

faith

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The Place of Scripture and Overcoming the Hermeneutic of Rupture

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Dominic Rolls

Why Contemporary Moral Theology Needs St Paul

Michael Cullinan

The Priesthood of Christ in the Letter to the Hebrews

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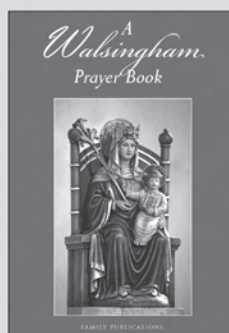
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The Place of Scripture and Overcoming the Hermeneutic of Rupture *Editorial*

“Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures.” Luke 24:45

Books of the *Da Vinci Code* genre and television programmes such as Channel Four’s flippant *Christianity: A History* earlier this year, have unsettled not a few Catholic parishioners. The beautiful Catholic vision concerning the convincing witness offered by the interplay of scripture, tradition and magisterium is not present enough in the minds of many members of our Church to protect them from ensuing doubt and confusion.

Even the practising Catholic who, against the fashion, is still up for arguing in defence of our Church’s claims, for instance with upstanding Evangelical acquaintances, can sometimes have a tendency to argue from scripture alone. They can seem unaware, among other things, that it is the rejection of the idea of divine magisterium which has so hamstrung the *sola scriptura* reformed traditions. The continual splitting of these communities into many denominations has witnessed to their weakness with regard to handing on authentically the content of Christ’s “but I say to you”.

It can be useful for such a Catholic interlocutor to remember that, particularly when at a loss, they are more than within their rights to admit, with the motorist confronted by a steaming engine in the 1980’s AA television advert, “I don’t know the solution, but I know a man who does”; that is Jesus in the Church. The Mystical Body of Christ wrote the Bible and also authoritatively interprets it. Catholics have not one but two books: the Bible *and* the Catechism. The Bible has and needs an ecclesial, incarnational context.

We need to understand this dynamic anew if we are to understand and revindicate the inspiration and interpretation of scripture.

An Illustration

The Year of St Paul has spawned, in the parochial context, many laudable attempts through talks and sermons to elucidate and inspire concerning his life, work and theology. This is a welcome phenomenon. However, to this writer’s knowledge, some of the talks have undermined the project by passing on that fashionable downplaying of the magisterium which is fostered by influential Catholic theologians and periodicals.

This widespread modern dynamic was fostered somewhat at the beginning of this anniversary year at a diocesan meeting for 300 priests. These priestly shepherds were invited to a relaxed “Celebration of Priesthood”, and were no doubt considering how they might mark the Pauline year for the people to whom they minister. In the event they were challenged to step significantly beyond our tradition by a prominent Biblical scholar. On 23rd June last Fr Tim Finigan published on his blog the below description of some of the points that were made on that occasion (which description he, needlessly it turned out, promised to update if anyone corrected):

“St Paul didn’t believe in the divinity of Christ – he didn’t deny it but his thought hadn’t taken him that far. For Paul, Jesus was the model man – he showed us what we are capable of, by the example of his life. (Cf. the Office of Readings for today in the *Liturgia Horarum*: St Gregory of Nyssa ‘On Christian Perfection’, beginning ‘More than anyone, St Paul understood who Christ is...’)] There is no evidence at all that the papal primacy existed for the first 120 years of the Church’s history. The monarchical Church was a later invention.

“Paul would not have fallen into the Anglican error of ordaining women priests because he was a pragmatist. St Paul was concerned not to scandalise others and therefore it was wrong for the Anglican Church to alienate the Global South by ordaining women to the priesthood – although that would be ‘a good thing in itself.’”

If the essential magisterial tradition in which we interpret scripture can be thus devalued we are robbing the Bible of its proper power, and descending into the morass of personal interpretation. As ever in this space, we make no judgment of culpability for the ever deepening confusion concerning the nature and teaching of the Catholic faith being foisted upon our people, young and old. Our argument is that it is a symptom of a more fundamental intellectual malaise seeping ever deeper into the life of the Church. We would counter this hermeneutic of rupture in our culture and Church by emphasising the one, historical, developmental line of what Edward Holloway termed the divine “Evocation of the Word”, from the advent of man up to the present day. This is the context in which scripture should be placed in the life of the Church today.

Contextualising the Word of God

The key reality to invoke here, is that man, as a being of physical body and spiritual soul, is called to commune with and be ‘Environed’ by the transcendent Spirit of God. Christ, as the incarnation of this same personal God, truly human and truly divine, needs then to be recognised as man’s infallible guide and bread of life. God now has a continuous and personal relationship to mankind. This necessarily involves that divine magisterium upon earth which is constitutional to the Roman Catholic Church. It is through such a vision that we can reaffirm the classical, orthodox concept of biblical inspiration.

Biblical inspiration is but an aspect of divine magisterium itself. A magisterium which confers power to define indefectibly and infallibly in the name of Christ’s Divinity and His continuing mission on earth is a particular fulfilment of the Biblical tradition of inspiration. The *interpretation* of the meaning of the inspired text belongs ultimately to that same magisterium in the Church which is a divine and not a human principle.

There is an organic and necessary relationship of God to men, whether in the personal life of the individual, or in the

“The interweaving of the Bible, the teaching of the synagogue and the Catholic Christian Church, witnesses to the presence of a Mind, a Power, and an Authority with love that transcends the mind of man and the power of man.”

public and social life of man which is natural to him. Among the communities which, by right of being and existence grow out of the nature of man, is the Church as a People and a Kingdom. When we come to recognise this relationship to God which grows out of our very being, the meaning of the Bible, as of Religion itself, becomes apparent.

God as personal ‘Environer’

This *personal* context of biblical inspiration is rooted in the relationship of interior prayer and seeking between God and the human personality. From conception onwards, faith as a virtue and state of being is elicited within the human spirit, and through faith, hope and charity. (See Faith editorial last November, *Mysterium Fidei*: Towards A New Liturgical Synthesis). The comparison of the seed in the ground might help us here – as with variations it did the teaching of Our Lord himself. The seed lives in a context, that is to say it lives in an environmental relationship at all times with nature around it. The sun and the shower, the earth and the atmosphere, all of these prompt within it a fuller life, a life more abundant. Within these things, one might say, it lives, and is, and has its being. The pattern of life and growth for the spiritual creation is the very same we would suggest, whether it be the angel of the purely spiritual order, or man, in whom is synthesised within his one being both orders, spiritual and material.

That which by nature compliments and fosters the spiritual creation is the ministration and being of God himself. God prompts within the spiritual being that increase of depth and nobility of being which comes from the possession of God, and makes it yearn more fully for that possession. God is the milk of this life, God is the bread of the maturity of this life. That is why at apex of the Divine Economy, Jesus Christ gave us the Eucharist. God is our food and drink indeed. God is quite literally the natural environment of the soul, and therefore of the personality of man. St Paul affirmed to the Athenians that in God we live, and move, and are, and have our being (Acts 17:28). What lesser creatures draw from visible nature around, humans draw from the being of God who comes “that they may have life, and have it more abundantly”.

The Evocation of The Word

The angelic spirit does not need words to go to God, or to be reached by God. God can enlighten the intellect, fulfil the longing, and suffuse with love the very being of that creature totally and immediately as Pure Spirit unto pure spirit. This will happen if that dynamic spiritual creation accept God. In loving God it will be transformed into blazing union with Him. It can also reject Him selfishly and be centred totally on itself and self-love, which is the heart of all sin. Either way the flesh and its works and words are irrelevant to angelic communication.

With man it is quite otherwise. Flesh and spirit as we are, we need the word. Our words are knowledge wrapped up in material signs and sounds. We cannot convey to another, nor fully express within ourselves that which we know and enjoy without the sign, the picture, the material beauty that expresses the spiritual, that is to say without the word in all

its aspects. This is true in the individual mind and heart, in the family, and in the communities through which we and society grow.

So God must, we would say, evoke the word. The human word is the proclamation of the knowledge that is within a man. God must evoke the word to express to mankind the knowledge which is within Himself. Because of this the Word of God himself becomes flesh. The Word is the living Personal content of the divine self-knowledge, and this Word must eventually be uttered to man.

In human affairs there is no deep knowing of God and loving of God which does not carry with it a desire to express this good to other men and share it with them. Even the most contemplative joy in God seeks to witness to men. How much more so with God. God must evoke the word of His Word as part of His one wisdom in creating the cosmos.

The Prophet as Natural

If God utters a ‘word’ like this He will need to raise up in society, in accordance with the nature he has implanted in man, the priest and the prophet, the spiritual genius who will minister the word of God. Nature itself does something similar. In good men and bad it throws up the leader, the kings and the counsellors, the wise men and the seers. All men have some power to know, to declare, and to rule, otherwise there would be few good parents. Only the few, however, are geniuses in governing, in teaching and in wisdom. There needs be the spiritual genius as well: the saint, the priest, the prophet, – the ‘great soul’. Yet the meaning of the word of God to be proclaimed will be in God and not in man.

The word of God will be spoken through a man, and through the consciousness of a man. The prophet himself will be aware within himself that the knowledge, the power, and the authority come not from himself, but rather come upon him from another. The prophet will know this in the peace and joy, awe and power that possess his spirit when he ‘speaks the words of God’. The word spoken, may concern the doctrine of God, morals for man and prophecy concerning the future. The economy of God in human society builds up like the process of life and evolution itself before man, to a supreme climax. Therefore that ‘word of God’ must be prophetic in the sense that what is said now, however much it may have an immediate meaning, possesses its fuller sense and ultimate meaning in the long years ahead. In the same way, men, events, actions, good things and disasters, all of these within their own being can show forth a greater reality that is yet to come. Our *Truth Will Set You Free* column in this issue applies this dynamic to the contemporary pastoral challenge of calling our people to conversion.

God must protect the word He speaks through the prophet so that with all the limitations, and all the cultural attachments and symbolisms that belong to the prophet and his age, God’s word of truth remains without falsity, and can develop through time. This word, if it is the official, the authentic, the continuing and permanent line of God’s guidance upon

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continued

mankind, will not be false through human error, nor merely mythological. And as it is true it can organically develop.

Such a process by which God ‘possesses’ the seer or teacher is quite possible, because of the total self-surrender of the ‘great soul’ to God, and because in the humble joy of his vision of the meaning of God, the seer will express, at least adequately, just what is the truth which gives him the joy. God does not need to dictate verbally. He ‘inspires’, which is to say he guides and teaches, expressing his own divine word through the loving and humble ministry of man. The content given is of God’s mind in the primary sense of the meaning conveyed and intended. God is and must always be the principal Author of the Sacred Scriptures.

The Uniqueness of Messianism

There are sacred books of great thought and great beauty in all great religions of the human spirit. This beauty and truth proceeds from great souls who seek God in contemplative communion and great purity of heart and find an answer in the personal love and communion of God. This also is the gift of God, who is no snob. But this is not ‘inspiration’ in the biblical sense. Inspiration in the biblical sense is the claim that God has raised up amidst the history of man a line of doctrinal and moral truth developing through the ages. This is in spite of original sin and all the incoherence and confusion it causes in the human psyche. This is the full, authentic, and consistent line of growth towards God’s final communication of Himself to mankind. Divine inspiration is the guidance of this line, as written down, taught, and used to expect the blessing of God yet to come. Divine magisterium covers not only the doctrine, but also the prophecy, and the entire control and direction of this line of truth and love to the fulfilment of mankind. This line of doctrinal tradition gradually reveals God’s mind, not man’s mind, making sense of man.

In the Bible we do find unique characteristics. It has an amazing sobriety and freedom from myth and magic. It is rational and factual. So much is this true, that the Victorians could believe that the creation narrative of Genesis and the later chapters on the development of human culture were literally and directly true. They saw no need for further criticism or exegesis, simply because of the grave, sober tone of the narrative, and the absence of gods and goddesses, warring, sinning, and being so very utterly human writ large, in the higher heavens. We can trace also in the Old Testament, a continuous development of doctrine, concerning moral excellence, union with God, monogamous marriage, the survival of the soul after death, and the survival of the spirit with joy and blessedness after death.

None of the religious cults of the Middle East, nor Hinduism or Buddhism, have creation stories involving such continuous, coherent development. Development of doctrine is held back in the Islamic faith by the claim that the Qur’an contains the last words of God dictated to the prophet. Such developments as are currently and encouragingly being offered from within Islam, usually in the form of Qur’anic commentary, are not really organic but are either

the response to challenges from people such as Pope Benedict or concessions to the Western mindset or that of other cultures.

It is Messianism which is unique in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and which makes the Bible what it is. This is the concept of the chosen people and the Anointed and Holy One who is to come. It might be termed the sharp, hard spearhead of the evolution upward of the faith of the Bible. It is no random evolution, but patterned and consistent. Age after age it grows only clearer and more vocal, and to it the whole interpretation of the prophets was turned by the official priesthood and the rabbinate of the Jews. There is only one way to explain this mighty fact, a fact spread across at least five thousand years of consistent development and coherent communication from the one creator. We are in the presence of a living magisterium which transcends man and man’s history and man’s culture. It works within that history but the magisterium leading onwards is from outside man. It is orientated to the coming of the transcendent one who is to come personally into history, a supreme climax preached for so long a time.

Biblical Magisterium

When you look back from Christ upon the past, you can see the quite amazing and often very detailed fulfilment in Him of so many a prophecy, so many a type, so many a suffering servant of the Lord God. If Christ, along the road to Emmaus, “beginning at Moses” opened to the two disciples “the things that were concerning Him” He was expounding only what was there to be found and following a tradition wholly accepted as true and meaningful by the Jews of His time and of earlier times. Since the prophecies of Daniel however, Messianic fervour had grown stronger and much clearer among the Jews, than in earlier times. The Messiah was to be a person, a King, a new sort of priest, in all things the saviour of His people, and of all mankind. Simeon at least, in his farewell canticle of praise, expressed the mystic knowledge and hope of the holy Jew, whatever the sword swinging zealots, and the cynical Sadducees might have looked for in the Messiah.

There is nothing like the magisterium of Messianism in the whole history of human religion. It is fulfilled in Christ, and it passes with Christ into the Magisterium of the Catholic and Roman Church. God revealing himself as The Eternal Word, and becoming Incarnate as the Word made Flesh is one seamless garment. This is the core of biblical inspiration and biblical inerrancy. Such inerrancy is compatible, in distant ages past, with many a statement, many a quotation made in the presumed context of human history and widely accepted among men as true of human culture which might have been only very partially accurate. It can have its obiter dicta, its cultural presumptions, its implicit citations, but the message preached, and the facts asserted as facts within the ambit of the prophet’s message, whether directly doctrinal or not, must be true and are true.

There is a twin authorship to the Bible, and the literal sense of the prophet may be only an aspect of the full sense

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of God, who is leading this sense forward to its being understood uniquely in Christ. One would think that the whole of scripture is Christological. Just as the womb of Mary was nature's offering to God for the Incarnation of Christ, so for this writer the Scripture is consummated in all its aspects in His Coming and His Attributes.

Ecclesial Magisterium

In the nature of the case the Scriptures, as St. Peter asserted a long time ago, are not subject to private and human interpretation but to the meanings of the Holy Spirit of God, and to the magisterium that declares that meaning. Among the Jews themselves, the priesthood and the rabbinate which killed the prophets nevertheless alone had the canonical power to declare the Canon of the Scriptures. Neither the seer himself, nor the individual as such, had power over ‘the word of God’.

That magisterium given in Moses and Aaron, was trustee only for the Christ, in Whose person it was to pass away. Yet even that limited magisterium asserted and used its power to declare and to interpret the inspired word of God. That power, dim, partial, and hesitant before the Incarnation, passes into the Magisterium of Christ which lives in the Church, and stems directly from the Divinity of Christ. Christ as Lord of history lives, teaches, and defines with a final word within the Catholic Church. Only within the Church is there the will and the faith to declare and to use this power, a power totally necessary to vindicate the Divinity of Christ, and to allow Christ to fulfil His mission among men till the end of time. Christ is not only Lord of the Church, but as Lord of all human history, Lord indeed of universal history, He is Lord of the Bible as well.

It teaches and declares through the leading and inspiring of God, “the things that are concerning Him”. In the last analysis therefore the written word, ‘Holy Writ’, is always subject to the word, the spoken and declared word of ecclesial Magisterium. The scripture had to come out from the mouth of priest and prophet before ever it was written. It had then to be accepted and declared authentic by those who have received from God “power to sit in the chair of Moses”, as Christ put it. Only then could the people know that it was indeed the word of God. Whether it was written down after the death of the prophet maybe, or declared in blazing words by the prophet, it was all part of one living tradition, one living magisterium of God which was the faith of Israel. It is the same now.

The magisterium of the Church declares in her faith, and in her liturgy, the meaning of Holy Writ. It is God's meaning, not always obvious to man, and God must speak His mind. The same magisterium of the Church has power to define such meaning if necessary. Sometimes it has done so, as in the case of the meaning of the Petrine text, concerning the Primacy of Peter and the power on earth of “the keys of the Kingdom”. Much more often the magisterium of the Church has indirectly taught the meaning of the Scripture either by accepting the universal consent of the Fathers of the Church, or by basing definitions in Council on long quoted passages, as for instance at the Council of Trent.

The coherence of the development of doctrine in the Catholic Church allied to the coherent and continuous development of prophecy, doctrine and Messianism in the Old Testament raises up in history itself one vast monument to the direct participation of God in the history of mankind and the religious and spiritual life of mankind. This is the natural, the proper, the expected union and communion of God with man: in Him we live, and move, and have our being. This sign set before the nations is its own evidence and it is not explicable from the historic, cultural, relative social life of human society itself. If it were so, then there would be many another example, and there is not. The line from Adam and Abraham to Christ and the Vicar of Christ reigning today is a unique line, unique in its claims and vision across all of human history.

The interweaving of the Bible, the teaching of the synagogue and the Catholic Christian Church, witnesses to the presence of a Mind, a Power, and an Authority with love that transcends the mind of man and the power of man. Yet it manifests itself as the control and direction, the Environment to be expected, of the life of man. It carries its own conviction.

Conclusion

As with most of the themes proposed in this space, these thoughts need further development. But let us remember that generous young minds need to be sure that there is within the Church and its treasury of God-given wisdom from the past, a majesty of truth and life that far outstrips the quite wretched limitations of rationalist critics. We think Pope Benedict and the new Archbishop of Westminster in his latest book, have been encouraging us to offer something similar (see our *Road from Regensburg* column).

There is no such thing as an ‘on-going revelation’ that proceeds from the mind of man. This will be merely the disintegration of the fulness of Christ, and of the real meaning of human nature and the dignity of human love.

Cardinal Newman has shown that the meaning and origins of doctrine in a living faith can be understood only by the official and authentically recognized saints and theologians of that faith: that is by orthodox, consistent, and ‘canonised’ development. One might add by ‘martyred’ development, because that was so often the price of genuine development. It was the same with Biblical leaders and prophets. It is the same today with Popes ridiculed for their active magisterium by fashionable media in and out of the Church, yet, when deceased, held up as better than their predecessors.

There is an on-going development of the understanding of doctrine, and of the vision of Christ's majesty, and that understanding resides within the Church Catholic, and in that work the meaning of the Scriptures is still carried on. It is carried on by the One who prompted it in the beginning within Adam, by the Holy Spirit of God who receives the things that are of Christ and until the end of time manifests that fulness to men through the Word of the Eternal Word made now the solemn word of the Church which Christ animates.

A Short Life of Paul: Journey to the Heart of the Church *by Dominic Rolls*

Fr Dominic Rolls offers an informative life of a great saint who became increasingly captivated by the person of Christ and His Church. Fr Rolls is Parish Priest of Dorking and scripture lecturer in Womersley Seminary, Surrey.

Pope Benedict has declared 2008-2009 to be the Year of St Paul. Between the 29th June last year and the 29th June this year all the faithful are called to give thanks to God for the tremendous work and missionary zeal of the Apostle to the Gentiles. As a worker in the vineyard of the Lord, this Jewish convert to Christianity was and remains unsurpassed. We ask him to pray and obtain for us those graces of patience and perseverance necessary to fight the good fight to the end and win the crown of salvation, just as he did.

Saul was born in Tarsus, the principal town in the Roman province of Cilicia, around the year 8AD (hence the reason for the jubilee year). Two influences immediately come to bear on the young man of great brilliance growing up in this bustling and thriving city. As an observant Jew in the strict Pharisee tradition, he would have learnt the Law from the elders of his community and lived the enclosed life of piety in family and synagogue that a religious upbringing entailed. As a Roman citizen, either because his family had been prominent in the service of the Emperor or because they had paid a large amount of money for the privilege, Saul would have indirectly absorbed the predominant Greek philosophy. A tent maker by trade, it would be too far fetched to suggest he attended the Greek university in Tarsus. Rather, through the culture and intellectual environment of which he was part, he would have been exposed to secular philosophy, especially the predominantly stoic thought of his day.

The Student

A brilliant pupil, Saul was sent to Jerusalem to finish off his studies under the guidance of the great Gamaliel. Two traditions governed rabbinic thought and Scriptural commentary there – the schools of Hillel and Simon. Gamaliel followed Rabbi Hillel and was reputed to be the best teacher of that or any subsequent period.

Pharisaism embraced a belief in the after-life and the resurrection. It embraced a full acceptance of spiritual reality, with a developed angelology, and an uncompromisingly strict set of traditions for observing the Law. Jesus would later criticise the Pharisees for abandoning the spirit of the Law in favour of their man-made traditions, but in fact the Nazarene's manner of teaching had more in common with pharisaism than any other sect of Judaism. Saul found himself in Pharisaism, which gave full expression to his own intellectual brilliance and a burgeoning zeal for the things of God. He became focused and fulfilled in the Law, and the Law alone.

It is interesting to speculate that Saul's period in Jerusalem would have occurred just before the mission of John the Baptist began – a mission subsequently taken over by his cousin Jesus of Nazareth. Everything was poised in the plan of God. There could have been no cloud to disturb the tranquil blue skies of Saul's pharisaism, and no reason to doubt that he would have returned to his native city one of the brightest pupils of his day. Then Jesus happened.

The impact of the Nazarene sect would probably have been localised like a small stone in a still pond. Only later, when the ripples did not die away but threatened to become huge waves, did the whole phenomenon become deeply disturbing to the Jerusalem authorities. Their actions to neutralise this threat met with final success after a hard and bitter struggle. Jesus was executed by a cornered Pontius Pilate, and the Law seemed safe from the radical repositioning advocated by the defeated and discredited Nazarene.

Saul's reappearance in Jerusalem at that time must have seemed a godsend to the Chief Priest. Persistent rumours of Jesus' resurrection emboldened and increased his following. Despite the grave doubts of Gamaliel at the rulings of the Sanhedrin against the adherents of the Nazarene sect, the mantle of swift, decisive and, if need be, brutal action laid down by Caiaphas was resolutely taken up by Saul. Even the mantles of those who stoned Stephen to death were gathered and guarded by the man who thoroughly approved of the killing of this first Christian martyr. Saul was very good at his job, and none were safe who challenged the Law after the way of Jesus. Men, women and children were hunted down and left in the appalling squalor of first century jails to come to their religious senses.

Not content with his unparalleled attack on the Church in Judaea, Saul was granted letters of authority to act against believers of the new sect in Damascus. His experience on the road to the Syrian capital changed his life completely in an instant, and remains a point of controversy in the eyes of many up to the present day.

Conversion

Luke refers three times to the act of conversion in Acts, underlying its vital importance to the survival and upbuilding of the early Church. Some, who smell a rat at any possibility of miraculous intervention in human affairs, claim that Saul was never converted but merely changed sides. A troublemaker from the start, his thirst for confrontation and prominence caused him to throw in his

lot with the fledgling movement he had formerly tried to persecute. Apart from flying in the face of the facts as reported to us, this view does not make sense of the psychology of a bright, convinced and much feted student. Such a view is based on a hermeneutic of doubt, the only certainty of which becomes the unreliability of early Church interpretations of what are branded dubious events. Subsequent interpretations become far more fantastic than the accounts that they attempt to deny. In the absence of historical evidence to the contrary, our views are formed by the clear tradition of near contemporary accounts, preserved that our faith might be well founded on eyewitness testimonies within the Tradition of the Church.

So, what happened to Saul? Let the sources speak for themselves:

"Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' He asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do'" (Acts 9, 3-6)

Blind and stumbling, Saul is lead into Damascus. His world is turned completely upside down, and he is brought to experience the utter depths of his weakness, so that the grace of God might build him up to the heights. Through baptism received from the trembling hand of Ananias, the grace of Jesus Christ enters his soul and begins that process of conversion which will culminate in his martyrdom in Rome some time in 67AD. But before the newly named Paul can give the witness of his blood, he is required to give the witness of his word.

"There could have been [...] no reason to doubt that he would have returned to his native city one of the brightest pupils of his day."

So Saul becomes Paul. Yet his conversion still remains a profound mystery. How much did he receive in direct revelation from God, how much did he learn from other disciples of Jesus? When did he receive the direct revelations he later claims? There are plenty of questions that can never be known definitively, though a likely scenario can fairly straightforwardly be attempted. What is certainly true is that Paul's conversion was an ongoing process, dramatic though it was in the beginning. If grace perfects through human nature, then the enormity of the vision of God given to Paul comes to him piecemeal as he struggles to live his new life fully.

Its seed was an encounter with Christ whose first words immediately and intimately associate himself with those people Saul is persecuting – a revelation that is of the Christ *who is in* the Church. Its fruit will be a profound knowledge of Christ and his foundational relationship, both to us – he it is "in whom we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28) – and to creation – of which he is "the first born." (Col 1:15) (cf. *Faith* Jan 2006, 'The Primacy of Christ: An Exegesis in Pauline Christology' by Luiz Ruscillo). It will lead, towards the end of his life, to his use of the beautiful ancient Christian hymn: "Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped." (Phil 2:5-11)

Evangeliser

Paul leaves Damascus for Arabia, perhaps to be strengthened in spirit for the task that is laid before him. At any rate, the effect of his return to Damascus is explosive. He preaches the divine sonship and Messianic character of Jesus in the synagogues of that city. Rejected as a renegade by his former friends, the Jews try to kill him and very nearly succeed. Paul is secretly lowered from the walls of Damascus in a basket and escapes to Jerusalem. There his reputation as Saul goes before him, and he is treated with understandable suspicion by the followers of Jesus, whose lives he had so brutally persecuted previously. He is saved by Barnabas, who befriends him and champions him before the apostolic leaders of the Judean church. Paul establishes his apostolic credentials before leaving for his native Tarsus. The sheer magnitude of such a high profile conversion must have rocked the holy city. The danger to Paul and all associated with him can only be imagined.

Barnabas' friendship with Paul extended to a shared missionary zeal. Though clearly a key figure, Paul's evangelical work was always within the mission of the universal church, which he grew to see as those in unity of belief (Phil. 1:27; 2:2), as the Bride of Christ on whom it was founded (Eph 5:23-32), and the "pillar and ground of truth" (1Tim 3:15) which faithfully hands on Christ's teaching (2Tim 2:2).

It was Barnabas who re-established contact with him in Tarsus and engaged him on a mission to the gentile converts at Antioch. The leader was Barnabas, not Paul, and the impetus for the work of evangelization came from the apostolic authorities in Jerusalem, not from Paul's own initiative. If Paul became the brightest light in the evangelical firmament, he was never the only light. Others laboured alongside him, and it is interesting to note that many of his most effective helpers later on, such as Silas and Apollos, were not his converts. Others had sowed where he reaped.

A Short Life of Paul: Journey to the Heart of the Church

continued

Missionary

The mission to Antioch was phenomenally successful, the gentile followers of the Way becoming known as Christians there for the first time. From Antioch, Barnabas and Paul began the first missionary journey, through Cyprus (the homeland of Barnabas), Perge in Pamphylia, and the Galatian towns of Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. At some stage the leadership of the mission passed to Paul for unknown reasons. No doubt his unique talents and calling brought him to the fore. Barnabas begins to fade and the work becomes truly Pauline.

Joy at his success on return to Antioch is short-lived, as Paul hears disturbing news from Antioch that his gentile converts in Galatia have come under the influence of Jewish Christians who insist on the importance of circumcision. A pattern is set for all Paul's apostolic work, whereby his presence among the young churches has a remarkable effect on conversions, only to be undermined in his absence by the mistaken insights and follies of disloyal followers.

“one of his key evangelising principles, flowing surely from his knowledge of the Son of God as the ‘first born of many brothers’ as well as ‘of creation’, was that in Christ there is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female.”

The two agree to disagree about whether to take Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, on their second journey (Acts 15:39). Mark had given up early on their first journey and it seems Paul did not want to take the risk on the second one. It seems that through Barnabas, who finds Mark “useful”, Timothy later brings him to Rome where he reconciles with Paul, “proving a comfort” to him (Col. 4:11).

Theologian

For Paul the question of circumcision hit at the heart of the gospel. It was not merely a matter of discipline, but rather a denial of the intrinsic merit of the cross. If a man bound himself to the Law through circumcision, he could not be saved. He had put his trust in delusive ways incapable of salvation and rejected the sole mediation of the cross of Christ. Only in the death and resurrection of Christ could we have access to the Spirit who brings freedom and life. It is the law of the Spirit that frees and saves us, not works of the Law. Vigorous debate and a delegation to Jerusalem to clear up this problem saw Paul and Barnabas completely victorious over the Judaizers who advocated circumcision. News of their victory and repudiation of their opponents reached Antioch through decrees carried from Jerusalem by Judas and Silas. In Silas, Paul found a kindred spirit, and it was he who replaced Barnabas on the second missionary journey.

This did not start well. They tried to go east to Proconsular Asia, but were forbidden to preach. They turned north to Bithynia, and were not even allowed to enter the territory. Eventually they turned west towards Mysia and Troas, and so over the Aegean Sea to Macedonia in Greece. Ancient historians often speculate about what would have happened if Alexander the Great had gone west instead of east. A like question can be posed about Paul: what would have happened if he had been allowed to go east?

Greece proved a fertile ground for Paul, although each advance made for the gospel was dearly bought in sheer unremitting toil against equally determined opposition. They reached Europe through Neapolis and proceeded to the principal town of that part of Macedonia, Philippi, where Lydia becomes the first European to embrace the gospel. Paul insists on his Roman citizenship in this Roman colony, and the range and differing social backgrounds of his converts back up one of his key evangelising principles, flowing from his knowledge of the Son of God as the “first born of many brothers” (Rom 8:29-31) as well as “of creation” (Col. 1:15): that in Christ there is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female (Gal 3:28).

Hounded out of Philippi, Paul and Silas move on to the capital of Macedonia, Thessalonica. There the mission again meets with some success, but the hostility of the Jews forces them on again through Athens, where Paul shows a mastery of Greek thought in debate despite his abhorrence of idol worship, and so on to Corinth, the capital of Achaia. Alone and sorrowful, Paul finds a reception in Corinth that makes his mission there the crown of his second missionary journey. He spent eighteen months in this key maritime city. Under divine inspiration he changes a Jewish mission for a predominantly gentile one and prospers. Ever careful of the churches he has left, Paul writes two letters to the church in Thessalonica. The year is 51AD.

Perseverance

Ceaseless effort and opposition must have taken their toll on Paul. Yet his return to Antioch heralds the start of his third missionary journey almost immediately. Moving through Galatia and Phrygia, Paul disputes in the synagogue in Ephesus and stays in the town for over two years. The circle of believers slowly widens as Christian groups are established in the towns of Colossae, Laodicea and Hieropolis. At the beginning of this period he writes to the Galatians, and at the end to the Romans (in order to prepare for a fourth missionary journey to Spain). In between he writes a series of letters to his friends in Corinth. Paul is indefatigable:

“In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to boast of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to win

“The mission to Antioch was phenomenally successful.”

obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the good news of Christ” (Rm 15, 17-19).

Soon it became clear to Paul at Ephesus that he would have to return to Jerusalem. He had collected money for the brothers in Jerusalem from all the churches on his missionary journeys, as a gift to the poor and a concrete proof of his loyalty. Now the gift was to be given, though it became clear to Paul from the daily privations of his missions and the stirrings of his inner spirit that suffering and abuse awaited him in the holy city. He was not disappointed.

Outside the Tower of Antonia in Jerusalem the Jewish mob set upon Paul, intent on killing him. The tribune in the city had to intervene, and Paul defended himself to such effect from the threshold of the Tower that the mob became doubly intent on taking his life. Paul had to be grabbed and taken within the Tower, where the Roman soldiers were garrisoned. It was a miracle of providence, for anywhere else in the city and he would have died very quickly indeed. As Pontius Pilate had been with Jesus, so the Tribune now found himself with Paul: caught between the hammer of their prisoner’s innocence and the anvil of mob rage. On discovering a further plot to kill Paul, the relieved Tribune had his prisoner spirited away by night to Caesarea Maritima and the residence of the deeply corrupt Roman Governor, Antonius Felix.

Felix was not interested in Paul, though he knew him to be innocent before the railings of the Sanhedrin in his court. He was interested in a bribe. Instead of releasing his prisoner as Roman law required he had him bound in chains and led back to prison until such times as a ransom was paid to the Governor for such an influential ‘guest’. No money was forthcoming, and Paul languished for two years until Felix was removed from office. Festus, who replaced him, was better, but the problem of Paul persisted. The case was heard promptly, and Paul worsted his opponents by claiming that it was on account of the resurrection that he was in chains, thus splitting Pharisee and Sadducee among his accusers. Felix’s firm attitude to the Jews wavered, and he seemed willing to allow Paul to be taken back to Jerusalem (though he was almost certain to be ambushed on the way). With his options rapidly diminishing, Paul played his trump card and, as a Roman citizen, appealed to Caesar.

To Rome

Felix must have been delighted, for his problem was literally going away. Paul was taken on a dramatic journey to Rome, including shipwreck, where he was established under a

relatively free house arrest. He thrived, preaching and writing in this Indian summer of his life. The letters of captivity to the Ephesians, the Philippians and the Colossians are hotly contested as being non-Pauline, but have always been accepted in the Church’s Tradition. Perhaps their difference of style can be attributed to Paul’s changed circumstances under house arrest. No longer plagued by wearisome journeys and constant anxieties for the health of the churches, the more meditative and developed tone of these writings show Paul’s ability to think things through rather than react to crises on the hoof, as in Galatians or the Corinthian correspondence. The letter to Philemon also dates from this period, and is the only extant Pauline letter written to an individual.

After two further years Paul was released, and may well have gone to Spain. A visit to the extreme west is recorded in the first century Letter of Clement (5, 5-7) and the tradition is also found in St John Chrysostom. Timothy was sent to Ephesus in this period, and Titus to Cyprus. Paul’s extensive travels brought him back to Rome, where the situation for Christians had noticeably worsened, and he was re-arrested. This time his confinement was close and he knew that his end was near.

By tradition, the very moving second letter to Timothy dates from this time (“I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained up like a criminal – but the word of God cannot be chained” (2Tim 2, 9)). Let that Letter be a fitting epitaph for the apostle to the Gentiles, in whose tradition we stand and who has inspired Pope Benedict to declare this special Pauline Year for the upbuilding and good of all the faithful:

“As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2Tim 4, 6-8)

Who could begrudge him his heaven?

Why Contemporary Moral Theology Needs St Paul *by Michael Cullinan*

Fr Michael Cullinan, a priest of Westminster Diocese, argues that development towards a more relational approach to ethics needs the insights of St Paul. Fr Cullinan has recently published a book entitled *Victor Paul Furnish's Theology of Ethics in Saint Paul* (Tesi Academiae Alfonsianae, 3; Rome: Editiones Academiae Alfonsianae, 2007)

Introduction

Claiming that the epistles of St Paul have a place in modern Catholic moral theology is met all too frequently, at least in this writer's experience, with incomprehension, raised eyebrows, and surprised remarks, even from Catholic theologians. The truth is that St Paul's teachings are not popular in most Catholic circles. We have a kind of race memory of how they were used at the Reformation, or perhaps an actual memory of evangelical students shouting phrases such as 'Justification by faith!' at us, and, like the dog beaten when it was a puppy, the mere sight of a stick is often enough to make us cringe or growl. There is also a popular perception that Paul is misogynist, indeed I know of one Catholic group that refuses to have the Sunday reading about the duties of wives and husbands from Ephesians when it comes up at their annual meeting. Nor is Paul's unpopularity limited to Catholics. The Anglican Bishop of Durham, himself a biblical scholar, relates how one of his colleagues once described St Paul as, 'A wicked man! A very wicked man!' and believes that the English in particular are often deeply suspicious of him.

Academically, this kind of prejudice simply won't do, of course. In order to demonstrate that the study of Paul is a natural part of moral theology, it shouldn't really be necessary to say more than that our theology has to come from the scriptures and that Paul's epistles are part of divine revelation. We can also point to the great respect in which Paul was held by the Fathers and the medieval scholastics, shown, for example, by the many commentaries on his epistles that were written, including several by St Thomas Aquinas whose *Summa Theologiae* uses Paul a great deal. In the present day, we can also point to the important ecumenical reasons for Catholics to face Paul squarely.

Paul and Ethics

Something more does have to be said about the use of scripture in moral theology, however, because it is not always clear that moral theology is actually part of theology. It may once have been, but ethics is formally independent of theology, and for many years casuistic approaches to moral theology made the subject seem more allied to law than to dogma, and gave it at least a claim to have developed a methodological independence of its own. Furthermore, the Catholic emphasis on the role of natural law does nothing to dispel the idea that too much use of scripture in moral argument can be inappropriate or impolitic because it can make universal truths seem to be based only upon specific revelation.

It is, of course true that revelation builds upon nature and that the Second Vatican Council decreed that 'the scientific exposition of moral theology should be more nourished by the teaching of holy scripture',¹ and, indeed, that such an important document as *Veritatis Splendor* is heavily based on the New Testament, including Paul. But greater use of scripture has brought its own problems which an honest advocate for it should frankly acknowledge. Scripture, and especially Paul, is unsystematic. Systematic exposition cannot get over this problem by simply relegating the use of scripture to 'proof texts' if it is to be academically respectable. A much deeper engagement with the whole text is necessary. This, of course, then exposes us to the icy winds of biblical criticism, which, even allowing for its various schools of thought, force us to accept that the texts are, if not exactly inconsistent, at least very pluriform, including the epistles of Paul once the problem of their authorship is acknowledged.²

Paul, in particular, often says hard things – as has been known ever since 2 Peter 3:15 was written.³ So it is no surprise if his writings are often treated with a degree of caution. Indeed, a student of Paul looking at *Veritatis Splendor* (with an admittedly prejudiced eye!) might be tempted to compare its use of Paul with the presentation of a small boy to important guests. The *enfant terrible* is gingerly presented to the assembled company and allowed to say a few words, but is then immediately sent back upstairs in case he says altogether too much!

Accepting, then, that the use of scripture in moral theology is not easy, and that Pauline scholarship is especially fraught, one might reasonably ask, why bother at all? Do we not have the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount? Do we not also have the natural law and the teaching of the Church? Why do we need to pore over Paul's difficult letters? It will be argued below that we very much do need Paul's letters if we are to have a proper idea of what Christian moral theology is. Paul teaches us much about what moral reflection and teaching is, and about what a human moral agent is, avoiding a narrow legalism or a concentration on natural law that each ignore the need for grace and so run the risk of being closer to Pelagian ethics than to Catholic moral theology. There isn't room here to do more than illustrate the case with a few examples, but an attempt will be made to show how rich Paul's view of ethics is, how his teaching on law is original and relevant, how his emphasis on love is important, and how he forces us to consider not only the human *act* that, as St Thomas says, is what moral theology is all about, but also the adjectival *human* agent transformed by the grace of the Holy Spirit into a friend, indeed a child of God.

“Paul is a teacher rather than a lawgiver and wants Christians to internalise their obedience rather than live in mere external conformity to rules.”

Paul and Moral Subtlety

The richness of Paul's view of ethics is best seen by first confronting another objection to looking at them. In the words of one older Catholic biblical scholar to this writer, 'But did Paul have any ethics?' Behind this scepticism is the view of the early 20th century German liberal Protestant Martin Dibelius, who applied form criticism to Paul's epistles and, noticing that the specific ethical teaching often comes in a section at the end of the epistle, concluded that it had nothing to do with the earlier dogmatic teaching but was simply Greek *paraenesis* (a type of classical moral instruction) hurriedly imported to provide moral formation to the new Christians when the end of the world failed to arrive. Other scholars saw dependence on Jewish ethics in the epistles, and one can also see echoes of the Sermon on the Mount in Rom. 12:14 ('Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them'). Like many other old liberal Protestant ideas, Dibelius's view passed into wide circulation in the Catholic world when biblical studies engaged with modern historical criticism at the time of the Second Vatican Council.

If it were really the case that Paul's specific ethical teachings were unthinkingly imported from contemporary culture, they would have little theological authority. Dibelius's view was, however, comprehensively refuted by the American Methodist biblical scholar Victor Furnish in 1959.⁴ Furnish showed that Paul was a critical and selective user of contemporary material, that his exhortations are significantly different from classical *paraenesis*, and that his specific ethical teaching is inseparably linked to his theological teaching. His ethics do not simply follow on from his theology as a humdrum practical necessity after the really important doctrinal bit (as the Lutheran tradition tended to believe). Rather his ethics and his theology are two sides of the same coin which is the Christian gospel.

Behind Dibelius's view, however, there lies a more fundamental error, which is to identify ethics with specific commands. In this view, you find out what Paul's ethics are by going through his epistles discarding all the theology and filleting out the commands and prohibitions. You can then compare what you have left with other ethical teaching that has been similarly filleted or deboned. This legalist procedure has been criticised very well by the Dominican moral theologian Servais Pinckaers as 'clumsy and materialistic' and 'like attempting to compare one person's face with another by eliminating all the features they have in common; this process would disfigure them both'.⁵ It is one thing to say that ethics includes commands and prohibitions, but quite another to say it is nothing more.

Perhaps the best example of how Paul does much more than issue commands is his shortest epistle: Philemon. Often ignored because of its size, this letter shows all the features of an authentic Pauline epistle. Paul writes to Philemon because a runaway slave of his called Onesimus has been converted by Paul in prison. Paul sends Onesimus back to him and asks Philemon not only to forgive him and receive him as a brother but to allow Paul to have him for the sake

of the gospel. Paul makes it clear that he has the right to command Philemon to release Onesimus but explains, 'for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you' and finishes, 'Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.' This shows Paul's moral subtlety, and that there can be much more to ethics than bald commands. Asking can produce much more than demanding and, indeed, we are all bound to do more than any set of specific commands can spell out. Paul is a teacher rather than a lawgiver and wants Christians to internalise their obedience rather than live in mere external conformity to rules. This epistle also, incidentally, shows how Paul links doctrine (faith) to ethics (the good) when he prays that 'the sharing of your faith may promote the knowledge of all the good that is ours in Christ.'

Paul and Law

Does this mean that there is no place for law in Paul's ethics? Does Paul advocate an ethic without any specific and definite norms? If this were the case, Paul's epistles would not be an adequate basis for Catholic moral theology. Some people interpret Paul in an existential way that leaves no room for unchanging commandments. I don't want to go into the debate about how we can recognise unchangeable precepts in scriptural texts from a particular culture, but I believe we can say that Paul does take some ethical precepts for granted as universally binding and hands them on to his congregations. I think, for example, of the prohibition against *porneia* (usually translated as 'sexual immorality') in 1 Thess. 4:3 and the excommunication of someone living with his father's wife in 1 Cor. 5:1–5. In 1 Thessalonians Paul uses the rare word *paraggelias* (which Jerome translated as *praecepta*) for the matters he is passing on. This word certainly has overtones of command rather than merely good advice. In 1 Corinthians Paul simply assumes that a certain kind of behaviour is unquestionably unacceptable, while in the same letter making very careful moral distinctions between matters covered by a 'word of the Lord' (for example against divorce), matters he himself advises are best (keeping an unbelieving wife), and matters intrinsically indifferent where we must be governed by respect for the consciences of others (eating butcher's meat which may have come from offerings to idols). Therefore Paul does seem to be open to absolute precepts.

Paul's attitude to the Jewish law, and so to law in general, remains a topic of heated controversy among Protestant scriptural exegetes. Even in the Catholic world we have our continuing debates. Just before Vatican II there was a tremendous reaction away from legalism and casuistry which, it seems, some theologians even wanted the Council to condemn formally. This has been paralleled in Western society by a swing towards anarchic relativism, which itself is now being undermined by its increasingly apparent destructive consequences and inner contradictions. This, in turn, has led many young Catholics to swing antithetically back to the old rule-based morality, seeking out the old pre-Conciliar manuals, devouring them avidly, and

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continued

propagating them on the Web. If we are to hope for a balanced synthesis we do well to take care before beginning a discussion. First of all we should be aware of our own historical and cultural presuppositions, from which not even biblical exegetes are exempt. For example we need to think about just what we mean by law. Do we mean natural law, the Law of Moses, positive law, or law in general? The medieval theologians spoke of ages of nature, of law, and of grace, and one of Thomas's enduring achievements was to keep these three concepts in balance, whereas Lutheranism, for example, set up an antithesis between law and gospel.

We should, therefore, be cautious about dealing too definitively with the question, but it does seem possible to say that Paul is not absolutely antithetical to law in general. He is open to ideas of natural law and virtue, but he does not place them at the forefront of his ethical teaching. He seems to invoke the idea of natural law more to understand how those who live without the Law of Moses can still be held guilty and responsible before God than as the foundation of moral reasoning. Paul does not mention nature often, but he does refer to Gentiles doing by nature what the law requires and so having the 'work' (*ergon*) of the law written in their hearts in Romans 2:15.⁶ Even Furnish, who does not come from a natural law tradition, is happy, for example, to see Greek natural law ideas behind Paul's incidental remarks in 2 Cor. 12:14 on parents' duty to save up for their children. Furnish also concedes that Paul sees a significant convergence between what society recognises as good and what may be discerned as the 'good and acceptable and perfect will of God' (cf. Rom. 12:2). So Paul does have ideas of nature and natural law. He mentions virtue only once (Phil. 4:8) as a good thing to acquire if you can. He describes the Law of Moses as good, and allows Jewish converts to keep at least some of it, but forbids Gentiles to assume it because to make law observance a fundamental religious obligation would empty Christ's death of its meaning and deny the experience that the Holy Spirit had been given to all on the basis of faith. Paul's teaching on positive law, at least as found in the section on rulers in Rom. 13:1–8, is certainly not anarchistic, indeed on the contrary this passage has too often been interpreted to justify absolutism.

However, while Paul is open to law, he also has some hard things to say about it, things which those of us brought up on the Ten Commandments do well to take on board. The commandment can be holy, just, and good, but at the same time it can arouse passions and increase sin: 'What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet"' (Rom 7:7b). Now this and other texts such as Gal. 3:19 were used by some, for example by Bultmann, to claim that law was actually designed to provoke sin so as to make people aware of their need for salvation. The idea that the law made people aware of their need for salvation because they could not keep it is in both Ambrosiaster and Augustine.⁷ Other texts are less clear in their meaning, for

example when Paul says law was introduced 'for transgressions' did he mean this was in order to prevent or promote them. Romans 7 does seem to say quite clearly that law can do harm as well as good: that, at the very least, it can have side effects. This should accord very well with our experience, even without the discoveries of modern psychology, and should make us pause before we expect too much of law.

Paul and Love

Perhaps Paul's most important teaching on law, however, is that the Law of Moses is summed up in the commandment to love one's neighbour. Interestingly Paul puts less stress on our loving God, preferring to speak of faith and obedience, perhaps because he is only too aware how bad we are at being able to love. Faith, however, is 'energised' by love (Gal. 5:6) which Paul identifies with the Holy Spirit. In contrast to the Greek ideal of freedom as independence from others, Paul warns 'do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another' (Gal. 5:13b), and so sees freedom as being 'bound to one another in a love that cares and serves', as Furnish puts it. In 1 Cor. 8, Paul bases his teaching about eating meat offered to idols on the principle that love is more important than knowledge. This love is what Catholic tradition calls charity, and it is, in one sense, a demand far surpassing all the precepts of Moses. Indeed the love command is described by Furnish as a duty independent of feelings, as being measured by comparison not with self-love but with divine love, as unrestricted in nature and scope, and as requiring the whole person including our feelings, and as not able to pick and choose its object. From a meta-ethical point of view this suggests the idea that ethics could be based on this command without falling back into narrow legalism, an idea worth further study, not least in the development of natural law theory. Furnish made these points in 1972, but this writer is not aware of much that has been done since by professional ethicists to make love more central to ethics.⁸ From the theological point of view, however, since charity is a theological virtue, love introduces us to the last important feature of Pauline ethics: grace.

Paul and Grace

Faced with an ethics based purely on natural law, one suspects that Paul would initially retort that natural man, since the coming of sin, is incapable of keeping the natural law. Even with the assistance of God's revelation in the Ten Commandments, 'I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do' (Rom. 7:19). Paul's ethical teaching is not for natural man but for man renewed by the Holy Spirit. Once again, given our perennial temptation towards Pelagianism, this can make some of us somewhat uncomfortable. We want, for example, to emphasise the *gratuitousness* of grace in contrast to natural moral *obligation*. We might do well here to reread the locus classicus of Catholic teaching on this: the Decrees of Trent on justification. We cannot be right before God without His

prevenient grace. Trent does define that the observance of the commandments is not impossible, but it adds, *for those justified and in a state of grace*.⁹

The theology of grace easily seems very abstract and remote, but we should remember that it used to be taught as part of fundamental moral rather than dogmatic theology, as it often still is by the Dominicans. In fact the issues surrounding the relationship of nature and grace do keep coming up in pastoral situations, not least in sacramental preparation. They are not as remote from our moral lives as it might initially seem. When this material is presented in a way that is too philosophical and abstract, it too can, perhaps, benefit from a return to the scriptures which reveal what God has actually done as opposed to what he might or might not have done. So, for example, to the important point that God's grace is a free gift, the scriptures propose the historical truth of Christ's death and so lead us to the theological conclusion that God has in fact chosen to pour out his gifts for all. Again, debates about freewill and predestination continue in each century, whether the adversary of freedom is alleged, (all too often in abdication of personal responsibility!), to be God's sovereignty, nineteenth century Newtonian physical determinism, or twentieth century biological genetic determinism. In fact there were also similar debates about the place of God, free will, fate, and angels in the Judaism of Paul's time.¹⁰ Looking into these matters (for example the disputes between Jesuits and Dominicans about sufficient and efficient grace) is not always pleasant, but after we have studied the more abstract ideas of predestination and election, it is a relief to read Paul's saying that he does not live but rather Christ lives in him, his assurance that God wants everyone to be saved, and his confidence that while he does believe he will face divine judgement, he still cannot see how anything can separate him from Christ's love.

Paul certainly doesn't give easy solutions to the problems of grace and free will but he does give us more hope than many others who have discussed these matters, and his writings remain the main battlegrounds over which these theological questions are fought out.

Paul and Man

More generally in the context of moral reasoning, Paul's emphasis on our becoming children of God and his discussion of Christ's indwelling and human inability force us, in tune with some aspects of modernity, to consider the human agent as well as the human act and so make a place for Christian anthropology in moral reasoning. This in turn allows room for personalism and, for example, helps us to repair the damaging split that developed between a legalistic and naturalistic moral theology on the one hand and a separate personalistic spiritual theology on the other, as well as challenging the Western tendency to subordinate person to nature and grace to law.

Conclusion

This article has tried merely to outline a case for the importance of Paul in contemporary Catholic moral reflection. Like the apostle's own letters, it does not claim to be systematic, complete, or to have discussed matters thoroughly. Paul's ethic is not a simple ethic of law, duty, virtue, or utility. It is not clearly egoist or consequentialist. Yet amid the competing claims of all these categories, Paul focuses the eyes of Christian ethics on the importance of the grace of the Holy Spirit. I would claim that while Paul is not the only source of ethical teaching in the New Testament and certainly not the easiest, he was the first Catholic moral theologian. In an age which increasingly flirts with Pelagianism and relativism we neglect him at our peril.

Notes

¹ Author's translation. The original is 'Specialis cura impendatur Theologiae morali perficiendae, cuius scientifica expositio, doctrina S. Scripturae magis nutrita, celsitudinem vocationis fidelium in Christo illustret eorumque obligationem in caritate pro mundi vita fructum ferendi' (Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Optatum Totius*, 16).

² Incidentally, the disputed authorship of some of the epistles, while bringing its own problems, also makes it easier to acquit Paul of the charge of misogyny. There is little in the undisputed epistles that could be seen as misogynist, indeed Paul's view of marriage is remarkable for its equal treatment of husband and wife and the recognition of the ministry of women. On the other hand, epistles less likely to be directly from Paul's lips are more likely to be conventional in their attitudes.

³ So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures' (RSV).

⁴ In Furnish's doctoral dissertation, published as Victor Paul Furnish, *Paul's Exhortations in the Context of His Letters and Thought* (Microcard Theological Studies, 36; Madison, WI: Microcard Foundation, 1960; University of Yale Ph.D. Dissertation). This dissertation is quite hard to obtain because the microcard technology is now obsolete. I have summarised it in my own published dissertation Michael Patrick Cullinan, *Victor Paul Furnish's Theology of Ethics in Saint Paul* (Tesi Academiae Alfonsianae, 3; Rome: Editiones Academiae Alfonsianae, 2007). Furnish's views are well presented in his later book *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968).

⁵ See Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. M. Noble (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995); orig. pub. as *Les sources de la morale chrétienne* (Fribourg: Fribourg University Press, 1985, 1993), 107, 108.

⁶ Paul's other references to 'nature' and 'natural' are somewhat mixed. He refers to natural and unnatural relations by women and men in Rom. 1:26–27, to those uncircumcised by nature in Rom. 2:27, to those who are Jews by nature rather than sinners out of the nations in Gal. 2:15, and to Jews as the natural branches and Gentiles as cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree and grafted against nature into a cultivated olive tree in Rom. 11:21, 24. He appeals to nature only once, in 1 Cor. 11:14 on why long hair is degrading for men but women's pride.

⁷ See Jeffrey P. Greenman and Timothy Larson (eds.), *Reading Romans through the Centuries: From the Early Church to Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MN: Brazos Press, 2005), 35, 77.

⁸ See Victor P. Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1972).

⁹ Council of Trent, Decree on Justification, ch XI, c. 18.

¹⁰ See, for example, John M. G. Barclay, and Simon Gathercole (eds.), *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and his Cultural Environment* (Library of New Testament Studies, 335; London: T&T Clark, 2006).

Stanley Jaki OSB, *RIP*: Committed to Reality

by Fr Michael-John Galbraith,

Parish Priest of Jedburgh, Hawick and Kelso

Jacques Maritain once noted that, “in the realm of culture science now holds sway over human civilization”.¹ The problem is that the dominant perception in human civilization is that modern science owes its success and historical development to its emancipation from the shackles of Christian culture. According to this reading of history, Galileo, Bruno and Darwin, amongst others, are merely particular instances of this general trend. Only when the great minds were liberated from the biblical accounts of creation and the controls and censures of ecclesiastical authorities were they able to make a qualitative leap in scientific progress, bringing about the un-fettered birth of modern science.

In the last 40 to 50 years, there have been few academics more intent upon holding this critique of modern science to account than the late Fr Stanley Jaki OSB, who sadly died on Tuesday 7th April last. A prolific writer on the theological, philosophical and ethical issues related to the faith-science debate, Jaki’s work can safely be summarised as the intentional repudiation of the modern, secularist agenda which seeks to place science and Christian faith in radical, philosophical and historical opposition. As he notes in his intellectual autobiography:

“The resolve to deny any tie, factual or possible, between Christianity and science, has become essential to modern secularism. Whatever concessions it might be willing to make, modern secularism will not yield an inch on that point, which serves as the basic rational foundation of its radical rejection of the supernatural”.²

Jaki’s battle with the secularist critique of modern science has been relentless and very fruitful. Born in Hungary in 1924, he joined the Benedictines and upon completion of his training was sent to the Pontifical Institute of Sant’ Anselmo, Rome, where he obtained his doctorate in Systematic Theology in 1950. Although he had been interested in science from a young age, it was while teaching dogmatic theology in the United States that he became increasingly fascinated with the connections between his own subjects and those of science and philosophy. Perhaps as providence would have it, an unsuccessful tonsillectomy robbed him of his voice for the best part of ten years. Being unable to teach, he devoted his time to the study of advanced physics and completed a doctoral thesis in particle physics under the guidance of Victor F. Hess. It was not long after this that he undertook the historical investigations for his seminal work, *The Relevance of Physics* – a work that displayed his mastery of science, history, philosophy and theology and scholarly attention to detail.

Since then he has published dozens of books and numerous articles on connected themes concerning faith and science. For the majority of this time he has been on the Faculty of Seton Hall University, New Jersey. He won the Lecomte de Nouy Prize, received the prestigious Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, lectured in many of the most prestigious universities throughout the world and obtained several doctorates in *honoris causa*. Added to this, he was made an honorary member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences by Pope John Paul II in 1990.

The primary thesis for which Jaki became well known was that of the historical dependency of modern science upon Christian culture for its only viable birth. With devastating, scholarly detail, Jaki turns the whole Enlightenment project of separating Christianity from science upon its head. Analysing the isolated success of science in the other great cultures of the world, he demonstrates how their long-term failures (or ‘stillbirths’) were invariably connected to the dominant philosophical or religious mindset of the given culture, especially the pervasive influence of eternal cycles and other tendencies towards fatalism. These were never conducive to sustained, experimental investigation.

The extraordinary phenomenon of the sustained birth of modern science in Western culture, however, is linked with meticulous investigation to the cultural influence of monotheism and the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* – a doctrine which both upheld the contingent, linear development of creation and its rationality through the existence of the physical laws of nature, or ‘secondary causes’, without thereby undermining God’s omnipotence. It was this cultural backdrop, Jaki consistently argues, that was essential to creating the necessary cultural environment for sustained, experimental investigation to be encouraged.

He always happily admitted to being profoundly influenced by the monumental but largely ignored work of Pierre Duhem, the French scientist and Catholic, especially ‘*Le système du monde*’. Jaki went on to tease out the effect that a more specifically christological monotheism had upon Western culture and the birth of science, namely, an even greater emphasis upon the doctrine of creation, the contingency of matter and its ordered nature in the providential plan of God.

For Jaki, then, there was always a real historical sense in which Christ was the saviour of science as well as the saviour from sin.

Nevertheless, if in the realm of science Jaki experienced with Pierre Duhem a ‘meeting of minds’, the moderate or ‘methodical realism’ of Etienne Gilson became his “philosophical lifebelt”.³ This became a gradually more influential factor in Jaki’s writings; one which made his own mind focus more clearly on the subtle but crucial influence of Christian philosophy upon the development of science and also on the fortunes of natural theology, in particular, the influence of a realist epistemology. The doctrine of creation assumed the existence and essential dependability of external reality and the doctrine of the Incarnation practically anchored a realist epistemology as an essential philosophical prerequisite of Christian faith. True, this was only really worked out as part of a philosophical system with the scholastics in the thirteenth century. It was St Thomas who would define truth as *adequatio rei ad intellectum* within his systematic theology, but this was also the century to which Duhem had traced the beginnings of modern science. The convergence of the cultural impact of Christianity, the historical development of science and the presumed epistemological realism of the Christian faith were too much for Jaki to pass-off as mere coincidences.

“it must have seemed like one of life’s tragic ironies to see Catholic theology align itself with the very antithesis of the tradition that had led to the most dominating factor of modern culture: science.”

With this renewed enthusiasm for Thomist realism Jaki began to discover that, “whenever a great creative advance took place in science, one could notice that those chiefly responsible for that step cast their vote, however unconsciously, for a realist epistemology. But the converse of this was also amply revealed by history: whenever a method of science was proposed that ran counter to or excluded a realist epistemology...a real or potential threat was posed to science”⁴. Jaki discovered the same to be true for the fortunes of natural theology, especially during the last three to four hundred years where the extremes of empiricism and idealism were a constant threat. Both science and natural theology affirmed the essential reliability of external objects and the ability of the mind to grasp them. If this first step in human knowledge is fundamentally called into question then the scientist undermines the process of scientific enquiry and the theologian empties the significance of the Incarnation and the objectivity of all other concrete acts of God in history. Theology and science have a common friend in philosophical realism.

This is not to say that Jaki only wrote on the historical origins of modern science. He has not been shy from venturing into biblical exegesis, artificial intelligence and even Newman studies. However, he has always been keen upon marking out the respective limits of science and philosophy as well. Invariably using a topical issue in faith and science, he would lay bare the inconsistencies and contradictions at the heart of many populist writings on faith and science. Jaki always drew attention to the inherent incompleteness of science as a discipline. Even a Grand Theory of Everything will not be the last word in science and the need for representing the faith in synthesis with the knowledge of the day will always be with us.

Nevertheless, it is the need to uphold an epistemological realism in both faith and science that came to dominate his works. It was little surprise, then, that Jaki never became a darling of the Catholic academic establishment during his lifetime. True, the polemical nature of his writings may not have always helped his case. As a Catholic blogger noted on the day of his death, ‘he did not suffer fools gladly’. Furthermore, he did also have the tendency to repeat himself from one publication to the next and, rather infuriatingly, failed to engage systematically in the finer points of thomist realism and any possible development of it in the light of modern science. See our *Letters and Road from Regensburg* columns for a discussion upon whether Gilson’s late philosophy of science manages successfully to connect his earlier realism with the emerging discovery of the inter-related character of the natural world.

However, when Catholic theology of the 1960s to the 1990s largely aligned itself with transcendental Thomism or other influences rooted in epistemological scepticism, Jaki could only scream in horror from the sidelines. Knowing that science now held sway over human culture; knowing that science itself only came to viable birth within Christian culture; knowing that Christian culture was inherently realist in its philosophical predisposition; and knowing that this realism had perhaps been *the* most significant factor in the sustained development of science itself, it must have seemed like intellectual suicide

and one of life’s tragic ironies to see Catholic theology align itself with a philosophical tradition that was the very antithesis of the tradition that had led to the most dominating factor of modern culture: science.

Along with others, notably Cardinal Ratzinger,⁵ it was of no surprise to Jaki that these theologies and the catechetical programmes based upon them studiously avoided all theology of creation. If there is scepticism about external reality, why use creation as one’s theological point of departure? Instead they focused upon the subjective perceptions and internal anxieties of the human person as their point of departure, which for Jaki was all very well as a second step in theological dialogue but not the first. It is the external reality of creation that impresses itself upon the mind that must always be the first step in theology. For Jaki, it was not for nothing that the dogma of creation was the first article of the creed and the first book of the bible: “without Creation, and a Creation by God who is Father, there is no possibility of a discourse about Incarnation, Redemption, and the final consummation in a New Heaven and Earth”.⁶

For a long time, Jaki’s warnings went unheeded. Indeed, it is arguable that those who write in the field of faith and science have deliberately ignored much of Jaki’s work.⁷ Nevertheless, his critique of the development of modern science does slowly appear to be being accepted – in no small part due to the work of Paul Haffner, whose study in the thought of Stanley Jaki is still by far the best introduction.⁸ It may be that a lot of effort is still required for Jaki’s insights to become common knowledge and the received explanation as to the origins of modern science. If it does, there would have been no one less surprised than Fr Stanley Jaki. He was quite conscious that “a Catholic intellectual must be ready to swim against the tide which will flow against him until the end of time”.⁹

Notwithstanding this observation, and in memory of a great mind, “Catholic intellectuals, but especially theologians, would do well to acquire a thorough familiarity with Jaki’s works. They constitute a pivotal tool – historical, philosophical and theological – in the great task of turning science into a blessing, natural as well as supernatural, for humanity”.¹⁰ May the Lord of Creation grant him eternal rest and reward for his labours. ■

Notes

¹MARITAIN, J., “God and Science”, <http://www.cwtn.com/library/THEOLOGY/JM2404.HTM>.

²JAKI, S.L., *A Mind’s Matter*, Eerdmans 2002, p.x.

³JAKI, S.L., *A Mind’s Matter*, Eerdmans 2002, p.88.

⁴JAKI, S.L., *A Mind’s Matter*, Eerdmans 2002, p.93.

⁵Cf., RATZINGER, J., *‘In the beginning...’: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1995, p.ix.

⁶JAKI, S.L., *Cosmos and Creator*, Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh 1980, p.556.

⁷Cf., MCGRATH, A.E., *A Scientific Theology, vols 1-3*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 2001-2003, which in a thousand pages only grudgingly makes a passing reference to Jaki. Other references are made to Duhem but not to the only person to write a monograph on the life and works of Pierre Duhem: Stanley Jaki. There are numerous other such examples in other authors.

⁸HAFFNER, P., *Creation and Scientific Creativity*, Christendom Press 1991.

⁹JAKI, S.L., “The Catholic Intellectual”, <http://www.catholic.net/rcc/Periodicals/Dossier/Jan-Feb00/Intro2.html>.

¹⁰HAFFNER, P., *Creation and Scientific Creativity*, Christendom Press 1991, p130.

The Priesthood of Christ in the Letter to the Hebrews *by Fr Luiz Ruscillo*

Fr Luiz Ruscillo, Director of Education in Lancaster diocese and parish priest of Hornby and Kirby Lonsdale draws out the very early Church's understanding of Our Lord's priesthood.

Since we have become very familiar with attributing the title 'Priest' to Christ, it may come as a surprise to find that Christ is never explicitly called a priest in any of the books of the New Testament except the Letter to the Hebrews. In the Gospels the term 'priest' always refers to the Old Testament institution of priesthood.¹ The title High Priest is always in a context of opposition to Jesus.² In the letters and Revelation Christians are referred to as a 'holy priesthood'³ but Christ is not said to hold this office. There are a number of places where Christ or His actions are described in sacrificial terms,⁴ but the title 'Priest' is never given, and generally these passages emphasise Christ's role as victim more than priest. Whilst other writings, especially the Gospels, implicitly contain some of the relevant themes, it is in the Letter to the Hebrews that Christ is directly identified as a priest.

In order to appreciate the context of the early Christian understanding of priesthood it is necessary to build a picture of the institution of the priesthood at the time of Jesus. The situation in the early first century was the result of centuries of change and development linked to the evolution of the place of the sanctuary in the life of the Jews and the political events which shaped their society. By the time we read of such figures as Annas and Caiphas the role of the High Priest had both a cultic and a political side. Lesser priests such as Zechariah, the husband of Elizabeth, were part of a highly organised structure in the hierarchy and took their turn in the 'service rotas' supplying the needs of the sanctuary and those who came to offer prayers and sacrifices.

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT Priesthood

At the beginning, in the time of the Patriarchs, there was no official priesthood. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob offered sacrifices in established sanctuaries and those places where significant events in their relationship with God had taken place. Of course these sanctuaries, and on occasion the priests mentioned, were of foreign nations. It is here that we find mention of the mysterious figure of the priest-king of Salem, Melchizedek (Gen 14,18). The priesthood properly so called did not appear until the social organization of the community had developed. The Old Testament name for priest is *kohen*, probably taken from Akkadian background.⁵

Israelite priesthood was an office not a vocation. Prophets were chosen by God, and often kings, but the only vocation from God in reference to priests is the choosing of the tribe of Levi.

The most ancient Hebrew term to refer to the investiture of a priest is *millu'im* which means literally 'to fill the hand'. This was later translated by the Septuagint as *teleiōsis*, which means 'to perfect' or 'to consecrate'. Every priest was installed to serve a sanctuary and, indeed, the destiny of the priesthood is strictly connected with the development of the

role of the sanctuary. The priest is one who serves and can enter the sanctuary. Gradually there developed a series of 'separations' which was a reflection of the perceived 'otherness' of God, who is 'Holy', and the 'profaneness' of the people. In this graduality of separation we see that first the people are set apart, then a tribe, Levi, and the men of that tribe who are priests. A day is set aside, the Sabbath, then the holy days of the feasts and then the great feast, the Day of Atonement. Furthermore, a particular place is set aside, the Tent, which only the priests can enter. Even here there is further separation of the Holy of Holies, where only the High Priest can enter and only once a year. The sacrifices are made because the priest cannot effect the necessary transcending separation himself. He therefore offers a chosen animal which is immolated. It is a gesture of reaching up to God where man cannot reach. When the sacrifice was accepted there was a descending movement of blessing through the priest to the people he represented. The main function of the priest is seen to be one of mediation. The institution of the priesthood looks towards communion with God. The priests' union with humanity was clearly understood and accepted as fact in the OT. This is why they needed so many stages of separation to be raised to the sacred level. The problem was achieving a level of holiness acceptable to God.

Other important roles of the priest are linked to oracles and teaching the Law. The priest consulted God (eg. Dt 33,8-10), often through the use of the mysterious *urim* and *thummim*, 'casting-lots' carried in the *ephod*, a pouch worn on the breastplate of the priest. As a result, the priest was able to communicate divine oracles. The Torah was also the realm of the priest. Just as the virtue of judgement belonged to the king, vision to the prophet and wisdom to the sage, so the teaching of the Torah belonged to the priest (Micah 3,11).

It may seem strange, but it is in this context that the priest had the role of arbitrator with regard to leprosy. The decision involved the judgement from God in the realm of ritual purity. The priest had competence in both these areas.

The place of the priest in the sacrifices was not so prominent at the beginning of this development. The one making the offering killed the victim. The role of the priest was to bring the blood, the holiest part of the offering, to the altar. It was the element of approaching the altar which required the priestly office because he was the one who was ritually clean and prepared. The sacrifices of the priest were to effect ritual separation and so to serve mediation. The function of sacrifice underwent great development over the centuries to become one of the priest's principal roles.

All of these functions of the priest have a common basis. When he delivered an oracle or expounded a teaching of the Torah the priest was passing on an instruction which came

“The Temple of Jerusalem stood as the unique place of God's presence and the place of sacrifice.”

from God. When he brought blood to the altar or burnt incense he was presenting to God the petitions of the faithful. In all these actions the priest was the mediator, either representing God before men or men before God. It could be described as having an ascending and descending dynamic. The priest was the instrument who carried the appeals and entreaties of the people. He was set aside to be ritually pure so that he could approach God on their behalf. This is the ‘ascending’ role. In turn he ‘descended’ with God’s oracle and judgement for the people. He was the instrument through which the people were blessed by God. We see a clear instance of this in Aaron’s formula of blessing (Num 6,22-27). Interestingly, there was also a formula for a curse pronounced by the sons of Levi (Dt 27,14-26). The priesthood is an institution of mediation.⁶

In the ancient near east many professions were hereditary. This also suited ancient Israelite priesthood. The tribe of Levi, and specifically the descendents of Aaron, were set apart to perform sacred functions. They were maintained in ritual purity so that they could properly fulfil their role and serve in the holy place.

Temple

In the time of the Exodus and the passage through the desert the Tent of Meeting was erected whenever the people of Israel pitched camp. It housed the Ark of the Covenant and the Altar. The presence of God revealed itself with the descent of the cloud, the Shekinah. Moses spoke with God inside the cloud (Ex 33,9; Num 12,4-10). When the Israelites conquered the land of Canaan they established a number of sanctuaries. Over the centuries, beginning with King David bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem (2 Sam 6), there was a progressive centralization. The many sanctuaries scattered throughout the country were gradually abandoned for the sake of Bethel and Jerusalem, and finally Jerusalem alone. The Temple of Jerusalem stood as the unique place of God’s presence and the place of sacrifice.

As a consequence, the number of ‘Levites’ needed for priestly service diminished. It is thought that those descended from Aaron maintained a privileged position and certainly those who served Jerusalem preserved their role. But many ‘Levites’ were no longer needed as priests. A distinction arose between those called ‘priests’ and those called ‘Levites’. The ‘Levites’ were, in effect, decommissioned, though they always held the privilege of being able to offer their own sacrifice when they went to the Temple. There still remained great numbers of priests serving the Temple in Jerusalem and they were organised into hierarchies and rotas. Zechariah was a member of this band (Lk 1,5,8).

By the time of Jesus, of course, the Temple in Jerusalem was the only place where sacrifice could be offered. It was considered to be the exclusive place of God’s dwelling. Synagogues, of which there were many, were not built for sacrifice. The synagogues were places of prayer, reading the Law and instruction. It is not known when they first came into existence but it is thought that they originated in the time of

the exile. They spread throughout Palestine and the Diaspora and were in Jerusalem itself during the existence of the Temple.

The High Priestly Office

After the exile in Babylon and the reconstruction of the Temple the priesthood was re-established and re-organised. The title of High Priest was still very rare but, with the place of the King seriously diminished by the weak political position of an effectively occupied country and, on occasion, ‘puppet’ kingship, the head of the priesthood became ever more powerful. Once the monarchy had to all intents and purposes disappeared the High Priest came to the fore as the head of the nation. Only now does the term High Priest become common. It had developed into a powerfully political position as well as having the cultic role. At the time of Jesus it attracted all the human failings related to ambition, power and riches.

The line of Zadok, which claimed to trace its genealogy all the way back to Zadok the priest who died during Solomon’s reign, and who in turn traced his origins back to Aaron, was displaced for power-political reasons by the Greek Seleucids. This foreign intervention eventually sparked the Maccabean revolt in 167BC which was the origin of the Hasmonean dynasty of High Priest political leaders which survived until the Romans intervened with the appointment of King Herod the Great (37-4BC). By the time Jesus began His public ministry there was a carefully balanced political situation of parallel leaders. The descendents of Herod were weak but still in place. The Romans had imposed a procurator. Meanwhile, the Jews considered their true leaders to be the High Priests. Yet the office was at the disposal of the sovereign who could appoint or dismiss at will. This resulted in the anomalous situation of there being two High Priests at the time of Jesus’ trial, Annas, the deposed High Priest, and Caiphas, the ruling High Priest.

The Altar

The Altar in the Temple was the sign of God’s presence. It was never considered to be a table. Unlike the gods of the pagans, God did not need to be fed. It was in fact the place for sacrifice and offering. In later times it was purified once a year on the Day of Atonement and was held to have an exceptional holiness. It can best be described as an instrument of mediation. The offerings of men were placed upon it and burnt. By this ceremony, the offerings were taken out of man’s domain and given to God. God replied by bestowing blessings. The Covenant between God and His people was re-established or maintained upon the altar of sacrifice.

Sacrifice

The altar was the place of sacrifice and sacrifice was the principal act in Israel’s cult. Sacrifice could loosely be described as any offering of animal or vegetable which is wholly or partially destroyed upon the altar as a token of homage to God. There were many different kinds of sacrifice and many different terms to denote them. Holocausts,

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continued

communion sacrifices, expiatory sacrifices, vegetable offerings, shewbread and offerings of incense were the main categories. Sacrifice was also understood on many different levels and had many different motives. A sacrifice was essentially an act of external worship. It was a symbolic action which expressed both the interior feelings of the one offering and God's response to the prayer. By these rites the gift made to God is accepted, union with God is achieved, and the guilt of man is taken away. But the effect of the sacrifice is not magic. The external action must express the true inward feelings of man. If this is not the case the sacrificial action is an empty expression and impotent.⁷ The perennial importance of internal disposition became ultimate and most pure in the priesthood of Christ.

It is not possible to go into details concerning the specific origins, rites, motives and meanings of all the categories of sacrifices of Israel. But one needs to be mentioned; the Day of Atonement. The origins of this feast and its provenance are disputed. By the time of Jesus it was of such importance that it was simply described as The Day. The High Priest sacrificed a bull for his own sinfulness and that of his 'house', the line of Aaron. He carried the blood behind the veil into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled the blood upon the mercy seat. Two goats were brought by the people and lots cast. According to the lots, one goat was sacrificed for the sins of the people. The priest took the blood behind the veil to sprinkle the mercy seat as he had before with the blood of the Bull. Then, in the presence of God, he laid his hands on the other goat to transfer to it the sins of the people. This goat was taken into the desert. It was God who brought about the transferral of the sins and the expiation of them from the people. Only on this day did anyone go behind the veil into the Holy of Holies. Moreover, it was the exclusive preserve of the High Priest.

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

The thrust of the Letter to the Hebrews is to show that Christ is the supreme High Priest in relation to whom all previous priests and priestly institutions are figures and preparations.

The structure of Hebrews shows clearly that it is not a letter, but more likely a lecture or discourse. At the end, chapter 13, it changes into the style of a letter. It is conjectured that it is a sermon which has been copied and sent, with a short accompanying note at the end, to the readers.⁸ There is no way of knowing who the original author is. Due to the content of the main body of the work it has been suggested that its readers would be intended to be Jewish Christians but this hypothesis cannot be shown conclusively. Neither can we be certain of the date of its origin. It is before the death of Timothy since he gets a mention (13,23) and it was known by Clement of Rome.⁹ We cannot tell whether it was written before the destruction of the Temple in AD70 since its references are to Old Testament Temple liturgy and not specifically to that of the Herodian Temple. It states that the old Covenant is passing away (8,13) but it is not clear whether this means that its rites were still in operation or

recently brought to a halt. Any date between 67AD and 90AD is thought possible.

The Central Point of the Discourse¹⁰

It is in chapters 8 and 9 that we find the high point of the whole discourse. The author writes in 8,1 that the *kephalion*, the 'head' or 'essence', of the discourse is the type or class of High Priest that we have in Christ. The author then goes on to describe the High Priest's place, his ministry, his sacrifice and the Covenant which results. These two chapters build on much that has gone before in the letter, so in looking at them in detail it will be necessary to refer back to some previous arguments.

The author contrasts what has gone before in the old Covenant and ritual with what is accomplished by Christ by considering in turn:

[A] The level of OT worship (8,1-6)

[B] The Old Covenant (8,7-13)

[C] A description of OT worship (9,1-10)

This is followed by:

[C'] A description of Christ's worship (9,11-14)

[B'] The New Covenant (9,15-23)

[A'] The new and final level of worship (9,24-28).

[A] 8,1-6: The level of OT worship. What the author argues here is that the Tent built by Moses, although it was completed according to the pattern and command of God, is necessarily established by man, not God (8,2.5b). It is, therefore a 'model or reflection' only of the divine realities (8,5a). It is an imperfect copy and on a lower plane¹¹ which is now surpassed and to be left behind. The author argues to this position by using the texts of the OT itself.¹²

[B] 8,7-13: The Old Covenant. By means of an extensive quotation from Jeremiah (Jer 31,31-34) the author, again using the OT itself, argues that the Old Covenant was defective and is now surpassed.

[C] 9,1-10: OT worship. Once again, using descriptions found in the OT, the author argues that it was not only the old Covenant that was defective, but the whole of the ancient cult was ineffective. He describes the Tent with its two compartments and their furnishings. Then he describes the cultic action which is clearly taken from the liturgy for the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). That the outer compartment remains after the sacrifice and that the High Priest can still only enter once a year into the Holy of Holies, according to the text of the OT itself, indicates to the author that even this, the highest instance of the OT cult, does not effect an inner transformation to perfection. These 'regulations of the flesh' are only until 'the reform is imposed' (9,10).

So the author proceeds to show how Christ brings about a definitive reform of the Tent or Sanctuary and the worship. In so doing, Christ establishes the New Covenant and a level of worship which is in effect the blessing of eternal communion with God.

[C'] 9,11-14: Christ's worship. Christ the High Priest has passed through the 'more perfect tent' and entered the 'holy place' carrying with Him 'His own blood' (9,11-12). The purpose of the previous 'outer compartment of the tent' was to enable human beings to be prepared and be given a means to enter the divine sanctuary. The whole organization of priestly worship was based on the idea that it was necessary to be holy in order to approach God. This was understood as passing from the profane level of human life through a transformation which raised the human being to the sacred level, into a relationship with God who is Holy. The OT solution to this problem was to have a series of ritual separations as has been described above.

Christ, to be the perfect High Priest, must be able to mediate between God and humanity. This is the concern of the early section of the work: 1,5 – 2,18. The first part, 1,5 – 2,4 establishes that Christ is the Son of God. The second part, 2,5-18 describes how He is brother to mankind.

2,17 describes Christ as a High Priest of God's religion who is 'compassionate and trustworthy'. That Christ is 'trustworthy' is explained in 3,1-6. It is a greater trustworthiness even than Moses because Christ is trustworthy as a Son. Thus His closeness to God is accepted.

That Christ is 'compassionate' is explained in 4,15 – 5,10 which emphasises that He is one with mankind.

Yet this mediation as High Priest is not summed up by having, as it were, a foot in both camps. The mediation is dynamic and established through the offering by Christ of His very self in the passion and resurrection. Christ becomes the High Priest through the priestly action of offering sacrifice and the acceptance by God of the sacrifice. This is described in 5,5-10.

5,5-6: Christ is humble towards priesthood and is declared High Priest by God. There is a parallel here with Phil 2,6-8. The 'emptying' is present and the subsequent 'raising high', though in this case it is to the High Priestly office. The key is that the office is a consequence of Christ not glorifying himself through personal ambition, but suffering. This is clear from the verses which immediately follow.

5,7-8: Christ *offers* prayer and entreaty. The word used to express *offering* is one which is used in contexts of sacrifice, *prosenegkas*. The references to loud cries, tears and death evoke the passion. It is as if we are hearing a commentary on the agony in the garden and the cross. In the same verse we read that His prayer is *heard*. The *offering* as sacrifice is given a holy quality by the attitude which accompanies its giving. We read that it is on account of His reverence and holy piety (*eulabeia*) (5.8) that He is heard. For this reason His offering is accepted. Evidently this does not mean that He was preserved from the agony of the passion and the death on the cross. If the *offering* refers to the passion, endured with holy piety, then the *hearing* can only refer to the acceptance which was expressed in the resurrection. This presumes that the offering is acceptable and accepted. We read that, although being Son, He learnt obedience through suffering.

It is not that the Son at some time or other did not obey and had to learn the lesson. The author of the Hebrews has already emphasised that our High Priest is without sin (4,15). Yet the nature that Christ shares with us (2,11) is wracked by disobedience and in His suffering, human nature learns obedience and in turn is *perfected*.

5,9-10: These verses confirm that the offering is accepted. He is *made perfect*. This is how Christ becomes the source of eternal life and is acclaimed as High Priest of the order of Melchizedek. The key term is *teleiōtheis*. The word, strictly translated, means *to make perfect*. In the Septuagint this term is used almost exclusively in Exodus and Leviticus and refers to the consecration or 'sacrifice of investiture of a priest'. The sacrifice described in 5,7-8 is accepted as a sacrifice of priestly investiture. Christ, having given Himself in sacrifice, is consecrated through being heard and accepted.

We notice a radical change from the OT priesthood. In the OT priesthood the sacrifices are made because of the weakness of the priests and their need to be raised towards God. With Christ, acceptance of the weakness and the closest possible association with humanity is itself the sacrifice. He is now the source of salvation 'for all who obey Him'. This is in accord with that aspect of priesthood in which the priest is the mediator of the word of God through oracle and teaching the Torah. The people of the old Covenant required the mediation of the priest to communicate God's judgement and will to them. That role now belongs to Christ.

He is proclaimed as High Priest of the order of Melchizedek. As we read in chapter 7, the particular reference here is to the prophecy of Ps 110,4 which is seen to be fulfilled in Christ. His priesthood does not depend on human genealogy like that of the members of the tribe of Levi. Melchizedek, who is without ancestry, is presented as a figure of Christ. But here the emphasis is not on the eternal pre-existence of the Son. It is the result of sacrifice that the priesthood of Christ is established. As Son and as risen humanity He is priest for ever. His sacrifice is sufficient for ever. As mediator, it is not only that He is truly Son of God and truly incarnate. His humanity has been internally transformed through the sacrifice, so that it was *perfected*, and through this *consecration* He has become a High Priest without peer. 'How much more effectively [than the OT sacrifices of goats and bulls] the blood of Christ, who offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice to God through the eternal Spirit, can purify our inner self from dead actions so that we do our service to the living God.' (9,14)

[B'] 9,15-22: The New Covenant. Since there is a new priesthood established in Christ so there is a new Covenant. The new priesthood is established by His sacrifice. In 9,12 this is described as Christ entering the sanctuary carrying His own blood. The only other place in the NT where we find the terms *blood* and *covenant* linked together is in the accounts of the institution of the Eucharist. It is here that the references to Christ as 'sacrifice', 'passover' and 'lamb' find their place.

The Priesthood of Christ in the Letter to the Hebrews

continued

A covenant between God and the people is inevitably unequal. It was always initiated through God's free gift and intervention. It also required blood for two reasons. Blood was seen as necessary for purification,¹³ without which man could not approach God. Also, to enter into a covenant at God's invitation required an irreversible event from the side of the people. This could only be through death and the shedding of blood.¹⁴

9,15-22 introduces a further element through the use of the field of meanings of a single word: *diatheke*. This technical term can mean *covenant* and/or *testament* (in reference to an inheritance, a will). Christ's death is seen to link these three elements. It is an expiation for the purification of sins, it establishes the new covenant and it inaugurates a new inheritance. This one act of Christ abolishes the obstacle of sin which prevented the establishment of a genuine covenant. It introduces humanity into a definitive communion with God through perfect mediation. It furthermore reveals the original plan of God for mankind as an inheritance promised but only now fulfilled.

[A'] 9,23-28: The new level of Worship. The result of this sacrifice, offered and accepted, is a new 'Tent' or Sanctuary. It is not one which is man-made or only modelled on the real one (9,24), as in the past. This is the definitive Sanctuary of God. We recall that in the description of the OT sanctuary there are two compartments. The first was a place of preparation and the second was the Holy of Holies. Both of these sections were mere figures which had to disappear. With the coming of Christ and His perfect sacrifice they are abolished.

Here we see a direct link with a tradition also in the Gospels. The resurrection is connected with the destruction and the raising up of the Temple. In Jn 2 it is made explicit (Jn 2,21-22). In Mt and Mk the destruction is connected to the glorification of Christ who is set at God's right hand (Mt 26,61.64; Mk 14,58.62). After the death and resurrection of Christ there is no longer need for the 'Tent' or sanctuary because Christ's risen body has taken its place. He has entered into the very presence of God in eternal and definitive communion. It is through His dead and resurrected human body that the faithful can now enter. Jean Galot develops this interestingly to argue that the erection of this new temple implies a new priesthood.¹⁵

A Perfect Fulfilment

The Letter to the Hebrews goes on to emphasise in the following chapters that the sacrifice of Christ is superior to all the previous sacrifices and surpasses them. This is not intended to be a symbolic or poetic development but one which understands its real effects in the very being of man through its transforming power. Vanhoye says:

'One must be careful not to say that the author of the epistle is using "metaphors" when he applies the title of high priest to Christ and the name of "sacrifice" to his

glorifying passion. His viewpoint is exactly the opposite: it is in the Old Testament that priesthood and sacrifice were taken in the metaphorical sense, as they are there applied to an impotent and symbolic figuration, while in the mystery of Christ these words have at last obtained their real meaning, with an unsurpassable completeness.'¹⁶

The early Christians did not identify Christ with the priests or high priests of their time. Christ's priesthood has moved into a radically new sphere. It leaves behind the juridical power of the high priestly families in the humility of Christ. Furthermore, and much more importantly, it so far surpasses the cultic role of the Old Testament priests that it abolishes that institution completely. Or better, it brings it to fulfilment. This new Priest is not merely an instrument of the oracle of God, He is not merely the vehicle through which God's will is expressed, He is not merely the channel for the blessings of God. Neither is He the man who has undergone ever greater rites of separation through purification in order to come into the presence of the Holy One. In His risen body He is God Himself, law-giver and origin of all blessings and at the same time the truly internally transformed humanity. This level of mediation was impossible in the old dispensation. It is achieved by His one perfect sacrifice through the dynamic of the passion-offering and resurrection-acceptance.

It is not only the priesthood which is abolished through Christ's sacrifice. The Temple is brought to an end and a new and everlasting covenant inaugurated. The risen body of Christ is the new Temple and the New Covenant. The worship of Christ replaces all other rituals.

Christ is the supreme mediatorial priest because he is the Son of God whose offering to God the Father, through his whole life and death has, in his Resurrection and Ascension, been accepted.

Notes

¹Mt 8,4; 12,4.5; Mk 1,44; 2,26; Lk 1,5; 5,14; 6,4; 10,31; 17,14; Jn 1,19.

²There are so many references that they are too numerous to list here.

³1Pet 2,5.9; Rev 1,6; 5,10; 20,6.

⁴'Christ our Passover' in 1Cor 5,7; 'Jesus Christ appointed by God as propitiatory sacrifice' in Rom 3,25; Jesus Christ is a 'propitiation for sins' in 1Jn 2,2; 4,10;

⁵'The ransom was paid...in the precious blood of the lamb' in 1Pet 1,18-20;

⁶'Christ gave himself up for me/us' in Gal 2,20 and Eph 5,2. Also the passage which includes, 'through His wounds you have been healed' in 1Pet 2,21-24.

⁷Much of the following is taken from the two great reference works in this field: *Ancient Israel: Its Life and institutions*, R. de Vaux, DLT 1961; *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, J. Jeremias, SCM 1969.

⁸R de Vaux, op. cit., p 357.

⁹Amos 4-5 is one instance of many in the prophets where the people are chastised for offering sacrifices in action alone without the necessary internal disposition.

¹⁰This is a widely held opinion among many scholars.

¹¹There are strong points of contact between 1 Clem and Hebrews.

¹²Much of the exegesis which follows is taken from *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest*, A. Vanhoye, St Bede's Publications, 1986.

¹³There is a similar argument with regard to the Law in Galatians. The OT has value as an imitation and model of a divine reality but is now surpassed; Gal 4,1-11.

¹⁴Ex 25,40

¹⁵There are innumerable references throughout Leviticus.

¹⁶Ex 24,3-8 expresses the irreversible event in the sacrifices, and the purification in the sprinkling.

¹⁷*Theology of the Priesthood*, Jean Galot (Ignatius Press, 1985),

¹⁸*Old Testament Priests and the New Priest*, A. Vanhoye, St Bede's Publications, 1986, p 208.



The Truth Will Set You Free

By Fr David Barrow, Parish Priest
of Clapton, London

APPLYING THE NEW TESTAMENT FULFILMENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TO OUR LIVES TODAY

If we could eavesdrop on Jesus' conversation with Moses and Elijah on Mount Tabor what would we hear? Luke uses a very specific Greek word 'exodus' to refer to their topic of conversation. This word is a highly loaded word, referring to the liberation of the people of Israel from Egypt. At their feast of the Passover, the Jewish people 'remember' this event in a way which is not simply a recalling of the event to memory. Rather it is a remembering and proclamation of the past action of God is history, such that the power and presence of God which was working in that past action, in this case the *exodus* from Egypt, is made present in the here and now. This presence of God is also a dynamic presence, not a static one, one which calls those who celebrate Passover to be caught up in the same movement, i.e. a leaving behind of the slavery of Egypt in order to journey to the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey, there to enjoy the freedom and joy of being God's chosen people. Christ understood his own passion in terms of the Passover. Just like Moses, he comes as the leader who is going to lead us out of the slavery to sin, into the promised land of a new relationship with the Father. The Transfiguration gives us a window into this end point of our journey. All that we need to experience this saving action of God this Eastertide, is the willingness to move, to change, to grow – to be transfigured – he will do the rest. The event of the *exodus* is also an allegory of the spiritual journey which we too are making under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Here is a quick synopsis of the main stages of this journey.

When Israel first went down to Egypt to take refuge from famine, all went well. The Jews prospered, and entered into a cosy relationship with the Egyptians. Then with a change of the King, things started to go wrong, they became slaves. This is a perfect image of sin, which begins with many small compromises, since at first it appears attractive, but which later on enslaves, and in the end brings emptiness, dejection, frustration, bondage. Still God could not act too soon to help them, because the people may not have been willing to leave Egypt, preferring the slavery and drudgery of Egypt to the risk of striking out across the desert to the promised land. In fact the coming of Moses makes their situation worse. Again as regards the slavery to sin, often it is only when we experience the consequences of sin with a certain intensity that we are humble or docile enough to allow ourselves to be led out of it by God. So they leave Egypt, and even so they need some convincing! The ten plagues. Often God has to give us some charismatic experience or perform some tangible sign, a miracle, for us to get moving.

Next comes the crossing of the Red Sea, a pre-figuration of the sacrament of Baptism. Having decided to let the Hebrews go, Pharaoh changes his mind, and starts to chase after the Hebrew people, he wants his 'free workforce' back. He catches up with them and they are eventually trapped between his army and the Red Sea. On the spiritual journey the same thing happens, when we begin to take God's call

seriously, thousands of obstacles will suddenly appear. Do not be a fanatic? Your friends will say. You cannot change? And so on. God said to the Israelites, and to us, at this point, '*be still, I will do the fighting for you*'. He opens the Red Sea allowing the Israelites to pass through, but drowning their enemies. The people then rejoice at their new found freedom, at seeing their foes drowned.

Having dealt with the Egyptians, God proceeds to purify the hearts of the Israelites. God brings them into the desert. Their joy soon evaporates! At this stage many decide that the spiritual journey is too hard and turn back. The 'old man', who lives in our hearts reasserts himself. This desert stage of the journey confronts this 'false self' and brings our secret motivations, our ideas of happiness, to the light. Though God was abundantly providing for all their needs, the Israelites were always unhappy! They continually grumbled against Moses. Read the book of Exodus, Moses was lucky many times not to be stoned to death by his own people.

"it took God three days to get Israel out of Egypt, but it took forty years to get Egypt out of Israel"

This hidden, unconscious, spiritual slavery of the people of Israel, was far greater than the physical slavery of Egypt. *It took 40 years to deal with. One Rabbi puts it like this, 'it took God three days to get Israel out of Egypt, but it took forty years to get Egypt out of Israel?'* In their 430 years in Egypt, symbol of the world, the chosen people had in all but name, become Egyptians at heart. Christianity faces the same challenge today. The Hebrews had absorbed the culture and internalised the values of the surrounding Egyptian culture. Another Rabbi said that God had to act fast at this point, not only to save these people from slavery, but also because his plan for the salvation of the world, passed through these Hebrew slaves, and if they were left any longer in Egypt this plan would be beyond repair, since the Hebrews were in danger of succumbing to the infamous immorality, decadence and paganism of the Egyptians. Then their Abrahamic origins would become unrecognisable, and they would sink into the morass of Egyptian society and disappear.

Finally, after forty years in the desert, the people are ready to begin the conquest of the promised land. The first Joshua had the task of dispossessing the seven nations occupying the promised land. Joshua is Hebrew for Jesus, and Jesus, the new Joshua, has the task of dispossessing the seven nations, the seven deadly sins living in each of us, and making of us temples of the Holy Spirit.

Where are you in this journey? Are you in still in Egypt, the place of slavery? Have you crossed the Red Sea? Are you in the place of purification, the desert? Have you tasted the fruits of the promised land? The true Joshua, Jesus, is passing calling us to follow him, will you have the courage to respond?



Letters to the Editor

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PAPAL DEFENCE – FROM OUTSIDE R.C. CHURCH

Dear Father Editor,

In your March-April editorial you do not mention that, while many of his co-religionists and even fellow bishops deserted Pope Benedict in his hour of need, one of the staunchest defences of him was written by perhaps the leading orthodox Lutheran theologian in Germany, Dr Gottfried Martens, pastor of St. Mary's in Berlin.

He was trying to explain to his (many) Berlin parishioners what all the fuss and palaver was about. Dr. Martens defends the Pope more forcefully than have many German bishops who enjoy communion with him, a fact I find, shall we say, ironic? It is published at vitruonline.org

Yours faithfully

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SCIENCE, DESCARTES AND CARDINALS

Dear Father Editor,

Thank you for your in-depth reply to my letter, which covered perhaps a wider range than I anticipated (March '09). I would like, if I may, to take up a few brief points.

1. First of all, let us consider the methodological disparity between science and metaphysics. It is not accurate, in my opinion, to characterise this difference as observation versus deduction, *a posteriori* versus *a priori*. Nothing is more alien to the thought of St Thomas than the idea of an *a priori* metaphysics: metaphysics always has to proceed from physics (μετὰ τὰ φυσικά: after/beyond physics), it can never bracket the sphere of physical coming-to-be.

2. To put modern Thomist thinkers together with Descartes on this score (as is implied regarding Schönborn) is like putting Aristotle with Kant because they both liked 'categories'.

It is true, however, that Thomistic philosophy recognises a certain independence of each science in its proper sphere. This independence is above all a question of method, such that a plurality of sciences can approach the same phenomenon or object according to their own proper principles and procedure. This means that the physical world can be investigated by the philosopher and the scientist, without precisely the same conclusions coming to light from each investigation. What we need – and we really do need it – is compatibility.

3. When Dulles and Schönborn and many others make claims about the limitations of scientific method, this is the kind of background they are coming from. Regarding the specific case of formality, I do think care must be taken. Scientists, you write, do in fact "get at formality"; I think that very much depends on what we mean by "get at". It is true that the irreducibility of form, of information and of organization has gained a broad acceptance among scientists. But how many of them will tell you that they *understand* this irreducibility? How many will tell you, for example, that they are perfectly clear about *how* an as-yet unrealised final state can influence, as a kind of "attractor", the actual material processes within a specific system – say a living organism? Or how the functioning whole can be a prerequisite for the physical configuration of its internal parts – like with DNA? They are getting at it as a question, all right; but they are some distance from getting at the answer. In my view, due to limitations of method they lack the concepts of being-as-act, of substance and of form. You write that for the scholastics, form somehow transcends the sensible and concrete realm. I would say that form as "transcendent" indeed seems to be coherent with recent scientific work, especially in biology – yet with a qualification: we must not locate this transcendence in a "world of forms" as Plato did (this is *such* a poor reading of Thomas – not that I accuse you of it). It refers rather to the transcendence of the ephemeral spatio-temporal conditions of matter-in-evolution, through

real metaphysical *unity*. It is not the world *qua* world, but *qua multiple* that is thus transcended – yet, the real unity of what is materially many is a strictly metaphysical question, and hence requires a fundamentally different method. I believe that the questions scientists are now raising about "top-down causality" (as opposed to "bottom-up") in some cases represent a kind of nudging against the walls of the "science next door" – metaphysics.

4. I would also like to highlight a distinction that is important in Thomistic epistemology, but is often overlooked. The form exists in the mode of universality in the mind – but this has nothing to do, ontologically speaking, with the form as *causa essendi*. The form as a principle of material being is not universal; it is in fact (as you say) fundamentally related to "environmental context". Both Aristotle and Thomas saw complexity as incrementation of form, arising from the innate propensities of matter at a lower level (eg *De Generatione et Corruptione*, II, 1-4; *In Metaphysicorum*, V, lec. 3). Here, form as that which in-forms matter 'emerges' from processes of efficient causality. This is clearly very different from the intellectual species.

Bearing this in mind, I am not sure I have understood what you mean by suggesting that one should see "dynamic, concrete, relationality as intrinsic and not extrinsic to formal intelligibility". Should they be intrinsic to it in physical reality, or in the mind? If the former, I think the recommendation is quite compatible with the Thomistic view sketched above, provided that form is not reduced to an "accidental" arrangement of colliding and cohering particles: and so I don't see why a "new metaphysics" should be preferred to integration of modern physics with "old metaphysics". If the latter, it seems problematic that we cannot *understand* what a thing is in itself, without at the same time understanding its "concrete relationality" – which extends far beyond what is needed for a normal act of understanding. If formality does not render sensible realities, having been sensed, potentially intelligible *aside* from the broader relational context of the cosmos, will not all concepts and thus all knowing be context-relative in much the same way as the form-as-*causa-essendi*?

Thanks again for your willingness to engage in civilised debate on these

“This is the very dynamic within modern philosophy of science which we think has had very deleterious effects upon Christian culture”.

important issues. I would be grateful if you were able to respond – especially to clarify the final point.

Yours faithfully
John Deighan
Scots College
Rome

EDITORIAL COMMENT

We are pleased that this discussion upon issues which we feel are important is being pushed forward in such a constructive manner.

1. We concur that Thomas Aquinas based his metaphysics upon his physics. Our main concern in this discussion is that this *a posteriori* methodology is compromised by his epistemology in as much as he proposes a static character to the universal ‘form’. This was sustainable in Judaeo-Christian philosophy between Plato and modern science. In the modern context neo-thomists who try to hold to it can end up saying that our grasp of it is *a priori* to scientific observation. Such thinkers, it seems, preclude the possibility that discovery about the physical realm can affect their concept of the ‘form’.

2. We do indeed think Descartes’ development of this weakness is present, to a degree, in the philosophy of science of Etienne Gilson, Cardinal Dulles and especially Cardinal Schönborn.

In his influential but self-consciously tentative 1971 book *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again*, Gilson critiques “the modern biologist[s]” and Descartes’ acceptance of Bacon’s belief that “it is scientific to exclude final causality from the explanation of organised living beings”, and, one might add, from the interpretation of experimental science. But Gilson tends towards a partial acceptance of this elimination by focussing upon affirming final and formal causation exclusively at the holistic level of living species. Concerning lower chemical and physical levels he talks of material and efficient causation, and mechanism, as being sufficient explanations. He does not appear to see holistic structure as inherent to all ‘matter-energy’ as discovered *a posteriori*, and therefore to see the concrete inter-relativity of all formality.

It looks as if he and followers are attempting to synthesise an effectively static concept of the universal form with

the fact that scientific methodology is a gradual growth in knowledge of holistic, dynamic, inter-relationship, which basic observational method applies across all physical levels. This ‘form’, whilst not *a priori* in the nineteenth century idealist sense, is still *a priori* to scientific experience, which we think is an unnecessary nod to the former school of thought. As we will bring out below, this view of the intellect’s grasp of formality and finality is exactly the conclusion Cardinal Schönborn reaches. This is the very dynamic within modern philosophy of science which was started by Descartes in response to Bacon’s philosophy of science and which we think has had very deleterious effects upon Christian culture in our technological age.

If our reader would indulge us we would quote from three recent pieces in *First Things* magazine to make the point more fully.

(i) With acknowledgements to Gilson’s book Cardinal Dulles, in his October 2007 article ‘God and Evolution’, argues similarly that reductive Darwinists are wrong to exclude formality from biology. But below biology he doesn’t complain about such reductionism. Rather he “inclines towards” John F. Haught’s view that “that natural science achieves exact results by restricting itself to measurable phenomena, ignoring deeper questions about meaning and purpose. By its method, it filters out subjectivity, feeling, and striving”. He sympathetically affirms Polanyi’s “ontological gap between the living and non-living”, the former exclusively having an “internal finality”, and that “the emergence of life cannot be accounted for on the basis of purely mechanical principles.”

Our position is that nothing, not even the sciences of physics and chemistry can be properly explained by such reductive principles – they all have formal and final contexts intrinsic to their intelligibility, from the parts of the atom through the periodic table to the living, seeing eye of the chimpanzee.

(ii) Stephen Barr seems to take a similar position and to demur from the proposed ‘gap’ concerning the presence of formality as well as the suggestion that biologists are, in their work, in any sense reductionist. Responding to Dulles’ article in the lead letter of the January 2008 edition of *First Things* Barr states that:

“Contrary to what is often claimed, even by some scientists, modern science has not eliminated final and formal causes. It uses them all the time even if unaware. For example, a liver and a muscle are made up of the same material constituents – hydrogen, carbon, oxygen, and so on – acting on each other by the same basic forces. It is precisely their *forms*, their organic structures, that differ and enable them to play different roles in the body. The same is true in physics. The very same carbon atoms can form a diamond (transparent, hard, and electrically insulating) or a piece of graphite (opaque, soft, and electrically conducting). What explains their different properties is the difference in form, in intelligible structure. Indeed, as one goes deeper into fundamental physics, one finds that matter itself seems almost to dissolve into the pure forms of advanced mathematics.”

(iii) In his January 2006 article, ‘The Designs of Science’, Cardinal Schönborn seems to concur with Barr and us to the extent of not affirming Polanyi and Dulles’ “ontological gap”. But this leads him in the other direction to us. With a certain logic flowing from the Dulles-Haught position he applies the supposed methodological reductionism point across the whole range of science, whilst he suggests this applies “most clearly and evidently the world of living substances, living beings”. He states:

“In science, the discipline and methods are such that design – more precisely, formal and final causes in natural beings – is purposefully excluded from its reductionist conception of nature. [...] true science is impossible unless we first grasp the reality of natures and essences, the intelligible principles of the natural world. We can with much profit study nature using the tools and techniques of modern science. But [...] to grasp reality as it is, we must return to our pre-scientific and post-scientific knowledge, the tacit knowledge that pervades science [...] Prior to both science and theology is philosophy, the ‘science of common experience’ [...] Modern science first excludes *a priori* final and formal causes, then investigates nature under the reductive mode of mechanism (efficient and material causes) [...] It is] reason [...] which grasps] the ‘vertical’ causation of formality and finality”.

3. Mr Deighan seems to take a slightly more subtle version of this position. He recognises a certain continuity of principle between living and non-living structures – and also keeps a certain ontological dualism across the whole range of holistic matter-energy.

He suggests that the “how” of bottom-up (material causation), of past-to-the-present (efficient) causality involving “multiple” individuals is easily explained whereas that which is transcendent to these, that is top-down (formal) and future-to-the-present (final) unifying causality is not easily explained. It is in these latter gaps that metaphysical concepts can be fitted in by Mr Deighan and indeed by the above mentioned Cardinals.

Positing an ontological distinction at the foundational level of the physical individual always risks such a metaphysics-of-the-gaps which tends towards its more famous cousin, the god-of-the-gaps. It falls foul of the same weaknesses: as scientific explanation of these gaps gradually becomes easier, (being done by the same methodology as the former set of ‘easier’ material explanations) we have no further need of metaphysics or of God. And as described by Barr above such organically developing explanation is exactly what is happening through modern science’s relentless discovery of the intrinsically inter-related and hierarchical structure of matter-energy.

Moreover such a positing of a partially *a priori* form which *mediates* organization and intelligibility to a further created realm below (‘matter’) puts significant pressure upon the Christian doctrine of God as the *immediate* creator and sustainer of every aspect of the cosmos. This is notwithstanding the gallant scholastic attempts to support this latter doctrine through affirming the ‘act of existence’. This ‘existential’ realm was seen as a further, trans-intelligible, metaphysical dimension immediately instantiating the whole physical composite essence. In being prior to the intelligible and created ‘essential’ realm it has been identified with the very ‘Act of Existence’ of God himself as well as being at the root of the school of Existentialism.

Our position is that all causation and existential relationship is holistic and points, in its intrinsic intelligibility as part of the unity of the whole cosmos, to the Mind of God. This is the ultimate level of

explanation of anything and everything – however apparently easy or difficult such explanation might at first appear.

4. Another significant motive for the affirmation of the *a priori* ‘Act of Existence’ as that which transcends definitive intelligibility was the attempt to handle the difficult fact that scholasticism’s approach to such abstract intelligibility of the ‘essence’ prescind from whether or not that thing actually exists. This is related to the fact that this system, as Mr Deighan describes it, implies that “physical reality [...] ‘concrete relationality’ [...] extends far beyond what is needed for a normal act of understanding.” This ‘moderate realism’ has proved far too moderate to maintain realism in an age when we know that a thing’s concrete relationality is intrinsic to what it is.

Mr Deighan goes further and captures the profound tension in Thomas’s epistemology as described for instance in the *Summa*. He puts it this way: “the form in the mode of universality in the mind [...] has nothing to do, ontologically speaking, with the form as *causa essendi*,” except for the fact that it is, must be for our knowledge to be true, the same identical form.

St Thomas himself has a line which captures this tension which he is perhaps happy to allow in order to maintain his ‘moderate’ realism, until a deeper world-view be found. It flows from his argument that the latter, non-universal, non-intelligible mode of the form mentioned by Mr Deighan must be abstracted by the ‘active intellect’ into the former “in the mind” mode *in order to be the object of our understanding* (intellect). This intelligible mode is termed the ‘*species intelligibiles*’, what we might call the ‘understandable impression’. But this universal object of the understanding (as intellect), which is in the mind, cannot at the same time, if we are realistic, be the object of our human holistic understanding (or ‘*ratio*’, which includes judgment) because the composite form-matter individual is that object. Thomas puts it this way: “The understandable impression is not that which is understood but that by which the understanding understands.” (“*Species intelligibiles non est id quod intelligitur sed id quo intelligit intellectus*”, *Summa Theologica*, I, 85, art.2). In this sentence and this passage he has to use

two exclusive meanings of the verb “to understand” without making that clear.

If one depicts the ‘form’ in a mediatorial realm between the knower and the known it falls between two stools. We don’t think one needs to posit any more orders of being than the two consistently affirmed by Catholic Tradition: the spiritual and the physical, mind and matter. Matter is intrinsically related to mind. Upon this insight we must develop our epistemology away from the theory of abstraction, its quasi-idealist, correspondence theory of truth, and its separation of essential meaning and existential truth.

Modern realism must indeed acknowledge that “all knowing [is] context relevant in much the same way as” the physical realm discovered by modern science – and all creation is immediately dependent upon and contextualised by, for its very existence and intelligibility, the Mind of God. This fundamental relationality is the condition of realistic objectivity not its undermining. That which has proved so uncomfortable for the Greek interpretation of the cosmos is the discovery of the intrinsic, existential relationality of all creation. To be open to this discovery is to invite a development of traditional philosophy, not least of the concept of ‘form’ which will prove, we think, profoundly supportive yet we think, powerfully supportive of the revelation of Christ.

SCPTICISM CONCERNING THE UNITY-LAW

Dear Father Editor,
Because the *Faith* “vision” essentially depends on two corner stones: theory of evolution (which is not the same as an established fact) and the “revelation” to Mrs. Holloway (the authenticity of which cannot be demonstrated). Remove these “stones” - the entire “vision” collapses. In other words, it is irrational, while claiming to be the synthesis of faith and reason.

Another correspondent, Father Cameron-Brown is known to the readers for his unshakeable faith in evolution: his letters have been recurring ever since the former Editor, cornered by evidence, “closed” the debate on this subject some two years ago. I say, “closed”, because it has been closed only to those who ventured to challenge the theory and the magazine’s “vision”.

“We don’t think one needs to posit any more orders of being than the two consistently affirmed by Catholic Tradition: the spiritual and the physical, mind and matter.”

The saying “like a red flag to a bull” equally applies to him when criticism of the theory is mentioned, as it does to those to whom evolution is mentioned as a scientific fact. Evolution isn’t a scientifically established fact, and however sensible it might appear as a biological theory, it hasn’t been, and will never be proved; it is unprovable in principle. Science is about what we can establish by observation, while evolution, if still in progress, is too slow to be observable, and past events are beyond the reach of observations.

One doesn’t have to be a biblical fundamentalist – I am certainly not – to be sceptical about this theory; one can be an atheist too.

*Yours faithfully
Michael Skarpa
Hawes Road
Bromley*

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Mr Skarpa’s letters, too, have been recurring ever since the very earliest days of the publication of *Faith* over several decades, along with very extensive private correspondence to Fr Roger Nesbitt, the co-founder of *Faith* Movement.

In fact the *Faith* vision relies on neither of the supposed corner stones he mentions. We do see the universe as a vast, developing equation of being in action and interaction. From this we argue to a centre of control and direction, and a universal Unity Law of being, which demands a God who is transcendent and independent of the contingent universe.

Whether particular theories of biological evolution stand or fall would not affect this basic perspective, or arguments and insights that follow from this. Unless of course Mr Skarpa takes issue with the universe being “a vast, developing equation of being in action and interaction”, in which case he no doubt questions the whole of contemporary science.

On our back cover we survey other aspects of our vision..

As to whether the basic insights proposed by Agnes Holloway and developed later by her son Fr Edward Holloway were divinely inspired or not is a matter for the Church to decide in her own time. The ideas stand in their own right and are recommended to many

by their usefulness in developing and defending the Catholic faith in the modern world. She always said that these ideas were nothing that could not have been developed by others in the Church. The divine aid she claimed in all humility, was simply a prompt and an aid for the darkened and unfaithful times we face. *Faith* movement is not based on any presumption about the sanctity or authenticity of her claims.

Finally, the suggestion that Fr Patrick Burke (emeritus editor) closed correspondence on the topic because he was “cornered by evidence” will be highly amusing to those that know him. Publications, including this one, sometimes close particular lines of correspondence so as not to wear out the patience of the wider readership, because they are becoming effectively a private dialogue with the same few correspondents and the debate is going nowhere. There are times when we must simply agree to disagree.

REPUBLICANS PRO-LIFE?

Dear Father Editor,
Towards the end, Father Neuhaus seemed to be coming round about the hoodwinking and hijacking of the American pro-life movement by the Republican Party, which is not in principle any more pro-life than the Democrats, and which is in practice rather less so because of the consequences of its economic policies, not to mention, of course, its record of warmongering and convict-killing even worse than that of the Democrats (which is quite a feat). Indeed, the new Chairman of the Republican National Committee is very considerably more anti-life, even in the usual sense of the term, than is the new Chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

A key strand in neoconservatism, at least in America, is made up of Catholics who agree with the Pope and his predecessor about sex but not about economics, seem immune to the enormous amount of work that they have done and still do in explaining how these things are connected, and manage to present themselves, quite falsely, as somehow more orthodox than those who, with similar disregard, agree with the Popes about economics but not about sex. But alike, they are in fact inheritors of

the misappropriation of the name of the Second Vatican Council. And alike, they hark back to the nineteenth-century Americanist heresy, which conceived of an oxymoronic American Catholic Church autonomous from Rome.

Alas, for all his gifts, Father Neuhaus was a key figure in the sex-but-not-economics camp, and a leader in its support for the neoconservative war agenda. But was he shifting just before he died? I hope and pray so. His last book, *American Babylon*, to be published in the US in March by Basic Books (and which must therefore have been completed before the recent presidential election), depicts America as a nation defined by consumerism and decadence, and argues that Christians must learn to live there as if they were in exile from the Promised Land.

He had form as a trailblazer. So, after him, who? Catholics of his hue were intellectually indispensable to the neocons, just as Catholic opponents of abortion are electorally key to the actually pro-abortion Republican Party. But President Obama won a clear majority of the Catholic vote (even if not Father Neuhaus’s own vote). If the shift is finally happening, then praise God, not least for what it will do to the Democratic Party.

*Yours faithfully
David Lindsay
Foxhills Crescent
Lanchester
County Durham*

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Mr Lindsay may find some support for an aspect of his challenging thesis in R.R. Reno’s tribute to Fr Neuhaus in last month’s inspiring memorial edition of *First Things*. Reno recalls sharing his worries about pro-life politics and the possible bad performance of the Republican Party in upcoming 2006 elections. Fr Neuhaus sat back and commented. “Relax Rusty, the Republicans will betray us eventually anyway.” We would demur on Mr Lindsay’s implied equation of the authority of the Church’s sexual and social teaching. The specificity of principle and the consistent invocation of Christ’s authority is significantly more developed with regard to the marital act and life issues than economics. And they are more prominently, directly and vociferously dissented from.



Comment on the Comments

by William Oddie

Snapshot of a British Catholic Psychology

Ever since the *motu proprio* was published – (interesting, incidentally, how everyone now speaks of THE *motu proprio*, as if there had only ever been one of them) – and it was clear that the bishops hostile to it were not going to be allowed to get in its way, the battle moved to the next set of trenches: those dug by the increasingly desperate proponents of ‘the spirit of Vatican II’, who had so far seemed generally quiescent in defeat, but who had in fact been looking for a *casus belli* all along.

In the event it was *The Tablet* which decided to stick the bayonets on to their Lee-Enfields, and go over the top. There had been a rumour for some time that the ‘bitter pill’ was on the look-out for a parish which regularly uses the extraordinary rite on a Sunday so that they could do a hatchet job on it, or at least on its Parish Priest: and they decided to go for it against Fr Tim Finigan, the Parish Priest of Our Lady of the Rosary, Blackfen, in the Southwark diocese: possibly an unwise choice, since Fr Finigan had the means very effectively to defend himself. I allude, of course, to the jewel in his crown, *The Hermeneutic of Continuity*, one of the most successful blogs in the Catholic world, which recently celebrated (by means of a High Mass in the Extraordinary Rite) its millionth hit. This meant that from the beginning, *The Tablet*’s attack stirred up an international hornet’s nest of traditionalist bloggers. In Italy, the blog *messainlatino.it* published an article headlined “*In Inghilterra, la stampa vicina all’episcopato diffama un sacerdote che applica il motu proprio*” (in England, the press close to the episcopate defames a priest who applies the *motu proprio*). This denounced *The Tablet*’s “*odioso articolo contro il ottimo Padre Finigan*” – as predictably, across the Atlantic, did Fr Zuhlsdorf (on *Zuhlsdorf.webarchive*) who told his readers that they should “keep in mind that this article was

written for no other reason than to discourage and intimidate priests in the UK from implementing *Summorum Pontificum* in their parishes.” Fr Zuhlsdorf then does one of his famous line by line demolition jobs on the text of the article itself, of which more later.

First, however, we must report Fr Finigan’s own deployment of this classic Zuhlsdorfian technique, if for no other reason than that it provoked *The Tablet* into making an abject and total fool of itself. Fr Finigan reproduced the entire text of the article, interpolating his own response where appropriate. This led *The Tablet*, unbelievably, to object not that Fr Finigan’s reply was flawed in some way, but that he had had *infringed its copyright!* At this point, I can do no better than reproduce Fr Finigan’s amusing reply:

“*The Tablet* have contacted me to say that my fisk of the article “‘That was not my Mass’ was a breach of copyright and would I remove it. The last ditch liberals really do not understand the internet, do they?”

“OK, the article is down. Now here is my legally compliant review, with only little bits quoted in accordance with the ‘fair use’ provision, and the rest reported in my own words. (The previous version allowed complete fairness to the author of the article by quoting her words exactly.)

“I must add a little extra to this revised post from information received. I understand that *The Tablet* was indeed intending to ‘have a go’ at a parish that offered the *usus antiquior*. Another Southwark parish was in the crosshairs but mine was set as the target because there were a few parishioners prepared to go on record. I also hear that *The Tablet* regards the Catholic blogosphere as a ‘tiny conservative world’. As I say – they just don’t understand the internet. If you tot up the combined readership of the Catholic blogs which have written on

this issue, they have a daily readership far in excess of *The Tablet*’s weekly circulation. One reason for that low circulation is that *The Tablet* thinks that enforcing copyright on the internet helps their cause. Bwahahaha!”

I don’t have enough space to reproduce the whole of Fr Finigan’s account of the article with his response; for that you must go to his blog; at the time of writing *The Tablet* has not hunted down all online copies of the whole text, which can be seen on, for instance, the *exlaodicea* and the *Irishpilgrim* blogs. The piece (which truly is, in the words of the Italian blog quoted above ‘*un odioso articolo*’) begins as it means to go on, in a tone of open ridicule (and incidentally, why, when these people are so utterly illiberal in their undisguised contempt for those trying to be faithful to the Magisterium, do we continue to call them ‘liberals’?). The article is by Elena Curti, *The Tablet*’s deputy editor, and is entitled ‘That was not my Mass’:

“Nearly 40 years ago, that was the comment of the keenest supporters of the Tridentine Rite as the new rite was introduced. Now the sentiment has been reversed in the suburban parish of Blackfen, where a priest’s introduction of traditionalist liturgy has split the parish.”

Fr Finigan comments:

“Ah yes, the ‘split’ – that’s a key point of the article – but in fact the vast majority of parishioners just come along to whichever Mass they want, and wonder what all the fuss is about. What hurts *them* is the bad atmosphere caused by vehement complaining and controversy. This is not helped, of course, by airing it all in the press.”

“A high proportion of those objecting appear to have been ‘Eucharistic Ministers’”

Elena Curti goes on:

“Each Sunday at around 9.45 a.m. a team at Our Lady of the Rosary, Blackfen, in the south-eastern suburbs of Greater London, erects a wooden stepped platform faced in a marble-effect laminate on the altar. On this is placed a gold crucifix, six large candlesticks, vases of flowers and altar cards for the celebration of the old Latin Mass. Welcome to the parish of Fr Tim Finigan, popular blogger and leading light of the Latin Mass Society of England and Wales.”

You get the point. *Not* that here is a parish which is going to great lengths worthily to celebrate a liturgy which the Pope has described as one of the most precious jewels of our heritage, so that, as Fr Finigan points out, ‘youngsters get there up to an hour before Mass to help prepare’, but that on the contrary, here is a set of ritualist wierdos who have no care at all for the true pastoral and emotional needs of their fellow parishioners. And Oh, how Curti capitalises on the dissidents’ *emotions*:

“The group describe feelings of irritation, discomfort and sadness at the changes that have been made. Those who prefer to stand for Communion and receive it in the hand say they feel selfconscious doing so at Fr Finigan’s Masses.

“Several said their adult children vowed never to go to the church again [question: and were they going before? I bet they had lapsed already], such was their unhappiness with the liturgy. ‘People who have been away from church come back at Christmas and Easter and are totally put off. It is so sad,’”

So, comments Fr Zuhlsdorf, “is this about feelings? I am getting the sense that it is not about what is right to do liturgically or what the rights of other Catholics may be regarding the Church’s worship.”

So, how real is this “split”? A high proportion of those actively objecting (accounts vary between 6 and 9) appear to have been “Eucharistic

ministers”, in a Parish which Fr Finigan thinks doesn’t need them (“Eucharistic ministers”, it may be said in passing, are frequently among those semi-clericalised laity who busy-body their way into positions of prominence in the Parish, and don’t like it when Father decides he is going to exercise priestly leadership in a way which threatens their little world). Curti says that:

“Between 30 and 40 people no longer attend the church and a similar number have taken their place”: but as Fr Finigan points out, “In these suburban parishes, over the course of a year or so, there are at least that number coming and going for all sorts of reasons”. The attendance at his Sunday celebration of the *usus antiquior* is around 135; attendance at all four Sunday Masses (the other three are of the *novus ordo* in English) is around 550. So 30 out and 30 in hardly constitutes a “split”.

So far, Curti’s case is pretty weak: simply a matter of using the subtler kind of sneery smear technique. This is where she decides to go beneath the belt: by implying financial irregularity, or at the least, indefensible extravagance. And at this point, a nasty little piece becomes really contemptible, truly “*un odioso articolo*”:

“There were also complaints about their priest’s refusal to support Cafod [this, Fr Finigan explains, is because of Cafod’s support for condoms as a means of combating HIV], his expenditure on traditional vestments and other clerical garb, the absence of a parish council *and failure to account to parishioners how money from the collection plate was being spent*” [in other words, possible corruption]

“The bit about vestments and clerical garb (*Boo! Hiss!*)”, replied Fr Finigan, is... a cheap shot. It is a part of my responsibility to ensure that there are dignified vestments for the Liturgy.... Over the past few years... I have also, among other works, replaced the roof, floor, heating and lighting in the Hall, put in disabled toilets and levelled the entrance, repainted the interior of the

Church, replaced the roof on two areas, replaced the guttering’, and on and on. It is absolutely clear that Curti has no evidence whatever of extravagance or irregularity and is relying on the hope that people will say there is no smoke without fire, thus little by little undermining Fr Finigan’s reputation.

There have been strong reactions: most substantially, perhaps, that of James MacMillan, the Scottish Catholic composer (whose best-known work the *St John Passion*, has just been recorded by Sir Colin Davies and the LSO). Dr MacMillan is so far from being a dyed in the wool reactionary that he says he has “always seen [*The Tablet*] as an important and sensible Catholic voice in the media”. Curti’s article, he writes (in a letter to her) “has unfortunately plumbed new depths that I thought I would never see in a Christian publication. The whole tone was disrespectful, mischief-making and opportunistic, lacking no palpable sense of Christian charity.” He goes on to say that “Our liturgy is in a deplorable state ...and, in the spirit of Vatican II, it is imperative that steps are taken to reform the reform for the good of the faithful. There is no attempt by the Pope, or Fr Finigan for that matter, to turn back the clock”. He concludes that “The implied assaults on the character of Fr Finigan were a disgrace, and... when you suggest financial impropriety, may be actionable. I hope the good parishioners of Our Lady of the Rosary can find it in their hearts to forgive you and pray for you.”

The Tablet seems on this occasion to have bitten off more than it can chew; but they will undoubtedly be back. Watch this space.

Dr William Oddie is chairman of the Chesterton Society
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Book Reviews

A Patristic Greek Reader

by Rodney A. Whitaker, Hendrikson Publishers, 279pp, £16.99 (available from Alban Books)

This unusual and extremely useful work is described as providing “primary Greek texts for translation by students and for pastors and scholars looking to refresh their Greek. Texts include the *Didache*, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Eusebius and John Chrysostom.”

The editor of this unusual collection, Rodney A. Whitaker, is Professor of Biblical Studies at Trinity Biblical School. What is so refreshing about this collection is the obvious fact that it does not make one of two false assumptions, either that only Biblical Greek is worthy of the attention of serious students or that classical Greek is the only type of Greek worthy of the name. It is perhaps worth pointing out that the Christian Latin West was far more innovative in its linguistic attitude than was the Greek East.

After a useful introduction the book divides into two parts: part one Greek Texts and Notes, part two translations of all texts. The selection of texts is extremely wide and imaginative. We begin with the *Didache* of the late first or early second century, perhaps written in Syria and we end with *Hymns* by Simeon the New Theologian, Byzantine mystic and spiritual writer, who lived from 949-1022. In other words, Greek in its various forms, from simple Greek of the first two centuries to the fourth century second Sophistic style appears here.

To the latter group above all belong Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostom both of whom were trained at Athens and Antioch respectively by the best pagan rhetoricians of the day, Himerius and Libanius respectively. Once the church in the East achieved freedom it allowed itself to be influenced linguistically and philosophically by the culture that surrounded it.

Each author's work is preceded by a useful introduction telling the reader something of the life and writings of the author under review and of the context of the writing in question. There is also offered an estimate of the level of difficulty of the author being illustrated. Most of the selections chosen are said to be either easy or intermediate, though some, above all Clement of Alexandria, are said to be advanced, as are the extracts from Eusebius, but interestingly and suggestively John Chrysostom is said to be “easy to intermediate”. His elaborate rhetorical education made him easy to understand. Perhaps the two Cyrils of Jerusalem and Alexandria were omitted as being too hard, as probably was Gregory of Nyssa.

The notes to the Greek text are very full and helpful and should be of great help to the translator, though the provision of a full scale translation at the end of the book may prove something of a temptation to the novice.

One of the important truths which this very useful book underlines is the simple fact that as neither the Church nor the doctrine of the Church came to an abrupt end with the death of the last apostle and the conclusion of the New Testament, Greek itself well outlived the apostolic period and continued to enrich the Church through history, philosophy, theology, hymns and sermons for a long time after 100AD.

Fr Anthony Meredith SJ
London

The Catholic Martyrs of the Twentieth Century

by Robert Royal, Crossroad, 340pp, £11.99 (available from Family Publications, Oxford)

Ils sont morts pour leur foi

by Andrea Riccardi, Plon, 454pp, €26

Robert Royal remarks that “for many modern Christians, the idea of martyrs is somewhat quaint”. His subsequent coverage of the last century aims among other things to correct that impression.

Mexico, like Civil War Spain has been badly served by the media. Few seem to be aware of the savagery of the Communists in either country. In Mexico, the Governor of Tabasco named his children, Lenin, Lucifer and Satan. Any priest who refused to marry was expelled. The life of Fr Miguel Pro reads like that of Fr John Gerard. He refused to become an altar boy, was fond of practical jokes and toyed with agnosticism before becoming a Jesuit. Eventually returning to Spain he carried on an apostolate in disguise. Finally arrested, the government made the mistake of filming his execution, hoping that he would recant. Instead he died proclaiming “Viva Cristo Rey!” (Long live Christ the King!)

It is not usually noticed that in Republican Spain, Mass was prohibited (except in the Basque country) and 6,832 priests and 13 bishops were executed. The international press believed that the persecution was justified because the clergy supported the landowners and were generally corrupt. However it appears that nobody apostatised, or opted to marry when given the chance to do so. The Oratorian bishop Salvio Huix was typical of many. He proclaimed, “I will always say that I am the bishop of Lerida”. He was shot. Antonio de Moral, a layman, was condemned to be gored to death in the bullring. The historian, Hugh Thomas sums up, “At no time in the history of Europe, or even perhaps of the world, has so passionate a hatred of religion and all its works been shown.”

It has always been thought that martyrdom really began in the Soviet

"It is not usually noticed that in Republican Spain, Mass was prohibited and 6,832 priests were executed."

Union under Stalin. However evidence has now surfaced to show that Lenin requested daily reports of the number of priests executed and that he used the famine of 1921-2 as a means of crushing religious resistance. The 3,300 churches and chapels were reduced by 1934 to 2, largely for show.

In the Ukraine, Roman Catholicism was virtually wiped out. Bishop Teodor Romzha was seriously injured in a "car crash" with security forces from which he died. He had told his people, "Let us rejoice that we have to suffer for our faith, because in doing so, we are preparing for martyrdom." The Metropolitan of Lviv, Andrew Sheptytskyi was first arrested by the Czarists in 1914. He then complained to Hitler about his treatment of the Jews, whose Rabbi later said of him, "We do not believe in saints, but if there is such a thing, the first is Metropolitan Andrew." He was succeeded in 1944 by Joseph Slipyi who was in prison and internal exile for thirty-nine years, accused of supporting "the fascist form of Christianity and a bastion of reaction." It has a certain modern ring... It reminds us that Cardinal Kung of Shanghai was imprisoned for 30 years and Archbishop Jarre of Tsinan was arrested at the age of 74 and in answer to interrogation said, "My answer will come to you from the tomb." The mourners dressed him in red vestments to the fury of the police who disinterred the body.

Robert Royal describes the life and death of Fr Jerzy Popielusko (400,000 attended his funeral) and points out that in 1953 eight bishops and 900 priests were arrested by those same authorities. In Czechoslovakia in 1950 three quarters of all religious clergy and half of all priests were sent to labour camps and Sr Zdenka Schelingova was tortured to death for allowing a sick priest to escape from the hospital where she worked.

There is also the sober statistic that in the Rwanda conflict between Hutus and Tutsis, 3 bishops, 96 priests, 64 sisters and 45 brothers were massacred. These are the facts which never appeared on Newsnight.

Andrea Riccardi adds details about the Islamic persecution of the Church in Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, Lebanon and Pakistan and adds details about India, Vietnam and Korea. There is unfortunately no index and there exists as yet no English translation.

Cardinal Newman said that the martyrs and confessors of the faith "still live unto God, and in their past deeds and their present voices, cry from the altar." May their witness be heard and remembered by us who follow in their faith.

Fr James Tolhurst
Chislehurst
Kent

Jesus, teach us to pray

by Fr Jerome Bertram, Family Publications, 143 pp, £8.95

I am a little cynical about books on prayer. There are several of them on my shelves but few successfully convey the reality of their subject. Perhaps the cliché is true: we have too many books on prayer and not enough praying. If we want to learn to pray (and pray better) then there is, I think, no substitute for simply trying to pray. Nonetheless, there is certainly a place for books which can help us to pray and Fr Jerome Bertram's *Jesus, teach us to pray* is a fine example. Refreshingly, it does not attempt to tell us how to pray – as the title says, this is for Jesus to do – but it does help the reader to understand what prayer is all about. This is vitally important because misunderstandings about prayer can easily become obstacles to true prayer.

The book, which is based on retreat conferences which the author gave to religious, is a pleasure to read because it retains in its written form the fresh and direct approach of a friendly conversation. His description of political speeches masquerading as spontaneous bidding prayers, for example, had me laughing out loud.

It begins with a very direct question: "Why Pray?" Our reason for praying, the author argues, should not be to make God give us things or to obtain some inner experience. These reasons

reflect little more than "sublimated selfishness". Christian prayer is about opening "our hearts to the love of God, so that love can flow through us to other people" (p. 9). Our prayers of intercession flow out of that openness to God's love. There are two chapters devoted to simple but encouraging descriptions of different approaches to vocal prayer and mental prayer – or, as Fr Bertram puts it, "talking to God" and "thinking about God".

The second half of the book is taken up with an extended commentary on the Lord's Prayer. As he reflects upon each of the petitions, Fr Bertram takes the opportunity to share further insights on prayer. He illustrates the richness of this most familiar of prayers with references to the Fathers of the Church and to Pope Benedict's recent book *Jesus of Nazareth*.

The book concludes with some practical suggestions on dealing with distraction in prayer and a reflection on the relationship between prayer and work. I hesitate to criticise a book which I have so thoroughly enjoyed and valued but I do have difficulty with a few sentences in this chapter. Fr Bertram rightly cautions against using work as an excuse to avoid prayer. But he goes further, suggesting the maxim "Orare humanum est, laborare diabolicum" because "the necessity for work is ultimately the result of the Fall, and therefore of the devil". If this is to be taken seriously then I think that this is a serious error. Even before the Fall, man is charged with tilling and keeping the garden (Gen 2:15) so, as the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church puts it, "Work is part of the original state of man and precedes his fall; it is therefore not a punishment or curse."

With this caveat, *Jesus, teach us to pray* is an excellent introduction to prayer for those beginning to take it seriously including older teenagers and young adults. It can also serve as a much needed refresher for those who have been praying for some time.

Kurt Barragan
Womersley Seminary



Cutting Edge Science and Religion News

VATICAN SPONSORS EVOLUTION CONFERENCE

Charles Darwin's much-vaunted 200th birthday having occurred on 12th February, just a few weeks later (March 2nd–8th) a major interdisciplinary conference took place in Rome on the Darwinian theory of Evolution. The conference was entitled *Biological Evolution, Facts and Theories: A Critical Appraisal 150 Years after 'The Origin of Species.'* It took place at the Pontifical Gregorian University, and was co-sponsored by the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. It was held under the patronage of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Culture, something of a first for the Church. The very last words of the proceedings, of an official of the Council, spoke of the conference as representing an important aspect of the re-starting of a dialogue between the Church and science "which should never have been interrupted". The conference was the third in a series of conferences that have been held under the auspices of the Pontifical Council's 'STOQ' project – the 'Science, Theology and the Ontological Quest' interdisciplinary study programme that has been running now in the Roman Pontifical universities for some five years, and which allows students and scholars to investigate the links and mutual enrichment of the physical and the metaphysical sciences.

The March conference consisted of some 35 lectures presented by an international selection of western academics with various expertise in biology, palaeontology, anthropology, archaeology, philosophy and theology. It aimed to follow an itinerary which began with the evidence for evolution in the biological world, and moved gradually towards its relevance and interpretation in the theological sphere, via the intermediary disciplines of anthropology and philosophy. It took place in an atmosphere of respectful listening and learning, consciously seeking a *via media* between the

more-publicised extreme schools of 'anti-Darwinian' biblical fundamentalism (young-earth creationism) and 'ultra-Darwinian' atheism (scientism). As a Catholic institution sponsoring a conference on evolution, the Gregorian's event attracted a lot of high-profile media interest: even the BBC news website in the UK included a feature on the conference's opening day.

Significant Consensus

Many of the speakers, including many of the scientists, starting with the very opening paper by Cambridge palaeobiologist Simon Conway-Morris, were keen to emphasise above all that whilst accepting fully the rectitude of the science of the biological theory of evolution (mutation with natural selection), yet a "totality of explanation it is not" (Conway-Morris's words). The terms 'convergence' and 'teleology' cropped up with regularity. By 'convergence' is meant that evolutionary history has shown the repeated re-invention of features such as the eye (evolved at least 7 times independently) or functions such as flying (at least 3 times); evolution therefore showing signs of constraint and some direction.

The idea of an 'inner teleology' was introduced into the conference discussion by David Depew (University of Iowa), and extended in an excellent lecture by the Jesuit priest and astrophysicist from Tucson, Arizona, William Stoeger: starting from the evidence that the components of the universe co-operate and build one on another, dependent on relationships and contributing to an emergent complexity, it could easily be shown that a directionality is present in the cosmological as well as the biological evolution of the universe/earth. Of course science as the description of the physical observed does not tell us about any *purpose* to this directionality. This question, Stoeger pointed out, moves us into the realm of philosophy and revelation. A "functional finality"

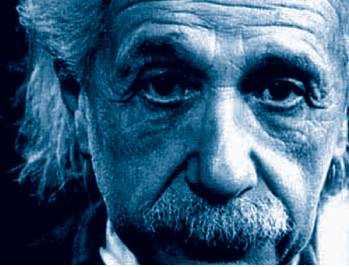
or "teleonomy" is written into the laws of nature, across its hierarchical layers. Whilst Fr Edward Holloway, founder of *Faith* movement, takes such insights towards God, Stoeger caught the mood of the conference by simply saying it was not inconsistent with there existing – above and beyond science – a theological teleology, a "reason for it all" which is given only by God. Of course this 'mood' is that of prominent philosophy of science since the advent of inductive experimental method which has delivered the death knell to deductive proofs of God based upon *a priori* metaphysical assumptions. Holloway attempts to found metaphysics and induction upon the necessary relationship between unified matter and organising mind, seen as intrinsic to a *posteriori* intelligible experience.

Lack of Consensus and the Cardinal

Whilst there was also significant agreement concerning the contradictory nature of reductionist philosophy the conference was tentative about whether nature is deterministic and about the nature of human freedom. Although quite a bit of evidence was produced concerning the difference of human behaviour from animals, the nature of spirit, and the ensoulment of man (both in terms of the ensoulment of each individual human person, and also the initial ensoulment of the first fully human man) were unsatisfactorily addressed.

Cardinal Cottier, Emeritus pro-Theologian to the Pontifical Household and member of the Pontifical Academy for Sciences, dropped into the conference to, among other things, present the traditional Thomistic ontology and epistemology as a way of defending the "very counter-cultural" concept of the spiritual soul. He argued that our ability to know universal forms is evidence that the soul is of a non-material nature and irreducible to an emergent property of matter. The Cardinal also highlighted an important point of anthropology, namely that the great 'jump' up to the

“the boundaries of species are not nearly as clear-cut as the Greeks and scholastics thought”



behaviour of *Homo sapiens* (i.e. to the use of tools, language, artistic and religious expression) was inexplicable solely by a materialistic elaboration of evolutionary theory.

During questions the editor of this magazine suggested to the Cardinal that much of what we had heard at this conference showed that the boundaries of species are not nearly as clear-cut as the Greeks and scholastics thought, and that this put pressure on the Thomistic vision of ‘form’, and therefore brought out the importance of a developed metaphysics to defend the soul. Cardinal Cottier commented that there still seemed to be a “threshold” between species but that certainly we needed to study the facts and implications of modern science. (See our *Letters and Road from Regensburg* columns).

There was quite a bit of interest in Teilhard de Chardin, for instance from the French Dominican Professor Maldame who stated that the evolutionary history of the world was also the ‘history of soul’. In the question time he clarified that his main desire was to avoid Cartesian dualism, not the Catholic doctrine of the spiritual soul.

Not acknowledging Cosmic Unity

The appreciation of the unity of the cosmos has not yet been achieved by this academic sub-community – let alone the *Faith* suggestion that this could support the traditional doctrine of God as the mind immediately behind every aspect of the cosmos. “Classical determinism” in terms of the mechanical predictability of more sophisticated stages and properties of evolution from less sophisticated stages was clearly rejected in favour of holistic “emergence”. But, a key area of disagreement was whether the material universe involves freedom from being determined. Professor Conway-Morris argued that if the universe was started again in the same way we would end up with something very similar to what

we have now – biologically speaking. Other speakers were not nearly so sure – particularly those who felt some freedom, or “self-organization”, existed below man, one even claiming Aristotle’s support for this idea.

‘Intelligent Design’ – in its specific American form as an attempt to find scientifically (in anatomy or molecular biology) gaps in the evolutionary framework – was analysed and not given much credence by the participating lecturers. In discussion it was acknowledged that the apparent support of evolution for moral relativism pushed some concerned people (including parents) into the arms of the creationists but it did not develop into considering how evolution could be interpreted in a non-morally relativist manner.

Despite this rejection of the ‘God-of-the-gaps’ Robert Russell of the Centre for Theology and the Natural Sciences, Berkeley, closed the conference with mention of the indeterminacies of quantum mechanics as a possible ‘space’ within which God can act without ‘intervening’ upon normal laws as such. He suggested that God might “act through chance and law”.

He suggested that we might need a Teilhardian/Rahnerian perspective upon spirit emerging from matter, and also a good “natural theodicy” to take account of the fact that “death is constitutive of evolution”. The traditional Catholic perspectives upon the direct creation of the soul and human death being the result of sin were not taken into account.

It was quite clear that many more-consistent answers to the interplay of God’s design and the universe’s evolution are available, which respect the ability of science within its own field to explain satisfactorily the evolutionary process. Vittorio Hösle of Notre Dame expressed it in this way: “a world without repeated divine miracles is a more divine action than one of repeated interventions.” Whilst he supported this classical view of God as simultaneously creating and sustaining the whole universe, he couldn’t see the natural universe as clear evidence for this God. He followed Kant in suggesting that the moral ‘categorical imperative’ was the best evidence for God.

The abstracts of the conference papers are available at: www.evolution-rome2009.net. In due course the proceedings will be published.

Catholicism a New Synthesis

by Edward Holloway

Pope John Paul II gave the blueprint for catechetical renewal with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Catholicism: A New Synthesis seeks to show why such teaching makes perfect sense in a world which has come of age in scientific understanding. It offers a way out of the current intellectual crisis, a way which is both modern and orthodox.

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The Road From Regensburg

Papal Encouraged Dialogue in Search of a Modern Apologetic

New Archbishop Brings Regensburg Inspiration to Bear

In the press conference announcing his appointment as Archbishop of Westminster Vincent Nichols mentioned as top of his priorities helping families to live their faith with courage in a challenging environment. He then went on to argue that “real social community cohesion will not be achieved on a purely secular model.” In his recently published book, *The Nation that God Forgot*, he comments:

“A society which limits itself – and its education – to a positivistic understanding of reason [limited to what can be positively seen] will find itself unable to determine shared moral principles and values. Such a society will lack cohesion. The rigorously secular, liberal project of community cohesion is mistaken in its fundamental view of the human person and simply will not work.”

Five days after the Pope’s Regensburg lecture Archbishop Nichols issued a very balanced reflection upon it in which he wrote:

“[T]he main conclusion Pope Benedict XVI draws is directly relevant to us. In his thinking we in the West are shooting ourselves in the foot in our search for mutual understanding between faiths and cultures by reducing our understanding of reason [... we are] reduced to using focus groups to try and discover what is acceptable and right. There is a key sentence in Pope Benedict’s lecture: ‘A reason which is deaf to the divine and which relegates religion to the realm of sub cultures is incapable of entering into the dialogue of cultures today.’”

Another Bishop’s Papal-inspired Evangelisation – 8th Century

In his general audience of 11th March last Pope Benedict spoke about St Boniface, “the Apostle of Germany”.

Having failed in his first evangelization attempt he got counsel and an official mission from Pope Gregory II. He then “promoted the encounter between the Roman-Christian culture and the Germanic culture. He knew in fact that to humanise and evangelise the culture was an integral part of his mission as a bishop. Transmitting the ancient patrimony of Christian values, he implanted in the German peoples a new style of life that was more human, thanks to which the inalienable rights of the person were better respected. As an authentic son of St. Benedict, he knew how to unite prayer and work – manual and intellectual – pen and plough.”

Pope on Purpose of His Pontificate

In his 10th March letter *To The Bishops Of The Catholic Church Concerning The Remission Of The Excommunication Of The Four Bishops Consecrated By Archbishop Lefebvre* Pope Benedict says the first duty of a Pope and the top priority of his pontificate is captured by St Peter’s phrase:

“‘Always be prepared to make a defence to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you’ (1 Pet 3:15). In our days, when in vast areas of the world the faith is in danger of dying out like a flame which no longer has fuel, the overriding priority is [...] to show men and women the way to [...] that God whose face we recognise in a love which presses ‘to the end’ (cf. Jn 13:1) – in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. The real problem at this moment of our history is that [...] humanity is losing its bearings, with increasingly evident destructive effects.”

He describes anew the contradiction at the heart of that ‘tolerance’ which is built upon relativist rationalism:

“At times one gets the impression that our society needs to have at least one group to which no tolerance may be shown; which one can easily attack and hate. And should someone dare to approach them – in this case the Pope – he too loses any right to tolerance; he too can be treated hatefully, without misgiving or restraint.”

Cardinal Ruini Argues an *a Priori* Aspect to Regensburg Philosophy of Science

Nine days before the Pope’s letter was published the recently retired Vicar of Rome, Cardinal Ruini, gave a talk analysing the priorities of this pontificate. Sandro Magister has recommended this on his website (www.chiesa) given the very engaging overview of Papal priorities it offers. However we would demur on the philosophy of science which the Cardinal, with some justification, draws out of the Pope’s Regensburg lecture. It seems to us that he is influenced by Cardinal Schönborn whose approach we discuss in our first Editorial Comment in the current *Letters* section.

Ruini begins:

“The first effort of the pontificate is therefore to reopen the road to God: [...] the initiative belongs to God, and this initiative has a name, Jesus Christ: [...] There are therefore two paths, that of our search for God and that of God who comes in search of us [...] This brings us to [...] prayer. This is not only personal prayer, but also and above all [...] the liturgical prayer of the Church. [...] We can speak of a ‘Christological’ or ‘Christocentric’ priority of the pontificate.”

Another important aspect of the “first priority [...] is] the purpose of opening contemporary reason to God”. The Cardinal points out that in Benedict’s “important” Regensburg address he “develops a ‘criticism from within’ of scientific technological rationality, which today exercises cultural leadership.” He focuses upon the Pope’s emphasis, which we have drawn out before in this column, that the influential depiction of reason through a reductionist philosophy of science denies reference to a transcendent organiser *and* cannot found itself. Ruini implies that the Pope’s line of argument was that this reductionism arises from an unjustified transference of scientific reductionism to philosophy – a sort of forgetfulness of what was validly and completely left out in order for experimental

“If we affirm the exclusion of ‘form’ as intrinsic to science’s discovery and description of deterministic physical structure there must needs be a pressure to maintain it in our metaphysics.”

methodology to progress. Concerning what he says “may be the most profound problem and also the drama of our present civilization” the Cardinal argues:

“Science in fact, owes its successes to its rigorous methodological limitation to that which can be experienced and measured. But if this limitation is universalised, by applying it not only to scientific research but to reason and human understanding as such, it becomes unsustainable and inhuman, since it would prevent us from rationally pondering the decisive questions of our lives [...] and would force us to entrust the answer to these questions solely to our sentiments or arbitrary choices, detached from reason.”

We would agree that such philosophical “limitation” or reductionism is a “profound problem” for our civilization and that this is related to a reductive interpretation of successful science. But we would not concur that this latter interpretation is valid. As we’ve argued in the above-mentioned *Comment* we disagree with Schönborn that scientific methodology is intrinsically reductionist. We think that the root of reductionism is, somewhat paradoxically, the traditional support of holism through the quasi-dualistic ontology of the physical whereby the formal realm was conceived as floating between the concrete material realm and that of sustaining spiritual mind.

If we affirm the above limitation, or exclusion of ‘form’, as *intrinsic*, even essential to science’s very fruitful discovery and description of deterministic physical structure there must needs be a pressure to maintain it in our metaphysics.

The only reason against such a move must prescind from the (supposedly) reductionist results of science and thus be *a priori* to science. Such philosophy will be cut off from concrete reality as observed and invite idealism – unless we perversely treat science as so different from normal human observation as virtually not to come into this category. True, culture-saving philosophy must be a reflection upon observation of the cosmos. Ruini does suggest that Pope Benedict’s argument

is an “analysis, non-scientific but philosophical, of the conditions that make science possible”, stating also that this rejection of philosophical reductionism is not a proof but “the best hypothesis”. A metaphysics involving talk of the epistemological “conditions” – instead of “encounter” and discovery” – for the operation of (an aspect of) reason, seems significantly closer to idealism than the Aristotelianism and Thomism of Catholic tradition.

The Regensburg address does seem to lend some support to the Cardinal’s interpretation. The Pope argues that modern scientific reason is based “on a synthesis between Platonism (Cartesianism) and empiricism, a synthesis confirmed by the success of technology.” These “two poles” involve respectively the “presuppos[ition of] the mathematical structure of matter, its intrinsic rationality, which makes it possible to understand how matter works and use it efficiently”, which wonderfully “correspond[s with] our spirit”, and our own experimental activation of “nature’s capacity to be exploited for our purposes”.

It is possible to argue that when the Pope talks of a “self-limitation of reason”, he is referring to a sort of forgetfulness of the former “pole” such that “only the kind of certainty resulting from the interplay of mathematical and empirical elements can be considered scientific”, a “canon” to which all the “human sciences” must refer for validity. The Pope argues in his Regensburg lecture that this is a false restriction: “Modern scientific reason quite simply has to accept the [...] former] pole [...] on which its methodology has to be based.” This aspect of scientific reason “bears within itself a question which points beyond itself and beyond the possibilities of its methodology”.

Our point is that the modern “self-limitation of reason”, the reductive philosophical interpretation of our holistic knowledge of matter, has followed upon that very knowing by observation, of which modern science is a powerful aspect. This is a *false* interpretation of successful

science. It has, does and will continue to hold back science as well as religion. The reductive philosopher of science is like the man who says “I do not exist”: he vocally denies what, in deciding to speak/act intelligently, he psychologically affirms. The problem is not so much a forgetfulness of a perception *a priori* to the activity of science but an active denial of an inherent aspect of active science, the holistic reality of matter.

Cardinal Tauran on Need for Magisterial Development Concerning Nature of Man

At a March conference in Rome Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, argued that Popes Paul VI and John Paul II said that inter-religious dialogue requires respect and “reciprocity in every area,” especially in the area of religious freedom. The current Pope has reaffirmed this, in particular emphasising religious freedom in Muslim countries. Still though, the Cardinal suggested, the Church has not elaborated “a systematic treatment of the principle of reciprocity” nor provided “concrete indications for its application.” (see our next issue).

Vigorous Debate About Islamic influence Upon West

A French scholar Sylvain Gouguenheim a year ago published a much discussed book, *Aristotle au Mont Saint-Michel*, arguing that the influence of Greek culture upon the West was mainly direct and only peripherally from Islamic culture – which was on balance defensive of Qur’anic doctrine and against Greek insight. Prominent French newspapers and scholars have taken sides in a vehement debate. Some on both sides have levelled accusations against others of placing political expediency above rigorous scholarship.

Notes From Across the Atlantic

by Fr Richard John Neuhaus



Richard John Neuhaus died on 8th January this year at the age of seventy-two. Here are some of his ever pertinent reflections from across the years.

BIBLICAL TRANSLATION AND THE HERMENEUTIC OF RUPTURE

1. There are, however, other movements afoot. When the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) came out in 1989, Canadians jumped the gun and started using it in the Mass. Rome jumped on the Canadians, noting that there were doctrinal problems with the NRSV, which was in some instances more an interpretation than a translation. What is called “inclusive language,” for example, substituted the third person plural for “he” and “him” in Old Testament passages that the Church has always understood to refer to Christ. The Canadians got to work on revising the NRSV to meet Rome’s objections and report that they have now received official approval for their rendering of the lessons used in Sunday Mass. (A further advantage of the Catholic edition of the RSV is that, unlike the Canadian Revised New Revised Standard Version, it is a complete Bible, meaning the same text can be used for study and for liturgical purposes.) But now there may be a question about whether the National Council of Churches (NCC), which holds the copyright for the RSV and NRSV, will go along with Canada’s RNRSV. (03/07)

2. Meanwhile – are you still with me? – other English-speaking conferences, led by the UK and Australia, decided to undertake their own revision of the NRSV. The project was going along swimmingly until, quite abruptly, the NCC let it be known that it would not give permission for the NRSV to be

used in the form proposed. So the Brits and Aussies are now thinking about using the Jerusalem Bible (JB) as the basis of their new lectionary. The Jerusalem Bible has its origins in a French project and made its first appearance in English in 1966. In 1985 a thoroughly “updated” revision was issued in English, the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB). The JB has an imprimatur for study purposes but not for liturgical use. (One notes that, after some hassle, it was decided that the Scripture references in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* would be “adapted” texts from the RSV and NRSV.) So this would seem to leave us with the prospect of a Canadian RNRSV, a Brit-Aussie RNJB, and of course the American NAB – the last being in a constant state of revision, which makes it now, give or take an R or two, the RRRNAB. (It may be hard to believe, but in 1985, I think it was, *Forbes* magazine declared the Catholic Church to be the most efficiently managed international institution in the world.) The Second Vatican Council called for a common biblical text for each language group, preferably one produced in ecumenical cooperation. The Catholic edition of the RSV fits that description perfectly, but the bishops of the Antilles are alone in recognising that. The upshot of all this is that, for the foreseeable future, American Catholics at Mass will be compelled to endure the clumsy novelties and embarrassing gaucheries of the ever evolving NAB. It really does seem that there ought to be an alternative other than moving to Bermuda. (03/07)

3. Of course it’s a lie, but the sheer brazenness of it elicits something akin to respect. It’s this week’s new Bible translation (it does seem there is one every week), which is, as is all too often the case, no translation at all. This one is called *The Inclusive New Testament* and is published by an outfit called Priests for Equality, in Hyattsville, Maryland. Read what Anne Carr, professor of theology at the University of Chicago, no less, says about it: “The text reads smoothly and beautifully, betraying no other agenda than a faithful rendition of the New Testament.” Uh huh. Then read the allegedly faithful rendition of, for instance, Colossians 3:18ff. But first recall the passage (Revised Standard Version): “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.” And so forth. Now the same (so to speak) passage in *The Inclusive New Testament*: “You who are in committed relationships, be submissive to each other. This is your duty in Christ Jesus. Partners joined by God, love each other. Avoid any bitterness between you.” And so forth. What to do when faced with a problematic text? Simply to say it is wrong might offend the faithful. Explaining how it really says what one wishes it to say takes effort, and may be unpersuasive. The much easier, albeit dishonest, thing is to rewrite the text and call it a translation. Professor Carr is the author of *Transforming Grace*. Watch for her next book, *Transforming Texts*. (11/95)

“properly liberal Tablet types [...] cannot help but be nervous about what their Anglican friends will think of them.”

CORMAC MURPHY O’CONNOR ON THE CHURCH

Long ago, when I was a student at Concordia College (now Concordia University) in Austin, Texas, I was greatly impressed by a sermon that kept returning to the theme, “God has no grandchildren. He only has children.” The preacher’s point was that faith cannot be inherited; each of us become children of God by our own act of faith. I do not reject that insight when I observe that, in saying Mass today, there are few parts of the rite that so consistently touch my heart as the phrase before the Sign of Peace, “Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church.” The Church does believe with me, and for me. We do have grandparents and brothers and sisters and cousins and a host of the faithful both here and in glory who sustain us in faith. This truth was brought to mind in reading an address on “The Question of Authority” by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor of Westminster in England. He cites the commentary by Henri de Lubac on the statement by the third-century Origen, “For myself, I desire to be truly ecclesiastic.” I have written a good bit on what it means to be an “ecclesiastical Christian,” and some say they are puzzled by the phrase. I mean what de Lubac writes in *The Splendor of the Church*: “Anyone who is possessed by a similar desire will not find it enough to be loyal or obedient to perform –exactly everything demanded by his profession of the Catholic faith. Such a man will have fallen in love with the beauty of the house of God; the Church will have stolen his heart.” Which is to say that Christ has stolen his heart. Murphy-O’Connor notes that today the word “authority” is so problematic because it is habitually associated with power. But ecclesial authority is grounded in love, the love of God in Christ. He writes: “The Church has nothing to offer but Jesus Christ. The reality that the Church offers to our world is Christ, his gift of forgiveness and his gift of love. These are given in his word, in his sacraments, in his presence, through

the power of the Holy Spirit. Like Peter in the Acts of Apostles, we say, ‘I have neither silver nor gold but I give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, walk,’ and Peter then took him by the hand and helped him to stand up (Acts 3:6-7). If Christ’s is the authority of the Church, Peter is the model of its exercise. He is also a sign of the paradox which is our experience of human weakness and God-given strength. Peter was given the power of the keys, but it was not because he was strong or because he was faithful. He was, for some considerable time, neither. He betrayed Jesus out of his own mouth. His shame and his moral collapse at that moment was utterly disabling. Surely Peter is the least authoritative and trustworthy of founders? One might think so; but it is here that something of the mystery of God’s graciousness and freedom is revealed, and, as with the cross, we discover a truth which is a source of incomprehension (perhaps even scandal) to many. The answer is that we can trust Peter precisely because he has fallen, because he is weak, because he is forgiven, and because he is raised up to service. We trust him because in him we see God’s power working in our human weakness. Peter knew from his own experience the depth of the gift he offered; he knew that it was neither his gift nor his authority but that of the One he denied and yet loved. Like each one of us, he experienced not only his own need of forgiveness; he experienced first hand from where that forgiveness comes. He was both empowered and commissioned to go out and to offer that same forgiveness to the whole of mankind. He was indeed the rock on which the Church was founded. She, like Peter, speaks not out of any kind of false strength, but out of her experience of weakness. And she speaks God’s truth that she lives and experiences every day. This is the authentic voice of the Church, a voice enriched with the gifts our Lord has given her and emboldened and quickened with the authority with which he has invested her:

‘Go therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and know that I am with you always, even to the end of time.’” (2/03) (cf Joe Carola’s article *The Sinful Priest: Minister of the Church’s Faithfulness*, *Faith* Nov ‘08)

THE TABLET ON POPE JOHN PAUL II

“Collective Spirituality Behind Youth Crowds for Pope?” asks the headline of a story in *Religion Watch*. We don’t usually use the word “collective”, but some Christians, the apostle Paul included, do think Christianity is a corporate thing, as, for example, in “Church”. The report is based on a sniffishly dismissive article in *The Tablet* (London) on how the pope manages to attract crowds of hundreds of thousands and even millions all over the world. “The Pope believes in a powerful, visible and obedient Church. The large assemblies of Catholics who congregate during his pastoral visits are the best expression of this muscular Christianity.... It is interesting to note that those who organise the youth days are the trusted ‘Pope’s legions’: Opus Dei, the Focolare, Comunione e Liberazione, charismatics and the rest, while those who attend are often the vast mass of drifters, of semi-believers, those who seek the warmth and emotion of a mass meeting, whether it be Woodstock, a Billy Graham rally or St. Peter’s Square.” In fact, events such as the recent world youth gathering in Paris are organised by the local church, but more interesting is the reassurance that properly liberal *Tablet* types would not be caught dead attending, never mind helping to organise, such gatherings of the great unwashed. “Charismatics and the rest” is a particularly nice touch. It has even been rumoured that this pope has approved of eating with tax collectors and sinners. The more decorous Catholics of England cannot help but be nervous about what their Anglican friends will think of them. (2/98)



The Truth Will Set You Free EXTRA: Briefly Defending the Pope

By Fr Hugh MacKenzie, Editor of Faith, and Parish Priest
of Willesden Green

GREATER SHOCK THAT POPE IS A CATHOLIC THAN AT PRIME-TIME ABORTION ADVERTS

What has been happening? The press have reported and supported various attacks upon the Pope, including from numerous heads of governments and even Catholics.

For instance? Just before last Christmas he was widely accused of attacking homosexuals.

What had he actually done? He hadn't mentioned this group but had said that the complementarity of male and female is important and is being undermined and obscured today in western culture. Certainly his speech was indirectly supporting traditional marriage – but then he is a Catholic.

Other examples? Last month he was widely accused of trying to undermine Jewish-Christian respect.

What had he actually done? An act of charity, for Christian unity: He had made the first tentative step along the long road of reconciling four Bishops who were excommunicated from the Church in the 90's. One of these Bishops had perversely denied the Holocaust gas chambers. But many of the Pope's statements show that he in no way supports such sentiments. Furthermore he has been a consistent defender of respectful Jewish-Christian dialogue. Some Jewish leaders defended him.

What's the latest example? In March he was accused of encouraging the AIDS epidemic in Africa.

What had he actually done? He unsurprisingly repeated another well-known position taken by Catholic authorities: condom promotion makes the problem as a whole worse.

What is this Catholic emphasis? Officially promoting and distributing condoms to those involved in promiscuous behaviour involves official support for and cooperation with this behaviour. All acknowledge that such behaviour is at the heart of the AIDS epidemic. Officially aiding and abetting such behaviour will make it more frequent – as well as implicating officialdom in the cause of the crisis.

What is the theory here? Catholic moral teaching and common law acknowledge that pro-actively enabling a behaviour which is wrong makes you party to the act. You are responsible for the act. You encourage the act. The Catholic Church is indeed alone in teaching that officially giving out condoms fundamentally undermines any other official discouragement of promiscuous behaviour. In a permissive culture such official ambivalence actually encourages the psychology beneath the behaviour, increasing its prevalence across the target group and beyond.

Why does this increase HIV? Whilst in a particular act condom use makes the spread of STD's less likely (as many studies have shown, though the actual failure rate is accepted as 30%), still, over time, amongst many individuals and the society as a whole it makes the basic problematic behaviour more frequent and more ingrained, inevitably, after a certain period of time, cancelling out the extra 'safety' gained by the reckless promiscuous individual person starting to use condoms.

What example might illustrate the point? If a school gave boxing gloves to bullies, without parental consent, it would just make the problem worse. If the government prominently promoted free rubber bullets for armed robbers they would become party

to the violence and undermine their authority and role in civilization. Violent robbery would be encouraged and increase, and, eventually the rate of killing would increase.

Does condom use in a particular act of sex outside marriage make the act worse or better? Given that the act is in an intrinsically disordered context this is difficult to answer. In a particular act there might be, in one sense, a positive effect of partially mitigating the risk of killing the other partner.

Is there any independent support for these theoretical effects of public condom promotion? Yes. Increasing amounts of academic studies show that in the population as a whole promiscuity increases, the absolute amount of condom failures increase, etc. etc. (cf. Professor Paton's *The Economics of Secret Abortions and Emergency Birth Control*, Faith July '07).

What evidence is there? One example is Uganda, one of the very few places where official support for condom use is played down. It is one of the v. few places in Africa where the prevalence of AIDS has been significantly reduced. HIV decreases wherever & only wherever abstinence increases.

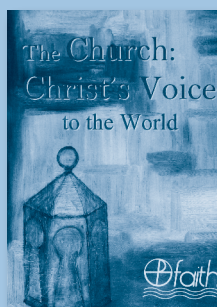
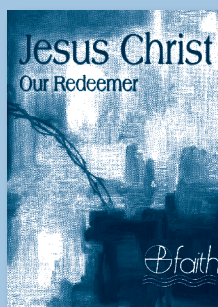
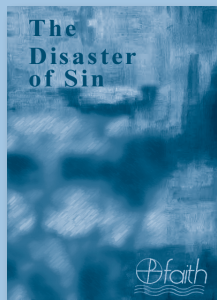
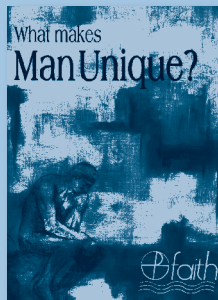
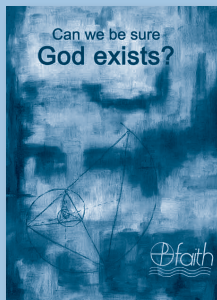
What about our own country? For decades we have had an *increase in both* official support for condom use amongst promiscuous teenagers, *and* teenage STD's and unwanted pregnancies. Both these processes look set to continue. The latest initiative is to advertise condoms on television before the 9 pm threshold: so the effective support continues apace. If Catholic teaching and our experience of recent decades are anything to go by the destructive physical and spiritual results of promiscuity and fornication will also continue.

What about condom use in marriage where one party has HIV? This is a very different question. Marital sex is a very different thing from promiscuous sex. The former is a fundamentally wholesome and holy thing, the latter a fundamentally disordered and false thing. The active introduction of artificial contraception into the former contradicts its fundamental nature and orientation, destroying its unitive power. Therefore the Church's moral teaching states that condom use in marriage is a grave injury upon a good act. This is not the case outside of marriage where the act is in its very nature gravely disordered. In the latter case the Church is not directly teaching about private condom use but public condom *promotion*.

What can such a couple do? Probably the most loving thing to do is to abstain, the only sure way of not passing on the deadly virus. If they mutually agree to take the risk, the act must be orientated to its true purpose: unitive through procreative (see *Faith* March 2006, Editorial, *Confusion over the Meanings of Marriage*). The attempt to mitigate, by a certain partial degree, the risk to physical life of their sexual act cannot involve destroying its orientation to the fostering of new and spiritual life (see Professor Luke Gormally's *Note on the use of the Condom by a Spouse within Marriage to prevent the Transmission of HIV*, in *Faith*, July 2006, and his fuller March article).

Isn't this lacking in compassion for those who are at risk? No – the Catholic Church wants to support the dignity of all concerned. It has a good record concerning the fostering of families, communities and western civilization. And today it is acknowledged as one of the foremost providers of support for AIDS sufferers and for the development of appropriate health care facilities in Africa.

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

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