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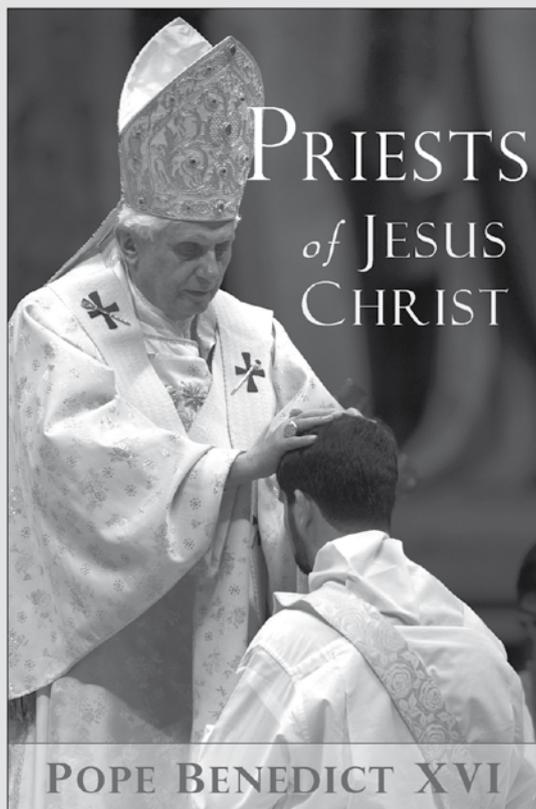
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Editor Hugh MacKenzie, St. Mary Magdalen's, Clergy House, Peter Avenue, Willesden Green, London NW10 2DD, Tel 020 8451 6720, editor@faith.org.uk

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

Book Reviews William Massie, 187 Pickering Road, Hull, HU4 6TD, reviews@faith.org.uk

Advertising Manager Scott Deeley, St Paul's, 16 Birdston Rd, Milton of Campsie, Stirlingshire G66 8BU, advertising@faith.org.uk

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The Attack Upon the Sexes: Fostering the Papal Defence *Editorial*

“This at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis, 2:23)

Pope Benedict has been the object of fierce attacks over the past couple of months. Now, that a Pope is attacked for being a Catholic should not surprise us too much. After all, at the Last Supper, the Lord said plainly to His Apostles, “If the world hates you, remember that it hated me before you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you do not belong to the world, because my choice withdrew you from the world, therefore the world hates you.” (Jn 15:18-19) Then Jesus goes on to say that if those who belong to Him do suffer persecution and difficulties from others “it will be on my account that they will do all this.” (Jn 15:21)

The ferocious attacks on Pope Benedict have worn the mask of rational outrage, but when analysed carefully there seems to be very little rationality in the anger. Joan Bakewell, in the February 6th edition of *The Times*, decided that the Pope’s decision to lift decrees of excommunication from four Lefebvrist bishops, one of whom absurdly denies the historical veracity of the mass extermination of Jews during the Second World War, should be linked to his Regensburg Address: in her view this was a sign of an increased antagonism on the part of the Vatican towards other religions. Pope Benedict was for her the villain of the piece. What is sad is that such a view could be taken seriously, let alone published: it is based on speculation, supposition of the motives of others and no serious attempt to look at the evidence of the Pope’s writings, addresses and actions both before his election to the Papacy and afterwards. Any serious thinker would acknowledge that he has shown a remarkable commitment not only to relations with Jews but also to dialogue with other religions. At the same time, he has reaffirmed the uniqueness of the Church and the universal significance of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Redeemer (see our Road from Regensburg column).

Indeed, there has been little attempt even in Catholic circles to give a public and sustained support of Pope Benedict throughout these difficulties. The fact that even Bishops and Cardinals have not just criticised the Pope but have also kept silence, giving him little support, speaks volumes about those august bodies. Many have sat back and watched; others have made statements reaffirming the Church’s commitment to working with the other religions and with the Jews; but few have stood up and robustly supported the Pope at a time when he needed them. In Gethsemane too the Apostles ran away and hid, or at best looked on, when the Lord was taken prisoner. We are all weak – but it *is* a weakness and their silence has not been a virtue. There is a reason why Cardinals sport the colour of red and it is not on account of their own dignity.

The personalised nature of the criticisms of the Pope, the inability to look at hard evidence and the unwillingness

to ascribe anything but evil intent to the Pope’s motives make one suspect that it is not one decision that is the real problem: it is really about the fact that the nature of Catholicism and the role of the Pope have at their core a claim so audacious as to provoke outrage. In modern secular Britain – indeed, in the modern secular West – any claim that there is anything like a real and absolute Truth is viewed with suspicion at the very least and most of the time with a sustained antagonism. This is what the Catholic Church does claim, however: that there is an absolute truth about Man, about the world, and about God, and that all this has been revealed and articulated in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. This means that the identity, the mission, indeed the life of Jesus Christ makes a fundamental and absolute claim upon every human life. It means that no human life is complete if it is not a life lived in union with Christ.

“Some Catholics tend to minimise the need for apologetics and the need for theological and philosophical reflection in the Church.”

It is here that we hit the central problem and it is something that has recurred not just during the Pontificate of Benedict XVI but also in that of John Paul II, Paul VI and beyond. The idea that someone’s life is lacking something if it is not lived in Jesus Christ, smacks to the modern world as a denial of liberty. For many it seems that the Church is an oppressive force that wishes to squeeze out human freedom and impose on everyone its own vision of what it means to be human. Now, within the modern notion of human freedom there is a central thesis: every human being is an individual who should be allowed the maximum amount of freedom to do what they like with their lives and to get the most that they can out of it. This radical individualism is reflected in every aspect of modern living; in education, politics, economics, relationships and the media. In nearly every sphere what counts is the autonomy of the individual.

Failure of Libertarianism

The fact that this notion is not the whole truth, that it is a perversion of the truth of Man, has been revealed slowly but surely by the fact that such an idea is unliveable. It is unliveable at the level of society: hence, in Britain we have a government that lauds the freedom of the individual (and it should be noted in passing, but noted very well, that our present generation of politicians rarely talk of the “human person” or just of the “person”, but usually of the “individual”) but which has brought in some of the most draconian legislation in Europe designed to control what people say and do on certain issues so that society can proceed in its life as a unity and not just as a mere collection of individuals.

“even Bishops and Cardinals have not just criticised the Pope but have also kept silence”

Many argue that the legislation stipulating the rights of homosexual people not to feel harassed overrides the rights of others to free speech. The very fact that one can have a class of human beings and that this class of persons has real human rights is but one manifestation of the many self-contradictions at the heart of the individualistic concept of life. The economic crisis presently being endured in much of the West and beyond also reflects this truth: the whole meltdown in many ways had its source in that unbridled capitalism that decreed the autonomy of the individual and the moral good of each person being allowed to pursue wealth without any relationship to the rest of human society. The concerns about the environment, so blatantly apocalyptic in many of their expressions, also reveal that human beings have to consider that as individuals they do not have absolute rights to do whatever they wish: there are some actions that really do have harmful consequences upon the rest of the world and therefore there is a morality that needs to be respected if we and the planet are to survive and flourish.

Papal Affront

No human being then is an absolutely autonomous individual who ought to be able to live his or her life without reference to any higher or more demanding truth in order to be complete, to be happy and to be free. It was exactly this point that Pope Benedict sought to highlight in an address he gave three days before Christmas to senior staff in the Vatican. It was greeted by strong protests by gay activists who in the context thought that it was an attack on homosexuality. The media of course did its usual best in stoking up and reporting much of the furore and ire; and it did so with scant regard for what the Pope actually said. People were reported as seeing the Pope's comments as “irresponsible and unacceptable”; they were “hurtful” according an Italian transgender former Member of Parliament, Vladimir Luxuria.

The BBC was most successful and vocal in its reporting of all of this – but then later it had to (shamefacedly?) re-edit its web pages on its website in order to be a little more accurate. It turned out that the Pope had not referred directly to homosexuality at all. It might also be noted that the BBC, like many media outlets, has been inaccurate in its reporting concerning the Bishop Williamson affair: indeed, this author took the liberty of writing to them on two occasions to suggest changes on two different web pages so that the truth of the incidents might be more adequately reported. The BBC changed one page as a consequence: nothing has been heard about the other. In either case, the damage was done and a fundamental misapprehension of the case – that the Pope had readmitted the four bishops in question to the Church – had been allowed to percolate. The fact it happened twice, and in a similar fashion to the Christmas furore, might at

worse suggest malice: at best it suggests incompetence.

The Christmas affair however really reflects the nub of the issue. Some Catholics tend to minimise the need for apologetics and the need for theological and philosophical reflection in the Church. Benedict XVI sees most clearly that there is a battle here that needs to be fought ; on it depend the future of Man and the future of the Church.

“The Pope has once again pointed out the essential connection between the order of the cosmos, the order of the environment and the order of Man.”

Role of the Sexes

So what exactly did he say to arouse so much indignation?

“What is needed is something like a human ecology, correctly understood. If the Church speaks of the nature of the human being as man and woman, and demands that this order of creation be respected, this is not some antiquated metaphysics.

“What is involved here is faith in the Creator and a readiness to listen to the ‘language’ of creation. To disregard this would be the self-destruction of man himself, and hence the destruction of God’s own work.

“What is often expressed and understood by the term ‘gender’ ultimately ends up being man’s attempt at self-emancipation from creation and the Creator. Man wants to be his own master, and alone – always and exclusively – to determine everything that concerns him. Yet in this way he lives in opposition to the truth, in opposition to the Creator Spirit.

“Rain forests deserve indeed to be protected, but no less so does man, as a creature having an innate ‘message’ which does not contradict our freedom, but is instead its very premise.”

The Pope has once again pointed out the essential connection between the order of the cosmos, the order of the environment and the order of Man. To disregard this order is to work against what it means to exist at all, what it means to exist as created beings. We in this sense are not lords of our own order, but recipients of and participants in a deeper and wider order of the created world. It is extraordinary that such a fundamental insight, one which also fits in with the modern insights concerning ecology, should provoke so much protest as it did. Yet the protest is ultimately one against any notion of a *moral* order, that there is an established way of being which demands a change in my behaviour, and that without such a change I am somehow less than I should be, that I am becoming less than what I am made to be. For many this is a denial of freedom; however, the Pope points out that any

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continued

attempt to be free of who and what we are is ultimately self-destructive, because we can only be free as a human person and this implies an order, a pattern in our existence that needs to be respected.

The primary example used by the Pope in all of this is that of gender and human sexuality. It is precisely this area of human living that has proved to be a significant focus in the great discussion about what freedom and happiness really involve and what it means to be a human being. The Pope clearly perceives that there is a real meaning to our human sexuality that is something which is a “given”, something we cannot fashion for ourselves or pretend to be other than it is. The biological order of what it is to be Man is not something that can be disregarded. We are made male and female, man and woman, and attempts to blur distinctions under the seemingly innocuous term “gender” are really attempts to assert that sex should be seen as an autonomous human activity, something which has no other meaning than what the individual wishes to bestow upon it.

Recognising Meaning

The falsehood in this is exposed in the very act of contraception: for a man and woman to contracept implies that they are trying to remove an essential element of sex, something fundamental to its meaning and function, and that is fertility. In doing this, the couple have changed the meaning of their act of sexual intercourse, making it infertile, but thereby they show that there is something which is natural to sex that they are seeking to deny and frustrate. The natural order is that sex is for the furthering of the species: that is what it is designed to do.

“it is the reality of the union of Christ with the human race which is the template for the meaning of the sexes”

Sex itself has a given meaning, a purpose which is natural and fundamental to the human species and which we can deliberately and unnaturally frustrate. It rationally follows that there is also a related meaning to that created sexuality of which sex is one use. This means that the truth that sex is for children really means that there is something naturally given about being male and being female. To deny this is to follow the path of autonomy; however, to follow that road is to deny who and what we really are. Furthermore, the idea that I am just an individual, owing little or nothing to anyone, that I need to be autonomous, seems absurd when we consider our own personal origins: we each owe our conception and birth to a mother and a father; our whole lives involve a series of interlocking relationships with parents, family, friends, teachers, society and so on. No one can ever be an autonomous individual: to be so one would have to remove all those other relationships; but then I would no longer be “me” – I would no longer exist.

This is even more than a point of logic or a conclusion from biological facts.

A recent report from the Children’s Society (*The Good Childhood Enquiry*: www.childrenssociety.org.uk) stated, “Children, whose parents separate are 50% more likely to fail at school, suffer behavioural difficulties, anxiety or depression.” If I am to be who I am truly meant to be, being cut off from one or both of my parents can have a lasting effect on me in my human development. The report continues, “On average, children are less likely to become depressed or aggressive the better parents get on and the more they see their separated father.” It concludes, “So to reduce the level of conflict in family life, parents must give more priority to their relationship. This would do more for children than anything else.”

The God-given institution of marriage is a recognition that the biological foundations of our identity need an environment for their healthy expression and development. It recognises that sex is indeed for children, but that sex also implies much more: it implies publicly committed stable relationships if we are to give our children the best chance of developing healthily and well. It recognises that our sexuality can never just be defined in terms of the autonomous individual: our sexuality is made for relationships, it is made for family. Where this is forgotten, there is always difficulty and confusion, because in the final analysis if I am to know who I am, I need to know who I am *from*.

Therefore it makes sense that the foundational relationship that brings about my life – the relationship of my mother and father – should be a stable and enduring one. Like any relationship it needs an environment or “ecology”, as the Pope puts it, if it is to thrive and grow. This is marriage, the foundation of the integral formation of family. This is why the Church has always taught that marriage is natural to man: it is because family is natural to all of us, no matter what our situation may be, no matter how painful those relationships may have been or become. Marriage also recognises that our relationships with each other are more than physical: they should involve knowledge and love – seeing and accepting the truth and good that each human being is. In this sense marriage, family, sexuality is something inscribed into our identity as human beings and not just a set of social conventions.

Holloway’s Vision

Fr Edward Holloway certainly saw marriage, and the nature of Man as male and female, as more than some accident of evolution. For him, the division of the sexes in the evolution of life had to have some deeper and further purpose. If the whole of the evolving universe was brought into being by God’s creative FIAT, then nothing in it is irrelevant: everything has a function and meaning;

“sex implies publicly committed stable relationships if we are to give our children the best chance of developing healthily and well.”

everything makes some contribution to the overall whole; God does nothing uselessly. We should reflect about this reality before imposing our desires upon it.

As ever in Holloway's thought, the key is the Incarnation itself. For Holloway the division of the sexes came about precisely to facilitate the coming in human nature of the Son of God.

To further most animal species, except some of the more basic forms of life and the earliest ones, sexual intercourse between male and female is needed. This also allows, of course, for greater variety in the species and wider series of on-going developments. For Man too, a man and a woman are needed as well normally: their action together produces a new person, with a soul being directly infused by God. This infusion of the soul is a kind of natural covenant that God has with His creation; whenever a new human being is conceived He gives the soul so that it can be indeed a human being; however, He allows the will of the two parents to be primary in this, so that it is they who decide – even if at times unwittingly! – with their own free will to bring into being a new person. God delegates a wonderful task to us. In that sense, the coming into existence of any new human person is the result of the action of the man and the woman: they consent that the man's initiative should find a fruitful response in the woman.

“When we refuse to give ourselves completely, especially in marriage, we destroy the foundations for a truly mutual and loving relationship”

For the Incarnation of the Divine Person of the Son, however, the primary decision must be with God Himself, not with Man. It is not the result of the free will of creatures, as is normally the case with the begetting of a human person, but the result of God's own Will, His free decision to become one of us. It was His own Will that had as its purpose to create all things so that through His Son made flesh all things might share in His goodness and His life. His coming to be as Man, then, must set aside an element of the natural covenant of sex in which God gives primacy to the decision of man and woman. To be a Man at all, He needs the womb, He needs a Mother – and so her free assent is needed. However, because this is the unique case where the natural covenant of procreation cannot bind God, the male principle, the biological father is set aside. If the human race had been unisexual, there would be no “space” for God's own Sovereign intervention, no space for the natural covenant of procreation to be open to the possibility of the Incarnation. The early division of the sexes makes it possible and therefore the whole covenant of procreation is itself designed to make the Incarnation a reality as part and parcel of God's one Plan.

Jesus and Mary

In this light, the role of the sexes is really about the Incarnation. We are made as human beings for Christ, according to Holloway; but even the fact of being male or being female was made for Him. Indeed the role of Woman has a primary significance. In planning creation this way, in God's one Thought about creation, Mary stands as the peak of evolution, the highpoint of the Universe, the first of all creatures under Christ. In her the meaning of what it means to be female stands clear: without her, Christ cannot become Man. It is her responsiveness, her receptive fruitfulness, that allows the very meaning of creation, the very Centre of the Universe, to happen and to be formed in her womb. In that sense, she embodies and represents the whole of the cosmos, offering of her own self her own substance so that God can become one with us. The union between God and Man that takes place in her is what the universe was made for.

This Union for which we are made finds its achievement in Christ. He comes to bring us Divine Life, Life more abundant. For Holloway, in this identity, as the one who determines and initiates for creation its union with God, Christ embodies what it is to be male and so in His coming as Man He must necessarily be male. In this sense, we begin to see that the biological divisions of male and female are really mirrors of a higher and more fundamental reality. They express what is the greater truth - which is that Christ comes to bring new life to humanity, and humanity is called to have a living, fruitful union with Him. Therefore it is not that we see the relationship of the sexes and apply them analogically to Christ: such a thing implies a certain arbitrariness to our decision. Rather, it is the reality of the union of Christ with the human race which is the template for the meaning of the sexes: the sexes were made for this, they point to it, they mirror it. And the Virgin Birth is not so much an exception to the rule as within the foundation and exemplar, the source of and summit of all other births.

Dignity of the Sexes and Marriage

This is a thrilling and beautiful vision of what it means to be a sexual being and a sexual human being. It means that the meaning of who I am, even in my biology, is part of something greater. For me to be truly myself, I do not need to be left on my own, in some isolated autonomy, where the only meaning to my life is what I give it. That I alone am the one to give meaning to my life may seem attractive at first, but in its heart it is empty and it is brutal, since so many people who live and die in this world have little time, money or resources for such a middle class luxury. This vision of Holloway, and we would dare to suggest that it might be implicitly that of the Church, gives to every human person a real value, role and meaning at every level of their being. To be truly myself, to be truly free, I cannot leave myself on my own: I am made for others, I am made for Christ.

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continued

This is one of the great givens of our creation to which Pope Benedict refers.

Such a vision has many consequences. It helps us see that this Union of Christ and Humanity is the Great Marriage, which is the template for every marriage. As St Paul says in Ephesians 5, the more that the husband in his relationship with his wife reflects the sacrificial love of Christ for His bride the Church, and the more that the wife in her relationship with her husband reflects the self-giving love of the Church for her Bridegroom, the more they will be truly fulfilled and the more they will live up to what they are called to be. Such a call towards complete self-giving in their relationship will have consequences for how they express their loving sexually: any holding back of themselves in any area, will be damaging to their relationship. This is one of the reasons why artificial contraception has had such damage upon marriages and relationships: the couple deliberately withhold their fertility and so no longer give themselves completely to each other; in doing this they deny not just the meaning of sex itself but they also subtract from loving one of its 'givens' – the orientation towards giving oneself completely to one's spouse. This is what Christ has done for us and He is Love Incarnate. When we refuse to give ourselves completely, especially in marriage, we destroy the foundations for a truly mutual and loving relationship, and we no longer live up to the meaning of marriage which is the Great Marriage of total self-giving between Christ and the Church.

The Male Priesthood

This image of the Great Marriage helps us see too the need for a male priesthood. The priest is to stand in Christ's role as Bridegroom in relation to the rest of the Church. He is to live not for himself but for his people. Christ necessarily became male because this is the sex that expresses in its identity most fully His role as Saviour and Life-giver for all humanity, a role that is determining, dynamic and initiating. The priest represents Christ not just spiritually but physically too. For us to have union with God, for which we were made, we need Christ's physical human nature: this is the meaning of the Incarnation. Through Christ, God made Man, we have access to God. The only sex that can articulate and embody Christ's role as Bridegroom and Life-giver to the Church, as the one who is ever present to care for her, is the male one.

There are other points of development that follow from this reflection. However, it can be seen from all this how crucial Pope Benedict's insight really is. For such a vision, our human nature has a value over and above itself, a value that comes from Christ. Part of this value involves esteeming our biological inheritance. The contrary tendency in modern culture, despite its appearance, actually despises our biology and forms part of the new Gnosticism that pervades our times. In this New Age heresy, biology is implicitly seen as something that enslaves us and so in that sense it is despised, it is seen as something negative and bad. However, as we see daily, this leads not to any real emancipation but to a deepening crisis and misery reflected in the broken hearts, minds and lives of so many of our fellow-citizens in our culture.

“the attacks are really not about the man but about the message”

The Pope has wisely pointed out to us the serious dangers that such a vision leads to. He wants to help the Church and humanity to see the true beauty of what it is to be man and woman. He wants to show that Christ comes not to take away our freedom but to return it to us truly. The criticisms of the Holy Father in recent months really have this as their object: once again, the attacks are really not about the man but about the message. Those Catholics who have failed to see this up to now, whether they be laity or clergy, need to open their eyes. Either we continue to allow man to self-destruct, or we do something about it. There is no middle course. If we do face up to the crisis we will not be attacking humanity but saving it; we will not be impeding human freedom but raising it to its perfection. In the Pope's words concluding the speech given in December, “The Church's missionary spirit is nothing other than the drive to share the joy that has been given to us. May that joy always be alive in us, and thus shine forth upon our troubled world.”

Meditation upon Mary, Creation and the Church

When we begin to understand the mystery of the Incarnation, we begin to grasp that God never merely does things *to* us, but always *with* our co-operation. We are always partners in our own salvation. This is why we cannot think of Jesus without also thinking of the Church as his partner. Mary is the first – the most essential and the greatest – partner of God in saving the world, because it is through her that Jesus comes to us. This gives her a unique and special relationship to God *and to the rest of humanity*. This is not a ‘one-off’ job, she has an ongoing vocation which encompasses her whole life and identity at the centre of God’s plan.

We can understand all the key doctrines about Mary in this light. Mary’s Immaculate Conception is the sign that her vocation is rooted in the very foundations of creation before sin ever came about. She is the original Mother of the Living and in her we also see the ‘dawn of redeeming grace’. She is therefore the image or archetype of what the human family in God (ie. the Church) always ought to have been like and what it will be like again through Jesus. She is the Mother of the Church not just because she is *there* at its beginning, but because she *is* its beginning.

Then in the Annunciation Mary answers God on behalf of all humanity in welcoming the Messiah. Her “yes” to Christ sets out the manifesto of her own life and of the whole Church.

This enduring “yes” is then lived out by Mary in her sinless faithfulness, in her intimate discipleship of her Son and in her co-operation in prayer with his Sacrifice on the cross. Through all this, Mary is not just an example of holiness and Christian discipleship. As our mother she actually sums up and conveys in herself the whole nature and work of the Church in her partnership with Christ.

Most importantly Mary also continues in her unique relationship with Christ and with the members of his wider Body – the Church – when she is taken up bodily into heaven at her Assumption. She has now become what we hope to be. So in Mary redemption is complete and the final Church of heaven has been made real. Mary is a sign of hope to all believers. As Mother she spurs the Church onwards to heaven.

Mary now continues to pray for the children who are born to God from her Son’s work. She does not get in the way of his irreplaceable role as our divine Saviour. She loves them because of him and she intercedes for them through him. She is the expert *par excellence* on receiving and responding to grace. She is Mother of Grace because she is herself ‘full of grace’, and as Mother of the Church she constantly gives us Jesus.

Richard John Neuhaus RIP

On January 8th last Fr Neuhaus, Editor-in-chief of *First Things*, passed away from side effects of the cancer he had been suffering from. For a decade we have been very honoured to carry a syndicated column by him, “Notes from Across the Atlantic”. This issue carries his recent words reflecting upon his possibly imminent death.

His prolific writing, manifestly based upon prolific reading, elucidated issues of faith and modern culture, especially in the many areas where the latter has been undermining the former. He was labelled ‘right wing’ and ‘reactionary’ by the *bien pensant*. Yet his expressed beliefs, as well as the fascinating story of his life, belied such tags. A more likely cause of such descriptions was his invariably profound and influential support of integral Catholicism.

He brought out anew the truth of tradition and also “the undoubted achievements of modernity”, in order to serve a modernity at risk of becoming relativistic. His hard-hitting and humorous criticism of those who fostered such a post-modern culture was proportioned to that occasioned by the actual meaning of their quoted words. Whilst exposing the abuse of legitimate power he remained within the bounds of due respect. His influence upon the American ecclesial and political scene, not least through his work with Evangelicals, is widely acknowledged.

Fr Neuhaus has given us probably the most powerful contemporary proof that the pen is mightier than the sword. This will be sorely missed. But we would also be confident that, by the mercy of God, his pen was just a “slight intimation”, to borrow from his words of parting later in this issue, of a work for our world which has only just begun.

May he rest in peace

In April 2007 Fr Neuhaus wrote:

“[T]he bulk of the Regensburg address was directed to Christian intellectuals who, in the name of ‘de-Hellenizing’ Christianity, pit biblical faith against the great synthesis of faith and reason achieved over the centuries of the Christian intellectual tradition. At Regensburg and elsewhere, Benedict has challenged also non-Christian intellectuals to free themselves from the truncated and stifling definition of rationality imposed by the Enlightenment. It is not reasonable, he argues with great intellectual sophistication, to hold that atheism or agnosticism is the default position of rationality. Nor, he insists, can the undoubted achievements of modernity be sustained without reference to transcendent truth.

Husband and Wife in the Light of the Incarnation *by Christina Read*

Inspired by Edward Holloway's vision Dr Christina Read, wife and mother, reflects upon marriage in the light of the Incarnation and the meaning of the sexes. This article is a developed extract of a talk she gave at the 2008 Faith Summer Session in Woldingham, Surrey.

Introduction

Out of love, God creates us. He does not need to make us or our universe, but he creates us because he wants to share the infinite love and happiness of his own life with us. He does this in the Incarnation, the coming of Jesus Christ, God become man. This brings about 'the marriage of all marriages', the marriage between Christ and the Church, between Jesus and the people of God united to him in baptism. It is through this marriage union that God gives us a share in his divine life and so fulfils his plan in creating us. Everything in the universe is made with a view to this union between Christ and the Church, through which God fulfills his plan. It is only in the light of this union that anything can be fully understood. And so this also is how we will understand marriage between a man and a woman: from its relationship to the most important marriage of all, the marriage between Christ and the Church.

In this article we shall try to bring out how marriage flows from and serves the purpose of the coming of Christ and his union with the Church. We shall be building upon the basic reality that it is through marriage that we are called to co-create the people to whom Christ has come to give divine life. It is through marriage that we make and form the people who are to make up the Church which he has come to unite to himself. This is the great and essential work of marriage in the plan of God.

Marriage is Natural

From the very beginning marriage is part of God's plan and so is entirely natural for us. In the book of Genesis human life at its very creation is immediately described as both male and female and as made to multiply, to make more people.

There is not just to be one sex, but two, to cooperate and help each other in a relationship that binds them together in a very distinctive and definite way: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" Adam says of Eve. And the writer of Genesis continues: "therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh." This extraordinarily intimate union, given the task of multiplying so that there are more human beings made in the image and likeness of God, is what we call marriage. Indeed, the writer of Genesis is already using the special terms man and wife (not just man and woman) and describing such a profound union between the two that it can be termed 'one flesh'.

From the beginning God made it this way for our good. Jesus himself had to remind his hearers of this when they questioned him about divorce, which in his day meant putting aside a wife you didn't want any more: "for your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matthew 19:8).

Despite the increasing divergence between secular and biblical understandings of marriage, signs of this original plan of God are still evident in the world around us, e.g. the fact that living together before getting married increases rather than decreases the risk of divorce and the fact that marriage is the best place for bringing up children.

Holloway's thought offers a profound illumination of the essential place which this male-female relationship has always had in the divine plan. Centred upon the Incarnation as the meaning of all things (cf. articles on "The Primacy of Christ" in *Faith* January 2006, 2007 and 2008), the separation of the sexes into male and female finds its primary meaning in God becoming man, where the female principle is essential to the enfleshing of the *Logos*. For the eternal, uncreated second person of the Trinity truly to become man he will take on human nature by being conceived and formed in the womb of a woman, like all human beings. This unique conception is achieved by the direct determination of the female principle by God himself (i.e., the Holy Spirit overshadowing the womb of the virgin Mary) and by Mary's free cooperation with this act of God.

This unique case of conception – for which the universe is made – is the foundation and exemplar of the procreative ministry of the union of the male and female human creature (fulfilling the command "be fruitful and multiply"). In this latter instance which involves the creation of a new person, the role of 'determining' the conception (which is God's alone in the Incarnation) belongs to the man, whilst the woman contributes in the same way as Mary (in accordance with the indispensable role of the female principle in bringing about the Incarnation).

In this way the union of male and female in marriage not only takes the Incarnation as its point of reference (as regards its purpose and meaning in the deepest sense) but also serves the Incarnation. For if God is to share human nature with the whole human race through the Incarnation, there *need* to be other human beings sharing this nature by virtue of their inheritance of it through conception of a woman. Unlike Jesus Christ, these human creatures are not eternal uncreated persons and will come into being, not only through Divine decision, but also through the decision and determination of the creature, a male principle determining the cooperative female, as is the case between a man and woman in human procreation.

Thus Holloway's fundamental insight is that the natural orientation of marriage towards family is focused upon the coming and person of Christ. All is for him, including all matter, and the distinction and complementary character of the sexes.

“sex is for family within the loving union of marriage”

Marriage as Incarnational

We discover the full depth and wonder of marriage when we look beyond the beginning of creation to its *purpose* – that is the coming of Jesus Christ to share the life and love of God with us through his union with the Church.

It is clear that the marriage union reflects the relationship between God and his people, between Christ and the Church and there are various examples in the Bible where God’s love for us in Christ is described in nuptial terms. But that doesn’t mean that God’s love is copying ours or is an image of ours. God doesn’t model his behaviour on ours. It is quite the other way around. St Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians:

“Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her... ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.’ This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church” (Eph 5: 25, 28-32)

So the love of husband and wife in marriage is meant to be like the love of Christ and the Church; it is meant to be a reflection of it. And the union of husband and wife in marriage can only be like the union between Christ and the Church by *sharing* in it. And that is what Christian marriage is: a sharing in the love between Jesus and the Church, a participation in the marriage of Christ and the Church. The marriage between Christ and his Church is the key for understanding marriage.

Covenant

The love relationship between God and the people he has made has this special name, covenant. Going back to the Old Testament the covenant referred to the bond that God establishes with his people, an utterly faithful and unbreakable bond described in terms of a nuptial relationship in which even if the people of Israel are unfaithful, God is always faithful. This Old Testament description is a preparation for the new and everlasting covenant in Jesus Christ in which God unites himself to us by becoming incarnate as a human being and living, dying and rising for us so that we can enjoy perfect union with God in and through him. This is the covenant between Christ and all those that are thus united to him in the Church. It is the fulfilment of the very being and pattern of creation.

As the marriage union between a man and a woman is a sharing in this union between Christ and the Church, so, like the love between Christ and the Church, married love is also a *covenant*. It is not simply a *contract*. It is modelled on and grounded in the covenantal love that God has for us, which means it is a ‘God kind of love’. Like God’s love it is unbreakable, utterly faithful, without conditions, essentially fruitful, life-giving – *because this is how God creates and loves*, this is how Jesus loves the Church, giving himself up for her. In Christian marriage we have this amazing reality that our human love is taken up into God’s commitment so that it can be kept. (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) n. 1639). We might not be able to love perfectly, totally, unconditionally but *God* can, and when we make our commitment to this

kind of loving on our wedding day it is taken up into God’s commitment so that it can be kept. The Catechism calls it a “covenant guaranteed by God’s fidelity” (n.1640).

As a reflection and continuation of Christ’s relationship with the Church, marriage is thus also a witness to God’s love. It is a visible sign, showing forth the union between Christ and the Church in which it is a participation. As such it is the high point of that which just being a man and being a woman is the seminal indication.

Looking back over the years I’ve been married, I see the marriage covenant is like a daily miracle. How can my husband and I live this, with all our weaknesses and inadequacies? And yet we do, because our marriage isn’t a little private contract between ourselves, but is located in the infinite perfection and abundance of God’s love for us in Christ and is sustained by that love of God in Christ.

Because marriage is a covenant modelled on the covenant that Jesus, the Bridegroom, has with his Bride the Church, it has the characteristics of being lifelong, faithful and fruitful.

Lifelong and Faithful

Marriage is unbreakable, a life-long bond ‘till death do us part’. It is *indissoluble*, it cannot be dissolved; it cannot be undone while both parties are living. It is an irrevocable and complete commitment of self made before God and sealed by him.

Marriage’s participation in the Christ-Church covenant makes it utterly faithful, year in year out, whatever happens. It is an *unconditional* love; it is not based on implicit conditions. There are no ifs and no buts. In marriage we do not say “I commit to you because I believe that what I like about you will not change.” Like Christ, with Christ, we forsee the Cross. Unlike other forms of Christian love the unconditional faithfulness of married love is *exclusive*. This love is just between me and my husband; the way I love my husband is just for him, I do not love anyone else in that unique way that belongs to marriage, in which the sexes are re-oned. It does not mean that I do not love other people, but the love that belongs to the marriage relationship is for him alone, and his for me alone. This is different from the way a priest or religious sister or brother loves. As they do not have a particular commitment to one person they are freed up to love everyone. But in marriage it is different. Our strength is this fidelity to this one person, a fidelity upon which the love of our family life is built and indeed the loving that goes out beyond our family into the world around us.

Ultimately this is the fidelity of Christ. As married people our efforts are drawn into the perfect fidelity Christ has to the Church (cf. CCC n. 2365). *He* is our rock. And this is very important because human beings are not perfect and do let us down. But Christ is always faithful. It is as though his fidelity embraces and holds secure our fidelity.

Husband and Wife in the Light of the Incarnation

continued

Fruitful

Finally, like God's love, married love is fruitful; it is creative. Here we come to the heart of the meaning and purpose of marriage and the way it flows from the covenant between Christ and the Church. By coming to share our human nature in the incarnation, God can share his divine life with us. But there has to be an 'us' to share it with. And this is where marriage comes in. In marriage we have the extraordinary privilege of sharing in the love that prompts God to create us so as to share his love with us through becoming one with us. In a way that flows from the fulfilment of Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit, together as husband and wife we actually cooperate with God in making people. This is so that God can share his divine life with them and the incarnation be fulfilled. We are involved in making new human beings who are going to live for all eternity. In this way we contribute to the realisation of God's plan to share his love with the people he has made, to fill heaven with people eternally fulfilled in his love, because it is through the love of husband and wife that these people, in the plan of God, come into being.

As well as sharing in God's work of creating people, husbands and wives also have a share in God's work of bringing them to salvation, bringing them into union with Christ in the Church by getting them baptised, bringing them to be fed by Christ in the Eucharist and to be cared for by him in the other sacraments; bringing them to know and love God through teaching, prayer, bible reading and example. Here we see again why marriage is a covenant, for if marriage shares in Christ's work of creating and saving, it "must be like Christ's own work. It must be an alliance, a covenant, a mutual office in which each needs the other." (Edward Holloway: "The Covenant of Christian Marriage" *Faith* editorial 1979 11.5 p1.).

This then is the essential role of marriage in God's plan flowing on from and serving the incarnation. Jesus Christ has come amongst us to share his infinite life with us and with him married couples make the people he is going share this life with, bring forth the people who will make the Church that he binds to himself to. Indeed this is our special office, our ministry in the Church; we are stewards of God's creative love (cf. the same Holloway editorial).

This of course brings us to the great dignity and purpose of sex: to make these new human beings within the unbreakable union of marriage. This is what sex is for; for family within the loving union of marriage; to make up the family of God, the Church. Sex has this amazing function that it is at one and the same time the means of making new people within the binding union of marriage and what establishes and affirms that binding union within which new life is nurtured and raised. In this way it flows from the pattern and reality of the annunciation and images the covenant relationship between Christ and the Church. The covenant between Christ and the Church is by definition a life-giving union – Jesus unites the

Church to himself in order to communicate his new risen life through her, giving birth to sons and daughters of God in baptism and nurturing them to maturity (spiritually and sacramentally). Just as it makes no sense to separate this life-giving fruitfulness of Jesus' relationship with the Church from his union with the Church, so too we cannot separate procreation from the meaning of sexual union in marriage. To do so contradicts the purpose for which it is made, for which the sexes are split, for which the universe exists.

Contraception literally means 'against conception'. It stops conception, obstructs or interferes with the possibility of a child being conceived out of sexual intercourse. It makes the act of sex a 'no' to the conception of a new human being, a 'no' to the co-creation of a person.

This doesn't mean that all married couples must have 20 children, but that every act of sexual intercourse is open to the possibility of conceiving a child as the fruit of our love. Every week we stand up at Mass and say in the creed 'I believe in the Holy Spirit the Lord the giver of life', that same Spirit which hovered over the waters at creation and the womb of Our Lady. For married people this 'yes' to the Holy Spirit the Lord the giver of life involves openness to the fact that he may give new life out of our marital 'lovmaking'. This openness to welcoming children is evident in the marriage vows themselves: "Are you ready to accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?"

For this reason many married couples find natural family planning (NFP) helpful. This is not just because it works but because it is a way of being open to God's will, of cooperating with the Holy Spirit in the decisions we make about the size and spacing of our family. When we use NFP, each time we have sex we're not doing anything to stop that act of love result in a new life being conceived. If we have good, unselfish reasons for postponing getting pregnant we simply avoid the fertile days of the woman's cycle. (Successful use of NFP requires the training and support of an accredited teacher and proper, careful application of the rules.)

I have found this creative aspect of marriage the most amazing thing I have ever done. I look at my children at all their various different stages of development, in all their wonderful movements and thoughts, all of them together and each one in turn, and I am overwhelmed with wonder to think I was involved in making them. They are the fruit of our love, they have come from the love my husband and I have for one another, together with the love of God. And of course this creative activity brings my husband and me closer together. Despite all the stresses of raising a family (where sometimes it can even seem difficult to make opportunities to *talk* to each other without interruptions) at a deeper level we are bound closer together, sharing the fundamental joy of making and raising these little people.

“From very early in my marriage I felt God’s care for me in my husband’s kindness.”

Sacrament

Finally let us turn to the fact that marriage is a sacrament.

The Catechism tells us:

“Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and his Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life.”(CCC 1661)

We have seen that marriage shares in the salvific relation between Christ and the Church. When marriage takes place between two people who are baptised it is a sacrament. A sacrament communicates salvation, an action of Christ in his Church that makes holy and sacred, which continues the Incarnation and fulfils the patterns written into creation and our bodies.

So we are saying that this union of a man and a woman in marriage can actually make us holy, it can be a channel of God’s saving grace, of his life, his love, his power, a meeting with Christ, a being touched by him through the Holy Spirit. Only two vocations in the Church are endowed with their own sacrament: priesthood and marriage. Becoming a religious sister or brother, a monk or friar does not involve a sacrament. The fact that Christian marriage is a means of grace for the couple and the wider community gives it a great dignity.

Marriage is a sign of Christ’s presence that is not just a nice image that reminds us about Jesus, but is a sign in which he is actually present. It confers the grace it signifies.

The fact that marriage is a sacrament is very important to me. It means that Jesus himself is present in our marriage. He is working through the love we have for each other to help us, to heal us and to make us holy. The sacrament of marriage works in and through our ordinary human love consecrating it and making it the way that we can be raised up and come closer to God and live the new life he give us in Christ. From very early in my marriage I felt God’s care for me in my husband’s kindness, through his help I knew the power of God was working and healing me; but also too through the challenges and difficulties we’ve been through together I know the hand of God has been at work transforming us for the better. Just as Jesus sorted out a crisis at Cana and turned the water into wine he takes the difficult things and just the plain boring every day things in our marriage so that they can be turned into something good and wonderful, so that they can be used to bring us closer to God and to each other.

This brings us to a close, important link between marriage and the Eucharist. We have said that marriage shares in the communion between Christ and the Church and the Eucharist is the culmination of that communion, the wedding banquet of Jesus and the Church.

“There must also be an intrinsic relationship to the Holy Eucharist in Christian marriage, a relationship which is

proper to the office of marriage and parenthood, both as spiritually unitive for the couple and as life-giving for the child. If the office of the covenant of marriage mirrors the covenant of Christ and mankind in the Church, then it would seem that there must be a similar special relationship between Matrimony and the Eucharist. The Eucharist as sacrifice and sacrament is the source of life and grace for us all. But what one is suggesting is that the graces which are promised in marriage, the special grace of life and state, must be obtained in a unique and special way though the Eucharist in the case of Christian spouses.” (Holloway, *Faith* editorial 1979)

Conclusion

Most of us have been short-changed when it come to the views of marriage we have grown up with. Marriage is so much more than just something that everybody does at some point when they grow up and sometimes it works out and sometimes it doesn’t.

In marriage we have a unique share in the work of God’s creation and God’s becoming man.

A man and a woman are united, not just by nice words and romantic gestures, but in a covenant of lifelong, utterly faithful love that fulfils the way they are made and flows from and *really shares in Jesus’ binding love for the Church.*

We are united in this divine way not just so that we don’t have to watch telly on our own each evening, but in order *to share in God’s work of creation and salvation, specifically to be ministers of God’s creative love.* With God, marriage makes families, it makes the Church, it makes the people who will fill heaven. Without marriage there would be no Church, no people for Jesus to share his divine life with just as without Jesus marriage, family and our very sexuality in all its dimensions would make no sense.

This makes marriage an adventure greater than we can possibly imagine, because it takes us beyond ourselves into the divine adventure of God made man. It offers more than human fulfilment and takes more than human sacrifice because it rests in and draws life from the love of God who lives us unto death and into eternal life.

When I was explaining to my children recently that I was going to give a talk about marriage, my six year old said “Great! We’re going to a wedding!” He misunderstood slightly. However he also showed that he understood something very important: that marriage is good news, a great thing to be really glad about, and if I hadn’t known better, I might have thought he had been reading the passage from the Catechism of the Catholic Church with which I would like to close:

“Proclaim the good news that God loves us with a definitive and irrevocable love, that married couples share in this love, that it supports and sustains them, and that by their own faithfulness they can be witnesses to God’s faithful love” (CCC 1648)

Time for a New Feminism?

By *Fiorella Nash*

Mrs Nash argues that modern feminism has corrupted and obscured an ongoing need within modernity for the fostering of the dignity, duties and rights of women. She is a mother and author of popular novels set in Malta, published by Progress Press.

“This is my body which will be given up for you.”

“My body, my life, my right to decide.”

There can be no two sayings more different in meaning and more telling than these. More than any other quotations I could have chosen to begin this article, the words of Christ against the well-worn feminist slogan reveal the unhappy truth that the ideology of radical feminism remains diametrically opposed to the basic tenets of Christianity.

The difference of vision appears irreconcilable – the one looking out of a window, the other looking in a mirror. Ironically, radical feminism exalts the female body but in a manner that is almost a demonic parody of the Theology of the Body, with its selfish, nihilistic mantra of ‘my body, my choice, my satisfaction’ so far removed from the emphasis on love and self-giving within the Catholic faith. The now virtually unknown beliefs of the early feminists – that men and women are born equal, with equal dignity and equal rights – have been distorted beyond recognition into a destructively self-seeking agenda that all too often comes across as aggressive, heartless and self-pitying.

Tragically, radical feminism has done women a disservice. Lack of honesty has damaged the credibility of feminism, from the deliberate caricaturing of Catholic teaching to the denial of the scientific reality of the unborn child’s humanity. As an activist, I have all too often been forced to listen to conspiracy theories about the Church’s opposition to abortion and contraception, from literature stating that “The churches, especially the Catholic Church, teach that sexuality is something bad,”¹ and that “sexuality is something dirty and impure, only allowed for men”² to rumours that the ‘anti-choice lobby’ (far be it for abortionists to accept the sincerity of the pro-life position) are being funded with millions of pounds from the Vatican’s burgeoning coffers. When it comes to the unborn child, the ample evidence that reveals the humanity of the unborn, such as pain responses, a beating heart and clear 4D ultrasound scans, are simply ignored or dismissed.

The few feminists, such as Ellie Lee, who have the honesty to admit that abortion involves an act of killing have revealed the morally repulsive reality of contemporary feminism – that women are essentially entitled to do what they want devoid of any moral responsibility, even kill a baby if it gets in their way. “What did he reckon pregnant women who have abortions think they are carrying? A frog? A baby pig?” Dr Lee famously said of a SPUC spokesman in the media furore surrounding the 4D ultrasound images. “Pregnant women who have abortions (and those of us who unreservedly support their right to do so) do know that fetuses are human.”³ A representative of BPAS at a Cambridge Forum debate in 2001 blurted out to a stunned audience: “Look, there is no happy ending for a foetus in an abortion, we kill it. That’s our job.”

Within the Church, feminists have come across as petty and self-pitying, bickering over all-inclusive language as though

intelligent women are likely to feel personally wounded every time the word ‘man’ is used to refer to humanity. The tendency to portray women as the victims of a patriarchal Church has become so entrenched that when journalist and broadcaster Joanna Bogle wrote a parody of this particular attitude within Catholic feminist circles, the Catholic Women’s Network published it in their newspaper thinking it was real.⁴

The Oppression of Women by Women

One of the bitterest ironies of radical feminism is the way in which women who refuse to accept this ideology of womanhood are openly bullied and villified or at the very least patronised. At a recent meeting of the National Association of Women’s Organisations in London, Mary Honeyball MEP attacked fellow parliamentarian, the ‘notorious’ (and absent) Anna Zaboraska for being ‘a right-wing Catholic’ who ‘doesn’t believe that women have any reproductive rights.’, [i.e. she opposes abortion and contraception.] Other delegates bemoaned the existence of ‘anti-women women’ who were clearly not on the side of their own sex because they opposed an apparently non-negotiable vision of sexuality. Feminists for Life of America⁵ are persistently attacked for ‘masquerading as feminists’ because they oppose abortion and embrace the vision of the early American feminists, who saw abortion as yet another way in which men brutally oppressed women.

Women who oppose abortion as a matter of conscience have become little better than the heretics of the women’s movement to be marginalised, attacked and silenced by the very people who claim to speak and campaign in their name. As Mary McAleese puts it in *Swimming Against the Tide*:

“The myth that to be feminist is to be pro-choice has forced many women to resign from the name of feminism, to settle back bruised into the silence of the margins, victims of a new colonisation of the intellect. Why feminism should appear to be so uncomfortable with diversity and even conflict within itself on this issue is probably due more to its relative immaturity as a political and social force than anything more formidable.”⁶

Whereas I would agree with McAleese that radical feminism has reached levels of despotism in its silencing of dissents that would be branded patriarchal and even fundamentalist coming from any other movement, I am not wholly convinced that it can be dismissed as mere immaturity. Feminism is certainly a relatively new movement but the forces behind the silencing of women have been too aggressive and too calculating to be explained away so easily. And the effects have been devastating both for society and – ironically – for the advancement of women.

Turning a Blind Eye

It is ironic that abortion, regarded as an evil by the early feminists⁷, should have become a weapon, not only to silence dissent within the feminist movement, but to paralyse any

“marriage of convenience offered the only realistic possibility of financial security.”

significant resistance to injustices facing women that involve abortion. China's coercive one-child policy has been described as 'the greatest bioethical atrocity on the globe'.⁹ Through the implementation of this policy, the Chinese authorities – with the co-operation and support of western aid agencies such as UNFPA⁹ – have interfered with the most intimate aspect of women's lives and deprived women of their fundamental human right to family life. Since its implementation in 1979, millions of women have been forced or coerced into undergoing sterilisation and abortion, threatened – along with their families – with financial ruin, loss of employment, imprisonment, torture and the destruction of their homes if they commit the crime of bringing 'unauthorised' children into the world.¹⁰

Those who campaign in China against this barbaric policy have been brutally silenced. To name just two; Chen Guangcheng,¹¹ a blind lawyer, has been jailed and subjected to severe beatings whilst in prison for exposing atrocities carried out in the name of China's family planning laws. Mao Hengfeng,¹² whose crime was to petition the authorities for justice after she was forced into an abortion, has also faced jail and been put to torture. This is an issue of paramount importance to those who campaign for women's rights, there can be no worse atrocity against a woman than to be forcibly aborted or sterilised, but the silence on this issue is deafening.

Another elephant in the room is sex selective abortion, a practice that is widespread in many parts of the world including China and India, but increasingly among some communities living in western countries. There are an estimated 60 million 'missing' baby girls in Asia alone, with hundreds of thousands of baby girls aborted every year.¹³ The consequences of this fatal discrimination against women are devastating, not just for the baby girls whose lives are lost, but for those who survive to reach adulthood. The gender imbalance in some regions of India and China is so serious that there are villages where no girl has been born for years. A healthy sex ratio should be 950 girls to 1000 boys (allowing for the fact that boys are more likely to die in infancy). Every region of India shows a significant gender imbalance, with the figure as low as 300 girls to 1000 boys in the Punjab.¹⁴

The results of this demographic disaster for women are already becoming evident, with the increase in sexual violence and exploitation of women through rape, wife-sharing, baby smuggling and sex trafficking. Dr B. S. Dahiya, a government official, has given the stark warning: "Violence against women is rising. We'll have more unnatural practices, such as brothers sharing a wife. In a few years, no woman will be safe. There will be abductions and rapes, even of minors."¹⁵ Some groups, such as ActionAid are beginning to speak openly about the dangers of sex selective abortion [ibid.] but remain evasive when it comes to talking about the chief problem – abortion itself – and tend to talk in more general terms about needing to change cultural prejudices such as the need for a dowry. At the same time, women such as Ann Furedi, director of BPAS (the UK's leading abortion provider and promoter) insist, in the name of women's rights, that it is necessary to accept the 'choice' to abort a baby for the crime of being a girl.¹⁶

The tragedy of maternal mortality is bandied about by many women's groups and aid agencies as a reason why abortion needs to be available on demand in developing countries when the bare medical facts do not reveal any palpable link between abortion and the reduction in maternal mortality. In 1992, Ireland's foremost gynaecologists issued a public statement in which they affirmed that "there are no medical circumstances justifying direct abortion, that is, no circumstances in which the life of a mother may only be saved by directly terminating the life of her unborn child."¹⁷ Childbirth is rendered safe by a range of interventions, such as trained birth attendants, good sanitation, the availability of powerful antibiotics and blood transfusion, caesarean section and adequate pre- and post-natal care. None of these interventions are unethical but the ideology of abortion for all is drawing attention away from the advancement of genuine, vital medical care for pregnant women. The approach to maternal healthcare is so skewed in favour of providing abortions that an organisation such as MaterCare International, a charity run by Catholic gynaecologists and obstetricians, has been denied funding for its vital work providing maternity care in developing countries because of its refusal to provide abortions.¹⁸

The Need for Women's Advancement

The temptation when faced with the hypocrisy and extremism of radical feminism, is simply to dismiss feminism out of hand. However participating in a (not unjustifiable) backlash is not an answer in a world where the status of women remains unacceptable in many countries. To add to the injustices I have already described, worldwide, the overwhelming majority of rape cases are never reported to the police, largely due to inaction or hostility on the part of the authorities. In South Africa the reporting rate is thought to be as low as 3% of cases, but even the United States, which has the highest reportage rate in the world stands at only around 16%.¹⁹ In Britain, of the tiny minority of cases that are ever reported, under 10% result in a criminal conviction.²⁰ It is generally accepted that false accusations make up a small percentage of the total. This would mean that the overwhelming majority of rapists are never punished for their crimes. The figures suggest that it is particularly difficult to persuade the Crown Prosecution Service to prosecute in situations where the perpetrator is known to the victim.²¹ Within the British home, an estimated two women die every week as a result of domestic violence.²²

Images of women of an increasingly sexualised nature are used routinely in advertising campaigns to sell everything from cars to fruit juice, perpetuating the notion that women are mere sex objects who exist to fulfil male desires. Powerful elements within the media continue to portray prostitution as exotic, enjoyable and empowering through what Madeleine Bunting described in *The Guardian* as 'f*** lit'²³ but programmes such as Billie Piper's notorious *Secret Diaries of a Call Girl* are only the tip of the iceberg. In its 2004 programme *Can Condoms Kill?* attacking Cardinal Trujillo's position on AIDS and condoms, BBC Panorama filmed a legal brothel in the United States in which the prostitutes were referred to as 'professionals' and 'sex workers' being carefully looked after by a madame in a business suit. The implication was that

Time for a New Feminism?

continued

these women had made a career choice like any other, enjoyed being prostitutes and were very much in control of the situation.

These programmes represent an insidious attempt to cover the harsh reality of an industry in which over 90% of prostitutes want to get out, a slightly higher proportion are drug-dependent and the majority have been the victims of violent assault and rape.²⁴ And these figures do not include the 120,000 women who are sold across Europe by sex traffickers every year.²⁵

When people are tempted to snigger at 'oppressed' women, it is worth remembering that women still get a raw deal, but that an ideology which claims to speak for women may be alienating and paralysing thousands of women who desire to fight against these injustices but are not prepared to bow down and worship the goddess of choice at the expense of innocent life.

Early Feminism Revisited

What then is the answer, if radical feminism is incompatible with the Church's vision but injustices towards women continue, often with the tacit encouragement of the very people who claim to campaign in the name of women? I would propose that we need to do two things: firstly, to look at the status of women historically, particularly in the early twentieth century when the seeds of radical feminism were being sown by the likes of Marie Stopes whilst writers such as G.K. Chesterton championed the cause of marriage and family life; and secondly, go back to the vision of the first feminists and the climate that spawned the feminist movement in the first place.

Feminism did not appear out of nowhere and in an age where feminism has become associated with some of the most destructive aspects of contemporary society, particularly the breakdown of the family, it is necessary to be reminded of precisely what life was like for women at the time of Mary Wollstonecraft and later figures such as Virginia Woolf. The overwhelming majority of readers, I suspect, would agree that the status of women even as late as the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was unacceptable. Women were denied what are now regarded as basic human rights such as the vote, unrestricted access to higher education, financial autonomy and employment. It is a scandal that women did not achieve what is effectively full emancipation until the mid-twentieth century and that women have for so many centuries been denied the freedoms and opportunities that their male counterparts have been granted.

Chesterton's famous witticism is much-quoted even today: "Twenty million young women rose to their feet with the cry: 'We will not be dictated to!' and promptly became stenographers." I am prepared to concede that the remark made me laugh when I first heard it but it is also very instructive of the extent to which Chesterton and his contemporaries failed to 'grasp the nettle' when it came to the status of women. His defence of marriage, motherhood and procreation, made with characteristic passion and humour, were all too necessary at a time when it was already becoming fashionable to speak of marriage and family life in terms of

servitude, imprisonment and even prostitution. However, his mockery of women who took advantage of their hard won right to education and training may well have undermined his efforts to defend the sanctity of marriage and the primacy of family life in the face of increasingly venomous opposition.

Chesterton quite rightly ridiculed the attitudes of those who sought to attack marriage and by extension the right to life and much of his vast body of writing suggests a man who was very much on women's side. As a mother, I can hardly suppress a cheer at his delightful rubbishing of Schopenhauer's insulting claim that women are the best people to raise children because they are like children themselves, "puerile, futile, limited." Chesterton answers: "If the 'futility' and 'limitation' of a little boy of seven lead him naturally to martyr himself for another little boy of seven, then the comparison is sound. But as we all know that they lead him to kick his shins and run away with his toys, the comparison is nonsense."²⁶

However, he ignored the consequences for women – and the institution of marriage – if society relegated women to the level of second class citizens. Without the right to education (even if it involved training to be dictated to), the ability to seek employment was extremely restricted; without the ability to earn a living, independence was impossible and a marriage of convenience offered the only realistic possibility of financial security. Hence the chilling, but not entirely slanderous assertion that marriage was a form of prostitution or servitude.

Financial coercion hardly offers the most promising start to married life but there is little suggestion in Chesterton's writings that he acknowledged that marriage for some women even in his own lifetime may have been an unhappy necessity. Instead, he is insistent that poor married couples at least are 'a business partnership'²⁷, the man contributing in his place of work, the woman within the household but if it was such a thing at any level, it was a partnership where one party alone owned the chequebook. He is open enough about the reality of marriages becoming unhappy but his tendency to trivialise the misery suffered by some women in abusive relationships weakens his other arguments. This is in no way to condemn Chesterton's apologetics, much of which remains as engaging and painfully insightful as it would have been during the Interwar period. However, his apparent failure to acknowledge the genuine struggles faced by women should serve as a warning to contemporary defenders of the Catholic Faith not to fall into the trap of ridiculing or dismissing arguments that require nuanced answers.

The Vindication of the Rights of Woman

Mary Wollstonecraft's contribution to feminist philosophy is a matter of some debate. She has been described as the founder of modern feminist philosophy, but a body of opinion questions whether she may be described as a feminist at all, largely, I suspect, because contemporary feminism has travelled so far from the convictions held by Wollstonecraft. Her ground-breaking work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, advocates a position few readers of this periodical would regard as controversial, seeking to strengthen not destroy the family unit. She condemns the tyrannical and insulting attitude of her age that weakness, vanity and stupidity

“the ability of a woman to cultivate her own mind: [...] was recognised as having serious implications for the moral well-being of society.”

were somehow ‘natural’ to womankind when society itself was cynically and despotically encouraging girls to develop into ‘the toy of man, his rattle’²⁸, possessed of ‘spaniel-like affection’²⁹ and ‘tainted by coquetish arts’.³⁰

Vindication supports and seeks to strengthen marriage, on the grounds that a strong and reasonable woman makes a better wife and mother, particularly as a mother is the primary educator of the next generation. As she puts it: “The woman who strengthens her body and exercises her mind will, by managing her family and practising various virtues, become the friend, and not the humble dependent of her husband.”³¹ She also draws attention to the vulnerability and humiliation faced by women such as young widows, when they were deprived of their male protector and society had robbed them of any possibility of independence. Wollstonecraft was by no means the only person to criticise the oppression of women. She quotes a certain Dr Day, who in one of his books about the progressive education he had given his daughter, stated:

“If women are in general feeble in body and mind, it arises less from nature than from education. We encourage a vicious indolence and inactivity, which we falsely call delicacy, instead of hardening their minds by the severer principles of reason and philosophy, we breed them to useless arts, which terminate in vanity and sensuality. In most of the countries which I had visited, they are taught nothing of an higher nature than a few modulations of the voice, or useless postures of the body; their time is consumed in sloth or trifles, and trifles become the only pursuits capable of interesting them. *We seem to forget, that it is upon the qualities of the female sex that our own domestic comforts and the education of our children must depend. And what are the comforts or the education which a race of beings, corrupted from their infancy, and unacquainted with all the duties of life, are fitted to bestow?* To touch a musical instrument with useless skill, to dissipate their husband’s patrimony in riotous and unnecessary expenses, these are the only arts cultivated by women in most of the polished nations I had seen. And the consequences are uniformly such as may be expected to proceed from such polluted sources, private misery and public servitude.” [my emphases]³²

Unlike the inward-looking, self-obsessed vision of womanhood presented by radical feminism, Wollstonecraft and her sympathisers promoted the rights of women because they believed the strength and health of society to be intimately bound up with the strength and dignity of women. Therefore, the ability of a woman to cultivate her own mind was not simply a matter of justice for women, a matter of her right to education on a par with men, it was recognised as having serious implications for the moral well-being of society. It is therefore perhaps by returning to the early (and indeed, very humble) demands of the woman’s movement that the foundations of a new woman’s movement might be laid.

And there is a need for this. It is all too easy in response to radical feminism to confront hate with hate, to demonise women on account of a movement that may not represent them, to trivialise the struggles women still face or to retreat into outdated attitudes. This will not do. I personally am

unimpressed by people who attempt to silence me in the name of my ‘right to choose’ but I am equally unimpressed by the casual misogyny of a minority of Catholic laymen, who seem to find a female academic an amusing curiosity or who feel the need to suggest that my own ‘time for intellectual enquiry really ought to be over’ now that I am a wife and mother.

It is necessary to develop a new Catholic woman’s movement which embraces and celebrates the Church’s teachings, in particular the dignity of women, the sanctity of life, the primacy of the family and the need for men and women to work together with complementary gifts yet as equals in pursuit of the common good. Anything that hurts and oppresses women, whether it is a law, a prejudice or a misguided ideology, hurts humankind in its entirety. As John Paul II wrote in *Familiaris Consortio*:

“What human reason intuitively perceives and acknowledges is fully revealed by the word of God: the history of salvation, in fact, is a continuous and luminous testimony to the dignity of women. In creating the human race ‘male and female’ God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity, endowing them with the inalienable rights and responsibilities proper to the human person.”

Notes

¹Las Dignas, *Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Central America*.

²Ibid.

³Ellie Lee, *The Trouble with ‘Smiling’ Fetuses* Pro-Choice Forum, 13 September 2003.

⁴Joanna Bogle’s account of how she came to write the spoof can be found here: http://www.ad2000.com.au/articles/2004/jul2004p5_1668.html

⁵<http://www.feministsforlife.org/>

⁶*Swimming Against the Tide: Feminist Dissent on the issue of Abortion* ed. Angela Kennedy (Four Courts Press, 1997) p.5.

⁷American feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, wrote in 1873: “When we consider that women are treated as property, it is degrading to women that we should treat our children as property to be disposed of as we see fit.” Quoted in *The American Feminist* Autumn/Winter 2003-2004 p.25.

⁸Wendy McElroy, *U.S. Should Stay out of UNESCO* 24 September 2002.

⁹Steve Mosher *The Case against UNFPA Funding* Population Research Institute, 11 January 2002.

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¹³Population Research Institute, *Infanticide, Abortion Responsible for 60 Million Girls Missing in Asia* 13 June 2007.

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¹⁸www.matercare.org/

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²⁰*The Truth about Rape* www.cer.truthaboutrape.co.uk/3.html

²¹Ibid.

²²Cf. Women’s Aid www.womensaid.org.uk

²³Madeline Bunting *Sorry, Billie, but prostitution is not about champagne and silk negligees* The Guardian, 8 October 2007.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Prime Minister’s Question Time, quoted in The Medaille Trust newsletter 2007.

²⁶Chesterton, *Men and Women: Husbands and Wives*, quoted from Brave New Family ed. Alvaro de Silva (Ignatius, 1990) pp.118-119.

²⁷Chesterton, *The Wildness of Domesticity*, quoted from Brave New Family ed. Alvaro de Silva (Ignatius, 1990) p. 77.

²⁸Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Dover Thrift, 1996 edition) p.33.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid. p.30.

³¹Ibid. p.28.

³²Ibid. p.40.

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The Greek Concept of Matter and Quantum Uncertainty

by Lydia Jaeger Director of Studies at the Institut Biblique de Nogent-sur-Marne

From its outset, quantum mechanics has been a source of intrigue; the picture it presents of the microscopic world being so different to that of everyday experience gained from normal-sized entities, between the atomic scale and the vast spaces of the cosmos. Many efforts have been (and are still being) made to understand the strangeness of the quantum world; a plethora of interpretations, often divergent, have been proposed. In the context of our study, it is relevant to introduce two approaches which allow a link with the Greek notion of matter; they specifically ask the question as to what extent the developments in physics in the 20th century should make us reconsider the critique of this notion, which the idea of creation gives rise to.

Werner Heisenberg, one of the founders of quantum theory, explicitly made the connection between the probabilistic nature of quantum mechanics and Greek matter, in its role of *potentia*; he tried in this way to make sense of attributing a state vector to an individual quantum system. While the probability theorems of this theory allow us accurately to predict the behaviour of a sufficiently large group of identical quantum entities, the wave function of an individual quantum system describes its *potential* to produce certain outcomes when appropriate measurements are taken. This *potentia* therefore constitutes an intermediate level of reality, between quantum systems and the observation of certain outcomes when a measurement is taken. It sustains the change in a quantum system which is caused by taking a measurement. In this way, it plays a role comparable to matter, which, for Aristotle, is the substrate which accommodates changes.¹

However, the analogy established is misleading. In quantum mechanics, the idea of probability only applies to groups of systems and not to individual systems; in particular, no measurement exists for the supposed probability property for an individual system. Moreover, the wave function contains all the information about the state of the system (provided that it is pure). This wave function can be expressed without recourse to any probabilistic notions (if we represent the state vector of the system in an arbitrary orthonormal basis). The *potentia* that Heisenberg postulates cannot therefore amount to an extra level of reality, in addition to the objective properties of the system. Recent results have indeed been able to show that probabilistic predictions in quantum mechanics logically follow, without any additional postulates, from the description of individual quantum systems, with the aid of the wave function, which can be expressed, as we have seen, in a completely non-probabilistic way and the assumption that the objective properties of the system can be obtained by measurements with certainty.² Thus it is impossible to consider the probabilistic structure of quantum mechanics when applied to groups of systems as pointing towards an intermediate level of reality, the so-called *potentia*.

A second connection between quantum theory and the Greek concept of matter is profiled in the debate on the possible incompleteness of quantum mechanics. The famous article by Albert Einstein, Boris Podolsky and Nathan Rosen in 1930 triggered this debate, since it demonstrated, for the first time,

non-local correlations between two systems which have interacted in the past, as predicted by quantum mechanics. This consequence of the formalism seemed so unacceptable to Einstein that he concluded from it that quantum theory would only give a partial description of reality, leaving out a more fundamental domain. The debate took a new and decisive step with the work of J.S. Bell. He managed to show that the probabilistic nature of quantum predictions is not the result of our limited knowledge: we arrive at contradictory results if we postulate that quantum theory is only a partial description of a hidden reality.

This result cautions against the temptation to perceive, in the probabilistic nature of quantum mechanics, an indication of its incompleteness. Quantum theory does not contain any sign of a deeper reality of which it only furnishes a partial description. Thus, it is not warranted to infer from the strangeness of the microscopic world a limit that mathematical description might encounter at that level. As much as Galilean physics, contemporary physics is based on the conviction that mathematical processes apply to our “lowly” world; we are not talking about merely approximate realisations of mathematical forms which would only exist in the world of Ideas. In this respect, it is noteworthy that laws of exact mathematical form govern the probabilistic predictions of quantum mechanics. As indicated, (complex) mathematical considerations even allow us to deduce the statistical predictions of quantum mechanics, solely starting with the non-probabilistic descriptions of individual quantum systems. It is therefore wrong to believe that there would be another level of reality behind the atomic world and that mathematical description would there come to an end. On the contrary, quantum mechanics describes a real order, even if this order reveals strange features which are unintuitive to common sense. We should not be too surprised: after all, our common sense is derived from the world of macroscopic objects, and transposing this to the atomic world is not at all obvious.

These considerations show that the presumption of order stemming from faith in a Creator God is not impaired by quantum mechanics. In particular, creation makes us immune against the fundamental motive owing to which Einstein saw in the uncertainty of quantum theory a sign of its incompleteness: in a strictly deterministic worldview our ignorance is the only possible source of indeterminate events. Over against such a view, the biblical perspective stresses the contingency of natural order, as it is dependent on the free act of creation. ■

This is an extract of a paper given to the joint conference of the American Scientific Affiliation and Christians in Science in Edinburgh, August 2007. The author thanks Peter Mittelstaedt for very helpful comments.

Notes

¹Werner HEISENBERG, *Physics and philosophy: the revolution in modern science*, New York, Harper & Row, 1958, ch. IX.

²P. MITTELSTAEDT, *The interpretation of quantum mechanics and the measurement process*, Cambridge U.P., 1998, p. 47-57, 62-64.

Learning From Homosexual Activism

by John Deighan

John Deighan, parliamentary advisor to the Scottish Catholic Bishops, builds upon his November '07 survey of the radical development of anti-family legislation and attitudes in recent years. He describes the culture changing activities of Stonewall, the homosexual rights pressure group. He brings out a social and economic aspect of the accelerating secularization of Britain, and our own Church's lack of ability similarly to harness cultural forces, for instance to promote the socially essential concept of religious freedom as developed within our tradition.

British culture is steadily increasing its support for values inimical to the Christian vision of life. We urgently need to examine why this should be so. One significant factor, this writer would suggest, is clever political activism based upon a post-Christian ideology.

This article briefly considers the effective activities of one group in altering society's values and considers how we could respond in kind.

Stonewall

Stonewall is a campaigning organisation which promotes homosexual lifestyles and lobbies for policies conducive to such promotion. On their website they describe how they work for "Cultural and attitudinal change" by "Challenging the underlying cultural and attitudinal values that allow discrimination to flourish. Changing cultures and attitudes to positively value diversity."

One should note here that those who experience same-sex attraction do need support and that such support as offered by groups like Encourage has been sadly scarce. Opposition to actively homosexual relationships should not suggest opposition to the dignity of those who experience same-sex attraction. The problem for a culture compatible with Christianity is that the underpinning principle of Stonewall's philosophy is that homosexual relationships are intrinsically good and equal to heterosexual relationships.

From a fringe organisation of social radicals Stonewall has become part of the mainstream of modern culture and is now cleverly helping steer society to a new set of cultural mores.

Incredibly on its website Stonewall states that it "receives no public funding and raises all its money itself in a range of ways including donations, sponsorship, and fundraising events." The reality is that they have devised initiatives which see large amounts of public money poured into Stonewall every year.

Diversity Champions

Take the Diversity Champions programme for example, through which scheme organisations sign up to Stonewall for an annual charge of £2000 for private organisations and £1500 for public or charitable organisations. The organization points out, for instance that "Inclusive work environments encourage loyalty, teamwork and maximise personal contributions, which are key in top performing organisations", and that "74% of gay and 42% of straight consumers are less likely to buy products from organisations that hold negative views of lesbian and gay people." The scheme is

backed by a very slick video on their website.

At the time of writing the website celebrates that the Army has become the 400th Diversity Champion. That's a guaranteed income from these groups of at least £600,000 a year!

Any charity would find good use for £600K and obviously that amount helps Stonewall advance its aims. The ingenious part however is that organisations will pay many times this amount to promote the Stonewall agenda. The organisations signed up as Diversity Champions are guided on how to be 'gay-friendly'. Such advice will include recommending that the organisation employ a diversity officer. This becomes a formidable asset for Stonewall, once a company has such a person (or team) they have someone on the inside looking for work to do and Stonewall is only too happy to provide a plethora of ideas and initiatives which the diversity officer can implement in the organisation. The cost of the personnel and the programmes are thus not met by Stonewall but by the organisation itself. Effectively a parasitic cell is established within the organisation which can then work on ensuring that staff are sensitised to 'gay' needs and encouraged to be supportive of the idea that homosexual relationships are good.

Another aim and expectation of Diversity Champions is to raise the issue of sexual orientation in the context of recruitment. Having senior staff who are openly homosexual helps attain a higher rating. It is a package which ultimately is geared at normalising the special and preferential treatment of homosexuals. In turn as senior positions are disproportionately held by homosexuals the ethos is reinforced.

Each year Stonewall produces a Workplace Equality Index to score organisations on how favourably they perform in relation to the criteria they have created. They tell us that this "index is a powerful tool used by Britain's 1.7 million gay employees and 150,000 gay university students to decide where to take their talent and skills."¹ A look at the list is informative: among those scoring favourably are various police forces, local council authorities, the Royal Navy, the Prison service, numerous banks, the London Authority, the Home Office, and other government bodies. For 2009 Lloyds TSB, Hampshire Constabulary and Brighton & Hove City Council have won the coveted top three spots.

To score well you need to do things like sponsor a 'LGB Community Event' (that is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual); give special support to homosexual staff; recruit staff through

“‘Homophobic Bullying’ [...] is to be used to give pro-homosexual groups access to schools.”

‘gay media’ (many of the companies are presently advertising well paid posts on the Stonewall website). The most recent report on the Equality Index noted that 61% of participating organisations had an “openly lesbian, gay or bisexual person on their board”. All of the organisations give diversity training, which is supportive of homosexual relationships. 99% of the organisations involved have a “diversity team”.

Organisations will reinforce their approval by giving benefits to same-sex partners wherever benefits to spouses are given e.g. health insurance. They will be expected also to organise special meetings or networks for “LGBT staff”. Diversity training will be compulsory to make sure that all employees learn of the values promoted by Stonewall.

Organisations involved, it seems, clamber to satisfy Stonewall’s demands to get a place on the top 100 and then Stonewall is waiting with further advice to help these organisations make their way further up the celebrated list.

A glance through their website also reveals how busy the organisation is, providing such services as: a Seminar programme; a Stonewall Workplace Conference; a Recruitment Guide; Stonewall Leadership programme; Workplace Guides; Awareness raising; Training Package and so on.

Stonewall is just one organisation among many that are shaping society’s values. They all know the importance of getting their message through to the next generation and unsurprisingly groups like Stonewall, Caledonia Youth, Equality Network put great efforts into working with young people to ensure that the message is a life-long one.

The success of the Diversity programme described above has led to the creation of an Education Champions scheme to use ‘homophobic bullying’ as the reason for giving support to local authorities to promote Stonewall ideology about equality in schools. Bullying of any description is wrong but in this context it is to be used to establish the view that homosexuality is good and to give pro-homosexual groups access to schools.

You may have noticed increasing calls in the media that young children even in nursery should be given sex education.² This is typical of the sexualisation of children and social relationships that is taking place. Homosexual groups appear fixated on sexuality, and sex is the prism increasingly used for viewing even relations between children. You will find that most when pushed will accept that this ‘sex education’ should be about relationships and preparing children to be accepting of differences and to be tolerant. Now these may indeed be virtuous traits to nurture but to have them viewed through the prism of sex is wholly inappropriate for children in the years of tranquillity before adolescence.³ The January 2009 edition of the teenage magazine *Bliss*, popular with many young girls I know, is typical of the publications aimed at Children, when it recommends the Lesbian and Gay Network as the key source of “Sexuality advice”.

The Contradiction

The vision of Stonewall is couched within a framework of tolerance and openness. How can one object? It is of course that classic clash inherent to modern radical individualism – in this case between so called ‘gay rights’ and religious rights. The Stonewall view is intrinsically hostile to the Christian view that sexual relationships belong only in marriage. The argument that people are free to marry and that diversity in the choice of sexual partnerships is a positive good evades the core of the problem i.e. that of the incompatibility of the two opposed visions of human sexuality.

The claim made, for example in the case of the police officer disciplined for promoting Christian teaching in response to the dissemination of homosexual material in his workplace⁴, is that it is intolerant to oppose homosexual practice. The advocates of this mantra cannot be so naïve as not to know that the enforcement of the view that same-sex intercourse is good inherently implies that the view that sex belongs only in marriage is no longer tolerable. If institutions choose to promote one vision or the other they are in effect choosing to promote a belief system. This is the point that is lost on many – there is not a neutral position on the matter. To promote one is to oppose the other.

I’ve heard from employees of organisations signed up to the new equality agenda who’ve had to endure regular snide anti-Catholic remarks but feel intimidated from speaking out. Increasingly it appears that being anti-Catholic is a badge of enlightenment. It would be nice if all people really did benefit from promotion of ‘tolerance’, alas the tolerance is only extended to those who conform to the views currently in vogue.

It isn’t hard to see what is in mind when Stonewall’s Education Champions propose teaching children to be tolerant and respect differences. A Barney video can promote care and compassion as I’m sure most parents do also. These are values which decent human beings intrinsically support but without instrumentalising them to smuggle in ideas about particular sexual practices that are to be condoned. When challenged on these the homosexuals declare horror that we should suggest any impropriety and most Christians are careful to be charitable, but we cannot allow this to give way to naïveté as our children’s faith and views on sexuality are systematically eroded and distorted.

Remaking The Culture

Stonewall’s platform is not a matter of simply ensuring that people with same-sex attraction are given support or protected from discrimination; that would be supported by any fair-minded person. This is an agenda for redefining society’s understanding of human sexual relationships and avowing that homosexual relationships are as healthy and acceptable as sex within marriage.

The 400 organisations signed up to Stonewall include major cultural and political shaping organisations, and they are following a carefully crafted blueprint for advancing the status of homosexual relationships in society.

Learning From Homosexual Activism

continued

With the success of the demand that organisations employ and promote openly homosexual staff is it any surprise that we see police officers and fire fighters being disciplined for daring to withhold their approval of homosexuality?⁵

In my November 07 article for *Faith* I explained how this vision is being implemented by legal force in Britain. The effect of the conditioning and widespread dissemination of homosexual propaganda is ensuring that more and more people in society will be supportive of the need for that legal force.

Stonewall is very effectively contributing to a cultural environment which is simply being absorbed unwittingly and few dare speak of the mental, physical and social damage of homosexual lifestyles, let alone the spiritual damage.

“Catholic organisations could adopt and promote a charter of Religious Freedom”.

Meanwhile society’s understanding of human relationships and the nature of sexual identity has been turned upside down in a relatively short period of years

Is it any surprise that many are cowed from voicing their view that sex belongs in marriage? I have been told personally by government officials that it is homophobic to believe that sexual relationships belong *only* in marriage.

Of course none of this could have happened without the post-Enlightenment undermining of the ascendancy of Christianity, aspects of which this magazine regularly discusses. But an immediate political and social question for the Church is: need we stand back whilst this cultural change is being forced upon us?

Learning Lessons

We need to be willing to fight the war of ideas and respond to the tactics of those who would have Christian values marginalised from public life. We know that presenting all with Christ’s message is the most compassionate response we can give to their concerns and initiatives.

We should be confident that the Christian message is a force for good. It is wrong-headed to think that offering the Church’s teaching to those who are living lives incompatible with it is insensitive. Undoubtedly many involved in supporting homosexuality do so firmly convinced of the rightness of their cause. Such people are deserving of the truth: the Christian message is a gift not a burden.

The British Catholic community needs to and can take action to reinforce our vision of human life and support those who are willing to support that vision also. We can learn much from the efforts of Stonewall and their fellow travellers. They have ruthlessly pursued a programme requiring a massive investment in the promotion of their message and for a paltry return organisations have clambered over themselves to invest in the Stonewall ideology. The companies may get a mention in Stonewall’s pack for students and the promise that being tolerant will enhance their workforce.⁶ Is there an

equal effort to ensure that organisations value and tolerate Christian employees? Do organisations routinely sponsor Catholic community events or recruit their staff through Catholic newspapers? The Catholic community is massive and can also offer real benefits to organisations which respect our values.

Take local newsagents for example, they routinely stock and openly display graphic pornographic magazines. Do we encourage and support newsagents who would refuse to stock such material? It certainly seems possible that we could establish a list of ‘family friendly’ retailers and make this well known in our parishes. Who knows they may even want to pay £2000 a year for the privilege (just kidding!) Surely businesses depend more on Catholics buying their goods than on supporters of same-sex marriage.

As well as responding to those who are actively working against Catholic values we need to try to inoculate our children against their detrimental influences. We could do this by restoring some confidence in the Church and its teaching. One example would be the need to make Catholic children familiar with an authentic understanding of the Church’s history; rather than the black legends of the Spanish Inquisition and the Galileo affair. A historical perspective is an important consideration; indeed homosexual campaigners are seeking and getting government support in promoting a ‘Gay History Month’.⁷ The official website for this month argues that it is virtually a legal priority for schools to prioritise the month, and so, among numerous other things, consider teaching about Alan Turing in maths classes emphasising that he was “gay”. Numerous wild claims about historical figures having been homosexual are made. We need to raise awareness of the massive contribution that the Church has made in civilising the whole world, especially Europe, for instance in establishing the principles that made the eradication of slavery possible and speaking against the western trade from its very beginning.

Religious Freedom

Another example is the need to promote the concept of religious freedom. It is a recognised human right but our society has little appreciation of it. Whilst homosexuals have been successful in getting politicians to foster anti-discrimination on the grounds of ‘sexual orientation’ as a basis to silence anyone who disagrees with homosexuality; no such ‘anti-phobia’ stance would ever be entertained in terms of opposing religious discrimination. That apparently would be a wrong understanding of equality. Now it would be preposterous to expect that laws should prevent people from stating their belief that the Eucharist is not really the body of Christ, and that Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is idolatry. Holding such non-catholic beliefs would rightly not be seen as anti-Catholic discrimination. Yet the law is moving towards proscribing public statements of the belief that homosexual activity is wrong. Furthermore Bishop Joseph Devine, for example, has been on the Stonewall website writing nominated for bigot of the year for stating Catholic teaching on sexuality. This attack should be publicly

“the tolerance is only extended to those who conform to the views currently in vogue.”

renounced in the name of religious freedom. The threat to religious freedom by the intolerance of homosexual groups is lost on most of our politicians. Freedom of religion should therefore be promoted through civil institutions especially in terms of freedom of conscience such that civil society could regain an appreciation of the importance and dignity of conscience and the right for individuals rationally to discuss their disagreements.

Catholic organisations could adopt and promote a charter of Religious Freedom or even a charter for freedom of conscience which highlights the need to defend conscience. This could be augmented with various initiatives such as seminars, talks, and articles in the press to detail the importance of the principle of Religious Freedom and how it links with freedom of conscience. Might not representatives of our Church challenge, for instance, Peter Tatchell, or better Stonewall, to a public debate?

There are many human rights groups who could be supportive but who need to gain a proper understanding of conscience and natural law. Organisations could be approached to sign up to support a freedom of conscience charter. Gathering support could take many years of effort. Many years promoting the idea to the Scottish Executive has in the past achieved their acknowledgement that it is a worthy idea. Such an initiative could extend to having businesses and other organisations in society to sign up to the Charter for Freedom of Conscience. A set of criteria about the organisation and how it made staff aware of the importance of respecting conscience could be established for them to meet.

To make this plan achievable there would have to be a benefit to the organisations willing to support the scheme. This would be the inclusion of that company's details in a directory of ethical companies given to every Catholic parish in the country and could be easily disseminated.

There exists the possibility of using the Catholic school network in a way similar to how the Young Scot Card works. Companies which support Young Scot are included in a directory given to each school child in secondary school in Scotland. We need to realise that such initiatives have taken years to grow until they are a major influence in schools and wider society.

We need to take the opportunity of building on the good principles that some organisations promote. For example UNICEF has in the past reported on the state of society for children in terms of the adverse effects of family breakdown. The Catholic Church has the answers to many of these problems. Do many people know that divorce is almost unheard of with couples that practice natural family planning? We need to highlight that supporting the commitment of marriage is an investment in our children's well-being not an imposition of a judgmental Church interfering with human freedom. The message has to be reinforced at every level such that people associate looking out for the wellbeing of children with following a pattern of responsible behaviour which tends towards that result.

Scotland gives much attention to sectarianism especially in relation to Celtic and Rangers football matches. The promotion of a tolerance of religious views in the public sphere should be an obvious antidote to sectarian intolerance. Diversity training should include courses on religious freedom, freedom of conscience and the Christian history of Europe among other things. We should seek the support of European Institutions for highlighting the Christian roots of Europe and the vision of the Catholic founders of the EU.

We should be willing to shun organisations that are acting in a manner hostile to our values. The Bank of Scotland was cowed by homosexual campaigners not to deal with Pat Robertson. Surely we can withhold our custom from organisations which promote abortion, pornography, promiscuity etc. And we should back this up by informing the Catholic Community of who should and shouldn't be supported.

Conclusion

We are up against people and organisations that use a myriad of means and large amounts of money to foster deeply flawed visions of human love and corrupt the values of society. Perhaps in a future article I can address how this activity is going on at international level beyond even the control of state authorities.

We need to be willing to put in a similar level of effort to preparing the ground of society for the gospel. The re-affirmation of the ordered reality of human nature is the start of this process.

Notes

¹http://www.stonewall.org.uk/media/current_releases/2493.asp

²See for example Education Guardian 24 July 2006 'Nurses Urged to Teach about Same-Sex relationships', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2006/jul/24/schools.uk>
Also Mail Online, "Children 'to be given compulsory sex education from age four'", <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1031837/Children-given-compulsory-sex-education-age-four.html>

³Cf 'Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality', Pontifical Council for the Family, 1995, Paragraph 78.

⁴The case of police officer, Graham Cogman can be found on Lifesite news which details his troubles arising from his objections to wearing ribbons to mark gay history month and receiving emails from staff involved in 'gay liaison'. See <http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2008/jul/08072215.html>

⁵Nine fire fighters were disciplined for refusing to participate in the Pride Scotia march held in Glasgow in the Summer of 2006. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/glasgow_and_west/5301334.stm

⁶Stonewall's Publication 'Starting Out: Lesbian & Gay Recruitment Guide' can be found at <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace/1468.asp>

⁷The Scottish Government published Challenging Prejudice: *Changing Attitudes Towards Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual And Transgender People In Scotland* (Recommendations of The LGBT Hearts and Minds Agenda Group).



Letters to the Editor

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

VAUGHAN SCHOOL CONTROVERSY

Dear Father Editor,

It is with some dismay that I heard of Westminster Diocese's discouragement of Cardinal Vaughan School concerning the giving of credit to families of applicants for weekly mass attendance. Whilst I am aware that the diocese has said that the school *may if it wishes* do this, it hardly inspires confidence, not least given the apparent equivocation of its official 'Guidance Notes' – and few schools take this *option*. The playing down of the importance of Sunday Mass in the definition of practising Catholic is very serious indeed, especially for families trying to make their youngsters go to church every week. After all to participate in the celebration of the sacrifice of the mass has to be the central point of every Catholic person's life.

Such schools have already suffered an enormous blow when they were made to drop the interview of prospective parents. Without such a means of assessing Catholic practice the Vaughan school has been left with a less than perfect system of giving extra credits to families based on the participation in the life of the parish. Participation is of course desirable, but difficult to define and can sometimes lead to abuse on the part of some families. My own experience has been very disappointing when our son was turned down for a place at this school, close to which we live.

My husband and I have been going to mass every Sunday for over twenty years, we have taken an interest in the life of the church by attending talks, retreats and the like, supporting our parish priest whenever possible. Raising our large family however made it at times difficult to participate in the life of the parish in the way the school entry

requirements define. Even though we specified our circumstances and motivations in the application form, these were not taken into account, even at the appeal stage.

It seems a pity that, under government pressure, the school has not been allowed more discretion to select candidates. It is in everyone's interest, especially the parents who choose this school in such overwhelming numbers, that the school retains its catholic identity. Academic excellence often follows as a consequence of the integrity of the catholic ethos. It is very difficult to make a fair assessment of a family's catholicity purely by looking at a form. Perhaps the Diocese together with the school could devise a fairer more flexible system.

Yours faithfully
Valeria Manca
Trebovir Road
London SW5

THE EVER DEEPENING SILENCE

Dear Father Editor,

Eric Hester's interesting review of Philip Lawler's book on Boston Catholicism, refers to a certain "culture of secrecy and evasion" in America concerning the abuse crisis, and sees it mirrored to some extent in Britain. The recent *Catholic Herald* interview with Bishop Conry of Arundel and Brighton, when compared with Bishop O'Donoghue's *Fit for Mission?* documents shows this point to have wider application.

The large divergence of episcopal opinion revealed (concerning the modern relevance of church teaching, for instance on contraception) is never reflected in the directives of our national Conference of Bishops. Instead the obvious concern for consensus would seem always to result in compromise and even silence, and therefore weak leadership in our national Church.

The fundamental hierarchical offices of the Church, set up by Christ to enable clear leadership and teaching, are surely the Pope and each Bishop responsible for his own diocese. The political

expediency of national conferences, oiled by their ever expensive bureaucracies, are at the very most secondary. While national *ad limina* visitations might of numerical necessity be made together as nations, each bishop is always there in his own right to answer directly to the Pope, and not to hide behind a national consensus, nor should he be unable to break rank out of loyalty to his fellows.

This diplomatic culture of secrecy must have been the cause of the roaring silence at the opportune moment of celebrating the 40th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, the beginning of which, back in 1968, was fascinatingly revealed by Clifford Longley's *The Worlock Archive*, as your July 2007 editorial helpfully described.

Yours faithfully
Fr Michael Kelly
St Augustine of Canterbury
Leeds

CELIBACY: A HIGHER LOVING?

Dear Father Editor,

William Massie's article, *The Incarnation and Priestly Love in the Theology of Edward Holloway*, (Nov/Dec) was an erudite and thoughtful expression of the virtues of priestly celibacy. As a former married Anglican priest going through seminary formation at the moment, such matters obviously resonate and raise questions. The question is not really about a celibate priest loving God more than a married one; that is disingenuous and rather unhelpful. Both can love the Lord equally, though in different circumstances. To suggest otherwise is to make something of a moral and spiritual judgment. What can be said, and, I should add, strongly affirmed, is that the celibate is more available and can give himself more to the service of the Lord and his people. This is an abiding sense of how the Pauline higher vocation of the celibate can be valued and understood. It stands the test of time, of attitudes to virginity, the body, sex and society.

Presbyteronum ordinis defends the retention of the Latin rite practice of

“the celibate priest is freed to love the Lord and his people in a way that is closest to Christ’s own loving”

priestly celibacy but admits that this is a useful discipline rather than being the essence of priesthood. The Eastern practice is also affirmed and it is assumed that married priests were apostolic in origin. The charism of celibacy is not essential to the priestly vocation, though there is a full givenness to the calling and ministry when that is present.

Recent scholarly studies such as by Stickler, Chohij and Cochini have reopened the debate about the origins of priestly celibacy, arguing that the Eastern practice is not ancient but an accommodation to lapses among married clergy. They envisage a universal, apostolic custom of ordaining married men but then expecting continence. Whether their assessment of the Eastern position is correct is debatable, as it is also whether continence was universal (northern European Councils had to keep on enforcing this, and the protests of the East also suggest that they did not hold it as an apostolic essential). Whatever the truth of this, it is a huge assumption to believe that what had become (at least) a widespread custom by the fourth century had originated with the Apostles. That the custom predated the fourth century councils to some extent is obvious, but no one can say by what length of time. There simply is not enough evidence. Scattered references such as in Ignatius of Antioch suggest that some were embracing continence or celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom, following the Pauline encouragement, but that this was of their own free will. Perhaps this gradually took force, especially in circumstances of persecution, and it would no doubt have had to have had the approval of the local bishop.

The Biblical material adduced by the aforementioned scholars is also inconclusive. St Paul uses forms of *egkrates* for ‘self control’ in 1 Cor 7:9 where it is clearly about sexual passions. He also uses the term in Titus 1:6-9 and it is assumed he means ‘continence’ but he might not. A study of the term in classical Greek and in the Scriptures reveals that the meaning is

contextual. For example, in Ecclesiasticus 18:30ff it refers to self control regarding drink and money; in Galatians 5:28 it is one of the general fruits of the Spirit for all believers, as it is in Acts 24:25. Aristotle saw this as self control of the passions, and not just sexual ones. The Titus reference might mean no more than a bishop must have his general passions under godly control. (Interestingly, the parallel passage in 1 Timothy 3:2 does not use *egkrates* at all; strange if it is so essential a teaching). Some are obviously choosing to read back later ideas into the apostolic writings and are jumping to conclusions. Likewise, the response of Jesus to Peter in Matthew 19:29 about leaving wives and family might mean no more than going out on the mission field and leaving them for a season. This does not enjoin permanent continence on the apostles.

As the following of the Pauline exhortation grew in enthusiasm, various other ideas were mixed in such as ritual purity and the Levitical code, and an associated interpretation of the periodic abstinence from sexual relations to be devoted to prayer (cf 1 Cor 7:5). Thus the priest was ever ready for service at the altar and in intercession. Some of these associations are highly questionable and they have been quietly dropped after Vatican II.

In conclusion, it is far from clear that the apostolic practice was a universal continence. It is likely that this grew steadily as something freely embraced and the later rupture of traditions between East and West reflected the diverse practice that went on earlier. It is hard, also, to equate enforced continence with the apostolic injunctions to remain in the state in which you were called and the Dominical teaching about not allowing anything to put the marriage bond asunder.

Married men, not embracing continence, can be committed, active and sacrificial in loving their flock, though they cannot be as freely moveable or available as a celibate priest. They can bring deep insights about married relationships, though, as well as the raising of children. In this way, both married men and

celibates reflect the mystery and wonder of Ephesians 5:21-33, the one entering the mystery of Christ’s love for the Bride as embodied in his own wife, and the other in the Church alone. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive in ministry. How the Church might or might not broaden the practice of married clergy in the future I cannot say, but there is room for both styles and the charism of celibacy is vital, beautiful and a sign of the kingdom. It should not be devalued.

Yours faithfully
Kevin O’Donnell
Hurst Rd
Horsham

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Fr William Massie replies:

I am very grateful for Mr O’Donnell’s considered and constructive engagement with my argument. I will respond simply to two of his points which touch the central point of the original article: first, whether or not vowed chastity (or “celibacy”) can enable a fuller living-out of the loving of Christ the priest and second, whether the Council Fathers in *Presbyterorum ordinis* intended more than simply defending celibacy in the Latin rite as a “useful discipline”.

I suppose it is inevitable since we have some married priests in Britain alongside those living vowed chastity that a re-statement of traditional teaching about the merits of celibate priesthood might seem like a negative judgment on the merits of married priests. It should not. But to affirm as Mr O’Donnell does that the celibate “is more available and can give himself more to the service of the Lord and his people” (and that this is St Paul’s understanding of the “higher vocation of the celibate”) is simply to recognise that the celibate priest is freed to love the Lord and his people in a way that is closest to Christ’s own loving who ‘gave himself’ to the point of laying down his life and came ‘to serve and not to be served’. ‘Self-gift’ and ‘service’ are surely important ways of describing the love in the life of a priest.

Pius XII reminded us that that the superior character of celibacy for the kingdom, as at least a capacity for and calling to holiness, “was solemnly defined as a dogma of divine faith by the holy Council of Trent” (*Sacra virginitas*, n. 32) where it formally stated (anathematising the contrary) that it is “better and holier to remain in virginity or celibacy than to be joined in marriage” (DS 1810). Moreover such authoritative tradition is never “choosing to read back later ideas into the apostolic writings” but a drawing out from the deposit of faith what is old and what is new.

Celibacy offers the potential for greater holiness when lived with humility and grace. St Augustine had much to say on this matter in *De sancta virginitate* where he insists that chaste virginity is the closest imitation of Christ open to us in this life. However the distinction is between a ‘good’ and a ‘greater good’ (marriage and vowed chastity) not between a ‘non-good’ and a ‘good’. And indeed he cautions against any subjective judgments being made by or about individuals – “humble spouses follow the Lamb more easily than proud virgins”. He also sees a truly ecclesial complementarity between the vocations of celibacy and marriage (as did Holloway) commenting on the “rejoicing” in heaven by those who have lived chastely in the state of marriage or virginity and now celebrate their respective gifts without any trace of envy.

Presbyterorum ordinis does recognise that celibacy is not demanded of the priesthood by nature and explicitly acknowledges the “many excellent married priests” in the Eastern Churches. However it does more than defend the retention of the Latin rite practice of priestly celibacy as a “useful discipline”. *Presbyterorum ordinis* lists the many ways in which celibacy is “in harmony with” and “so appropriate to” the priesthood. But it does not argue for the maintenance of celibacy for practical reasons alone. In bypassing questions as to the practice of the early Church in this matter it insists that the motive for celibate priesthood is found in the words and the mystery of Christ: “Perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the

kingdom of heaven was recommended by Christ the Lord”; it is “... based on the mystery of Christ and his mission” (P.O. 16). The Council Fathers were in no doubt that its origin and motive lies with Christ and that is why it was “recommended” and afterwards “imposed” on candidates for the priesthood. In the light of this confirmation of the tradition it does seem highly plausible, as the studies by Stickler, Cholij and Cochini maintain, that the apostles would have practised continence even if it were not a universal requirement in the ‘apostolic age’ and beyond.

NEW ONTOLOGY ILL ADVISED?

Dear Father Editor,

It is a pleasure to write to you (again) about a topic that is close to my heart: St Thomas. My intention is simply to take up a few of my main queries concerning the Jan/Feb editorial of Faith.

1. Do you have to be a Thomist to be a Catholic? No, I wouldn’t want to say that. But papal statements have been consistent in promoting, not only the method, but also the content of Aquinas. Just a couple of examples, two among many:

“His teaching above that of others, the canonical writings alone excepted, enjoys such a precision of language, an order of matters, a truth of conclusions, that those who hold to it are never found swerving from the path of truth, and he who dare assail it will always be suspected of error.” (Innocent VI, Sermon on St Thomas)

“...this new pursuit seems to have caught the souls of certain Catholic philosophers, who, throwing aside the patrimony of ancient wisdom, chose rather to build up a new edifice than to strengthen and complete the old by aid of the new – ill-advisedly, in sooth...” (Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*)

I know you will have encountered these lines before, and that they are not of infallible nature. And no, I don’t “suspect you of error”! But the teaching is nevertheless clear: Thomas’ philosophy

is made to last. In the second citation, if we replace the word “edifice” with the word “synthesis”, do we not have a description of Holloway’s enterprise, followed by the considered judgment of Pope Leo XIII? To “throw aside the patrimony” – even when done with the respectfulness you invariably show – is truly “ill-advised”!

Finally, I saved this one to last because I have read this claim, or something very close to it, on the pages of your magazine:

“They allege, finally, that our perennial philosophy is only a philosophy of immutable essences, while the contemporary mind must look to the existence of things and to life, which is ever in flux.” (Pius XII, *Humani Generis*)

“Thomistic essentialism” – that old chestnut – as opposed to a “dynamic” vision of life, the universe and everything. But Pius XII is not convinced; and neither am I. It’s a false opposition, an “allegation”, and can be corrected, I believe, by careful study of Thomas’ writings.

2. The editorial text seems to imply that the recent crisis – post Vatican II I assume – has deep roots in the outgoing intellectual orthodoxy (Thomism); and you ask rhetorically for a solution to the crisis without reference to that particular synthesis: “Why did everything collapse so quickly in the 1960s?”

For theologians, the intellectual factor is easy to overrate. I think that the crisis goes deeper than any particular systematic expression of Catholic faith – Thomism, Holloway, or whoever else. The question is not so much the “adequacy” of a theological system in its internal coherence, but the “adequacy” of an institutional structure that claims to mediate truth in an authoritative way. This anti-institutionalism, married to anti-traditionalism, has marked the recent history of the West profoundly, in thought and in forms of social and political life, and after Vatican II it found its way into the mainstream of Catholicism both as lived and as theorised.

“Catholic thinkers from Descartes down to Cardinals Schonborn and Dulles have tried to claim that scientific observation prescinds from formality”

Those who set themselves up as the true repositories of the “spirit of the Council” are not rebelling against theological incoherencies, and they won’t be re-integrated if a more satisfactory system is proposed, since its presuppositions – if it is orthodox – are ultimately the same. No, they have imbibed the spirit of the age, and seek to mould the Holy Catholic Church according to its un-holy inspiration, which they see as the “way forward”. This, I reckon, is what the crisis is about, more than intellectual reservations about academic theology, or indeed counter-proposals at the same level. The “theology” of rebellion, it seems to me, follows upon the act of rebellion itself, not vice versa.

In summary, I consider the implication that Thomism was as an essential factor in leading up to the modern crisis is misplaced. I don’t deny the inadequacy of the particular version of Thomism – perhaps typical at the time – to which Fr Holloway may have been exposed, nor its need for reform and renewal. I just wish to make the case for integration and not rupture with the contents of the perennial philosophy.

Yours faithfully,
John Deighan
Pontifical Scots College
Rome

EDITORIAL COMMENT

We thank Mr Deighan for raising some key issues helpfully. We share his important concern for “integration” rather than “rupture”. In contrast with his emphasis we would affirm that the individualist, anti-institutional “spirit of the age” and its “acts of rebellion” have been profoundly encouraged by the “theology” of rebellion”, or perhaps better: by the gradual development of theological and philosophical relativism. This process has been fostered, we believe, by the failure to respond appropriately to the rise of science and its attendant culture. Making such a response involves developing scholastic philosophy – newly synthesising the traditional “patrimony” concerning, for instance, realism, natural law and holism with new discoveries. This is quite different from building a “new edifice”, as if from scratch.

Mr Deighan *will* have read in these pages “something very close” to the idea that Thomistic epistemology tends to emphasise “immutable essences” and static forms, and that this emphasis has been powerfully challenged by the success of modern science (for example Jaeger’s article in our last issue and in our September 2006 issue the editorial and the quotes from Ronald Knox’s *God and the Atom*). As Pius XII brings out St Thomas’ philosophical synthesis does go significantly beyond such essentialism balancing it with a much needed existentialist emphasis upon “dynamic”, even relational, being. But the coherence of the two emphases was partial. This didn’t matter too much until the rise of science exposed an insufficiency.

Francis Bacon set up the challenge in the early seventeenth century by pointing out that the new science’s success showed that something akin to induction upon observation is a more fundamental and normal way of knowing than deduction upon abstract, formal propositions. In turn he showed that repeated observation of the world around us organically develops our knowledge of the form or nature of things.

We would agree with scholasticism that the ‘form’ of something is that objective dimension of something which makes it an intelligible unity of a particular type or species. But Scholasticism conceived such, in its universality and its intelligibility, as clear-cut and static, somehow transcending the specific, concrete, dynamic environmental context of the various individual things which it in-forms. Science denies this transcendence of the concrete, sensible realm. Formality is a real observable phenomenon, and yet also dynamic and relational *in its very intelligibility*.

As well as challenging the scholastic concept of form this insight also offers a fresh way of synthesising it with the scholastic concept of being. It should be, we suggest, simply a matter of seeing dynamic, concrete, relationality as *intrinsic* to and *not* extrinsic to formal intelligibility. But the opportunity was missed and the reactionary Rene Descartes became the foremost

defender of abstract knowledge and deductive methodology *against* the scientific method through his theory of *a priori* innate ideas.

In a certain reaction to such developing idealism, scepticism and Existentialism grew up. More recently we have seen the influential Transcendental Thomism which school emphasises Thomas’ dynamic approach to being whilst sadly deemphasising his realistic (if too static in its intelligibility) approach to knowledge of the form.

Even worse over the centuries since Descartes right up to the invariably profound pages of *First Things* Catholic thinkers have downplayed the metaphysical relevance of modern science. This has allowed science to be predominantly interpreted through the lens of anti-essentialist nominalism and reductionism.

What all these modern schools of thought have in common is rejection of the previously dominant Greco-scholastic essentialism in ontology and epistemology. Unfortunately they threw the baby out with the bath water, and seriously downplayed the ontological and intelligible reality of formality.

In response Catholic thinkers from Descartes down to Cardinals Schonborn and Dulles have tried to claim that scientific observation *prescinds* from formality. They have then tried to contextualise science through a basically *a priori* metaphysics which defends the traditional concept of formality as a *priori* to physical observation and so ontologically transcendent of matter. This approach sadly fails to convince most reductionist scientists concerning the actuality of formality because most scientists know that they do get at formality in their careful observation of matter (as Stephen Barr has asserted against the late Cardinal Dulles in *First Things* last year, and the Ronald Knox quotes mentioned above bring out). As a phenomenon this observation of formality is *not a priori*. In the absence of a convincing holistic philosophy of science the form gets metaphysically reduced to dynamic, individualistic materiality.

It might be said that such Catholic response actually does the opposite of what is intended. Over recent centuries Catholic patronization of science has inexorably further entrenched the nominalistic hegemony upon the philosophy of science. In turn, in the technological West, it all undermines the important traditional emphasis upon the holistic form, human nature, natural law and the very existence of the divine designer.

We urgently need a *metaphysics* that develops upon our developed *physics* whilst keeping Thomas' realism, holism and belief in human nature.

MAGISTERIUM AND/OR SCIENCE?

Dear Father Editor,

Thank you for publishing my letter and for your lengthy comment thereon. If I may be allowed a rejoinder, as per the usual debating protocol, I would begin by commenting that the authority of the Church's *Magisterium* can hardly be challenged by an article in *L'Osservatore Romano*.

Even articles by the most distinguished of journalists can hardly be put on a par with papal magisterial teaching contained in *Humani Generis* and *Arcanum* or the teaching of the ordinary infallible *Magisterium*.

The teaching of living theologians, even a large group of living theologians, is not, of itself, an exercise of infallibility, either – despite what some of them may think.

Even the International Theological Commission cannot be put on a par with the infallible *Magisterium*. Indeed, the ITC – which recently even questioned the existence of limbo and thus, by implication, the necessity of baptism to enter heaven – forms no part of the *Magisterium* but is merely an advisory body.

Approval of its documents by its President, and by the Holy Father, are simply approval *in forma specifica* for the document to be published as an advisory document and no more. It does not represent formal approval of the

teaching contained within them. Grants of *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur* are also not infallible or certain guarantors of orthodoxy.

Failure to draw these important distinctions and failure to observe the hierarchy of authority is not only misleading but tends to dissolve the distinction between the *Ecclesia docens* and the *Ecclesia docta* which is one of the primary causes of doctrinal confusion today. If there is no such distinction then each man's view is as authoritative as the next and no-one can be certain of any doctrine. The founders of the Protestant revolt denied the distinction and the result has been a profusion of conflicting sects and doctrines ever since.

In *Humani Generis* Pope Pius XII stated thus:

“When there is a question of another conjectural opinion, namely, of polygenism so-called, then the sons of the Church in no way enjoy such freedom. For the faithful in Christ cannot accept this view, which holds either that after Adam there existed men on this earth who did not receive their origin by natural generation from him, the first parent of all, or that Adam signifies some kind of multiple first parents; for it is by no means apparent how such an opinion can be reconciled with what the sources of revealed truth and the acts of the magisterium of the Church teach about original sin, which proceeds from a sin truly committed by one Adam, and which is transmitted to all by generation, and exists in each one as his own” (*Humani Generis* 37).

Pius XII is not merely “speaking strongly” in favour of monogenism, he clearly says that the sons of the Church enjoy no freedom to endorse polygenism.

That teaching may not have been made by an exercise of the extraordinary infallible *Magisterium* but it is plainly a re-presentation of what the ordinary infallible *Magisterium* has always taught. It is thus a teaching *de fide* which cannot be departed from.

The ordinary infallible *Magisterium* has never taught anything other than monogenism. That is not surprising since polygenism only became scientifically fashionable within the last 200 years.

The Fathers are unanimous, as are the Doctors of the Church, that there was but one Adam and one Eve through whom Original Sin was transmitted to their posterity, the whole of the human race. Unanimity of both Fathers and Doctors may not represent an exercise of infallibility but it is a measure of a very high degree of certainty in matters of faith and morals.

However, the infallible extraordinary *Magisterium* has, in fact, pronounced on the subject of Original Sin:

The Council of Trent (Session V, Canon 2) declared:

“If any one asserts, that this sin of Adam, which in its origin is one, and being transfused into all by propagation, not by imitation, is in each one as his own, is taken away either by the powers of human nature, or by any other remedy than the merit of the one mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ...let him be anathema.”

The Second Council of Orange (Canon 2) declared:

“If anyone asserts that Adam's sin affected him alone and not his descendants also, or at least if he declares that it is only the death of the body which is the punishment for sin, and not also that sin, which is the death of the soul, passed through one man to the whole human race, he does injustice to God and contradicts the Apostle, who says, “Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned” (Rom. 5:12).”

How can sin pass to the whole human race as the posterity of Adam if there was more than one Adam? Clearly, then, it is a dogmatic fact that there was but one Adam and one Eve since it is connected with the dogma of original sin, and on which the application of that dogma depends.

“The ordinary infallible Magisterium has never taught anything other than monogenism.”

Neither can one avoid the issue by saying that the name “Adam” is symbolic, or that his existence is not defined. Dissenters from the traditional view are forced to deny that original sin passed to the first man’s posterity, a teaching which *has been defined*, as we see above. Thus they deny a *de fide* teaching.

Pius XII restates the teaching in *Humani Generis*. Moreover, in *Arcanum*, Pope Leo XII taught this (paragraph 5):

“We record what is to all known, and cannot be doubted by any, that God, on the sixth day of creation, having made man from the slime of the earth, and having breathed into his face the breath of life, gave him a companion, whom He miraculously took from the side of Adam when he was locked in sleep. God thus, in His most far-reaching foresight, decreed that this husband and wife should be the natural beginning of the human race, from whom it might be propagated and preserved by an unailing fruitfulness throughout all futurity of time.”

Yours faithfully,
James Bogle
Inner Temple
London

EDITORIAL COMMENT

With respect, we do not elevate *L'Osservatore Romano* or the proceedings of the International Theological Commission to the level of Magisterial documents. The point at issue is whether or not monogenism is an infallibly defined dogma, and therefore whether or not the question can legitimately be discussed in any terms at all. The fact that the question has been regarded as open to further investigation in the Vatican’s own in-house publication and officially sanctioned consultative documents without drawing censure or even demur from the Holy Office indicates that the issue is not defined *de Fide*, although there is no doubt that the ordinary teaching of the Magisterium is in favour of monogenism for the reasons outlined by Pius XII in *Humani Generis*.

On questions that are not yet subject to infallible definition, the International Theological Commission may legitimately explore opinions and possibilities which the Magisterium ultimately rejects or corrects. That is the remit which is proper to both institutions. But to question a dogma that is already defined would simply be heresy. Mr Bogle seems to suggest that heresy on this point is openly tolerated in publications published with the blessing of the Vatican - and in our own much more humble publications too.

As evidence to back his point, he also seems to think that the teaching about Limbo is an infallibly defined dogma which has been reprehensibly questioned by the International Theological Commission recently. Here we must correct him too. Limbo is not and never has been *de Fide*. Cardinal Ratzinger made this clear in 1985: “Limbo was never a defined truth of faith” (*The Ratzinger Report*, Ignatius Press, 1985 p.147). He also expressed a personal opinion that it could be dropped if necessary and he went on to show how this would in no way compromise the necessity of baptism for salvation.

Similarly, the doctrine of Original Sin being passed on by physical generation, hence that we are all descended from the first humans who fell from grace, is indeed defined *de Fide*. That is not in dispute. *Humani Generis* is indeed strongly, but carefully worded, in favour of monogenism precisely to defend this doctrine. And this we hold as the teaching of the ordinary magisterium. But does it close the door to any further insight, if that could be shown to compatible with what has already been defined - viz. the teaching on Original Sin? Has the specific matter of monogenism been infallibly defined?

Once again, we make it clear that Faith Movement makes no case for polygenism at all. The only place in any publication of Faith Movement where the issue is raised is in Fr Roger Nesbitt’s pamphlet, *Evolution and Original Sin* where, after careful discussion of the theological and scientific issues involved, he concludes:

“The Church then at present teaches monogenism, one original human couple, and whilst polyphyletism would seem to be unacceptable a polygenistic monophyletism (several couples from one branch) could possibly be squared with Catholic doctrine. What can be said about the *scientific* evidence in this discussion? Whilst Pierre Teilhard de Chardin may not have been renowned for his doctrinal orthodoxy few would deny his perceptiveness in grasping modern scientific trends. De Chardin made two important points: firstly that the science of man seems to come out decisively in favour of monophyletism and secondly that any decision for or against monogenism must ultimately elude science in view of the depth of time that has elapsed since the creation of man. Because of this scientific inconclusiveness perhaps the Church’s teaching on monogenism may turn out in the long run to be the only information we shall ever have.

“Some interesting questions remain to be answered by science. Can any argument from genetics and biochemistry if not from anthropology be constructed for monogenism? Does not the complete interfertility and viability of the offspring between all the races of Man necessarily argue to one origin and biological stock for Homo Sapiens? Despite all this the fact remains that our stock was damaged at the beginning of human history by a real sin, and the effects of this sin are passed on to us all. That is the teaching of the Church. At the present time she still favours monogenism and there is no need for an inferiority complex on this matter with regard to the scientific evidence”.

Thirty years on, we see no reason to revise this. However, if anything here were ever to be judged unorthodox by the highest authority in the Church, then we would very happily withdraw it. Our pre-submission to Christ’s Ecclesial Magisterium in all things is most explicit in our aims and ideals.

This correspondence is now closed.

The Truth Will Set You Free

Joanna Bogle

MARRIAGE PREPARATION: AN EXPERIENCE OF BEING THEOLOGICAL

Invited to give talks to young couples preparing for marriage, it was easy enough to know what to avoid. “Marriage Preparation” is one of those topics like “School Masses” where you expect to hear some horror-stories. I had had plenty of reports, over the years, from intelligent young couples whose sense of humour and commitment to good manners had been sorely tested by the vacuities thrown at them on these occasions.

One couple – he a Catholic, she a German Lutheran, both of average intelligence and holding responsible jobs and in their middle 30s – had had to endure a game in which they were told to take an object out of a box and “say what it meant to them”. (He had drawn out a teabag). Another couple found themselves wriggling with embarrassment as older team members spoke sentimentally about the joys of matrimony, with coy hints about the delights of its intimacies.

Almost all these couples whom I had encountered were serious about marriage preparation, genuinely concerned to put thought, prayer and effort into the approach to this great sacrament. Most were “mixed marriages”, a Catholic marrying a non-Catholic, and in virtually every case the non-Catholic was open to and interested in the Catholic Church’s message on marriage, expecting something large and inspiring – and was disappointed.

Easy enough, then, to recognise what to avoid. And the priest who had invited me to participate in the programme of talks was fairly specific. There would be, in the course of an organised programme of talks, separate sessions on various matters ranging from the liturgy of the Nuptial Mass to the message of *Humanae Vitae* and knowledge of NFP. My task was simply to speak as a Catholic married woman about the reality of the Church’s teaching, with the thought that this could include such things as the importance of prayer and Sunday Mass, creating a Christian home together, facing the events of life together, and so on. It should also include clear references to the value of confession, the need to understand the nature of the Church’s understanding of marriage as a lifelong bond – and some references as to why cohabitation before marriage was not the right way to start.

From the beginning, I knew that I wouldn’t do the “sharing my own story” thing that many (probably most?) young people find both uncomfortable and boring. Such testimonies are rarely applicable to most listeners and rarely convincing. We can hardly be expected to reveal the full truth about our family lives – quarrels and money worries and muddles and worse. And jolly stories about the joys and absurdities, tender moments and sad ones, etc etc, easily crowd out clear teaching and turn the thing into a soap opera. Also: why tempt Satan into thinking that here would be a delightful opportunity to encourage preening and boasting, followed by some hideous public humiliation and divorce? No, thanks.

So I started by just sticking to the basics. I used the words of the Nuptial Mass, and the sections on Marriage, Prayer, and the Eucharist from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as my initial study-guide. I read up relevant Papal encyclicals and a range of Catholic writing on marriage. And I found myself

drawing from long-stored mental material on marriage: well-observed human realities noted by Jane Austen, things said by my parents and grandparents, commonsense spoken by elderly people (as a reporter on local newspapers, it was my job – for years – to interview Golden Wedding couples: one often got unexpected wisdom).

One can be amusing, genuine, honest and even mildly entertaining without slithering into bogus showing-off. There are great depths of wisdom in the centuries of Christian teaching on this subject – and most especially in the distillation given by Pope John Paul II in his *Theology of the Body*. You can introduce a sufficiency of personal insights and anecdotes to ensure that the thing doesn’t resemble either a sermon (which no one wants from a laywoman) or a hearty evangelistic rallying-call.

But what I hadn’t expected was that I would find the process so deepening – so demanding in its insistence that I really study this whole matter of matrimony in depth, so, well, *theological*.

The Great Marriage

I found myself meditating on the idea of matrimony as linked not just to Christ and his Church, but to the essence of the whole Christian mystery: the Word made flesh.

Initially, I was simply struck by the way in which, in the marriage liturgy, we are reminded that the union between a man and his bride is like that of Christ and his Church. I hadn’t noticed the order before – that Christ and his Church came *first*.

There was already a great Marriage, a union planned in the mind and heart of God, before human beings were even created. It’s not that we begin things ourselves – a boy and girl standing before the altar – but rather than we unite ourselves with this much bigger reality which has already taken place, is already taking place: Christ and his Bride, the Church. The male/female imagery is no mere poetry, something nice to be said at weddings because Scripture provides us with some pleasant words to fit in with the flowers and pretty dresses and general sense of agreeable festivity. It’s actually a statement of truth. For Catholics, this whole male/female business is terribly important – crucial, central to the way we see things. Marriage matters. It’s not just a convenient arrangement, a remedy for concupiscence. It’s a sacrament which images God and his Church. It’s a human reality living out a Divine plan. And at the end of all things, when we meet God face to face, we’ll see the fullness of all this is the great Marriage Feast of the Lamb in Heaven.

Now, when I had discovered all this I thought I had hit upon a great mystery (doesn’t St Paul say much the same?), and I got very excited and talked about it all to my husband at supper and he looked up languidly and said yes, of course, stupid, we all know that anyway, it’s all there in the teaching of the Church, he’d read about it years before, typical that I’d only just discovered it, did I have any other brain-shattering wisdom to impart? And of course he had a point. But there’s more.

The Incarnation didn’t happen silently. It was the Word, spoken to Mary at Nazareth, and eliciting a verbal response from her, that was central to the Incarnation. I don’t believe that Mary sensed a silent voice within her, or had a mysterious feeling of an angelic presence. I believe that it was exactly as the Gospel

“Prescriptive messages do not work: honest theology can. So can prayer, solidarity, and a sense of hope.”

of St Luke describes it: it was verbal, she was literally startled by the voice of an angel.

The words of the salutation were certainly startling – Mary was hailed as “full of grace” – and the news they conveyed more startling yet. Mary was to be the mother of the world’s saviour and redeemer.

And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us – initially, in Mary’s womb, and later in a manger in Bethlehem.

In the Mass, we have the spoken word, which is made flesh – and Christ is present on the altar. In marriage, too, we have the word – actual, crucial, verbal, spoken words, the marriage vows – that will become flesh. Through these words, we provide the proper, accepting, committed context in which a child can come and dwell and grow among us.

The Confusion About Sex

The problem today is that we’ve lost all this. Marriage is denigrated. Instead of word becoming flesh, we have the uniting of bodies followed – sometimes – by some words of promise. Wrong way round.

It was after thinking all this through that I began to realise how deficient some older marriage-manuals were – those produced in the early part of the 20th century, for instance, which while denouncing contraception and urging chastity, saw all this in prescriptive terms and essentially as a series of rules. I came to grasp how extraordinarily different, as well as differently-presented, was the approach taken by Pope John Paul, and to recognise the truth blurted out, on a TV programme recalling his life, by a Polish woman of his generation who first encountered his teaching as a young woman in his diocese of Krakow in the 1960s. “No one had ever written about sex in this way in the Catholic Church in Poland before!”

Because of recent abandonment of Catholic teaching on sex, love, marriage, and fruitfulness on a huge scale, the reality of the Church’s message is seen, even today, 40 years after the massive dissent from *Humanae Vitae* was first vocalised, as being something bleak. For this reason, it is often simply not taught at all, and of course there are those who seek to water it down or rob it of all authority. Among others, it is too often still taught in a prescriptive way. Pioneering work in promoting Natural Family Planning, or fertility awareness as many now prefer to call it, has started to change this – I’ve learned a great deal from the excellent presentations I have seen on this subject, and the human and dignified way in which it speaks of man and woman – but we still have a long way to go.

Because most of the young couples arriving for a marriage preparation talk are already living together – “living in sin” as it used to be called – it really is very difficult for them to grasp much of the Church’s message all at once. Their minds are clouded (darkened?) and they are muddled and confused. Sometimes they almost demand a prescriptive tone so that they can shout against it. Sometimes they simply want to express their own sense of hurt and frustration about the break-up of their parents’ marriages, and seek some sort of instant formula for ensuring that they can make a better go of things. Almost invariably, they are bringing to their own marriage a whole complicated package of previous sexual relationships, confusion, contraception, and dishonesty as well as hopes, fears, wishes,

and (unknown to them) the awesome God-given possibilities associated with their baptism and the power of Christ.

Prescriptive messages do not work: honest theology can. So can prayer, solidarity, and a sense of hope.

It isn’t daft to recommend confession to engaged couples – one of the questions most often asked is “Should you tell your spouse about all your previous relationships?” to which the only sane answer is “Not necessarily. There may be some things we need to tell, but is it right to burden a spouse with detailed knowledge to which he or she has no real right and which can serve no purpose? But we must tell it all to God, through the ministry of the Church, and this is what the Sacrament of Penance is all about.” (Talk about confession should incidentally in my view usually be done as a “we” and not as a “you”. By ensuring that it is clear that this is a Sacrament of which the speaker makes personal use, it can be approached on a real level).

It isn’t daft to suggest that they read through the words of the Nuptial Blessing – and indeed the whole of the marriage service – together. It isn’t daft to suggest praying together, visiting the church where the wedding is to take place and perhaps finding some special meaning in the life of the saint to whom it is dedicated, going to Mass together, talking about the things of God together. It isn’t impossible to suggest that the decision to marry is one that should be rooted in prayer, or that as we pray we may find God making suggestions to us about a change of lifestyle. It isn’t lunatic to hope that when given interesting information, young people may talk about it and think about it.

Finally: it has been my experience that in discussing marriage at this fairly deep level, and relating this to the practicalities of married life, sessions really can actually result in precisely the sort of genuine communication to which the trendier “look-in-the-box-and-find-a-teabag” version aspires. This is especially the case when they have had several sessions, including real teaching – from a priest – about some basics on God, prayer, the Church, and the Sacraments. In discussion, we don’t get lots of personal fluff and stories. We do get some genuine questions – especially about confession (sometimes rather moving – along the lines of “Um..um...if a person...um...hadn’t been to confession for...um...years and years...is it going to be difficult?”) . We do get thoughtful private comments when the session has ended. And we do get a sense that the whole room has engaged in a subject of real importance – something for which it was worth giving up time, something that respects the minds and intelligences of the young people gathered there.

What has been worrying is that it has all challenged this writer beyond her expectations. I thought I was just talking about marriage, from the perspective of one who’s reached the Silver Wedding stage and is committed to the full stretch. I found instead that I had opened a book and discovered a whole library. I now want to know more. If all that about matrimony and Christ and the Bride is at the heart of it all, and is relevant to our understanding of the Eucharist, then it’s all obviously bound up with our understanding of a great deal more. I want to know about that “more”. I want to study further.

Notes From Across the Atlantic

by Fr Richard John Neuhaus



MERE RHETORIC?

The culture wars and the political battles by which they are fought are a day-by-day thing, the stuff of sound bites and news cycles. Attention must be paid to, but even greater attention is due to, the longer-term changes in the way we talk and think, as we know that the way we think is powerfully influenced by the way we talk. Toward that end, William Brennan, a social scientist at St. Louis University, has a new book from Sapientia Press, *Confronting the Language Empowering the Culture of Death*. It is a close study of the thought and language of John Paul II, who taught the Church and the world to understand the contest of the culture of life versus the culture of death. Rhetoric is never mere rhetoric, and the past election witnessed novel efforts by some Catholics to capture John Paul's language and employ it to opposite effect. With apparently some significant success, evangelical and Catholic supporters of Senator Obama attempted to hijack the language of the culture of life, claiming that they are the authentic pro-life proponents because, by reducing poverty and expanding comprehensive sex education, Obama will decrease the number of abortions. This despite his adamant support for the unlimited abortion license, his support for government funding of abortion, and his backing of the Freedom of Choice Act, which would establish abortion as a "fundamental right" and eliminate all regulation of abortion, including state measures such as waiting periods, informed consent, and parental notification, which, along with abstinence ("It works every time!"), have the proven effect of reducing the number of abortions. Such Orwellian distortions are bizarre, but, as William Brennan reminds us, they are also the

longstanding modus operandi of the pro-choice cause. And, of course, he is right in seeing John Paul the Great as a master of infiltrating truth into what, against all evidence to the contrary, we persist in calling public discourse.

SOWING SEEDS OF CHAOS

You may remember Mark C. Taylor. He's chairman of the religion department at Columbia University, who a while back announced in the *New York Times* that his ambition is to make sure that students are more confused and troubled at the end of his course than they were at the beginning. Now that's a sense of calling and a real challenge: to confuse and trouble young people. Taylor has committed yet another book, *After God*. It is reviewed by Anthony Kenny in the *Times Literary Supplement*. Taylor writes: "God is not the ground of being that forms the foundation of all things but the figure constructed to hide the originary abyss from which everything emerges and to which all returns. While this abyss is no thing, it is not nothing – neither being nor nonbeing, it is the anticipatory wake of the unfigurable that disfigures every figure as if from within." Kenny comments: "Religion, Taylor tells us, is perfectly possible without God – and given his elastic definition of religion, this is surely true. Given Taylor's definition of God, his absence seems no great loss." Kenny is right about that, but perhaps he fails to appreciate sufficiently Prof. Taylor's declared vocation, namely, the intellectual abuse of minors.

DEMISE OF TRADITIONAL ETHICS

Despite devastating critiques of his positions, Peter Singer goes on and on. Holding a Princeton professorship

doesn't hurt. But there's something about the man himself, call it self-confidence, insouciance, hubris, or something else. He wrote the long article on ethics for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. After many pages surveying the history of ethics, his conclusion is that the future of ethics as a serious discipline presupposes the collapse of traditional ethics. As it happens, he had written a book subtitled *The Collapse of Our Traditional Ethics*. History is Peter Singer. Now he reviews a new book on ethics and writes, "[The author] agrees with what now seems to be a near-consensus among philosophers that 'speciesism' – the view that we are entitled to take the interests of animals less seriously than we take human interests, simply because humans are members of our species – is not a morally defensible position." *Speciesism* is a Singer neologism and it seems he really believes what he says about there being a near-consensus on it. Surely the world cannot be that far behind Peter Singer! I doubt if anyone has a statistical breakdown on the matter, but I expect that only a small minority of philosophers, perhaps a very small minority, agrees with Singer that, for instance, between a year-old pig and a newborn baby, the pig has rights superior to those of the baby because of its greater self-consciousness. In all the possible reasons for the exalted self-confidence that keeps Peter Singer going, do not underestimate the power of sheer delusion.

SOLZHENITSYN LEGACY

Through much of the commentary on the death of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn last August, there was the repeated intimation – and sometimes vulgar assertion – that, after his return to

“Maybe I have, at least metaphorically, planted a few trees.”

Russia in 1994, he descended into crotchety old age and irrelevance. This is not new. The same complaints were loudly heard more than thirty years ago when he gave that “controversial” commencement address at Harvard. There he said, among other things: “Even if we are spared destruction by war, our lives will have to change if we want to save life from self-destruction. We cannot avoid revising the fundamental definitions of human life and human society. Is it true that man is above everything? Is there no Superior Spirit above him? Is it right that man’s life and society’s activities have to be determined by material expansion in the first place? Is it permissible to promote such expansion to the detriment of our spiritual integrity?” Such reflections were met by both embarrassed silence and cries of outrage. Who is he to presume to preach to us about the spiritual wreckage of our culture?! And to do so at Harvard, the shining campus on a hill that glows with the achievements of the brightest and best the world has ever produced. The answer is that he was one of the relatively few giants of the last hundred years, a man whose moral courage, literary genius and uncompromising devotion to his calling alerted millions to the higher possibilities in being human. Through his years in the earthly hell of the Soviet prison system, to the publication of *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in 1962, and, later, the multivolume *Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn challenged the world to look unblinkingly at the good and, with relentless specificity, the evil of which we are capable. In this he offended the good taste by which we protect our pitiable conceits and dirty secrets. In the September 2008 issue of the *New Criterion*, Roger Kimball lifts up another factor that made Solzhenitsyn so very unacceptable to most of our intellectual class. He showed that communism and Nazism were but two sides of the same evil coin. “The myth of communist ‘idealism’ was, and perhaps still is, a hardy perennial. George Steiner, reviewing *Gulag Archipelago* in the *New Yorker* in 1974, typified the attitude of the left-wing Western intellectual: ‘To infer that the Soviet terror is as hideous as Hitlerism,’ Steiner lectured, ‘is not

only a brutal oversimplification but a moral indecency.’” At least communism meant well; the pity is that it employed such brutal means, and the greater pity is that it failed. The left-wing historian Eric Hobsbawm was asked by an interviewer whether his position doesn’t come down to “saying that had the radiant tomorrow actually been created, the loss of fifteen, twenty million people might have been justified.” To which Hobsbawm unhesitatingly answered “Yes.” Kimball worries whether America, now in the grips of “crowd politics” rallying to utopian promises, might be headed in the direction of what Friedrich Hayek, following Tocqueville, called “the road to serfdom”. I hope, as he no doubt hopes, that he is wrong about that. One way to ward off that dreadful prospect is to have indelibly imprinted upon our minds the life and literary legacy of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

BOWING OUT

As of this writing, I am contending with a cancer, presently of unknown origin. I am, I am given to believe, under the expert medical care of the Sloan-Kettering clinic here in New York. I am grateful beyond measure for your prayers storming the gates of heaven. Be assured that I neither fear to die nor refuse to live. If it is to die, all that has been is but a slight intimation of what is to be. If it is to live, there is much that I hope to do in the interim. After the last round with cancer fifteen years ago, I wrote a little book, *As I Lay Dying*

(titled after William Faulkner after John Donne), in which I said much of what I had to say about the package deal that is mortality. I did not know that I had so much more to learn. And yes, the question has occurred to me that, if I have but a little time to live, should I be spending it writing this column. I have heard it attributed to figures as various as Brother Lawrence and Martin Luther – when asked what they would do if they knew they were going to die tomorrow, they answered that they would plant a tree and say their prayers. (Luther is supposed to have added that he would quaff his favoured beer.) Maybe I have, at least metaphorically, planted a few trees, and certainly I am saying my prayers. Who knew that at this point in life I would be understanding, as if for the first time, the words of Paul, “When I am weak, then I am strong”? This is not a farewell. Please God, we will be pondering together the follies and splendours of the Church and the world for years to come. But maybe not. In any event, when there is an unidentified agent in your body aggressively attacking the good things your body is intended to do, it does concentrate the mind. The entirety of our prayer is “Your will be done” – not as a note of resignation but of desire beyond expression. To that end, I commend myself to your intercession, and that of all the saints and angels who accompany us each step through time toward home.

See our tribute to Fr Neuhaus on page 7.

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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Comment on the Comments

by William Oddie

The Drift of the Diocese

Is there, in the English Catholic Church, a crisis of confidence in the diocese as an institution which can be relied on: both to defend the integrity of the Catholic faith and also to promote it with conviction – to propagate it as being not just an optional lifestyle appendage, but as the indispensable key to life itself, as a faith which makes demands that must be met, not the least of which is the vocation to be a sign of contradiction to the values of the secular world?

At the time of writing, the current *cause celebre* in this general area (there usually seems to be one at least at any given time) was the dust-up between the governors of the Cardinal Vaughan School and the Diocese of Westminster in the person of Bishop George Stack. The *Catholic Herald* summed it all up thus:

The governors of one of London's leading Catholic comprehensive schools, Cardinal Vaughan Memorial, have accused the Archdiocese of Westminster of forcing the school to water down its Catholic admissions requirements.

They predict that the latest directives will devastate the school's ethos and deny places to deserving Catholic children from boroughs of London where Catholic secondary provision is poor. Cardinal Vaughan, in Holland Park, has traditionally served Catholics from varied backgrounds from all over London. However, Westminster diocese has threatened to report the school to the Government if it fails to apply only the bishops' "objective criteria" on admissions and no others.

The chairman of the governors, Sir Adrian FitzGerald, said the school already complies with the law on admissions. The Church, on the other hand, believes it is the bishops' responsibility to define Catholic practice and Cardinal Vaughan was

not allowed to make subjective judgments about "who is a better Catholic".

The diocese said Cardinal Vaughan was not permitted to take into consideration "involvement in the wider life of the Church" or First Confession and First Holy Communion. *It insisted, however, that the governors were incorrect to claim that regular Sunday Mass-going would not be taken into consideration and nor would the length of time parents had taken to baptise the child.* A spokesman for the diocese said: "The school would be allowed to give credit to families for going to Mass every Sunday through the priest's reference form [my italics].

The passage in italics is the most important bone of contention perhaps: according to the school, the diocese specified simply "regular" mass attendance as a criterion for the description "Catholic" (they do at least accept that Catholics should be given priority): the school insisted that Mass attendance be every Sunday and all weekday Holy Days of Obligation that may have survived the recent cull. The Diocese replied that it never said what the school said it said: it could specify every Sunday if it wanted to. The school demurred: "Diocesan Guidance (Para. A26)", retorted the Chairman of the school's governors, Sir Adrian Fitzgerald Bt., "does not state that schools can give priority to children from families who attend Mass every Sunday. It states that 'regular attendance' means *attendance more often than not as far as can be judged by observation.* This could be as low as twenty-seven times per year." As for the school's requirement that Baptism should be within the first year and the Diocesan reply that it had never ruled this out, Sir Adrian rejoined that "Nowhere in the heavily prescriptive Diocesan Guidance can we find any statement that a criterion relating to

baptism within a year of birth is a legitimate one". The diocese said it had been supportive of the school; Sir Adrian said, well, in that case, why, when "the School's criteria relating to involvement in the life of the Church and reception of First Confession and First Holy Communion were ... agreed by the Local Authority" and when "in the annual consultation with relevant bodies these criteria attracted no negative comment" was there only one exception to this: three months late, the threat of the diocese of Westminster to report the school to the secular authorities?

In the end, what did the whole thing really portend; what was the subtext to this affair? Damian Thompson, in his Telegraph blog, was pretty sure that he at any rate knew very well what it was all about: under the headline "Catholic Lefties won't be happy until they've destroyed the Cardinal Vaughan School", Thompson concluded that "what it boils down to, as far as I can see, is that the diocesan bishop, H.E. Cormac Card. Murphy-O'Connor, after consulting his Left-inclined advisers, has changed the rules. The criteria for assessing Catholic commitment have been taken out of the hands of the school, and also surreptitiously loosened....Diocesan Tabletistas disapprove of the old-fashioned excellence of the Vaughan, which they consider to be elitist. So, using the excuse of new government guidelines, they are quietly moving the goalposts. And – hey presto! – one of England's best Catholic schools turns into a bog-standard but ideologically pure local comprehensive school."

Is that unfair? To read the diocese's side of it, you'd think so. But can you trust the diocese? The real point of this whole business, surely, one of them at least, is that there is a real lack of trust between the school and the diocese: the diocese is seen as the enemy, ultimately, of the faith itself: it is seen,

“Is the diocese a compromised institution; or is the real problem the fact that there are just too many dicy bishops?”

in effect, as an agent of the secular power. And it is here that the affair becomes, not just a one-off battle between a bolshie set of school governors and a heavily bureaucratized local diocese but an emblematic struggle which enacts, yet again, the suspicion felt by many Catholics for the local Church authorities, usually in the form of the diocese. Most Catholics have a perfectly good relationship with their Parish Priest; the Church indeed, for most of us is embodied by two people: the PP and the Pope: only rarely by our local bishop and his administration.

What is the problem? Is it an institutional one: or does it have to do with certain key individuals? Is the diocese a compromised institution; or is the real problem the fact that there are just too many dicy bishops? In its Christmas edition, *The Catholic Herald* ran an extended interview with Bishop Kieran Conry of Arundel and Brighton, who seemed to go out of his way wilfully to embody episcopal dicens. For a start, he turned up dressed as a layman, looking, remarked Andrew M. Brown “trim and fit ... and sporty. In his nylon zip-up jacket, dark jersey and slacks he might be a dad taking his son to a rugby sevens tournament”. At the end of the interview, as the bishop prepared for his train journey back to his diocese, Brown alluded to his secular appearance; in reply “[h]e told [him] a story about how he once came back from a conference in clerical black and two people badgered him with their Da Vinci Code questions.” As Brown drily commented, “It was a good anecdote. But as an explanation for not wearing clerical clothes, it struck me as only half convincing.” This was a restrained way of saying something pretty damning: Bishop Conry was pretending not to be what he was so as to avoid having to defend his religion – an interesting contrast, incidentally with the reaction of Opus Dei, directly attacked in the Da Vinci Code as a sinister and murderous sect, who when busloads of Da Vinci Code trail tourists pulled up outside the houses of this supposedly secretive organisation,

invited them in and answered their questions, attracting as a result hundreds of new vocations. (How many new vocations has Bishop Conry attracted?)

The whole interview is well worth studying in full as a classic of its kind: rarely has the liberal secularist Catholic mentality so uninhibitedly, even defiantly, displayed itself (you can read the interview by going to www.catholicherald.co.uk/features/f0000353.shtml). Above all, one is repeatedly struck by the Bishop’s remoteness from reality. When Brown remarked that “[a] lot of conservative enthusiasm comes from the young”, Bishop Conry explained this phenomenon by saying the reasons were “geopolitical more than theological”, specifying “massive climatic change heading our way inexorably”, the present economic uncertainty, the threat of terrorism, and the fact that “China could wage cyber-war”. How these things explain – for instance – the enthusiasm of Youth 2000 – one of the few really buoyant youth organisations in the Catholic Church today – for prolonged adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, is not perhaps, immediately obvious. But Bishop Conry is convinced that he is on to something here: he reckons he really understands young people. Brown’s interview here was masterly, and was clearly well-prepared. As he tells us, “Since the Catholic Youth Services were closed down earlier this year, Bishop Kieran has supervised youth ministry in this country.” So Brown went to the relevant website and discovered (with what glee may be imagined) a proposed “Youth Mass with a liturgy designed to appeal to youngsters”: “Suggestions included distributing tips on high-energy light bulbs, handing out Fairtrade chocolate and in a list of things to be sorry for in the penitential rite: leaving water in your kettle.” Brown asked if the bishop thought any of this was a bit silly? Well, it might be, he replied:

But it’s youth. We’re not going to switch light bulbs on in young people’s heads, not at a single event. But it was felt some of that would be appropriate for young people.” Leaving water in the kettle? “For young people that’s an issue – energy saving.” Could the Church be more radical? Talk about the serious questions – repentance, salvation? “You can’t talk to young people about salvation. What’s salvation? What does salvation mean? My eternal soul? You can only talk to young people in young people’s language, really. And if you’re going to talk to them about salvation, the first thing they will understand is saving the planet. You’re talking about being saved and they will say: ‘What about saving the planet?’”

Is that really what they all talked about, those hundreds of thousands of young people at World Youth Day, in the intervals of all that old time religion, all that Pope stuff? Were they really not concerned about salvation and their eternal souls? Did they really talk about not leaving water in their kettles?

One could go on. “Is it a good idea to go to Confession regularly?” asked Brown; “No,” replied the good bishop “because my own experience when we had Confession every day at St Chad’s Cathedral in Birmingham was that regular penitents came back with exactly the same words week after week.” *The Catholic Herald* came in for a certain amount of disapproval in my parish for publishing the interview at all, as though giving Bishop Conry a platform implied the paper’s approval of his views and as though if we ignore his views they will go away. The fact is that what Bishop Conry said encapsulated what we are all up against in the English Catholic hierarchy. Among the bishops, he is by no means the odd man out: that is Bishop O’Donoghue of Lancaster, that good and courageous man. We need to know that; the *Herald* did us all a service.



Book Reviews

Essays Catholic and Contemporary

*by John Haldane, Gracewing,
230 pp, £9.99*

In this collection of 25 very readable short essays and articles the philosopher John Haldane explores the relationship between a range of public issues in the Catholic Church and the world today. Whilst Professor Haldane is a much respected and learned academic philosopher he is also a frequent contributor to British newspapers and many of the chapters in this collection first appeared as short articles in the popular press. Haldane has rewritten and expanded many of them for this welcome publication. The book is loosely divided into five sections and each chapter is presented as a reflection on a particular challenge or issue facing the Catholic Church. The book is wide ranging in the issues selected and Haldane offers his opinion on, among other topics, the papacy of John Paul II and of Benedict XVI, the role of philosophy in faith and reason, evolutionary theory, the role of the Church in the modern world, medical and sexual ethics, art and religious architecture and Catholic schooling. He examines these issues as a Catholic intellectual and explores how they all challenge trends within modern society.

The book is very accessible and each chapter is written as a short commentary for a general audience. Therefore, the reader can be confident in beginning with any chapter that particularly interests them as it is one of those books that you can simply dip into and read and reflect on any of the many issues addressed. There is one major theme that appears to unite the

various chapters and that is 'formation' – the formation of Catholics who understand and live the Catholic faith in the public domain, but above all who apply Catholic principles to their encounters with secular modernity. Haldane has little time for a woolly Catholicism in which "the religious and moral requirements of the Church are increasingly disregarded – if they are even known about", and in which the Church is "something inessential, more to be sampled on special occasions than to be embraced as the very stuff of life itself". Haldane believes that our culture is "visibly adrift on the seas of relativism", but he is confident that the Catholic Church is "the principal form of Christ's presence in the world" and that all Catholics have a responsibility to contribute in some way to the well being of the Church. Haldane is clearly optimistic about the challenges that face the Catholic Church and he believes that "there is a sense of awaiting a renewal of Catholic apologetics and creativity".

However, how is this renewal to come about when we see the disappearance of the genuine Catholic intellectual from British public life and the Church's diminishing impact upon society? The renewal of Catholic intellectual life has to be placed against an academic background that regards the very possibility of discovering the truth with scepticism. Catholics are often exhorted to accept different opinions as representing many truths and these exhortations are often made by so-called Catholic intellectuals. There are numerous definitions of the Catholic intellectual and many of them include a powerful cultural relativism that can be self-indulgent and disruptive. After all, it is Catholic intellectuals who have often been blamed for many of the ills that have affected the Church. The Church certainly needs a higher quality of intellectual debate that critically engages with what it genuinely means to be a Catholic in secular society. It is why Haldane recognises that the Catholic intellectual needs an intelligent

public within the Church – therefore the central importance he attaches to the 'formation' of Catholics in schools and out of schools.

Haldane's last chapter 'Learning and the Mind of God' concludes: "the philosophical and religious ideals associated with traditional conceptions of knowledge and education have to be rearticulated, and the institutions of learning reanimated by them if the vineyards are not to prove barren and the tenants become corrupt". There is certainly a great opportunity for a Catholic intellectual renewal with increased disenchantment and disappointment with the Enlightenment project, which more often than not undermined the sacred and the connections that linked people to God and the Church. Haldane offers us a very commendable and readable text for intelligent Catholics who aspire to a more challenging intellectual and cultural life.

Dr James Arthur
University of Kent

Salvation for all God's Other Peoples

*by Gerald O'Collins SJ, Oxford
University Press, 279pp, £55*

Those who had the fortune to be taught by Father O'Collins during his years at the Gregorian University – or have encountered him in his current position as Research Professor at St Mary's Twickenham – will know him as a benign and kindly figure with a passion for communicating knowledge and a considerable ability to make highly complex subjects comprehensible. These qualities are again evident in this, his latest work, which tackles the highly relevant but controversial subject of the relationship between Christianity and other religions. In particular, O'Collins seeks to ascertain what the sources of Revelation have to say about the possibility of salvation for those outside the Judaeo-Christian Covenant – 'God's Other Peoples' as he terms them.

“O’Collins finds no space to mention the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*”

To this end O’Collins begins by assembling a considerable mass of biblical testimony which affirms the universal scope of God’s salvific love. Yet from the outset the author admits that this is an explicitly one-sided operation, since he deliberately excludes from his compilation the many biblical texts – from both the Old and New Testaments – which speak far from positively about those outside the covenant relationship. He gives as his reason that “...to survey and appraise *both* the ‘negative’ and the ‘positive’ witness...would call for a book twice the length of this one”. By the same token, this makes the present work half as useful as it might have been.

This is not to belittle O’Collins’ achievement. As he states, no one before has taken the trouble to collate and appraise the total biblical testimony to God’s universal benevolence. Such a work as this is clearly a valuable contribution to the field of inter-religious dialogue, albeit incomplete in itself. Indeed, it is the concise but thorough review of the biblical evidence which readers will probably find the most rewarding aspect of the book. A lengthy survey of ancient texts may not appear a terribly enticing prospect, but O’Collins writes with clarity and grace, and brings alive passages from the Bible with which many will be unfamiliar. Seemingly marginal figures such as Naaman, Balaam and Malachi are explained in their full significance, and inserted within the unfolding drama of God’s redeeming love.

Not content, however, with assembling an impressive body of biblical detail, O’Collins moves in the latter part of his book to outline some systematic conclusions from his research. Here he writes explicitly ‘as a Roman Catholic’ and shows a concern to integrate Magisterial texts and the testimony of Tradition into his theological vision. This part of the book too, however, demonstrates a deliberately one-sided approach which ultimately undermines the book’s effectiveness. For, just as he elected not to examine those biblical

texts which might appear to limit God’s salvific action to the people of the covenant, so too he chooses to overlook several recent interventions of the Magisterium which present a rather more nuanced – and less positive – attitude towards ‘God’s Other Peoples’ than the extremely optimistic position he wishes to propose. It is significant that while he cites several documents of the Second Vatican Council, the Encyclicals *Dominum et vivificantem* and *Redemptoris missio* of Pope John Paul II, and speaks approvingly of the Assisi World Day of Prayer for Peace in 1986, O’Collins finds no space to mention the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2000, which remains the most recent authoritative intervention of the Church in the matters under discussion. Such an omission begs questions. We should note that while *Dominus Iesus* accepts that followers of non-Christian religions may be on the way to salvation and truth, it emphasises that this is but a spur to the missionary activity of the Church, which is needed to bring God’s salvific work to fulfilment. This appears to be a different conclusion to that which O’Collins reaches, but since he chooses not to engage with the document at all, nor with other voices opposed to his thesis, it is hard to make a satisfactory judgment.

Ultimately one is led to conclude that, as O’Collins himself suggested, a single volume is insufficient to deal with the vast topic under discussion. This book is an interesting and useful contribution to the on-going debate – but we must hope that one day the author will find time to give us a more rounded and comprehensive treatment of the subject.

Fr Richard Whinder

New Malden
Surrey

Eco-Theology

by *Celia Deane-Drummond, Darton, Longman and Todd, 224pp, £14.95*

Few matters are more topical today than the environment. But it might also be said that few discussions are filled with quite so many thoughts contrary to what many, including Celia Deane-Drummond, call the ‘anthropocentric’ view of the cosmos as fostered by this magazine. But we should also note that an ‘anthropocentrism’ which excludes reference to God made Man as the centre of the universe is something very different.

Deane-Drummond is a scholar in the field of eco-theology and draws on her extensive background “to introduce the reader to critical debates in eco-theology” (p. ix) and to do so with reference to *Christian* theology. The book is comprehensive and well written. It does well in highlighting some of the Christian critiques of certain viewpoints (e.g. valuing the environment more than humans, p.34), however, it lacks the precision of orthodoxy. While Deane-Drummond describes herself as standing “in the Roman Catholic tradition”(p.xiv) this book does not aim to have a “denominational stance” and makes only the briefest of references to Church documents, indicating John Paul II’s call to care for the environment (p.180).

The key eco-theology issue for *Faith* concerns the purpose of creation. This matter can be considered from two perspectives: Christ and man.

Concerning Christ, the *Faith* vision proposes that the entire cosmos was created for Christ. As Pope Benedict said in 2005, commenting on Colossians 2,

“Christ is, then, proclaimed ‘firstborn of all creation’ (verse 15). Christ precedes the whole of creation (see verse 17), having been begotten from all eternity: because of this ‘all things were created through him and for him’ (verse 16). Also in the ancient Jewish tradition it was affirmed that ‘the whole world was created in view of the Messiah’ (*Sanhedrin* 98b)”.



Book Reviews continued

Given that eco-theology concerns the cosmos it might be expected to have something to say on this and Deane-Drummond devotes a chapter to 'Ecology and Christology'. However, she simply notes that there has been a "surprising... lack of sustained focus on the relationship between ecology (or evolution more generally, for that matter) and Christology" (p. 99). It is a significant strength of the book that it addresses an issue likely to concern orthodox Catholic readers even though the issue has not been widely covered in eco-theological literature. Deane-Drummond sums up the literature by noting that ecological interpretations see all of creation as having "intrinsic worth" (p. 89), reject "anthropocentrism", and see the incarnation as "affirming material being as such" (p. 112) rather than just affirming humanity.

Concerning anthropocentrism, the *Faith* vision argues for the very notion that most eco-theologians reject: We say that the entire cosmos was created for man, that Christ might become a man; Evolution had a goal, and its goal was man, and every other thing in every niche in the cosmos is there in order that man might be achieved. Others things in the created order thus only have a purpose, value, or meaning in relation to humanity. As Vatican II and the Catechism say, man is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake" (CCC 357). *Faith Magazine* has long argued that it is the notion of *mind* and *soul* that is the key to discovering the purpose of the cosmos, to indicating what is distinctive about man and what is lacking in the animals: it is the spiritual soul which makes man capable of knowing and loving God. An analysis of the soul, however, seems to be absent in contemporary eco-theology and gets no mention in this book.

There is, of course, a general sense in which *all* of creation has the purpose of glorifying God, "The heavens proclaim the glory of God" (Ps 18). But the cosmos glorifies God *through* humanity. Deane-Drummond considers this notion of "humanity as priests of

creation" (p. 59), however, she claims that non-human creation can offer a "direct" and not just a "mediated" relationship to God "for creation as a whole can express its praise regardless of the presence of humans" (p. 60). In contrast, the general thrust of the *Faith* vision is that the cosmos is so interconnected that it is meaningless to argue that anything's purpose can be seen apart from its purpose in relation to the whole plan of creation, which is ordered to Christ through man. Deane-Drummond re-phrases Irenaeus: from "The glory of God is man fully alive" to "The glory of God is the cosmos fully alive" (p. 185). I think those committed to Faith movement may be left thinking that this avoids rather than addresses the question of the precise relationship between man, cosmos, and God.

Fr Dylan James

St Edward's
Shaftesbury

To Heal the Broken Hearted. The Life of St Charles of Mount Argus.

by Paul Francis Spencer CP. Ovada Books, 155pp, £9.50, (available from Ovada Books tel. 0141 552 5523).

Before reading this fascinating account of the life of Saint Charles I must confess that I had never heard of him. By the title I expected him to have lived in some exotic and distant part of the world, undertaking great missionary endeavours on behalf of the Church. Instead I was reminded that sanctity is very often the stuff of the ordinary, and the humble. Not only this, I quickly discovered that I was reading an account of the life of a Dutchman, who had spent almost the whole of his adult life as a Passionist priest at prayer and work in the British Isles. For almost thirty years Saint Charles, who died in 1893 lived at Mount Argus Monastery near Dublin. He quickly developed a reputation for sanctity, and word of his healing ministry spread far and wide. He was daily bombarded with hundreds of visitors requesting healing, and wishing to see the modern day saint,

who was performing such wonders. Eventually Fr Charles' reputation became too much for the community of Mount Argus, and his presence too much of a disruption to the tranquillity of community life. It was decided to send him to England to Staffordshire to recover his health. However news of his arrival quickly spread and so many of the faithful started to visit him in his new surroundings, and the miracles began again. St Charles remained humble and modest, attributing the healing work to the Lord Jesus Christ, as one would expect from a saint. He never properly gained an adequate command of the English language, despite having spent most of his life in the British Isles. He never returned to his native Holland, and never saw his family again after his departure to England as a youth. He suffered ill health, and the trials of community life, the ridicule of some of his brother Passionists, and humiliations at their hands. He bore these trials with perfect meekness and patience.

Paul Francis Spencer's account of the life of Saint Charles is well researched. It is a straight forward narrative of the saint's life from his adolescence through his ministry, ending with his death in 1893. It generally reads well, although just occasionally the writing can be a bit of a bumpy ride. I would also have appreciated a little more examination of St Charles' inner life. Part of the charm of the book is the insight it gives into the conditions of nineteenth century Catholicism in the British Isles, the occasional persecutions of the Catholic minority, and the picture it gives of religious life. This is an inspiring read, and helpful. St Charles is a wonderful example of a holy and dedicated priest, very much attached to the cross which came with his ministry.

Fr Matthew Jakes

Burton upon Trent
Staffs

“A failure rate of 30 per cent is pretty high.”

The Case Against Condoms

by *Alfonso Cardinal Lopez Trujillo and Brian Clowes, Human Life International, 72pp, \$7.95*

For some of us, it may have been the last straw in the decision to get rid of our televisions. For most of us, at least, the screening of the Panorama programme “Sex and the Holy City” (2003) strongly confirmed the anti-Catholic bias in the BBC. Even a statement by the Bishops’ Conference at the time described it, along with another programme, as “biased against and hostile to the Catholic Church” and that it “gave offence to many Catholics”.

During filming, the late Alfonso Cardinal Lopez Trujillo answered questions on camera for more than an hour. Yet, in the documentary itself, only out of context snippets of three questions each amounting to less than half a minute each were shown. According to the Cardinal (and to most Catholics watching), the episode was manipulated systematically to criticise the Catholic Church for supposedly contributing to the death of millions by not supporting the distribution of condoms to fight HIV/AIDS.

Cardinal Trujillo’s most controversial point was that there was no 100 per cent protection from the AIDS virus through the use of condoms because numerous studies have shown “certain permeability” through the latex as the virus is 450 times smaller than the sperm cell, notwithstanding some contrary studies. In a later 2003 paper on the issue, Trujillo backed up this claim by quoting Dave Lytle, a senior researcher at the US Food and Drug Administration in the 1980s and 90s. But Mr Lytle said to journalists that Trujillo had plucked a figure out from his study. He concluded in an interview that only one condom out of the 470 he tested might conceivably leak any infectious HIV – and even if it did, the amount leaked would be minimal. The World Health Organisation’s position is that there may be breakage or slippage

of condoms but not holes through which the virus can pass, and that “consistent and correct” use of condoms gives 90% protection from HIV infection. But, in *The Case Against Condoms*, the former president of the Pontifical Council for the Family provides a significantly wider range of academic references to back up his case and points out that International Planned Parenthood talk about an actual 70% safety rate. A failure rate of 30 per cent (10 when properly used) is pretty high when dealing with the potentially mortal disease of AIDS. The Cardinal carefully and convincingly exposes the condom ‘Russian roulette’ which many people in positions of power don’t want us to know.

The book is co-authored by Brian Clowes, who deals with facts, figures, studies and definitions of condoms from across the world in more detail. Countless studies are quoted and well referenced in the endnotes to the Cardinal’s chapter. And it’s not as if the investigations can be deemed as being fixed to support the Church’s position. Virtually all the admissions that condoms aren’t impenetrable come from the manufacturers and promoters of contraception.

Viruses aside, the Pearl Pregnancy Index Rate found 15 failures per 100 women in condom use in preventing pregnancy. Four US government agencies found in 2000 that a 15 per cent risk remains of the AIDS virus being passed on when using a condom. The US Food and Drug Administration recommends that where there is a defect rate in batches of condoms of more than four per 1000 they should be discarded by manufacturers. This means there could still be hundreds of thousands of faulty condoms in circulation. The list of studies goes on and the evidence is overwhelming.

Trujillo shows how holistic policies in tackling the AIDS pandemic are much more successful than contraception dominated programmes. In 1987, Thailand had 112 recorded cases of AIDS while the Philippines had 135. Thailand went for a 100 per cent condom policy – in the Philippines there was opposition to this method by the Church and several government ministers. By 2003, Thailand had 750,000 cases, the Philippines just 1,935. And the latter country’s population is 30 per cent greater than the former’s.

After outlining his case, it’s time for Trujillo to fight back. He says the hard fact of condom failure goes totally against the indictment that the Church contributes to the death of millions by not promoting the use of condoms. The reality is the complete opposite and he firmly deflects the blame onto “those promoting the condom” who are not warning users of the failure rates. It is they that are leading to the deaths of many. Furthermore, it is the Church that provides 25 per cent of all the care to AIDS sufferers worldwide. This book sets the record straight.

Richard Marsden
Kettering
Northants



The Road From Regensburg

Papal Encouraged Dialogue Beyond Catholicism in Search of a Modern Apologetic

Islamic Inculturation Awaits an Effective Response

In the January 2009 issue of *First Things* Robert Louis Wilken, Professor of the History of Christianity at the University of Virginia, has powerfully argued that we must awaken to the extraordinary converting and staying power of Islam. Over the centuries he argues Christians “have seldom taken Islam with the seriousness it deserves or recognised it for what it is – a religion in the biblical tradition in which piety is wedded to statecraft.”

Islam, he points out, made long-term, territorial conversions, in its first centuries “by a gradual process of soft coercion” of the conquered and later quite “peaceably” and “quiet(ly)”. He goes on:

“Although in science, in the humanities, in technology, and in statecraft the West has far outdistanced the Muslim world, the practice of Islam has not been dislodged by the political and cultural hegemony of the West. [...] Turkey is a good example of the resilience of Islam in modern times.”

He warns against tending to dismiss “Islam as a historical relic, incapable of change and betterment, inimical to reason and science.”

Wilken goes on to praise the two Islamic Open Letters which followed Regensburg, as respectively “thoughtful” and “unprecedented” not least in suggesting, in *A Common Word Between Us and You*, that “the prophet Muhammad was, perhaps through inspiration, restating and alluding to the Bible’s first commandment.” This was, as requested by this letter, the starting point of the resultant ‘Forum’ in Rome last November. Wilken points out that the actual historical, cultural and

geographical context of Islam must also be relevant to this dialogue.

He does not give an analysis of what has given Islam seemingly greater staying power than Christianity – save for noting that “One of Islam’s most enduring innovations was that religious law became also the law of the body politic” and that “Violence has been a persistent strain in Muslim history”, referring to the respected Marshall Hodgson.

He goes on to ask:

“whether, face to face with Islam, Christians will [...] have the imagination to form the spiritual architecture of the societies of which they are a part? [...] Though some may eschew the term, in the decades to come the great challenge for Christians will be to fashion, within the cultural and political conditions of the twenty-first century, a new kind of Christendom.” (See our November 2007 editorial, *The Church and the New World Order*)

Further Fruitful Convergence

On behalf of the *Common Word* Open Letter signatories Prince Ghazi received the Eugen Biser Award in Munich on 22nd November last. The letter was written in September 2007 on the first anniversary of the Regensburg lecture. Prince Ghazi gave thanks to God for the numerous events that had resulted from the letter. He then referred to the letter’s exclusive emphasis upon our duty to love God, which excluded mention of God’s love for us. In our January 2008 editorial, whilst acknowledging the significant move forward this letter represented, we, probably among others, had suggested that this lack reflected a lack in an Islamic tradition which has not emphasised friendship as the purpose of human existence. Prince Ghazi commented that:

“A *Common Word* was not intended to deny that God loved us first, as some Christians have opined. The

knowledge that God loved man before man loved God is so obvious in Islam that we did not think we had to make it explicit. It is obvious because God obviously existed before His creation of the world and man. It is also evident in the very sacred formula that starts every chapter in the Holy Qur’an but one, and that begins every single legitimate act of any Muslim’s entire life – *Bism Allah Al-Rahman Al-Rahim, In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.*”

He then goes on to mention one or two of the ‘99 names of Allah’ which also “*implicitly*” (our emphasis) refer to God’s love for us.

A Disharmonious Note: Pope is Catholic

After the fruitful November ‘Forum’ at the Vatican (see last edition of this column) for a while the official website for the *A Common Word* letter had on its home page a 14th November article from the United Arab Emirates’ *The National* quality newspaper. The piece by Craig Nelson, associate editor, was entitled “Will mere talking bring about peace?”

The article’s premise was that the apparent lack of clear Papal apology for the offence caused by the Regensburg lecture put a question mark over the value of the current dialogue. Moreover, it reported,

“The pope, in a 2007 Vatican proclamation, said Catholic Christianity was truer than Islam or Buddhism or Hinduism or even Protestant Christianity”, said Prof Knitter, the Paul Tillich Professor of Theology, World Religions and Culture at Union Theological Seminary in New York. The articulation was considered unusual for a modern pope.

“He sincerely wants to promote better relations with Islam, but it’s not possible on the basis of the theology he espouses,” Prof Knitter said, alluding to a 2007 Vatican

“the necessary grounding of the nature of human reason in the nature of divine reason”

proclamation that Roman Catholicism provides the only true path to salvation. The statement was widely viewed as a move away from a period of more open dialogue with other faiths.”

Pope on *Logos* and Islam: Politics or Truth?

The January 2009 edition of the journal *Race and Class* published a lecture entitled “A Syllabus of Errors: Pope Benedict XVI on Islam at Regensburg”, which had been given to the 2008 Global Studies Conference at the University of Nebraska. In this Ralph Coury, Professor of History at the Jesuit Fairfield University, Connecticut, accused the Pope of falsely devaluing Islamic faith and culture. The Pope, he suggests, is self-consciously playing upon the European fear of an Islamic cultural takeover in order to promote a return to Christianity as the only solid basis to a civilised Europe.

Coury’s major argument is that the Pope was very wrong to make such a big distinction between the Greco-Christian view of reason and the prevailing Islamic one. According to the Regensburg lecture, the Islamic approach allows for the intelligibility of the idea that God might act capriciously. In response to this claim about the *potential* of the Islamic God, Coury (like others before him) changes the category and responds with actual acts of Allah, viz. the Qur’anic statement that “God prescribed mercy for himself”, and other Islamic uses of reason.

We would refer to our January 2007 editorial “Fostering the Regensburg Insight”, especially the sub-section entitled “A Vital Debate within Islam”. There we concluded that the various defences of Islam against the Pope’s argument seem to miss and fall short of challenging his central point concerning “the necessary grounding of the nature of human reason in the nature of divine reason”, indeed in God’s very being as revealed by Christ.

Using arguments of Aref Ali Nayed, who has often appeared in this column, Coury points out that the Pope’s (and St John’s) personalistic depiction of ‘*Logos*’ goes well beyond the Greek concept. Coury concludes that “Benedict’s conception of reason and the rational God are ill-defined.” In the Regensburg address Pope Benedict talked of a “mutual enrichment” of Greek and Christian thought which enabled the tradition to see reason as “creative and capable of self-communication”. The Pope did not go into detailed justification of this description. However it might not be out of place to note that this rich, personal conception would seem closer than Greek logic to how self-conscious humans normally experience being reasonable.

Professor Coury brings out how the Islamic adherence to Greek-inspired philosophy and science which, as this column has highlighted, is widely acknowledged to have significantly diminished after the 12th century, was continued over later centuries by the Iranian Twelvers and the Hanafi legal school. He does not acknowledge let alone reflect upon the significantly more developed science and politics which Christian civilisation has enjoyed since the Renaissance.

He makes the oft repeated accusation that the Pope should have quoted Al-Ghazali not Ibn Hazn (see our editorial for a response).

Of the other “errors” proposed by Coury only one, concerning an historical attribution of a Qur’anic verse, is actually explicitly owned by the Pope as opposed to one of the people he quotes.

Pope’s Short History of Salvation: *Logos* to Resurrection – Epiphany Sermon 2009

“God is at the origin of all things and governs all things, not as a cold and anonymous engine but rather as Father, Husband, Friend, Brother and as the *Logos*, ‘Word-Reason’ who

was united with our mortal flesh once and for all and fully shared our condition, showing the superabundant power of his grace. Thus there is a special concept of the cosmos in Christianity which found its loftiest expression in medieval philosophy and theology. In our day too, it shows interesting signs of a new flourishing, thanks to the enthusiasm and faith of many scientists who following in Galileo’s footsteps renounce neither reason nor faith.

[...]

“Within this mysterious design simultaneously physical and metaphysical, which led to the appearance of the human being as the crowning of Creation’s elements Jesus came into the world: ‘born of woman’ (Gal 4: 4), as St Paul writes. The Son of man himself epitomises the earth and Heaven, the Creation and the Creator, the flesh and the Spirit. He is the centre of the cosmos and of history, for in him the Author and his work are united without being confused with each other.

[...]

“In the earthly Jesus the culmination of Creation and of history is found but in the Risen Christ this is surpassed: the passage through death to eternal life anticipates the point of the “recapitulation” of all things in Christ (cf. Eph 1: 10). Indeed “all things”, the Apostle wrote “were created through him and for him (Col 1: 16). And it is precisely with the resurrection of the dead that he became “pre-eminent in all things” (Col 1: 18). Jesus himself affirms this, appearing to his disciples after the Resurrection: “all authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mt 28: 18).”

Peter Hodgson RIP

Dr Peter Hodgson passed away shortly before last Christmas whilst visiting South Africa. He was an Emeritus Fellow of Corpus Christi college, Oxford, and President of the Science Secretariat of the organization for Catholic intellectuals, Pax Romana.

Over much of the thirty-five year life of this periodical we have been pleased to publish numerous pieces by him. He was very effective at clearly explaining the challenge which modern science makes to our culture and the outlines of the appropriate response, particularly that made by Stanley Jaki.

In 1996 he reflected upon the purpose of the above Secretariat in *Culture and Faith*, "Science affects our twentieth century culture in many ways. Most fundamentally, it affects the way we think about the world and our place and destiny within it. [...]"

"Einstein in his autobiography recalled that he abandoned his early religious beliefs at about the age of 12 when he realised that many of the stories in the Bible could not be true. [...]"

"Scientific culture thus exerts a powerful influence on young and impressionable minds, and gradually they drift away from the Church. What they need is a clear and convincing exposition of the Faith that takes full account of the latest scientific advances."

May he rest in peace.

HUMAN MIND ORDERED TO DIVINE MIND?

Dr Justin Barrett generated waves of media interest back on 25th November, including an interview on the BBC's *Today* programme, when he delivered a seminar in the Faraday Institute of Cambridge's St Edmund's College entitled *Born Believers: the Naturalness of Childhood Theism*. Barrett is Senior Researcher at the University of Oxford's Centre for Anthropology and Mind and a lecturer in the Institute of Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology.

The work he was describing in the seminar was, as the Institute's on-line notice said, an attempt to "cut through both sides of the increasingly polarised debate about how the universe was created, with atheistic Darwinians declaring the death

of God, whilst anti-Darwinian creationists denounce evolution as fraud." What he is signifying by the results of his work is that the human mind, as evidenced in children, displays an innate tendency to belief. He does not want to go further explicitly and say that religion is itself 'hardwired' in the brain, but only that "children have propensities to believe in gods because of how their minds naturally work." He considers he is simply providing a scientific explanation of religious belief, not that he is explaining away that belief. In effect he is noting that our human minds are naturally compatible with belief, in that "from childhood, humans have a number of predispositions that incline them to believe in gods generally and perhaps a super-knowing, creator god in particular." (Latter two quotations from his on-line *Guardian* article dated 29th November).

Barrett reacted angrily to *ad hominem* attacks by prominent atheist A.C. Grayling who accused him of being 'religiously motivated' and compromising his scientific integrity by accepting Templeton Foundation money to fund his research. He called the arguments for a "strong natural disposition to believe in gods ..." a "mounting body of scientific evidence." He sums up his thesis: "Supernatural agency is the most culturally recurrent, cognitively relevant, and evolutionarily compelling concept in religion. The concept of the supernatural is culturally derived from an innate cognitive schema ..." The scientific evidence for his position comes from an analysis of studies done on children that show that their innate way of viewing the world is in terms of 'design, function and purpose' – making them, in effect, 'intuitive theists.'

His work would seem to support the view, in effect, that man is made for relationship with God: not that our relationship to the Creator is just some fictional result of indoctrination by another, but that our natural response to the world is that is has been 'made.' We can see there is a coherence between the idea that the religiosity of mankind is a function of our mental architecture, and the idea that the human mind with its spiritual soul is made for union with God in the first place.

A video and audio version of the seminar is available on-line at the Faraday Institute website, www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/faraday, under the section 'news.'

POPE'S EVOLUTION SEMINAR

Papers from the Pope's September-2006 *schülerkreis* which he held at the Castel Gandolfo palace have now been published in English after translation from the German originals. The book, entitled *Creation and Evolution: a Conference with Benedict XVI at Castel Gandolfo*, is published by Ignatius Press (ISBN 1586-172344).

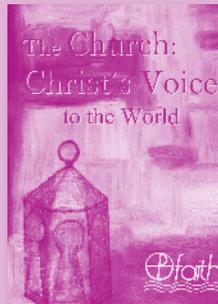
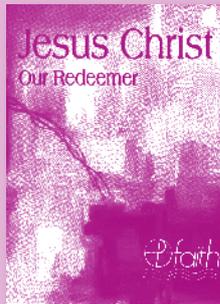
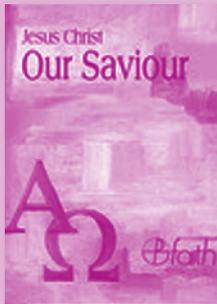
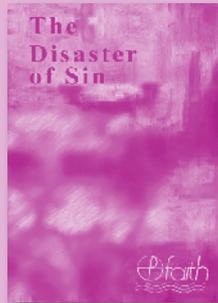
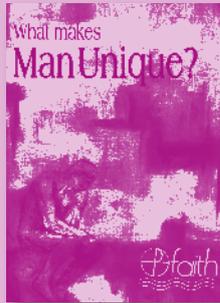
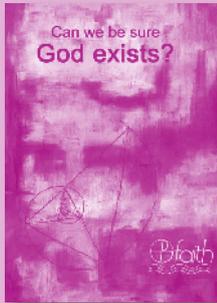
COPERNICUS FOUND

The father of modern astronomy – the Polish priest, Nicolaus Copernicus – died in obscurity in 1543 at the age of 70. He was then canon of the cathedral in Frombork, a small town on the Baltic coast in Poland. Apparently, his death was not even noted in the cathedral records, so unimportant was he considered, and his demise could nowadays only be inferred from a record of someone else being appointed to his post. As a result, his grave was unmarked, and his resting place hitherto unknown. Copernicus's posthumous fame, of course, arose from his 30-year project published soon before his death, *De Revolutionibus Orbium Caelestium* – a revolution indeed, in which he explained his calculations that proved that the earth and planets orbit the sun, rather than the sun and planets orbit the earth.

For some 200 years various attempts have been made to locate the grave of Copernicus. In 2004, the auxiliary bishop of Warmia diocese, Jacek Jezierski, invited eminent archaeologist Jerzy Gassowski to conduct a new search for the body. The bishop had an idea about which altar the priest-astronomer might have been buried near. In August 2005 they found the skull of a man of 70 years of age, and found that a forensic reconstruction of his facial features closely resembled portraits of Copernicus which were based on a lost self-portrait. The matter was decided scientifically just last November, when the results of a DNA test were announced: there was an exact DNA match between material from a tooth in the skull and a strand of hair found in a book of astronomical data which was owned by Copernicus.

Bishop Jezierski has decided that a fitting sarcophagus will now be designed for the remains of Copernicus that have been discovered, not only to honour this renowned astronomer, but as a testimony to the unity of deep faith and meticulous science which his life's work represented.

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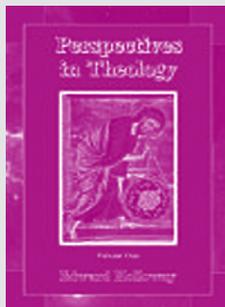
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