working class was the best educated and most literate in the whole of Europe. The Irish of all classes read books and listen to music; “culture” is not in Ireland a middle-class possession. I once got on a bus to go to the opera: when I asked for the nearest bus stop to the Gaiety Theatre, the conductor said, ah, you’ll be going to see *Turandot*, and proceeded to give me at some length his opinion of the production: an experience surely unimaginable in London.

More and more it became evident to me that everything I loved about the Irish character was inseparable from its religion, because the religion was omnipresent in everything people thought and did. The Angelus is still played before the six o’clock news on the radio. I was once in an unimaginably noisy pub down by the docks. The barman had the radio on: as the Angelus sounded through the pub, all the horny-handed drinkers fell silent, put down their pints of stout, and lowered their heads. I was made vividly aware that these raucous men had something in their lives that I could only dimly imagine. And this dimension in people’s lives, from which I was excluded, was inescapable: there was no ignoring it. On the buses then (does it still happen?) as we passed a Catholic church, all the passengers except me would bless themselves; a crowded rush-hour bus became for an instant a place of worship; before I arrived, it would have happened five or six times.

When Pope John Paul visited Ireland in 1979 he gave thanks to God for “Ireland, *semper fidelis*”. When I became a Catholic over a decade later one of the many things I thanked God for was that I now had in common with the Irish their (and now my) most precious possession. I do not believe that they will ever truly lose it; and certainly, I pray to God that it may be so.



# The Truth Will Set You Free

## Pastoral Presentations of Unfashionable Church Teaching

### DEFENDING GOD AT THE BBC

**How we might have answered the questions put during a hostile BBC radio interview in the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake.**

#### MAKING SENSE OF THE HORROR

"I have nothing to say that makes sense of this horror ...". That was the headline quote chosen by the BBC from an interview with John Sentamu, Anglican Archbishop of York, on Radio 4's popular *Today* programme the morning after the Haiti earthquake. The words are, of course, edited away from their following context in which he said that there are no easy answers to this tragedy, but that God is with those suffering in the person of the risen Christ.

The prominent BBC interviewer began by referring to Christian calls to pray, demanding to know "But who do we pray to? The God who allowed all these people to die? – ironically adding "Archbishop, why did God allow this to happen?" After listening to a denial that God inflicts tragedies randomly, the journalist intervened with: "I don't understand what you are trying to say ... What you seem to be arguing for is a slot machine God ... the suffering that has been imposed upon the people of Haiti, many of them clearly innocent, is random." Also posed was the perennial question: "How can God be all-powerful and all merciful?"

The Archbishop was probably taken aback by the aggressively indignant tone of the presenter John Humphries, as he attacked Christian belief in a good God. He was also, no doubt, trying to avoid giving too glib an answer. However, with hindsight we can formulate some more focussed answers to the points raised, which others may find helpful in answering troubled parishioners or sceptical enquirers. Here is what might have been said:

#### HOW COULD GOD LET IT HAPPEN?

"First of all, it is not as if this event has suddenly confronted Christian believers with new issues for their faith. Suffering, especially on a large scale, is always shocking, of course, but natural disasters have happened before and individual tragedies can affect families and just as deeply. So this is not really a question about Haiti specifically, it is the question of why there is any suffering at all.

Actually behind all suffering, even so called "natural disasters", there are often many layers of complex causality. It is not enough just to ask why earthquakes happen. We know what the physical causes are. We need to ask why people were living in cramped poverty in inadequate housing on this vulnerable island? Why was there no warning when we have such sophisticated scientific techniques for predicting these things now? The answers will touch on slavery, colonialism, modern day corruption, crime and drug addiction, the lack of equity in international development, human ignorance, greed, and many other things.

#### WHAT SORT OF GOD DO WE PRAY TO?

Yes, there are natural forces that shape the earth and the environment we live in, and these can be dangerous for us. We are contingent creatures in a fragile world. In the same way there are dangers for a baby or toddler even in the most loving home, not because the homemakers are evil, but because of the immature nature of the child. So we guide and teach our children to avoid these dangers. And that is how God wants to deal with us, but our relationship with God has been severely disrupted. We often don't listen, but we are also incapable of hearing clearly because our consciences have been damaged by sin. Our relationship with each other and indeed with the natural environment has been damaged and distorted too. Our reaction to suffering, therefore, should not be to turn away from God, but to seek him more earnestly in prayer, at the same time as helping others in whatever way we can.

Christianity does not teach a naïve vision of life with a fairy tale God, despite the caricature of faith promoted by some atheists. If it did, how could we cope with the fact of our Lord and Saviour dying on a cross? We do not pray to a god who waved a magic wand to heal this world of its woes. We worship God who took humanity and suffering upon himself in order to heal and transform it from the inside. Death is not the ultimate tragedy. God the Father allowed Jesus to die. The death of the soul is the ultimate tragedy. Perhaps there are many painful things in this world which cannot be put right until human nature itself is healed.

#### DOES SUFFERING DISPROVE GOD?

In any case, suffering does not logically disprove God. The very scientific laws of Nature show us that there is an absolute transcendent Mind behind the cosmos. Suffering may make us question his goodness, but not his existence. Ironically, if you do reject God and become an atheist because of the problem of suffering, then you no longer have a rational basis to feel that suffering is "not right". If there is nothing other than matter, then that is just the way things are – no "good" or "bad" about it. There is no higher vantage point from which to make a judgement about how things "ought to be".

How can God be both all-powerful and all merciful? If He is almighty then why does he not prevent evil. If he can prevent it but does not, then he is not good.

Our answer, which we have been exploring a little here, is that ultimate goodness and power are not as we may imagine them to be, as the crucified Christ makes clear.

#### IS THERE AN ANSWER TO EVIL?

The traditional answer to the question of evil is that even God cannot force us to love him or to be good, because it is the very nature of love to be free. Love is goodness freely embraced, and God is Love by nature. God respects our freedom, and our free choices have real consequences that affect others, they may affect the planet and future generations. It may not be their fault, but the fault lines spread outwards into every aspect of human existence.



**“The very concept of rights flows precisely from the Christian vision concerning the dignity of the human person.”**

The effects of the first human sin would actually be analogous to a terrible earthquake, devastating human nature and making man's place in Nature insecure. We are still living with the aftermath, and with the aftershocks of that event. The cumulative results of human degradation, ignorance, greed and venality over the ages have created a conspiracy of suffering which can only be undone by a new injection of wisdom and a new conspiracy of love – love of God and love of neighbour. That can only come from the mind and heart of Jesus Christ.

## **THE PAPAL ARGUMENT AGAINST RELATIVIST RIGHTS**

### **DEFENDING THE POPE**

Recently Pope Benedict said to our Bishops, during their five-yearly visit to him, that the measures enshrined in the Government's equality legislation partly go against the “natural law”. For saying this he has received much criticism, and ‘gay rights’ campaigners, along with ‘humanists’, have said that they intend to mount protests when Pope Benedict comes to England later this year. The Chief Rabbi and others have supported him, and the Government has pulled back, probably with an eye to the Papal visit.

### **THE CURRENT SITUATION**

The position of the Government and of such campaigners and many other cultural icons in our society is that the rights of active homosexuals to be *unimpeded in having their relationship treated as normal* trump the rights of Christians not to so cooperate. Hence Catholic adoption agencies have been closed down, individuals such as Gary McFarlane (who refused to give relationship counselling to same-sex couples) and Lillian Ladele (who refused to register civil partnerships) both recently lost their jobs and their appeals. Catholic schools are being forced to make children aware that, without their parents' consent, they can access medical contraception and abortion services, (although we are allowed, kindly, to add our ‘opinion’ of these activities). And now, in the latest equality legislation, religious organisations were to be forced to be open to employing people who are publicly living lives that contradict our vision of love e.g. actively gay ‘partners’. On this latter point the Government lost in the House of Lords over their efforts to force us to employ such people. This led to the government mooting the idea of not bringing the clause back through the House of Commons, which partial climb-down became formal policy the day after the Pope's words.

### **THE CONTRADICTION**

The Pope has, in recent years, quite often pointed out the perversity of this drift concerning human rights: it is cutting off the branch upon which it is sitting. The very concept of rights flows precisely from the Christian vision concerning the dignity of the human person, which lay at the roots of western civilisation. For it is only upon the vision of each person as called to enter into communion with God and others that certain supports and freedoms which allow and

enable Man's response accrue to him – ie “rights”. At the heart of the recent encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* was the Pope's attempt to develop this understanding of “natural law” and associated social teaching to emphasise more strongly that Man himself is “gift” made for “relationship”.

However, because this very civilisation, at least in England, is removing its Christian foundation, it is removing the coherence of its vision of rights. Thus, with an extreme irony, and an arrogant inconsistency, an exaggerated version of ‘gay rights’ is being used against the right to religious freedom – a concept that lies at the very heart of any coherent concept of rights at all. The Pope has repeatedly pointed out that this is a dangerous situation. Whose rights will be next to go in the headlong march to make sexual gratification an absolute right? For it is surely this which is driving so much of Britain's anti-life secularisation.

*John Deighan's article in this issue explains the two cases referred to above. Our Road from Regensburg column has been monitoring the development of the Pope's basic argument in this regard, especially over the last year or so. The current instalment includes an extract from his 1 February address.*

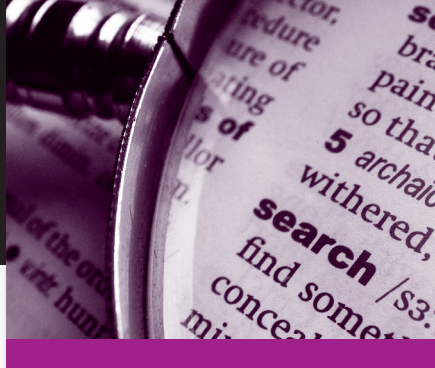
## **OVERVIEW OF PROBLEMS WITH NEW LAW**

The Children, Schools and Families Bill is very likely to become law making sex and relationships education a statutory part of the national curriculum. Children must “learn the nature of Civil Partnership, and the importance of strong and stable relationships”. Removed from the statute book is the rejection of “teaching and materials which are inappropriate, having regard to the age and the religious and cultural background of the pupils concerned”. The government has affirmed that faith schools will still be able to present their moral “views”, as long as they are not presented as “the only valid ones”.

The specific requirements flowing from this are to be worked out by later government “guidance”, for Sept 2011 implementation. Consultation on their draft closes on 19 April 2010. Somewhat logically, given the wording and nature of the Bill, this guidance contains elements for Key Stage 2 (age 7-11) which are in serious tension with Catholic teaching (e.g. teaching this age group about sexual intercourse, contraception and homosexuality), and for Key Stage 3 (age 11-14) which directly contradict it.

These latter pupils, who are under the legal age of consent, *must* be told where they can, without their parents knowing, obtain contraception and the morning-after pill. A Catholic school might be prepared to sail close to the legal wind by contextualising these facts through Church teaching. However the process of proactively providing this information would be to enable, and thus to become party to, teenage promiscuous behaviour – analogous to telling pupils where they can confidentially get boxing gloves for free to reduce the adverse effects of any bullying they might, regrettably, engage in.

*There are numerous other very worrying aspects to this legislation. Cf. the Family Education Trust: Tel: 020 8894 2525, [www.famyouth.org.uk](http://www.famyouth.org.uk)*



# The Road From Regensburg

Papal dialogue in search of a new apologetic

## Extracts from recent Papal speeches on key aspects of *Caritas in Veritate*

### LIKE AQUINAS, EXPECT GOD TO INSPIRE URGENTLY NEEDED SYNTHESIS

*To members of the Papal Academies, 28 Jan 2010, some of whom are currently celebrating special anniversaries (our translation).*

Looking back to our glorious past cannot be the only approach to [current anniversaries...] Contemporary culture, and even more believers themselves, in fact, demand a continuing ecclesial reflection and action in the various areas in which new issues emerge [...] enabling the whole Church [...] to respond effectively to questions and challenges [...] and promote man in his integrity.

[... Thomas Aquinas'] first biographer, William of Tocco, highlights the extraordinary and pervasive pedagogical originality of St Thomas, with words that can inspire your actions: Brother Thomas, he writes, "in his lectures introducing *new* themes, resolved issues in a *new* and clearer manner with *new* arguments. Consequently, those who heard him teach and deal with *new* theses, *new* methods, could not doubt that God had illuminated him with a *new* light: in fact, you can never teach or write *new* opinions if you have not received a *new* inspiration from God."

[... thus] we should study very carefully emerging issues to provide appropriate, creative responses. Confident in the possibility of 'human reason', in full fidelity to the immutable deposit of faith, [...] in order to promote [...] with all the energies and resources available, an authentic Christian humanism.

### KEY TO PEACE: ACKNOWLEDGING MAN IS MADE BY GOD

*To the members of the Diplomatic Corps 11 January 2010 on the "continuing" economic "crisis" and "social instability".*

[...] In my Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, I invited everyone to look to the deeper causes of this situation: in the last analysis, they are to be found in a current self-centred and materialistic way of thinking which fails to acknowledge the limitations inherent in every creature. [... Twenty years ago, in eastern Europe] the collapse of the materialistic and atheistic regimes [... made it] easy to assess the great harm which an economic system lacking any reference to the truth about man had done not only to the dignity and freedom of individuals and peoples, but to nature itself, by polluting soil, water and air.

[...] It is clear that if relativism is considered an essential element of democracy, one risks viewing secularity solely in the sense of excluding or, more precisely, denying the social importance of religion. But such an approach creates confrontation and division, disturbs peace, harms human ecology and, by rejecting in principle approaches other than its own, finishes in a dead end. There is thus an urgent need to delineate a positive and open secularity which, grounded in the just autonomy of the temporal order and the spiritual order, can foster healthy cooperation and a spirit of shared responsibility. [...]

There is so much suffering in our world, and human selfishness continues in many ways to harm creation. [...] The Church points out that the response to this aspiration is Christ "the firstborn of all creation, for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created" (Col 1:15-16).

### EUROPEAN RIGHTS NEED ORIGINAL COHERENCE TO AVOID MUTUAL DESTRUCTION

*To the Delegation of the Commission of European Communities, 19 October 2009.*

You have just described, Mr Ambassador, the reality of the European Union as "a zone of peace and stability that gathers 27 States with the same fundamental values". This is a felicitous presentation. However, it is right to point out that [...] these values are the fruit of a long and tortuous history in which, as no one will deny, Christianity has played a leading role. The equal dignity of all human beings, the freedom of the act of faith as the root of all the other civil freedoms, [...] are likewise central elements of the Christian Revelation that continue to model the European Civilisation.

[...] These common values do not constitute an anarchic or uncertain aggregate but form a coherent whole which is ordered and expressed historically on the basis of a precise anthropological vision. [...] Does not letting oneself slip into this forgetfulness mean exposing oneself to the risk of seeing great and beautiful values compete or come into conflict with each other? Furthermore, do they not risk being exploited by individuals and pressure groups desirous of imposing their own interests.

### A BRITISH EXAMPLE OF PLAYING OFF RIGHTS

*To the English and Welsh Bishops, at their Ad Limina, 1 February 2010.*

Your country is well known for its firm commitment to equality of opportunity for all members of society. Yet as you have rightly pointed out, the effect of some of the legislation designed to achieve this goal has been to impose unjust limitations on the freedom of religious communities to act in accordance with their beliefs. In some respects it actually violates the natural law upon which the equality of all human beings is grounded and by which it is guaranteed. I urge you as Pastors to ensure that the Church's moral teaching be always presented in its entirety and convincingly defended.

## Extracts from recent commentaries on *Caritas in Veritate*

### RELATIONALITY AS STARTLING

From an article by **David L. Schindler**, Dean of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family, Washington, DC on *Life*, entitled Family and Development: The Anthropological Unity of Caritas in Veritate, in the *Bollettino di Dottrina Sociale della Chiesa V* (2009) 93-97.

The main presupposition undergirding the argument of *CiV* is the universality of the vocation to love. We all know that we “are not self-generated” (68). This implies a sense of the Creator which Cardinal Ratzinger/Benedict describes in other writings in terms of *anamnesis*, the memory of God that is “identical with the foundations of our being.” This memory of God can be ignored or denied but it is never absent from any human consciousness. In a word, a dynamic tendency toward communion with God, and with other creatures in relation to God, lies in the inmost depths of every human being and not only Christians.

The encyclical’s call for a new trajectory of thinking informed by the principles of gratuitousness and relationality, metaphysically and theologically conceived, takes its beginning from this universal *anamnesis* of love and God (cf. 53, 55): [...] “*The principle of gratuitousness* and the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity can and must find their place within normal economic activity” (36); [...] man’s being-with God, as creaturely, is first a *being-from* [...] the radical generosity of the One Who Is.

Here, in what we may call the filial relation associated with the family, we find the root meaning of the encyclical’s central category of relation as *gift*. Indeed, once we see the radicality of this relation, which originates in God as the Creator, we see that it must include not only all human beings, though especially and most properly these, but all creatures and thus also all of the natural, physical-biological, entities of

the cosmos. Thus Benedict says that “*nature expresses a design of love and truth*” (48). It is prior to us ... and speaks to us of the Creator (cf. Rom 1:20) and his love for humanity. It is destined to be ‘recapitulated’ in Christ at the end of time (cf. Eph 1:9-10; Col 1: 19-20). [...]

The implications of the constitutive relationality affirmed in *CiV* are stunning: *no relations taken up by human beings in the course of their lives are purely contractual*, [...] freedom is an act of choice only as *already embedded in an order of naturally given relations* (cf. 68) to God, family, others, and nature. [...] Man] is intrinsically related to the whole of humanity and of nature. [...]

Technology thus, rightly conceived, must be integrated into ... the idea of creation as something first *given* to man, as *gift*, “not something self-generated” (68), or *produced* by man.

### CREPALDI ON FRATERNITY AND UNITY OF KNOWLEDGE

From an interview with **Archbishop Crepaldi** of Trieste in the German magazine, *Amos International*.

[...] the mental change [*CiV*] proposes is no longer to consider persons and the world as something we have produced, but to look upon them from the viewpoint of their vocation. [...] If everything is due to mere chance or sheer necessity, man remains deaf and nothing in his life speaks to him or reveals itself to him. In that case society will be nothing more than a sum of individuals and not a true community. We can produce reasons or motives for being ‘neighbours’, but producing reasons or motives for being brothers is above and beyond us.

[...] the world is suffering due to a lack of thinking, a shortage of thought. [...] Personally speaking, I think very much still has to be done along these lines. The Social Doctrine of the Church needs to be considered as authentic knowledge, and [...] considered as an instrument at the service of the unity of knowledge, an ever-present requirement also in this age of globalisation.

[...] There is no fraternity without gratuitousness. If this is not experienced in the family – or rather if the family is weakened – it has an impact on society as a whole. [...] The modern economy works because hundreds of thousands of perfect strangers can trust one another. [...] abortion and laws that permit the non-respect of life [...] also have] an economic cost over the long term. The approach must be holistic.”

### NEW PRESIDENT, NEW SYNTHESIS

On 19 October 2009, one month before he became the first President of the European Council, **Herman Van Rompuy** gave a talk at the Belgian University of Liege, on *Caritas in Veritate*. He brought out the Pope’s highlighting of the moral dimension of the current global crisis, and the need to root our solutions in a renewed spiritual vision of Man which can lead to a better balance of solidarity and subsidiarity (our translation):

The goal is a humanism that coheres with the loving plan of God. [...] The Church considers ethical relativism, which implies that no objective value exists, one of the greatest threats to modern democracies [...]

He is convinced that it is precisely the lack of charity that has led us to the current economic and financial crisis: [...] When economic, social or political ideas are based on what is possible and self-determination, they undermine the true liberty of men. [...] Clearly, the only solution is a new humanistic synthesis.

*Two other astute online commentaries are those by Elizabeth Carr of Amherst College, Massachusetts, who writes that the “overarching issue” is the soul’s gifted relationality which roots human fraternity in God, and Francois Lacoste Lareymonde in his “Les quatre ‘fils rouges’ de l’encyclique” in a feature on “The Anthropology of Gift” in Liberté Politique, Autumn 2009.*



# Notes From Across the Atlantic

by Joseph Bottum



## PREJUDICE AT THE NEW YORK TIMES

Archbishop Timothy Dolan of New York caused a stir when he accused the *New York Times* of anti-Catholicism. In an October 29 blog post originally submitted to the *Times* as an op-ed piece, Dolan cited four recent examples from the paper to show that the *Times* has been unfair in its treatment of the Catholic Church. The archbishop's post sparked a reply by Clark Hoyt, the *Times*' public editor. "I think it is hard to pick a handful of examples, as Dolan did, and make a case that the *Times* has been 'anti-Catholic,'" Hoyt wrote in his column on November 8. "Could the newspaper sometimes choose a better word in a story or pay more attention to transgressions in other parts of society? Yes. Has it been guilty of anti-Catholicism? I don't buy it."

Hoyt, however, might want to explain two church-state stories that the *Times* published within days of each other. On November 2, the *Times* reported that Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn recorded a message praising Brooklyn Democratic Assemblyman Vito Lopez, who also doubles as the Brooklyn Democratic county chairman. Supporters of a city-council candidate who had Lopez's backing used the message in a "robo-call" that was telephoned to voters in the candidate's district. (Lopez was not up for election.) A spokesman for the Brooklyn diocese said that the bishop simply wanted to thank the assemblyman for his service to the diocese, and he insisted that the message did not endorse any candidates by name.

The *Times* story takes a predictable path: "By recording his message,

a legal scholar cautioned, Bishop DiMarzio could be treading close to legal lines limiting political advocacy by nonprofit organisations – whose tax-exempt status could be jeopardised."

A few days earlier, on October 29, the *Times* reported on African-American ministers – among them the Rev. Calvin O. Butts, pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, and the Rev. Floyd Flake, a former congressman who is pastor of the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral in Queens – who publicly endorsed New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg for reelection. The story did not even raise the issue of whether the ministers were violating IRS guidelines.

One *Times* story clearly treats the political involvement of African-American Protestant clergy as perfectly normal and legitimate. Another story treats the political involvement of a Catholic bishop as something bizarre that may even be illegal. The tax guidelines for nonprofits (available on the IRS website) treat all churches the same. There isn't one standard for the Roman Catholic hierarchy and a different one for African-American Protestant clergy.

Maybe Mr. Hoyt should have a word with his reporters.

## 'RIGHTS' OF CHILDREN ABOVE RELIGIOUS RIGHTS

Meanwhile, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France, has ruled that the government of Italy must remove crucifixes from public school classrooms throughout that country. According to the decision of

the court, "The presence of the crucifix ... could easily be interpreted by pupils of all ages as a religious sign." This, the court said, could be "disturbing for pupils who practiced other religions or were atheists." The ruling stated that the display of crucifixes restricted not only the right of parents to educate their children "in conformity with their convictions," but also "the right of children to believe or not to believe."

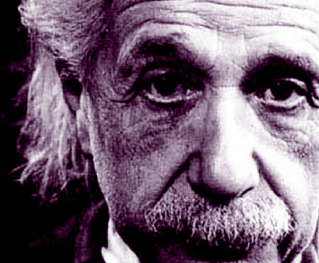
The Italian government and the Church responded at once. Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini termed the ruling a "mortal blow to a Europe of values and rights." The Italian Bishops' Conference said that the crucifix is "not only a religious symbol but also a cultural sign" and noted that its display in public buildings is "part of the historic heritage of the Italian people." On November 6 Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi announced that the crucifixes would stay in place as Italy appeals the ruling. "Nobody," said Education Minister Mariastella Gelmini, "much less a European court that is steeped in ideology, will be allowed to strip our identity away." If, however, the seventeen-member Grand Chamber of the Strasbourg court rejects the appeal, the court will order the stripping of the crucifixes from Italian classrooms.

As Minister Gelmini commented, "It is not by eliminating the traditions of individual countries that a united Europe is built." Did the individual countries of Europe envision such sweeping decisions when they joined the EU? And how much power, exactly, does the EU have to compel its member states to abandon long-held traditions? Italy – and the rest of Europe – may find out soon.



# Cutting Edge

## Science and Religion News



### CONCERN FOR ANIMALS ABOVE PAPAL QUOTATIONS

One of the latest pamphlets to be published by the Catholic Truth Society is the intriguingly titled *Concern for Animals*. In its 50 short pages it carefully analyses the Catholic approach to the treatment of animals, from the evidence of Scripture and Church Tradition, right up to our own day in the pronouncements of Pope Benedict XVI. A helpful quotation comes from the pen of John Paul II, before he was Pope: “Since [animals] are beings endowed with feeling and sensitive to pain, man is required to ensure that the use of these creatures is never attended by suffering or torture.” The pamphlet quotes from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “Man’s dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute” (n. 2415). It adds that “by [animals] mere existence they bless [God] and give Him glory. Thus men owe them kindness” (n. 2416); and also that “it is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly” (n. 2418).

However, more controversially, the pamphlet attests:

“To counter the notion that ‘animals do not have souls,’ Pope John Paul II declared in a public audience on 19 January 1990 that ‘animals possess a soul and men must love and feel solidarity with our smaller brethren’. He went on to state that all animals are the ‘fruit of the creative action of the Holy Spirit and merit respect’ and that they are ‘as near to God as men are’.”

This citation and quotation, as well as the conclusions drawn from it, are acutely problematic. The words are at best a very rough translation and they convey a sense which is in tension with Church Tradition concerning the uniquely spiritual (non-physical) human soul. (In addition, the date given is wrong: the particular Wednesday General Audience in question was 10 January 1990).

Translating from the official Italian version on the Vatican website we see that the Pope actually stated: “Other

texts, however, admit that animals too have a breath or vital spirit received from God. In this regard, man, coming from God’s hands, appears in solidarity with all living beings” (n. 4). He was speaking of Psalm 104, which focuses upon the shared dignity of all living creatures. The Pope also affirms that “when Genesis chapter two speaks of the creation of the animals (Gen 2:19), it doesn’t mention such a close relation with the breath of God” (n. 3).

Furthermore, the sentence about animals being “as near to God as men are” simply does not appear in the Pope’s text at all. (This phrase, and the above rough translations, are in fact in an online translation of a Roman priest’s apparent paraphrasing of the audience, just after it took place, as quoted by *Genre* magazine.)

The *Catechism* teaches clearly that man is “the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake” (n. 356, cf. also 358), and affirms the uniquely human spiritual soul in n. 363 ff. Contrary to the impression given by the CTS pamphlet (and it’s unusual for a publication from that organisation to be misleading in this way), the servant of God Pope John Paul II was clearly, as ever, combining orthodoxy with sensitive insight.

### HONOUR FOR REFLECTIVE RISK-TAKER

On 4 January, the American Astronomical Society awarded its George Van Biesbroeck Prize to the Jesuit priest Fr George Coyne, for his work in the field of astronomy. This prize is “for long-term extraordinary or unselfish service to astronomy.” Fr Coyne, who is 77, was Director of the Vatican Observatory from 1978 to 2006; after a pastoral year in a North Carolina parish he returned to the Vatican Observatory as the President of the “Vatican Observatory Foundation.”

Towards the end of his time as Director he criticised Christian creationism, as evinced by, for example, the Intelligent Design school, in a *Tablet* article, “God’s Chance Creation” (6 August 2005). In this he argues that evolution involves the interaction of “chance and necessity”:

“Take one simple example: two hydrogen atoms meet in the early universe. By necessity (the laws of chemical combination) they are destined to become a hydrogen molecule. But by chance the temperature and pressure conditions at that moment are not correct for them to combine. And so they wander through the universe until they finally do combine.”

The problem with this is that modern science does not so radically separate those conditions which lead to such a constructive, substantial combination (a “substantial change”) from those which don’t. The concept of ecosystem and environment captures the unifying, inter-relativity of local physical phenomena even when they don’t result in new chemical or biological unities. Actually, we would argue, none of the cosmos’s natural processes are truly “chance” (see, for example, our November 2006 editorial).

Fr Coyne goes on:

“For those who believe modern science does say something to us about God, it provides a challenge, an enriching challenge, to traditional beliefs about God. God in his infinite freedom continuously creates a world that reflects that freedom at all levels of the evolutionary process to greater and greater complexity. God lets the world be what it will be in its continuous evolution. He is not continually intervening, but rather allows, participates, loves.”

Fr Coyne thus risks confusing the complementarity of the distinct realms of determinism and freedom; this complementarity is inherent to human, self-conscious, creative engagement with our deterministic environment environment – an engagement which modern science exemplifies in such an important way. He thus risks confusing the complementary distinction of the physical and the spiritual, of matter and mind, which is inherent to Catholic teaching. While he clearly does not intend to, he thus risks confusing Creation and Creator.

We *can* do better than this, without falling into Creationism.





# Book Reviews

## Evolution & Emergence: Systems, Organisms and Persons,

*edited by Nancey Murphy and William R. Stoeger SJ, Oxford University Press, xiv + 378pp, £76*

Nature works at every level to produce more complex and highly organised systems and organisms from much simpler components: this is the theory proposed and investigated by this collection of essays. This review concentrates on how some of the authors apply this supposed “universal phenomenon of emergence” to anthropology and theology, Christology especially.

For more than a decade many of the contributors to this volume, including its editors – Nancey Murphy, Professor of Christian Philosophy at Fuller Theological Seminary and William R. Stoeger SJ, Staff Astrophysicist at the Vatican Observatory – have collaboratively developed a “nonreductive physicalism” or “emergent monist” anthropology. This holds that though man is a single, solely physical substance he is irreducible to his simplest, physical components. Rather man is a highly complex, multi-levelled, hierarchically structured organism from which emerge higher-level capacities, such as thinking and willing. Although these intrinsically depend on lower-level physical processes, they cannot be explained by simple description of such processes. Moreover, these higher-level properties are “causal players” in their own right over and above, and able to exert downward causation upon, the effects of lower-level processes. Hence “nonreductive”

indicates a rejection of causal reduction, but not ontological reduction. It is a physicalism claiming to escape determinism without recourse to a properly spiritual soul, if “soul” is understood as implying that man’s nature is composed of an entity ontologically distinct from his purely physical being.

This concept of “soul,” and the physicalism proposed by many of the contributors, is unacceptable to those who hold that Christianity teaches that man is one unified being but composed of two *essential* parts – a physical body *and* a properly spiritual soul which, though the substantial form of the body, is a subsistent entity capable of conscious existence when separated from its body between an individual’s death and the General Resurrection. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether the physicalism espoused successfully protects human freedom, a power traditionally rooted in man’s spiritual soul. Many critics argue that nonreductive/emergent physicalism simply replaces bottom-up determinism with top-down.

Turning to theology, Stoeger, for example, seeks to defend a portrait of divine action consistent with revelation and enriched by this emergent, physicalist portrait of the world which, he argues, the natural sciences provide. This involves inquiry not only into God’s continuous activity of maintaining creation in being, but also into “special divine action” in history, including the Incarnation and Resurrection. Stoeger accepts that reconciling these with the natural sciences is a “considerable challenge.” He responds thus:

“It seems to many that God does, in some sense, intervene or reveal God’s self in a special way in nature and in history in order to answer prayer, effect the Incarnation and the Resurrection and so on. Is this what happens, or is there some other way of understanding these events? One way to deal with this question is to stress the regularities, processes,

structures and relationships that constitute the laws of nature as they actually function in nature” (p. 243).

From this Stoeger argues that “special divine action” is really a matter of the “higher laws of nature” as they actually *function*, rather than as we *understand* them, subsuming, modifying and marshalling the “lower orders of nature”; those of physics, chemistry and biology. Hence “divine intervention” is “only relative to our limited understanding of the full laws of nature.”

Stoeger seems to limit the manifestation of God to the operation of divinely established natural laws whilst excluding effects transcending the order of that created nature, explicable only by the direct, *supernatural* action of God. Even the Incarnation and Resurrection appear attributable to natural processes which, potentially, could be explained in terms of completely natural laws.

For Arthur Peacocke, the now deceased former Director of the Ian Ramsey Centre, the followers of Jesus encountered in him a dimension of transcendence which they could only attribute to God: “But they also encountered him as a full human person [!], and in his personhood they experienced an intensity of God’s immanence in the world”(p.280). The “fusion” of the transcendence and immanence of God in Jesus led to the belief that they were experiencing something new “and they ransacked received concepts to try to give expression to this discontinuity... eventually designating it *inter alia* as ‘incarnation’” (ibid). However, this “new kind of reality,” who is Jesus, is an emergent manifestation of God in human life emanating from within creation: “a unique manifestation of a possibility always inherently there for human beings by virtue of their potential nature being created by God... a new mode of human existence emerged through Jesus’ openness to God making him a God informed human being”(ibid).



Jesus is presented as the fulfillment of *natural* human potentialities, with his “divinity” understood not in ontological terms but in relation to his divinely inspired response to God by which he became the brightest manifestation of God’s action in human life.

The Professor of Philosophy and Religion, Philip Clayton, begins with the premise that the beliefs and doctrines of traditional theism can be modified or abandoned in light of emergentist theories. He thinks that the only indispensable for Christology is “some way to think of the Jesus event as involving an act of God.” He says:

“In contrast to much of the tradition, I do not define the incarnation first in terms of the ontological status of Jesus Christ. Most of the two-natures doctrines of the incarnation are based on the categories of a substance based metaphysic that is foreign to how most people think today. These doctrines also require a pre-existence logos Christology that remains in tension with the fundamental humanity of Jesus” (p. 329, fn. 20).

Instead, Clayton portrays the “divine” in Jesus as the perfect submission of his will to that of God such that his action and that of God are identified. Jesus manifests the divine power by subsuming his will to God’s, and at the same time God acted through Jesus to manifest God’s will and bring about God’s intentions.

“This fusion of human and divine is what was right about traditional ‘two natures’ Christologies and the traditional doctrine of ‘incarnation’; it’s just that emergentism now locates the fusion in shared action and attitude rather than in some *a priori* ontological story” (p. 332).

Jesus, then, may be viewed as a unique revelation of God in that more than any other human his will is attuned to God’s so that his actions disclose God’s purposes. Yet this unique attitude is also the exemplar for all of humanity in that it actualises

the possibility that each man enjoys as made in God’s image.

However, because nonreductive physicalism does not seem to defeat determinism, it appears to render impossible this freely and perfect submission of Jesus’ human will to God. Moreover, whilst admiring their insistence on the true humanity of Jesus, I question whether these authors adequately express Christian belief that the “Word was made flesh.” It appears that for them Jesus is only a man, with a special – unique even – relationship to and identification with God, but no more; and whose entire being is wholly emergent from processes which, though established and directed by God, are fully natural. Yet nor can their understanding of Jesus’ humanity be shared by anyone who believes that Jesus’ human nature includes a properly spiritual, immortal soul, which, separated from his body, yet united to the divine Word, descended into Hell as an essential dimension of his mission to redeem man, body and soul. Indeed, is Jesus truly the Saviour who elevates man beyond his created nature and its possibilities into a supernatural deification of his existence?

The desire clearly discernible in so many of the pages of this book – to engage seriously with the natural sciences and demonstrate the compatibility of Christian faith with them – is highly laudable. Although I must leave others to substantiate the argument that the interpretation and application of the findings of these sciences by some of the contributors are unwarranted, I may certainly conclude that their understanding of the Christian faith sits uneasily with that of this reviewer’s (spiritual) mind.

**Fr John O’Leary**  
London

### **Too Much, Too Soon – The Government’s Plans for your Child’s Sex Education**

*by Norman Wells, Family Education Trust, £2.50, 36pp (available from FET, Jubilee House, 19-21 High Street, Whitton, Twickenham TW2 7LB)*

### **Choose Life – Prayers for Life**

*Copies available from Human Life, 18 Chelsea Square, London SW3 6LF, (free, donation appreciated) 12pp*

There is a great deal of talk about sex education at the moment. For some, it seems to be the universal panacea, especially if it is accompanied by widescale distribution of contraceptive drugs and devices to children. Here, at last, is a well-written commonsense guide to current Government plans, and practical advice to parents who may be confused on the subject.

*Too Much, Too Soon* looks at what has actually occurred in Britain over recent decades with regard to teenage sexual activity – the steadily rising figures for teenage pregnancies and abortions, and for sexually-transmitted diseases, linked to the commercial and ideologically-based campaigns for more and more propaganda aimed at the young, encouraging belief in the idea that sexual activity is just a matter of mutual pleasure supported by contraceptive equipment. Crude and explicit materials, devoid of any reference to marriage or even to love, produced by groups with links to lobbyists promoting abortion and the “morning after” pill, have become the standard for sex education. Evidence for the misery and chaos that this has created is now widely available, but voices calling for a fresh approach are ignored or stifled.

There is something rather chilling about the names and slogans now being used by officialdom in this territory. “Bodyzone” is the gimmick name given to a youth clinic distributing contraceptive and abortifacient drugs, and children are urged to attend sessions with



## Book Reviews continued

names like “Speakeasy” where they are assured that parents and teachers will not be told about the contraceptive equipment they are getting.

The fact that sex education schemes of this sort positively encourage more teenage sexual activity is no longer even regarded by officialdom as wrong. On the contrary, one enthusiast, admitting that such activity could be increased said that she didn’t think that this was necessarily harmful – she spoke instead of the value of removing taboos and seeing sex as “valuable and life-enhancing”, an odd expression to come from one associated with provision of abortion.

What can parents do? Give their children clear moral direction, exercise control over sexual content in the media in the home, be honest and truthful about the consequences of extra-marital sexual activity, uphold marriage and emphasise the benefits of saving sexual activity for marriage. “What young people really need is not more talk about the mechanics of sex and contraception, but encouragement to develop the character qualities of stability, faithfulness and commitment – the qualities they will need to build a strong and lasting marriage based on something that runs deeper than feelings and physical attraction.” This is wise advice, and the author is clear about the wrong direction taken by current policies: “In the name of non-judgementalism, the government’s approach is abandoning young people to the shifting sands of relativism and depriving them of the moral compass they so desperately need.”

What does this booklet have to say to Catholic schools and Catholic parents? This booklet is not written with the Church in mind, and does not specifically tackle this aspect of the debate. But it has wisdom to offer. Having established the horror of what passes for “sex education” in official government-sponsored schemes, it also emphasises that there are indeed things that can be taught, but that these are precisely the things

that officialdom has thus far blocked and banned – the virtues of faithfulness and commitment, the centrality of marriage, the importance of family structures, the necessity of truth. “What we really need is to recover a proper respect for marriage and a proper respect for parents.”

Catholics can and must take a stand on this, and Catholic schools can, within the law, present the Christian moral teaching as the right way to live and refuse to use any materials which are either too explicit or which in any way infringe parental rights or impose a message contrary to Christian moral norms. If necessary, this could be tested in the courts. There is no need to shrug and assume that current government-funded schemes of sex education or vague imitations of them are the only way forward: Catholic schools are popular and highly-regarded by the public in general in Britain and in a stand-off between them and officialdom the latter might find it had fewer allies than it imagines.

We need a certain confidence, and this is a message that emerges from this booklet: official schemes of sex education over recent decades have failed. It is time for a fresh approach. Many of us are tired of the debate, exhausted by the relentless and well-funded propaganda pushed by those whose ideas have dominated the official attitudes, and despondent of ever seeing change. But we need courage and hope. This booklet urges us to have both, and not to give up. The stakes are too high for that.

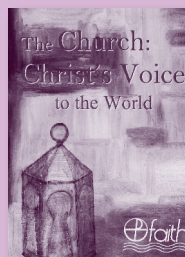
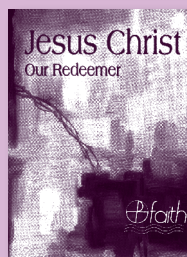
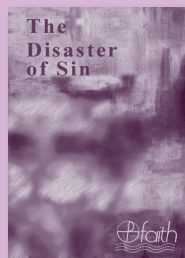
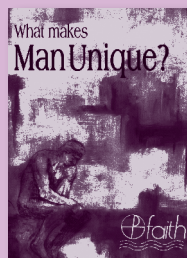
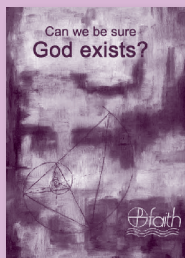
*The Choose Life* booklet of prayers is rather charming. It is nicely-produced, pocket-sized and with pleasing decorations. The prayers include the *Magnificat*, the familiar “*Holy Michael, Archangel, defend us in the day of battle...*” and a rather good hymn which can be sung to the tune of *Come, Holy Ghost* and is specifically aimed at begging for protection on unborn children. This hymn is beautifully composed around an Incarnation theme and is rich in

doctrine. It would be good to see it adopted at pro-life prayer-vigils and services “*Begotten of His Love Divine/Before Creation’s dawn/Let God’s own Son our hearts incline/To cherish the unborn.*”

I detect a gently Anglican feel to this little prayer-book – it brings with it a waft of the best of what that tradition can offer. If it is a taste of what those who come into the new Ordinariate may bring with them, then we can be glad and grateful. Meanwhile, this is a prayer-book that could usefully be ordered by groups and parishes and widely distributed – it would come in handy for common prayer at meetings of Catholic women’s groups and youth groups as well as having much value for private devotions. Aborting large numbers of children is now a standard part of our National Health Service and accepted by many as normal – defeating this horror is only possible by prayer. I like the quote from Julian of Norwich on this little book’s frontispiece, “*The Lord showed me about prayer. I now see that there are two conditions about prayer. One concerns its rightness, the other our sure trust.*”

**Joanna Bogle**  
New Malden  
Surrey

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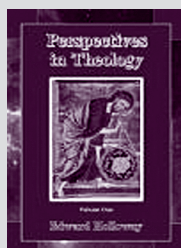
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