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Editorial

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Gerard Bradley

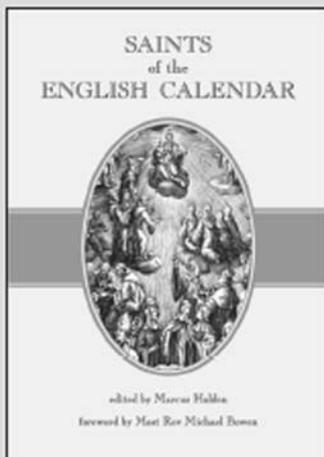
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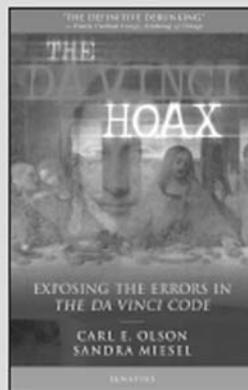
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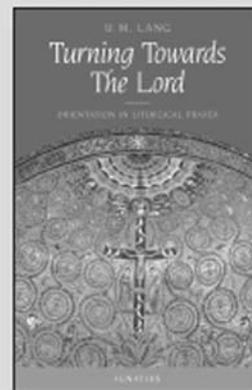
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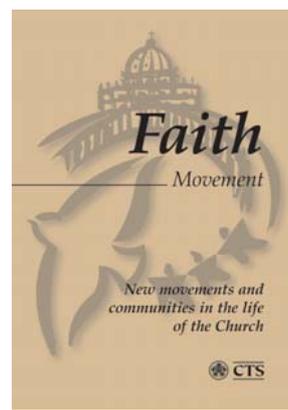
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# Tragedy and Suffering: What Can We Say?

*"As for me in my poverty  
and pain, let your help, O  
God, lift me up."  
(Psalm 68:22).*

*"Atheism's answer leaves  
us only with the futility of  
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the unbeliever. The fact that  
acts of nature can roll back  
years of prosperous  
advancement in just a few  
hours only helps to  
highlight this."*

## Questions Raised By Natural Disasters

Natural disasters always raise profound and disturbing questions. The newspapers in Great Britain have been full of them as a result of the recent tragic events in Asia. Many have focused on the question of the existence of God and the credibility of religion. Religious leaders have been given wide coverage, as have those whose deep antagonism to religion is beyond doubt. A familiar debate has been revived. Do such disasters prove that God does not exist? If He does, does He really will these evils? Or does it mean that God is strangely detached and disinterested about the world He has created?

It would be easy to give a response to these questions which answered them in their own intellectual and emotional terms. Perhaps this is what has been wrong with so much of the public comment on this crucial issue. We have seen clergy all too readily agreeing that such disasters challenge faith, feed doubt and are a problem that believers cannot get over. In return, unbelievers use syllogistic logic to try to score points in a discussion whose real significance really goes beyond words and which therefore requires a much more profound examination.

Certainly, to turn on religious belief and declare that "therefore God does not exist" is no answer to the problem of suffering. Atheism involves the rejection of any notion ultimate 'good'. So to be an atheist who is outraged or incensed by human misery is to be incoherent. If the cosmos is just a vast accident of random, pointless events, then why grieve at death or disaster? It's just how it is. There is no absolute standard by which to say anything is 'good' or 'bad'.

Atheism fails to answer the problem of suffering in practice as well as in theory. Without God society has no cohesion, no true ideal to hold human beings together. The atheistic state machines of Fascism and Communism soon ended up consuming the individual and destroying any real basis for love, trust and freedom between people. Our secular culture is beset by similar problems.

## The Emptiness of Secularism

Religious leaders still speak regularly to quite large groups of people in their congregations. This is in notable contrast to those who have been arguing against God's existence; they have no congregations. They rely only on the media. They cannot draw people together in common cause or belief. They have little to say that can unite humanity, because if what we have now is all there is in life, then in the end each of us is on our own in our struggle for survival in a world without ultimate reason.

Secularism seeks to remove faith in God from the public sphere, but it has little with which to replace Him. It is the tendency of secularism to isolate the individual, more often than not unintentionally, but such isolation nevertheless flows from the logic of the secular outlook. For all its consumerism and cult of celebrity, it cannot help but betray the bleakness and emptiness of its vision. Faith in God gives the believer

so much more – the power to draw people together and unite them socially as well as spiritually.

### Armchair Atheists and Suffering Believers

Indeed it is striking that those who have raised the question of God's existence in the context of the Asian tsunami disaster do so from the comfort and safety of this country. The people who have actually suffered in the affected countries are gathered together praying in temples, mosques and churches. Of course the natural response to such a catastrophe may indeed be to ask "why?", but usually, those who are actually involved and affected ask that question of God in prayer. In their desolation they turn towards God, not away from Him. Their reaction is actually the more normal, human instinct. It is natural for us to be religious - an automatic reflex of the spirit.

All of which is well and good. But the questions and arguments proposed in our country and in many others in the West will not go away. They are very persuasive to many people in a culture that has already distanced itself more and more from religion as a public force. Consequently these questions do need to be answered.

### Causality and Freedom: God Respects Creation's Laws

Any answer we give must grasp the subtle relationship between the created world and God the Creator. Our answer must show that, from the foundations of creation (and here we are referring to creation through 'evolution') God respects the real consistency of created existence – its otherness from Himself. This is His covenant of respect with His creation. The material universe has been built up through a complex series of interactions based on the laws of matter. The tsunami and earthquake of December were a result of these. There have been many others in history and they have all contributed to building up the beauty and the drama of the world we live in. They are simply part of the fabric of the universe that God has created and in that sense they are not in themselves evil.

Furthermore, there is a covenant of respect for the freedom of humanity. God does not constantly intervene to stop people murdering others or to stop drunk drivers from getting into their cars. To do so would be to destroy *all* freedom. He would need to unravel all history, since all our decisions are interlocking ones and influence each other all the time. He would then destroy our very humanity and suspend any sense of independence in our behaviour and our very existence. Freedom is part of our constitution as spiritual creatures.

It is in this context that we must understand the doctrine of Original Sin. We human beings have the ability to use

our freedom for good or for ill – this is necessarily entailed in the very definition of freedom. The doctrine of Original Sin tells us that in the past we used our freedom badly. Indeed, we say that sin made its entrance at the outset of the history of humanity, with our first parents. That first sin fundamentally wounded our human nature, since through it we cut ourselves off from our natural relation to God as our living Environment. Our ontological moorings were damaged and ever since then, each of us has borne in our personal lives the lasting effects of that unnatural disaster - in our relationship with God, with one another, with the environment and even with ourselves.

The reality of sin and selfishness in humanity hardly needs to be proved. Few need convincing that something terrible has gone wrong with our world. Most people feel instinctively that certain forms of behaviour are wrong. Even secularists believe this, but they can give no reason for it. In fact the problem of evil behaviour in man is *more* of a problem for the unbeliever because it underlines the radical difference between humanity and the rest of animal life. Our very awareness of the problem reveals this vital difference.

Professor Richard Dawkins tries to invert the problem and argues that all life, even at a genetic level, is fundamentally selfish. But if this is the case, why should we be any different? Why get upset about human selfishness? However, the constant altruism of individuals and their ability to deny sin and suppress selfishness, living lives of generous service to others, just pushes the question of human identity more obviously and more awkwardly into the light.

### Misunderstandings About Omnipotence

Precisely because of His covenant of respect for our freedom, God allows us to misuse that freedom. It is, in a sense, pointless to ask if God could have made us otherwise, since if He had made us programmed only to do good, we would in no way be free and so we would not be spiritual and human. God permits us to be ourselves. But there are consequences to this – for us and also, in a sense, for God.

For us it means that we become enmeshed in events and structures of sin for which we may not be personally culpable. It is in this context that we can say that often it is the innocent who suffer. Hence, it could be argued that in a more perfect world – that is, a *holier* world – government leaders in the affected parts of Asia would have bought into an early warning system for tsunamis and not put costs and the low probability of occurrence before the value of human life. And we could also say that, without the waste of so many human resources on

sinful pursuits and so much intellectual talent and potential wiped out in endless wars, we might have understood Nature more quickly and precisely by now and perhaps avoid these natural dangers more easily.

### This Valley Of Tears

However, in a deeper sense, no human being is innocent – we all misuse our freedom and sin. To be redeemed from this, to be healed from within from the fundamental damage we have inherited and which we perpetuate through our own personal choices, will require much effort and pain. It is a work that will require self denial as we wrench ourselves away from our habits of selfishness.

Alone we could not do this. This is where the consequences to God of our freedom are made plain. For any attempt to look at the question of evil and suffering in the world cannot remain just at the level of mere reason. Our minds alone cannot comprehend how the vast history of suffering and sin in humanity can be healed, how any sense can be made of it all. Atheism’s answer leaves us only with the futility of existence; Sartre’s acknowledgment of the deep absurdity that life and existence as it appears to the unbeliever; the fact that acts of nature can roll back years of prosperous advancement in just a few hours only helps to highlight this.

In the coming of Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man, God gives us an answer to the problem of sin, evil and suffering. A short editorial cannot hope to give the fullness of what this means. This is not because we are dealing with something irrational. In fact, it does make sense to our reason once we grasp it, but the answer is not something we could have worked out rationally on our own. We cannot hope to describe it, because the answer is more than an idea or a word or a cleverly assembled argument. “We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:23-24).

### An Answer In Deeds Not In Words

Indeed the answer can only be fully understood by living the mystery, by living in communion with Christ. Only in this context does the seething anxiety of human reason before suffering begin to glimpse the glory of God within it all. In His life, Jesus became one who suffered. He suffered because of the sin of the world, because of the hatred of people, because of the afflictions he saw so many burdened with. But in a world whose actual history cannot be unraveled without doing damage to human freedom itself, Christ transformed the meaning of

suffering. No longer is it a dead end, a cause for despair, an affliction which holds no good within it. Rather than run away from the problem of evil, rather than shut his eyes to its inexorable reality in the lives of people, Jesus united himself to it and endured it as his personal experience. In doing this he opened the fact of suffering up to new possibilities and redefined the horizons of human experience. Suffering has been transformed into something potentially redemptive.

Through his passion Jesus unites himself to all who suffer; he sorrows for all who sin; he consoles all who are burdened by pain. In doing this, he assures us of his lasting consoling presence. The “logic” of this is often only experienced by those who go through such sufferings themselves and experience something of the presence of Christ’s passion in their passion. And yet none of it is irrational. It is a more profound and complex and living response to the problem of evil and suffering in our world.

### The Mystery of the Cross

It is also the true response to our need for personal redemption. Just as none of us can live utterly individual and isolated lives – such a concept is irrational given the relationships that visibly, and sometimes less visibly, shape our lives – so none of us can make the journey out of selfishness on our own. It can only be done in communion with God, for whom we have been made. Jesus gives us that love and truth which heals the damage of sin within us, if we open ourselves to him. In his suffering and death he experiences the hatred of sin and sin’s ultimate logic, which is to attempt to isolate and destroy.

But he perseveres in his perfect love of his Father and of us, and bridges the gap that sin creates. He unites himself to each of us and draws us back to the Father. Sin cuts us away from each other because of its tendency to make others subordinate to or less than one’s own self. This means that there is no longer any uniting force between us as human beings, apart from the uncertain power of mutual feeling and sympathy. But Jesus Himself is now the true principle of unity for the human race, since his love overcomes the barriers of sin and death.

This principle of unity is more than a feeling or an experience or a subjective belief; it is real, existential, in the order of being itself. Through his resurrection and his Church, Christ can reach every human heart and, through baptism, unite them to himself as he lifts the whole of creation and reintegrates it into its ultimate purpose of communion with God the Father. But in this journey, the suffering of every person can play its part. By being

united to Jesus' work of redemption, our own sufferings can now become redemptive and can be offered in love for ourselves and for others. Our suffering, our sacrificial love can have a real existential impact on others precisely because, through Jesus, every person is bonded together in a way that is greater and more perfect than sin. Of course, continuing sin damages these bonds of communion, yet they still remain, since all are the object of Jesus' universal will to save.

Such an approach as this is certainly of more significance than many of the debates and discussions we have seen in our media of late. It is a serious attempt to understand suffering and evil in the world. It is no mere acceptance of it, nor is it a flight from it.

**The Need For More Than Just Pious Answers**

However, we will not get anywhere unless we can first show that the existence of God is rational; that by looking at this remarkable world around us we can show He does exist, and that human beings are unique, because they are not just physical organisms but have souls as well. Without these foundations, theology and preaching will seem to be little more than pious reflections, without any foothold in the real world. These foundations are the only firm basis for the Church to be able to talk to our world about God at all.

Many people criticize the Faith movement for attempting to present a new synthesis of religion and science (and philosophy). Some believe that such a work is of little relevance for the Church, others believe that it is a work incapable of being accomplished. However, the debates that have assumed such prominence in the public forum since the Asian disaster show clearly not only the necessity but also the urgency of such a synthesis. Without it, the Church's Faith appears as little more than a fable, cut off from the realities and the horrors of real human life in this world.

We can show the unity of creation and how it makes no sense without the transcendent God and his Incarnation in Christ. We can also show the special nature of humanity and then creation's re-established unity effected by Christ. It is only within this perspective that the problems of evil, sin and suffering find their true context and resolution. Only in Christ is the answer to evil more than just an intellectual argument, impacting on the real. Nonetheless the intellectual groundwork must be still done. There is nothing else on offer in the modern world that addresses these questions so profoundly and so hopefully. But then, nothing other than the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the fullness of the Truth.

**THE EUCHARIST**

**OUR SOURCE OF HOPE AND PEACE**

Faced with the many tragic situations present in the world, Christians confess with humble trust that God alone can enable individuals and peoples to overcome evil and achieve good. By his death and resurrection, Christ has redeemed us and ransomed us "with a price" (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23), gaining salvation for all. With his help, everyone can defeat evil with good.

Based on the certainty that evil will not prevail, Christians nourish an invincible hope which sustains their efforts to promote justice and peace. Despite the personal and social sins which mark all human activity, hope constantly gives new impulse to the commitment to justice and peace, as well as firm confidence in the possibility of building a better world.

Christians, especially the lay faithful, "should not, then, hide their hope in the depth of their hearts, but rather express it through the structures of their secular lives in continual conversion and in wrestling 'against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of iniquity' (Eph 6:12)"(19).

During this year dedicated to the Eucharist, may the sons and daughters of the Church find in the supreme sacrament of love the wellspring of all communion: communion with Jesus the Redeemer and, in him, with every human being. By Christ's death and resurrection, made sacramentally present in each Eucharistic celebration, we are saved from evil and enabled to do good.

Through the new life which Christ has bestowed on us, we can recognize one another as brothers and sisters, despite every difference of language, nationality and culture. In a word, by sharing in the one bread and the one cup, we come to realize that we are "God's family" and that together we can make our own effective contribution to building a world based on the values of justice, freedom and peace.

from **MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD DAY OF PEACE, 1 JANUARY 2005**  
8 December 2004.

# Priesthood: Gift and Mystery

*Gerard Bradley*

*In this article, originally given as a talk at a parish group, the Spiritual Director of St John's Seminary in Womersley meditates on the nature of priesthood.*

## The Priesthood as a Gift

I remember on the night of my first Mass, sitting in a Wimpy Bar feeding the choristers who were to sing at the solemn Mass. The choir master, himself a priest, said to me "You know, you and I are very fortunate to have been given two very special gifts: music and the priesthood." Now he wasn't regarding the two gifts of equivalent value, but the remark has never left me. It reminds me constantly that being a priest is a great privilege, but it is also a gift, something given by God. But we must be careful, because it is not a gift given to me for my possession.

All gifts, which come from the Father through the Son, are given for others and given precisely for our eternal salvation; given to give us the fullness of spiritual life. *"I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance". (Jn 10:10)*

And so in the first place we must recognise this office in the Church as a Gift given by God to His Church and for the Church. Its purpose is for the growth of the Church and the salvation of mankind. Since the priesthood is a gift from God and not a construction of mankind we must be careful not to recreate it as a human job although it will have many human traits and characteristics.

## Mystery of Love

John Paul II calls this a gift of the mystery of love and we must pray to God that we may deepen our understanding of this gift given to the Church. Because the priesthood is not only something we experience Sunday by Sunday, but is also a part of the mystery of our faith. The priesthood is something in which we believe. And all that is revealed to us can be usefully reflected on for our own growth in holiness.

So I am hoping that this evening may do two things. Firstly I hope it may help you to understand what the priesthood is. I am sure I will not really tell you anything new that you didn't already know, but it is good to hear it again in order to be encouraged.

In the contemporary climate when the media seizes on the faults of some priests there is a great danger that the world will lose sight of the meaning of priesthood. It is by studying our faith more deeply that we can come to a deeper understanding of those mysteries of love, which the Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted to us. Meditating on them can help our faith grow.

The second thing that I hope to do this evening is to give you some thing on which to meditate. Think of the priesthood as something to meditate on and perhaps an aid to prayer. For we must be grateful to God for this gifts of the priesthood among us. In particular we must be grateful for the priests he has given us who work steadily in season and out of season, to dispense the mysteries of God among us. We need to pray for our priests and our seminarians, encourage them and promote the priesthood among our young men. They need to hear the call from Christ and it is among you that they will hear that call.

*"If we want to understand this relationship between Christ and His people and therefore between the priest and his people the best thing is to look at the Holy Mass we celebrate. We will discover there a picture of who the priest is. We will see in it the priesthood of Christ as if we were looking in a mirror."*

## Who is the Priest?

I have described with the Holy Father the priesthood as a gift of the mystery of God's Love. Why is that important? Firstly it is important for us to be reminded that the priesthood is something different from the run of the mill job. It is something sacred; supernatural; it encompasses the divine. During the last forty years the identity and role of the priest in the Catholic Church have come under heavy attack and much questioning. In an effort to give it a modern stamp, the essence of the priesthood in some ways has been forgotten. It is not that the Second Vatican Council reinvented the priestly ministry, rather it confirmed what we always believed.

The current Pope ever since the beginning of his pontificate has repeatedly and tirelessly taught us about priesthood in a variety of contexts. He has given much thought and prayer to the meaning of the priesthood and taken every opportunity to present the meaning of this mystery of love in all its fullness. He has called us back to the identity of the priest as the true presence of the mystery of Christ's own High priesthood working among us and in some ways developed our understanding of this gift.

## Origins of Priestly Identity

The origin of the priesthood has its source in the Blessed Trinity, like every Christian identity. When the Bishop lays hands on a man during the Rite of Ordination the priest is consecrated. He is sent forth by the Father through the mediatorship of the Jesus Christ in order to live and work by the power of the Holy Spirit in service of the church and for the salvation of the world. Perhaps it is obvious to say, but the priest is a sacrament of the Crucified and Risen Christ and therefore a sacred symbol of the real presence of Christ in a certain but guaranteed way among us. This springs from the Person of Jesus Christ: true God and true Man.

First of all we have to understand the relationship between Christ and His Church and from that we see precisely who the priest is in relation to the People of God i.e. the consecrated religious and lay faithful of Christ. The Church is the Body of Christ in time and in space. Christ is the Head of the Church as St Paul tells us and we are His Body.

Therefore it is just this relationship between Christ and the Church that we see present and tangible in the person of the consecrated priest. You can see already that it is important for us to consider *who* the priest is before we talk about what he does. *What* he does is important because he is set aside for sacred duties. But the thought patterns of the society in which we live seem to value

*what a person does* rather than *who they are*. It prizes usefulness over the value of life itself.

We have only to look at the culture of death in which we are steeped to see that human life both at its beginnings and at its end are being threatened and some of that is attributable to a prevailing utilitarian way of thinking. That is why, it seems to me, that it more important in the first place to ask **who** the priest is rather than to ask **what** he does. So I am a priest and the symbol of Christ the priest, even when I am doing my shopping, filling the car with petrol and going on holiday. I am always a priest of Jesus Christ and in what ever I do.

## Jesus Christ the Eternal High Priest

There is, strictly speaking, only one priesthood; that is the High priesthood of Jesus Christ. The priesthood share by a priest links him to Christ's own priesthood. The man who is a priest allows Christ the crucified and risen Lord to exercise His own priesthood for us. This means that in every age and in every place where there is a man ordained Christ exercises His priesthood for us and for our eternal salvation. We understand this by the Latin phrase which describes a priest as *in persona Christi* i.e. in the Person of Christ or as an *alter Christus*. He stands in relation to the Church in the way that our Lord does to us. Jesus is Head of the Church, which is His Body. He is Bridegroom of the Church, which is His Bride, and He is Shepherd to the Church who are His Sheep. The priest stands in relation to his people in just the same way that Christ does.

## Priesthood and the Holy Eucharist

If we want to understand this relationship between Christ and His people and therefore between the priest and his people the best thing is to look at the Holy Mass we celebrate. We will discover there a picture of who the priest is. We will see in it the priesthood of Christ as if we were looking in a mirror. This is because the Liturgy of the Church is the centre of its life and it is from the Liturgy of the Church that all the power and grace of heaven flows.

It was at the Last Supper on the night before he died that Jesus instituted the priesthood when He gathered the twelve and shared the paschal meal with them saying "*Do this in memory of me.*" This is the commandment we keep every time we celebrate the Mass. But it is not just the Last Supper that we celebrate in the Mass, but the supper and also what occurred on the next three days: namely the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. (as a matter of fact the Ascension is celebrated too.) We call this the Paschal mystery. All of this is part of the saving work of Jesus Christ. All of this has been given to us in

every time and place through the sacrament of Holy Orders, in the Episcopacy and Priesthood.

As I said, we can use the Holy Mass as a picture for understanding the priesthood of Christ and therefore the priesthood of all priests. Think of the Mass and picture in your minds the different places where the priest stands. There are three important places from which the priest performs his priestly duties. These places are associated with three sacred furnishings: the chair called the presidential chair; the altar, and the ambo from which the Sacred Scriptures are read. These have a deeper significance than you might expect. Each of them relates to a specific sacred office of ministry. Let us meditate on them one by one.

### The Chair

The Chair is not just a place to sit on. It is a place from which the priest governs the praying people in the name of Jesus Christ. It is from this position that he calls them to worship the Father, and in the name of Jesus Christ. This is the place from which he takes the prayers of the people to the Father. Here he presides over the faithful people of God who by virtue of their baptismal life in Christ are called to worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth. Typically it is here that the priest prays and leads the prayer of the people: the opening rites and opening prayer, the Prayers of the faithful should be led from here, as well as the Creed, and the final prayers and blessing. Even when he is sitting and other people are fulfilling their functions; singing or reading he sits in the chair which is symbolic of Christ governing His people. This is what we call the kingly office or service of Christ among his people. Christ is the proper authority in the church and it is his kingship or government, which orders us. He does this so that we can receive His saving gifts and so that He can use us, however lowly we may seem to ourselves, for his work of calling men and women to life in Him.

It is here that in the Mass the priest asks the people to call to mind their sins so that they might worthily prepare themselves to partake in the sacred mysteries. Although his moment is not sacramental confession we should remark here that the authority of Christ is given to the priest to forgive sins. His task is to use the power of Christ to break the bonds of sin, which bind a person and so free the sinner to go to God. This is also true in the sacrament of the sick in which the compassionate forgiveness of Christ is given and a person freed from sin as well as the healing of mind and soul (and occasionally of body)

The priest has the duty to be a shepherd to the flock entrusted to him in the image of Christ the Shepherd even

as the bishop is the supreme shepherd and pastor of his diocese. Here we have to remember that the staff of the shepherd is also the sceptre of the king. The shepherd image in the Old Testament and the new is one of leading, guiding, correcting and nourishing. All of them are part of the priest's life in building up the faith of his people so that they may come closer to Christ and fulfill the mission, which He gives them to accomplish.

### The Hierarchical Nature of the Church

The priest, as a delegate of the bishop has a role of authority in the Church at a local level. This authority is to guide and govern the community. The Church is not simply a democratic entity that operates by the vote of the majority. The priest has entrusted to him the task of leading the people to holiness and seeing that their spiritual needs are met. In this way he mediates the kingship of Christ, because it is Christ who governs us. This does not exclude the valid and valuable involvement of the laity.

There are many things that the laity can and must do which the priest cannot and shouldn't do. But the work of the laity is principally to be in the world as bearers of Christ where they live and work and come into contact with the world. The Church, whether we like it or not, is hierarchically structured. That means that it is governed by priesthood. That may not be very popular or fashionable but that is the mode of the Church given by Christ. Christ Himself proclaimed himself a king and shares that with his Church. Peter is placed at the head of the apostles not because he was better or more competent, but to be the voice of Christ among his people to articulate what the mystery of faith holds for us.

### The Ambo

The next place in the Mass to which we must turn our attention is the ambo, the lectern from the Word of god is proclaimed. It is here that the Gospel is read by the Deacon or Priest. However, it is symbolic of the prophetic gift of Christ in His Church. Jesus is Priest, prophet and king. Christ of course is more than the Old Testament prophets. All the prophets and prophecies of the Old Testament point to Him. There is a prophetic charism, which Christ offers us and which is given to the Church. To be a prophet does not mean that a person is engaged in the reading the future like reading someone's palm or tea leaves. The word prophet comes from a Greek word *prophasko* meaning to speak forth, or speak on behalf of someone. Jesus Christ is the Word of God promised from all eternity. He is the Word made flesh. Jesus is both the Prophet of God and the message, because the Word of God is Truth. Jesus says I am the way the Truth and the

Life. He himself is Truth. Truth is not an idea, or an opinion nor an ideology. Truth is the fulness of the Person of God revealed to us in the Divine Person of Jesus Christ. And so the priest has the office of proclaiming the Truth in season and out of season. It is his responsibility to teach Christ's Truth and the Truth of the Church.

### The Priest As Catechist And Servant Of Truth

This is important because today we live in a world in which people distrust institutions and the Church is one of those. What has happened is that in many people's mind they have driven a wedge between Jesus Christ and his Church. As we have already said the Church is His Body. Therefore the church is not merely a human institution. It has a human dimension but it also has a divine nature rooted in the Divinity of its Lord and Saviour. Therefore it must be true to say that when the Church teaches officially it is Christ who teaches.

People do feel let down by priests who are unscrupulous in their moral behaviour. But they rarely feel outraged when they do not teach what the Church proclaims. So the principal catechist in a church is the Bishop. His role is one of teaching and holding the Church in his diocese in unity. The priest has to be the chief catechist of his parish and is responsible for the passing on of the Church's teaching. It is not a teaching which is discovered by experience, because it is revealed to us by God and therefore needs to be passed on authentically. This has all sorts of ramifications from providing talks like these, to taking care over the content of faith taught in the parish school, in collaboration with the teaching staff. It will even affect whether or not you have a certain hymn at Mass, because there are some which clearly teach material contrary to the mind of the church. And that matters because the formation in faith of his people is always in the forefront of the priest's mind.

### The Altar

Come lastly to meditate on the altar. The most significant of the pieces of furniture within our sanctuaries. It is here, not exclusively but perhaps above all, that we find the identity of the priest reflected and lived. When we celebrate the Holy Mass, Christ offers Himself to the Father. This is the re-presentation of the Sacrifice of Calvary. This is the mountain of Calvary on top of which the whole of history and the whole of the universe finds its meaning. Christ offers Himself to the Father, in love for the Father and in love of us. Of course, through His whole life Christ was offering Himself in obedience to the Father. All His actions are done in obedience to the Father and in the outpouring of Himself for us. From small parables to great healings, all of them speak of the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

This is the heart of the Paschal mystery and why he gives the gift of priesthood to the church during this important meal of the Passover. This means that what we experience in the Last Supper is not merely a meal. It was not for the Jews. It was a solemn commemoration of the power and initiative of God to liberate the people from slavery and death in Egypt. So too Christ interprets this same solemn ritual meal in the light of the liberation from sin and death that Good Friday and Holy Saturday contained. And it is not merely about liberation but the bestowal of a new life in the Spirit. What that Sacrifice gives is access to the Father and the gift of eternal life. This is eternal life: that you may know the true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. So it is the offering of Christ, which is at the heart of the Eucharist.

### The Heart Of Priestly Identity

This is the heart of the priest's life and identity. The priest stands in the person of Christ offering that unbloody sacrifice on our altars, the same that was offered on Calvary. In doing that the whole Church joins its own sacrifices and lives to that of Jesus through the sacrifice of the priest. That is why the priest invites you in these words. *"Prayer brethren that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the almighty Father."* It is in the nature of the priest to offer gift and sacrifice says the letter to the Hebrews. It is important that we do not drain the Mass of this particular and essential content, which has so easily happened in the past. There are other elements, which belong to the Mass just, as there are other elements to the life of the priest. However if we drain the Mass of its sacrificial content then we cut out its heart. When helping a seminarian who is struggling with his vocation I often find myself asking him, "At the end of the day do you want to celebrate the Mass." It always has a profound affect on the students and puts his vocation, or lack of it into relief.

Priests are not Mass-machines. On the other hand as soon as remove its central position from the Mass you remove it from the life of the priest. Similarly if we do that we remove it from the central consciousness of the minds of our people and gloss over the fact that unless you take up your cross daily you cannot follow me. There is a huge danger of forgetting the centrality of the Cross in our lives. But there is no spiritual growth without it. There is no resurrection without Good Friday. And if we desire to experience the kingdom of Jesus Christ within our hearts then we must never sideline the cross. The whole of the mystery of Jesus Christ is contained within those last three days of his life. They sum up the whole of his mission from before time until the end. They define and orientate the lives of all Christians and particularly the priest's.

So you can see that Christ lives as Head of His Church as relates to Her as Priest, Prophet and King. These gifts are given to the Church through the Office of the Bishop and priest and we see them symbolically reflected in the Liturgy of Holy Mass and the Sacraments in the different sacred duties of the priest.

**The Gift of Celibacy**

**B**efore I finish I want to make some remarks about priestly celibacy. This naturally follows on from what I have just outlined. As you know there has been much discussion and study on this question in the last forty years. Many people had hoped that the Holy Father would change the Western discipline. The Eastern Catholic Church has retained a practice of marriage for those priests who choose it before diaconate. But their Bishops are always chosen from among the celibate clergy. John Paul II has not only resisted this change but also taught very extensively about it. The first thing I want to say is that the Church understands celibacy to be a gift and a mystery. Now there are lots of priests who do not feel it to be either of those things. Celibacy seems to be more of a deathly conundrum. But in the first place it is a gift to the Church. Celibacy is a gift given to us in order to make us faithful and fruitful Christians.

It must be understood this way in order for it to be received by an individual as a gift for themselves. Celibacy is not the same as being a bachelor. We all know that unmarried men can be the most obstinate, self-centred individuals if they let themselves be. All of us as humans must find in life some way to give our lives to others if we are to be fulfilled and happy. In the Sacrament of Marriage that giving of myself to my spouse and of my spouse to me should make me grow humanly and spiritually.

**Self Consecration For Life And For Love**

**S**o too in the celibate life. This is a consecrated singleness. I consecrate my life to God. I give it wholly and entirely to Him so that He can be fruitful in me. He does this so that He can give Himself eternally to many other people. It is not a question of being more available, or of economic sensibility. It is for this one spiritual reason that God wishes through my self-donation of all that I am and have to Him that he can call other men and women to holiness. In that self-donation that I make to God I have also to give myself to men and women whom he sends to me. In that self-donation I offer him the deepest part of my being.

I have to give to him everything including my sexuality. Sexuality is a gift from God for the giving of life to another and, in marriage for the giving of life to the world.

The single, consecrated priest directs that life-giving gift to Jesus Christ and in turn it is transformed in grace for the holiness of the Church. It is an act of faith and an act of hope, but no less so than the fruitful and well-lived faithfulness of marriage. It therefore mirrors the self-donation of Christ in the Sacrifice of the Mass. Yes celibacy is a sacrifice. It is a giving up of a married life, and of family. But all sacrifice is ordained towards the resurrection. It is not the giving up of being happy and fruitful. It is ordered towards spiritual fruitfulness and must feed into the priest's personal spiritual life. You may validly say, but a married man can be holy, so could a married priest. That is true. No one denies that. But the world needs to see the visible sign of Jesus Christ the single and poor one in its midst living.

The consecrated singleness of the priest is a sign in our midst of the Gift of our Lord Jesus Christ who gives up everything so that we might have life and life to the full. Celibacy must be seen in the light of the call to holiness and it must also contribute to the holiness of the priest. A priest without a deep and regular life of prayer is not really living his celibacy well. The priest's life is one of prayer. It is reflected in his duty to offer the prayer of the Church for the living and the dead. This he promises to do for you every day of his life. At diaconate he promises to undertake this work of stand in Intercession before God with you and for you.

**Conclusion**

**T**he priesthood is a gift of Christ to the Church in which Jesus Christ our redeemer is present and working his saving work in us. The priest is a visible sacrament of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ Priest, Prophet and King, living in intercession and Sacrifice, teaching the truth and enlightening our minds and hearts and guiding us as a true shepherd to holiness and life eternal. This is a great gift to the church I wonder why so few people want it!



# The Analogy of Faith And The Sanctification Of Man

Jeffrey Kirby

*In this insightful essay, Jeffrey Kirby, a seminarian for the diocese of Charleston in USA, examines the essence of the act of faith.*

## Introduction

The world today supports people who seek truth and who explore for answers to their questions; however, it shames those who claim to have found the truth and silences those who want to share the truth they have discovered with others. Further, the world permits lies to be presented as truth and half-truths to be argued as fullness. Truly, we live in an age of self-imposed untouchable truth, of lies and half-truths, of answerable questions left unanswered, and of supposed tolerant people who are viciously intolerant to assertions of truth. Where are we to go from here? Is there a direction beyond the counsel of this world and its fallenness?

Yes, God, who exists as a Trinity of Persons, has given the world another direction. Through the deliverance by the Father of the Son, within the distinct yet inseparable ministry of the Holy Spirit, God himself welcomes man to share in his own life and love. God the Son became a man and declared himself the Truth (John 14:6). He invites all people to come to him for the answers to their questions and rest from their labors.

Man, in his act of faith in the Son of God, accepts the invitation and enters *into* God Himself and, in this mutual yielding between God and man in the Christic Mediator, man comes not only to a deeper understanding of God but simultaneously, as if in a single movement, to an ever-spiraling depth of awareness of his own personhood. This occurs principally in his acceptance and surrender to truth, which becomes expressed in the analogy of faith. The analogy of faith is the reality which demonstrates the inter-connectedness and singular expression of all truths in the divine simplicity of God's One Utterance, *Jesus Christ*, who is the Word made flesh and the fullness of revelation.

When man surrenders in faith to this Word, he begins the slow process, often marked by tension and pain, of purgation, illumination and deification. The Word, which is alive and active cutting to the marrow (Heb 4:12), gradually transforms the person, allowing him to become more fully himself in Christ. Concurrently, the person grows in wisdom, which is the ever-expanding, widely promiscuous grasp and retreating resignation to the truths of faith, as well as their application in the many aspects – familial, political, moral, social – of his life. These reciprocal actions of the Word and of man rely on one another and neither of them can occur without the other. Man's act of faith, initiated by grace, begins and permits this development and remains the hinge upon which it all rests.

## The Activity of the Triune God

As Being itself, God is not static but there exists a constant activity of transmission between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> The Persons of the Trinity are distinct Persons; however, as divine Persons their distinctness is one, not of essence, but of relation.<sup>2</sup> God the Father, therefore, is not merely spoken of as a symbol of fatherhood or as being "like a father," but as *being* Father. So with the Son as Son, and with the Spirit as Love. The relation is of the divine essence and

*"As a person becomes more conscious of God, himself and the relationship between them, he is called to cast off the spirit of the world and to renounce sin. To the extent that he does this, he will be able to spiritually see, hear, taste and touch God"*

inseparable from it. To divide the essence from the relation is to make the relation a creature and to cause confusion in the understanding of the divinity. As a Family, the Godhead's relationality is central to himself and to the dynamism and veil of mystery that surrounds him.

The dynamism between the Persons should not be seen as an "effect proceeding from a cause" (this could lead to modalism which denies divinity to the Son) or even as the "cause going to the effect," as moving it or making its own image upon it, in which case the "persons" of God would only be a mask of a truly singular Person. Both of these errors understand the activity of procession as an outward act and so deny such a movement within God.

### God's Inner Life Is Creation's Exemplar

These views fail to recognize a possible inward action by an agent, such as an act of the intellectual power within man: he proceeds in knowledge to understand an object. God must be understood not according to the mode of the lowest creatures, material bodies, but from the mode of the highest creatures, the intellectual substances. Although even this illustration falls drastically short in representing the activity of divine objects; nevertheless, with this understanding, procession should not be understood from what is in our bodies but rather from what is the movement of an intelligible emanation.<sup>3</sup>

God, because he is love in his inner life, processes love within himself.<sup>4</sup> The activity between the Persons is one that is Love and that shares Life. The Father begets the Son and the Love between the two is the Holy Spirit. This co-activity, this inter-subjectivity, is the mark of the movement within God, and the exemplar to all creation of its own nature and final destiny.<sup>5</sup>

### The Son's Deliverance as Invitation

As finite and contingent being, the human person exists within the abyss of existence as a pilgrim on a journey. In his expedition of life, with a hunger for meaning and desire for fulfillment, he has many questions: What is man? What is the meaning of suffering, evil and death, which persist even in the midst of such progress? What can people contribute to society and expect from society? What comes after this earthly life? These questions, without assistance, can lead man to alienation and despair.

God, Creator and Lord of creation, not wishing man to be left in confusion and disorder, freely chose to initiate a personal revelation of Himself to man. Man, therefore, stands as a privileged partner and graced act-or in this self-disclosure of the Divinity. Precisely because God is

the almighty and eternal, immeasurable, incomprehensible, infinite in will, understanding and every perfection,<sup>6</sup> he chose to approach man progressively in "many and various ways" (Hebrew 1:1).

This revelation of God to man can be divided into the natural and supernatural. In the natural order, God shows himself to man in creation and within man's own conscience and spiritual yearnings. Man, with the light of reason, has the capacity through these discreet disclosures by God of Himself, to know of God's existence and the elementary truths about Him. The supernatural revelation of God is the blatant invitation for man to enter into His intimacy: to know Him, love Him, and to be a trusting friend.

Respecting man's fallen nature, which is prone to error and sin, God enters and positively yet gradually shares His knowledge of Himself to man through history and then "in, with and under" other experiences. Through these mediums, such as miracles, personal inspirations, and prophetic messages, God presents man with the encouragement of entering into a filial covenant with Him.<sup>7</sup>

The summit of this radically ineffable sharing by God to man came in the Person of Jesus Christ. Within the Godhead, the Father asked who could be sent to redeem man and the Son, in loving obedience, answered, "Here I am. Send me" (Isaiah 6:8). From the transmission within the Trinity, therefore, the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit, was delivered to man. God entered human history as a friend and as *the* answer to man's questions. As the Incarnate Logos, He is and will be the end and ever-new, Alpha and Omega, of God showing and giving Himself to man. By his life, death and resurrection, Christ has definitively revealed God to man and man to himself, in order to conclusively invite and receive humanity into relationship with Himself.

### Man's Act of Faith

God, the ultimate witness to Himself, resting on His own authority displayed in prophecy, miracles and internal illuminations, extends His hand fully in Jesus Christ and offers man communion. Against the dark backdrop of a world that asserts non-belief and imposes upon man an atheistic model of reality, the human person is presented with the vulnerable and pierced hand of love from the Word Incarnate.

Restless to find answers to his questions and the foundation of his life, man is called to accept the divine hand, marked by the brutality of the Cross, which is offered to him. Called into this intimacy with God, man's

only adequate response is one of adoration.<sup>8</sup> He begins this existential adoration through an act of faith.

Faith can be defined as a gift from God, a supernatural virtue, which calls for a submission of the intellect and will and which, through the grace of God, allows the person to believe, as true, what God has revealed.<sup>9</sup> It can further be defined as a total and free self-commitment to God, through the working of the Holy Spirit, which willingly assents to the revelation which He gives to man.<sup>10</sup>

### Believing in God, Believing God, and Believing Within God

To understand the full depth of the act of faith, three distinctions can be made: *credere Deum*, *credere Deo*, and the *credere in Deum*.<sup>11</sup> The act of faith which merely “believes God exists,” the *credere Deum*, is a “faith” that is not necessarily supernatural but is rather limited only to an acknowledgement of a Being’s existence. Although it can be a first step or initial action of the person towards God, this act of faith, which even the fallen angels cannot deny, does not contain the fullness of the response which God invites man to make.

The act of faith that “believes God,” *credere Deo*, and acknowledges the propositions of faith as true and trusts that God’s words are without error; even this, although praiseworthy and necessary for salvation, does not contain the fullness of faith that God offers to man. These two acts of faith are insufficient in themselves and are lacking in depth and vitality because they can exist without love.

The act of faith that “believes within God,” *credere in Deum*, is when the person, conscious of his own weakness, turns to God and seeks to know about God from God Himself. It is when man goes beyond the formal object of propositions and encounters the Reality and believes from that simple intuition.<sup>12</sup> This is the faith that God desires for man, has made possible for him at a tremendous price, and encourages him, by external and internal proofs and illuminations, to enter and integrate within his own being and life in order to become a new creation.<sup>13</sup> To make this act of faith, this simple yet profound movement of adoration, the human person must respond to grace and work to love God. Only those who truly love God are able to believe in Him.

### Faith: Opening Both Mind And Heart To God

The person receives faith only to the extent that he accepts it and is open to it. Faith is the “primordial choice” that man makes as to what degree he will open himself to the divine mystery and, in it, understand and approach life, the world, man and history. When fully

lived, faith becomes not only a fact but an occurrence.<sup>14</sup> It embraces the entire person and each of his acts is marked by an understanding of God’s activity, not only always and everywhere but particularly here and now.

### The Steps Towards Faith Begun by Wonder

Pursuing the appropriate act of faith, man is ordinarily motivated by his existential questions. While the human person, with the use of his reason, possesses and poses his questions, he is also the recipient of wonder, an experience of awe when in the presence of finite beauty, truth or goodness, which propels him to the Infinite fulfillment of these transcendental experiences. It is God seeking the person in, with and through different occasions, people and objects that inducts the person into this awareness. It is this awareness that allows him to formulate his curiosity and clearly express his questions. Synthesizing the questions and seeking the answers is a serious, lifelong commitment to struggle through the tension of this questioning-and-answering, which, if cooperated with, eventually becomes a part of the person’s very definition by leading him to the full act of faith called for by God.<sup>15</sup>

### Concentric Circles of Insight

This engagement by man can be seen as a process that consists of three concentric and complementary circles. The first and most universal of these circles is the experiencing by the person of existence itself. God as Creator can use anything to instill this wonder and call man to Himself. It would be disastrous to attempt to limit God only to the supernatural or merely to the miraculous. The work of God is as large as creation itself and uses this creation as a sacramental, by which man can recognize, know and praise God. Nature, other persons, poetry, art, music, plays and film, are all avenues of this first circle of wonder calling man to faith in the living God.

This first circle is not enough, however, and needs a second circle to balance it. The second circle would be the special history that has defined the unveiling of God. By desiring to understand history and placing himself, as far as is humanly possible, in the position of those who have gone before him, the person wants to know their viewpoints, hopes and fears.

This action by the person is a reaching out to the long-dead generations and a re-creating of their thoughts and words, allowing them to instruct and enlighten him about God. This is a difficult task but must be made because, as a God of history, the Trinity calls man, especially in the historical Person of Jesus Christ, to know Him and to comprehend His movements and self-revelation through the ages.

The third and smallest circle in this process of wonder is tradition.<sup>16</sup> It is the circle that the others lead man to and that enlivens the other circles with meaning and value. Tradition serves as an object and the medium of the person in his quest for answers within God.

**Tradition, a Living Environment of Faith**

Tradition is an offering by which the Father’s gift is communicated to a humanity throughout the world and in successive generations so that, even if separated by time and space, they are nevertheless incorporated into the same, unique, identical reality, the revelation of God especially in his Son, Jesus Christ. It is not only a book or a codex or an anthropology but, by the power of the Holy Spirit, tradition is an environment and atmosphere in which the person sees, smells, hears, tastes and touches the lived faith of a believing community.

This holistic encounter forms man and guides him towards the appropriate act of faith. It allows him to see and adopt himself to what his fathers held and what has been held from generation to generation, since the time of the apostles. It calls him to become a beneficiary of the apostles’ heritage through faith. If he accepts, the person approaches the belief in God, which, while profoundly personal, is never individualistic. Man’s faith always relies on and is grounded upon the faith of the whole Church, which is the fellowship of the faithful of Jesus Christ.

**Into God in Christ**

Compelled by wonder in desiring answers to his questions, as well as meaning and purpose in his life, man is led through creation, history and tradition to reach the full act of faith, the existence of lived adoration. Jesus Christ, the pre-eminent bearer of revelation, as the Incarnate Logos, is the mediator and benefactor of man, giving human Utterance to the Word of God. Man is summoned into the cloud of unknowing in, with and through the corpus of this Utterance. The truth of God is found primarily in His very being. Christ is not simply one among many material objects of faith, *credere Deo*, but, in his humanity, is the locus in which the Formal Object – God Himself – is encountered. The whole of revelation converges in Christ and has its definitive truth only in Him.

The man who accepts the life of faith, *credere in Deum*, re-acts to the action of God in revealing himself, it is his “yes” and “amen” to God, with all that may or may not come with that action.<sup>17</sup> In undertaking this voyage of faith into God, the person begins a dynamically divine drama of life and love between himself and the Godhead.

The person grows in an inward awareness of who God is and becomes gradually more conscious of the nuptial unity between himself and God. He begins to perceive God’s being and discern His mind. The person becomes more alert to his own self and to God’s image within him.

As he freely surrenders more to God and enters into Him, the person becomes more fully himself in Christ by allowing grace to heal his wounds from sin and evil and to actualize his potential in virtue, talents and even personality. The person truly becomes consciously transformed into a new creation. Standing as himself, the person is shown his dignity. He realizes that he holds a privileged place in the cosmos as a child of God by adoption, and therefore is the summit, focal point and crown of God’s creation. He sees how he is a reflection and, in a sense, is the glory of God.<sup>18</sup>

An apparent juxtaposition – man entering God and believing in Him and also becoming more fully himself as a person – becomes a paradox that is reconciled in the hypostatic union within the Person of the God-man. In this seemingly single, yet distinct, act by the person, he begins to participate in the very activity of God and to share, through Christ his Mediator, in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). The person begins to see not only how God has entered him, especially in the impression of His image, but also how he can perpetually enter into God, seeking greater Wisdom and Love and being transformed from glory unto glory.

**The Eyes of Faith**

As a person becomes more conscious of God, himself and the relationship between them, he is called to cast off the spirit of the world and to renounce sin. To the extent that he does this, he will be able to spiritually see, hear, taste and touch God (1 John 1:1-2). In this growth into God, man begins to see the unity of God extended and reflected in the analogy of faith. The analogy of faith is the coherence of truths among themselves and within the whole plan of revelation.

The analogy of faith, difficult to see by those with carnal eyes and heart, can steadily be given to the mind and heart of the person of faith. The person, in entering God, starts to see, beyond the contingent differences and distinctions in this world, the connection between God and His teachings.

The common divide, the “scales” of finite being, which is a part of time and space, sadly edified by sin and the social errors of the day that deny and kill the spirit, such as hedonism and materialism, is gradually diminished by grace in the person possessing the fullness of faith.

The analogy of faith depends upon the *credere in Deum* in which the person has come through the propositions of faith and is now experiencing the realities of faith themselves. The person no longer sees merely a collection of truths or an organized system of immutable statements in a creed. The Creed ceases to be only a stop-sign, a requirement of belief, and becomes instead a boundlessly fruitful unity, endlessly unfolding to the eyes of faith.<sup>19</sup> The person now sees – in God’s own divine simplicity – the oneness of these truths in the One incarnate Logos.

### Seeing With The Eyes Of Faith

The truths of life no longer contain the appearances of incongruity or the façade of discrepancy. They are clarified and ordered in the mind and heart of the believing person. Previous occasions of confusion are corrected, seeming contradictions are shown to co-exist in a beautiful Reality, agonies and former anguish are rewarded in seeing the connections and even dependency of truths on other truths. The former sense of confinement is now replaced by an indefinite sense of freedom. The harmony and homogenous nature of the truths sing out, as they are, to the soul now open and panting for Wisdom and Love. The person ceases to “grasp the faith” and rather begins to be grasped by it.

As the scales drop and man sees the activity of the truths of life in service to the Truth, he understands and is enlightened to an even greater and inexhaustible awareness of his own humanity, of God, their relationship and the great circle of being flowing from and returning to God. In this enlightenment, this immeasurable precision of clarity, man, according to his free will, becomes liberated from private fantasies, the peer pressure of popular trends, the pull of the world, and the enticement to sin. In seeing the analogy of faith, the radical indivisibility of truth, the person is called to more profoundly assimilate and integrate himself and his life into this Reality, which is God.

### Tension and Pain

While the illumination of the mind and heart and the conformity of the person’s life and desire for transformation are distinct acts; nevertheless, in the act of faith, they must simultaneously occur or else neither will occur at all. If the person begins to see the analogy of faith, it is because he has allowed God to show it to him. If the person ceases to grow in love, the life of wisdom will dry up and bear no fruit. This is the difficult task of the person who wants to believe: *credere in Deum*. It is an arduous task; however, to the one who makes it, God himself will walk with him and desire to make the yoke easy and the burden light.

The person must allow his faults, weaknesses, and sins to be the very path that God uses to transform him. If man steps onto the wrong path, which seeks to convince him that he must work to remove and leave these undesirable elements behind, he does not let God work and seeks to redeem himself (like Pelagius). If he steps onto another misleading path, which convinces him that these are not important or superfluous to the “real” him, and he ignores them and tries to believe in God, he will not be given passage because he does not want redemption at all, except maybe from the hazards of this world (like Confucius or the Buddha).

No, for the human person to enter the right path he must take up his cross and truly follow Christ (Matt. 10:38). He must see his weaknesses, faults and even his sins as the very crosses that will be the source of his own salvation. Not separate entities or unimportant issues, these elements allow the person to recognize his own creature-ness and finitude, and calls him to seek salvation, not from himself or from this world, but from sin and evil.

To begin to face the sorrow of his own fallenness, recognize his own dismerit, acknowledge his own unworthiness and smallness, submit to his existential awkwardness and essential discomfort, the person permits God to work. It is precisely in his areas of sinfulness, embarrassment, shame, confusion, loneliness and even despair, that Christ will ask him to stretch out his hand.

In desiring Him alone and following His commands, not worrying about the thoughts of this world or the respect of man, the person will stretch out his hand and allow Christ, exactly in these sensitive areas, to begin the work of redemption.

### The Reliance on the Will

This strenuous act of faith entered into by man with questions and awe, is the hinge upon which this entire drama depends. At its source, it is a movement of love because it is love that inspires every action towards goodness. It moves the will to follow God and makes faith possible and allows it to deepen.

It is only love that directs the person to trust and accept communion with a witness and, in the act of faith, the Witness is God Himself. The Witness says “it is so” and the person, using his will, makes the statement his own and is able to see something he would never have been able to see through his own abilities. It is this turning of the will that makes the act of faith and allows the person to endure the struggles and trials of living by faith.

Seeing the extended hand of God, the will awakens the intellect to accept the offer. This will and the intellect, inflamed by love, make this affirmation and assist the person in persevering in his act of faith. God's grace initiates, supports and pervades this entire internal process within the person. Having once made the act of faith, the person chooses to what degree he will let God work. If he adheres to God's will and walks the correct path, the person can attain and persevere *credere in Deum*, and the heights of "likeness" unto God Himself.

**Conclusion**

Through the act of the will, moved by love, the human person is able to make and sustain an act of faith. This act of faith answers his questions and explains his awe. It places him within a complex struggle with various forces within himself and the world around him. If he stays on course and seeks the face of God, his act of faith will deepen and God will be able to work more profoundly. As the person grows in his faith, a deeper sense of God and of his own personhood is given. This unveiling displays to the person the simplicity of God himself. In his growing awareness, man sees ever more deeply God's image in his own person, as well as his own capacity to enter into God. If he desires to enter God, he meets his mediator and guide. Christ, God-Man, who initiated the call and assists its completion, encounters the person and allows him to enter the life of the Trinity Himself.

In entering the life of the Trinity by assimilation into Christ, the person becomes capable of seeing the analogy of faith. The analogy shows man the inter-connectedness

and unity of truths and allows him to see the harmony of creation and the glory of God's created cosmos. It shows him the great circle of being that begins with God and rests with Him.

The person who perseveres in love and belief in God, comes to the existential adoration of the Godhead, which celebrates His glory and exalts in His splendor. Such a person, standing on the horizon of existence, is truly free in Christ and lives while singing, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my being rejoices in God my savior" (Lk 1:46-47).

- 1 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 28, art. 1.
- 2 *Ibid.*, I, q. 28, art. 1-2, 151-153.
- 3 *Ibid.*, I, q. 27, art. 1, 147-148.
- 4 John Paul II, General Audience on January 19, 2002, in *The Trinity's Embrace* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2002), 309.
- 5 Romano Guardini, *The Faith and Modern Man*, Trans. Charlotte Forsyth (London: Burns Oates, 1952), 100.
- 6 Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius*, Chapter I.
- 7 Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, Trans. Matthew O'Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 117.
- 8 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Word Made Flesh* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 149-150, 152, 154.
- 9 Vatican I, *Dei Filius*, Chapter III.
- 10 Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, 5.
- 11 Augustine, *Sermo de Symbolo*, in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, vol. XL, 1190-1192.
- 12 Aquinas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 1, 2, 1169-1170.
- 13 John Paul II, *Redeemer of Man*, 10.
- 14 Kasper, *God*, 117, 119-120.
- 15 I will use Aidan Nichols' distinctions to order my explanation of the movement of wonder within man: *The Shape of Catholic Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 18-19.
- 16 I am here changing Nichols' last circle from "bible" to "tradition." I believe that Congar's exposition of tradition warrants and supports such a change: Congar, *Meaning*, 15-18.
- 17 Kasper, *Jesus*, 122.
- 18 Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, IV.20.7; Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.
- 19 Henri de Lubac, *Christian Faith*, Trans. J. Saward (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), 130-131.

## MARY THE MOTHER OF THE LIVING

It is fitting that Mary the Virgin is found obedient, saying, 'Behold Your handmaid, O Lord; be it to me according to Your word.' But Eve was disobedient; for she did not obey. And this was while she yet a virgin. Indeed she had Adam for a husband, but as yet being a virgin and becoming disobedient, she became the cause of death both to herself and to the whole human race. So also Mary, bearing the predestined man and being yet a Virgin, by being obedient became both to herself and to the whole human race the cause of salvation.

And on account of this, the Lord said that the first should be last and the last first. The Prophet signifies the same when he says: 'Instead of fathers you have children.' Because the Lord, when he was born, was the first-begotten of the dead and received into His bosom the primitive fathers. He regenerated them into the life of God. He Himself became the beginning of the living, just as Adam became the beginning of the dying.

Therefore also Luke, commencing the line of generations from the Lord, referred it back to Adam, signifying that He, the Lord, regenerated the old fathers, not they Him, into the Gospel of life. And so the knot of Eve's disobedience received its unloosing through the obedience of Mary; for what Eve, a virgin, bound by incredulity, Mary, a virgin, unloosed by faith.

*St Irenaeus  
Adv. Haer. iii. 22.34.*

# Mary and The Convert

*David Paul Deavel*

*David Deavel, of Fordham University in New York, looks at the central role of Mary in Catholicism and examines the difficulties that many Protestants experience when considering whether to convert to the faith. The author is associate editor of LOGOS: a Journal of Catholic Theology.*

*"The most disturbing discoveries of a potential convert that make him reconsider biblical objections to Mary, however, are not of the "new" or "strange" doctrines that he has found in Scripture. The most disturbing doctrines are the ones he quite often holds already."*

## Introduction: What's the Problem?

G. K. Chesterton famously summarized the steps involved in an outsider's approach to the Catholic faith. First is defense of it—he "imagines himself to be indifferent" and "feels he ought to be fair to the Church of Rome" because he sees that the attacks on it are unjust.<sup>1</sup> The second stage "consists in discovering what a very large number of lively and interesting ideas there are in the Catholic philosophy, that a great many of them commend themselves to his sympathies, and that even those which he would not accept have something to be said for them justifying their acceptance."<sup>2</sup>

The third stage we might simply paraphrase as "running like hell in the opposite direction" because, as Chesterton puts it, the inquirer feels "trapped."<sup>3</sup> This description is quite accurate. Not only that, but I would suggest that for a great many converts, their discovery of the centrality of Mary to Catholic faith is often the stimulus that moves the enquirer from the stage of discovery to the stage of flight. A great many Protestants and "mere Christians" are able to follow C. S. Lewis in seeing the logical and theological appropriateness of a set liturgy, purgatory, a moderate honor giving to the saints, auricular confession, and the real presence of the Eucharist.

Mary, however, is a different subject. The language surrounding Mary is simply frightening to Protestant ears. Consider the *Salve Regina* with its declaration that Mary is "our life, our sweetness and our hope"—Mary, not Jesus. Or the *Memorare*, attributed to St. Bernard, and its demand not only that Mary hear but "answer me." John Henry Newman, a man whose devotion to the Virgin was so great as an Anglican as to have preached something very near to the Immaculate Conception in his sermon "The Reverence Due to the Blessed Virgin Mary," confessed that the elaborate and extreme honors paid to Mary were his "great *crux* as regards Catholicism."<sup>4</sup> Especially disturbing to Newman seems to have been the language that indicated that Mary's own heavenly queenship seemed to allow her to "command" her Son.<sup>5</sup>

## Unbiblical Dogmas?

Newman's objections were in the context of his own strong Marian belief. For many Protestants and even for those who are first discovering Christ in the Catholic Church, the objections are even stronger. The brief against Catholic Marianism is short and to the point: 1) that the Marian dogmas are unbiblical, 2) that belief about her power to "answer prayer" contradicts the unique mediation of Christ, and that 3) devotion to her is at best a distraction, at worst idolatry. Before we can proceed to an estimation of Mary's central position in the faith positively, we must give some answer to these objections.

The belief that Catholic teaching about Mary is "unbiblical" is perhaps the first to fall in the convert's attempt to escape the Catholic trap. What does it mean to say that a doctrine is "unbiblical"? Does it mean that a teaching must be found

explicitly in the text of Scripture? And if evidence is given for it, what is to be done with passages that might seem contradictory?

**The Inner Logic Of Truly Accepting Scripture**

The Protestant who has discovered the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist has by this time realized that what one finds in the Bible is in part dependent upon assumptions that he has taken to it. To discover Jesus' explicit discourse on eating his body and drinking his blood in John 6 is quite a shock once one has abandoned the somewhat Gnostic habit of strictly separating "spiritual" from "physical." Similarly, for those who have come from many of the Protestant traditions of "faith alone," the discovery that baptism seems to be required for salvation (Jn. 3:5) and that "faith" in St. Paul's letter to the Romans is from beginning to end (Rom. 1:5 and 16:26) associated with, and not opposed to, "obedience" is enough to make them question whether they understand what it means to have biblical doctrine.

The most disturbing discoveries of a potential convert that make him reconsider biblical objections to Mary, however, are not of the "new" or "strange" doctrines that he has found in Scripture. The most disturbing doctrines are the ones he quite often holds already. For those with a bent for history, the discovery of Luther's approval of polygamy leads them to discover that there is no explicit prohibition on that practice in either Old or New Testament. Jacques Barzun writes of Luther that "He must have suffered when, on Old Testament authority, he recommended bigamy (and secrecy) to Philip of Hesse, knowing that St. John and St. Paul, his favorite apostles, would never have condoned that solution."<sup>6</sup> What they would or would not have condoned is a moot point—the shock is that such an issue was never addressed by them.

For those with a bent for speculative theology, the ins and outs of Trinitarian doctrine and Christology, the doctrine of Christ, often end up knocking the wind out of them. Anyone who has dealt with any of the neo-Arian groups around—and we can here include both Jehovah's Witnesses and a great many university religion professors and their student products—knows that the Trinity is a difficult thing to figure out, what with all the passages that seem to contradict the view that Jesus is true God from true God, equal to the Father and the Spirit.

**Discovering The Principle of Development**

One who studies the history of theology finds that, yes, there is continuity from the passages of the Bible to the Nicene Creed, but that there is also a development in understanding of what is the *orthodox biblical* teaching and not just *biblical* in the generic sense

of having a few passages that one can use for support. The potential convert discovers, often without reading Newman, the principle of the development of doctrine: that what was found in Scripture in an inchoate fashion was made more explicit by the Church in time. Jaroslav Pelikan summarizes the dilemma Newman and the many others who follow him find themselves in:

*If the Protestant churches acknowledged the validity of the development of doctrine when it moved from the great commission of the Gospel of Matthew to produce the Nicene Creed, as all of the mainline Protestant churches did and do, on what grounds could they reject development as it had moved from other lapidary passages of the Bible to lead to other doctrines?*<sup>7</sup>

**The Self Contradiction of Sola Scriptura**

What the potential convert discovers is that when he, or any group of Christians, had claimed that they were ruled by "Scripture alone," what they had really been ruled by is a "rule of faith," or to put it more baldly, by an extra-biblical tradition that governed the interpretation of Scriptures. Of course each group of Christians will say that their own particular interpretive scheme is the one that faithfully reflects the Bible, but this really gets one nowhere, since, as Chesterton put it so amusingly, "You cannot put a book in the witness-chair and ask it what it really means."<sup>8</sup>

This discovery is not, however, the end of the rabbit hole for the one who is, by now, a little sick to his stomach and generally suffering from a good bit of insomnia. What one had assumed was stable, *sola scriptura*, is seen to be dependent upon the rules of a tradition. But then the history of the canon of Scripture is brought out. Not only, it seems, is the interpretation of the Bible a matter of tradition, but the Bible itself is nothing more or less than a piece of the Tradition.

Calvin and the Protestant Reformers seem to have believed that the canon of Scripture pretty much dropped into the laps of the Church around the middle of the first century, that the Apostles recognized it with a quick amen, something more like what is claimed for the delivery of the Koran or Joseph Smith's tablets. Indeed, Calvin writes:

*For they mock the Holy Spirit when they ask: Who can convince us that these writings came from God? Who can assure us that Scripture has come down whole and intact even to our very day? Who can persuade us to receive one book in reverence but to exclude another, unless the Church prescribe a sure rule for all these matters?*<sup>9</sup>

Calvin's belief that it is mocking the Spirit to ask for some authority for the canon is somewhat ironic in view of his older contemporary Martin Luther's attempt to remove James, Hebrews, Jude, and Revelation from the canon of Scripture, as well as his successful elimination of the deuterocanonical books from the Protestants' canon.

### The Church Precedes The Canon of Scripture

Both Luther and Calvin seemed to assume that the canon of Scripture preceded the Church, an assumption which is, of course, false. Throughout the first few centuries of Christian history the canonicity of books like Hebrews, Jude, 2 Peter, and Revelation was hotly debated, with the end of the discussion not really taking place until the end of the fourth century (and probably not dogmatically until Trent). There simply were no internal criteria to the books themselves that would demand that they "count" as Scripture. Nor was there a divine table of contents to the Bible written either by Paul and the Apostles or handed down from heaven on a golden scroll.

The plain assumption of the early Church was that not only biblical interpretation, but the Bible itself, was a matter for the living Tradition, the fullness of teaching, to discern. This same point is made by the Second Vatican Council's *Constitution on Divine Revelation*: "Thus it comes about that the Church does not draw her certainty about all revealed truths from the Holy Scriptures alone."<sup>10</sup> The Catholic is not obligated to prove everything strictly from the Scriptures alone because Scripture itself is nothing other than the written form of Tradition. Tradition must be bigger than the Bible because otherwise there is no Bible at all to argue about with regard to Mary or anything else. As the Fathers of the Church affirmed, "Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church's heart, rather than in documents and records..."<sup>11</sup>

### Application To Marian Dogma

That I have spent so much time on these questions may seem to some a dodge of the question of Marian dogmas and the Bible. But it is not a dodge at all. The nature of biblical authority in doctrine and dogma must be brought into the clear before the discussion of any particular doctrine begins or the Catholic and the non-Catholic will be talking past each other from the start. For those who are interested in what such a conversation might look like, Dwight Longenecker and David Gustafson's excellent recent book, *Mary: A Catholic-Evangelical Debate* does a good job at establishing this difference between Catholic and Protestant takes on Scripture in the first chapter so that the discussion that happens does not devolve into a does-so-does-not discussion over 200-plus pages.<sup>12</sup> If the potential convert

can overcome the hurdle of seeing that he does not have to find every doctrine either explicitly stated or immediately and easily deduced from Scripture, the belief that teachings about Mary are unbiblical will have to move to another plane in which he will have to search out the heart of the Church's Tradition.

Different discussions will be had and certain acknowledgments will have to be made. The fact that Scripture does not explicitly say that Mary remained ever-virgin will have to be weighed against the fact that 1) it never says she didn't, and 2) that the Church both East and West has consistently believed she did. That the end of life is both death and corruption and thus Mary's assumption body and soul is impossible will have to be weighed against 1) the biblical traditions of Enoch and Elijah who seem to have been assumed bodily at the end of their lives, 2) the historical lack of a gravesite for Mary—a big oddity considering that traditions of graves or remains for all the other important figures exist, even if they are actually fake, and 3) the longstanding consensus East and West that Mary was assumed. For each case of Marian teaching one will have to weigh the history of the Church's tradition as well as the explicit Scriptural evidence.

That Scripture cannot be contradicted is assumed, but that it is the whole and exhaustive truth is a claim that it does not make for itself in any place nor did anyone else make it for Scripture until the Protestant Reformation. This essay is not, of course, designed to be a complete catechism on Mary, so let's move on to what I believe is the main objection with regard to Marian teaching, the second objection named above—namely, Mary's own mediatorial role.

### Usurper?

I remember quite clearly the different reactions to the revelation that I was going to become a Catholic. My mother repeatedly told me how she had been repulsed by some of her Catholic cousins who prayed in front of a statue of Mary at their brother's funeral. Why, she asked, couldn't they pray to Jesus? Was I now going to leave off praying to the Lord and pray to his mother instead? I think her worry bothered me less than other reactions I got.

Another associate of mine seemed very sympathetic to my becoming a Catholic, informing me that he had had a very good experience working at a Catholic college out east. He told me with a knowing sort of air that he knew a lot of priests at his former workplace and that none of them believed that Mary was divine. I responded that this was a good thing since the Church had never taught that. Now he was really surprised.

**Unwarranted Assumptions**

Why the twin assumptions that 1) prayer to Mary detracted from prayer to God, and 2) prayer to Mary somehow implied that she was divine? I think the answer is in the common Protestant understanding of Christ’s mediatorial role. Most Protestants will read, and my parents did to me, I Timothy 2:5, “For there is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ,” and then assume that this settles the whole matter. Mary’s intercession, along with that of the saints in heaven, is obviously unbiblical. If one objects that it is a common Christian practice to pray prayers of intercession for others and preach the gospel to them and that these mediatorial practices are not considered violations of I Timothy 2:5, the answer will then be that Mary and the saints are dead. This is, of course, a *non sequitur*, as well as a denial of the reality that Jesus himself affirmed when he told the good thief, “Today you will be with me in paradise.”

If the good thief will simply be dead in paradise, Our Lord has a strange, one might say cruel, way of giving comfort. If the citation of I Timothy is sincere, then the question is what it means to say that Jesus is the unique or only mediator between God and men. If it means that he alone can pray for others to the Father, then those who still walk this earth should not do so. If it means that he alone can be God’s messenger to people, then those on earth should not do that either. The problem with this interpretation is that Jesus explicitly told people to go-between, or mediate, between the Father and other people by prayer as well as preaching and even healing. There must be a different understanding of this verse.

**The Meaning of Mary’s ‘Mediation’**

The Second Vatican Council provides one in its constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. This document includes a section on Mary and the Church that talks about the maternal and mediatorial role given to the Virgin and helps clarify what the Church means when she refers to mediation by Mary or other creatures:

*But Mary’s function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But the Blessed Virgin’s salutary influence on men originates not in any inner necessity but in the disposition of God.*

*It flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it. It does not hinder in any way the immediate union of the faithful with Christ but on the contrary fosters it.<sup>13</sup>*

Mary’s mediation draws not on any “inner necessity,” i.e. she is not “divine” as my friend seemed to think. Instead, she depends on the “disposition of God,” i.e. she is full of God’s grace given because God wishes to give it and not because he is under obligation to do so. The Council Fathers continue to drive home this point:

*No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the Priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source.<sup>14</sup>*

**We Are All Co-mediators of Grace**

Just as the New Testament designation of the Church as “a royal priesthood” (I Pet. 2:9, cf. Ex.19:5-6) does not take away from Christ’s own unique priesthood, so too with Mary. That she is referred to in the Church as a “Mediatrice” does not mean that Mary is a coequal counterpart to the Son, even when the term used is “Co-Mediatrice.” We are all co-mediators in Christ and even co-redeemers. St. Paul dares to rejoice in his sufferings “for your sake” because “in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is the Church” (Col. 1:24). As St. Paul’s suffering role is properly understood as part of “the manifold cooperation” in Christ’s unique redeeming mediation rather than, as a literal reading would have it, an addition, so too is Mary’s. In this way we can also account for Paul’s description of himself as a “fellow-worker” of God (I Cor. 3:9) and as a type of “father” to the Christians of Thessalonica (I Th. 2:11).

That Mary is referred to in popular piety as a “heavenly mother” does not mean she is somehow a divine counterpart to the heavenly Father, but that she is a mother in the same way that St. Paul describes himself as a mother “in travail until Christ be formed in” his “little children” (Gal. 4:13). An even better parallel is to Abraham who is said by St. Paul to be “our father in faith” (Romans 4:12) and depicted as continuing his role even after death—remember that Old Testament saints were said to be in “the bosom of Abraham” and Jesus himself approves of this idea when he tells of Lazarus and the Rich Man (Lk. 16:23).

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* [Mother of the Redeemer] focuses on this Mary-Abraham parallel, noting that not only did Mary, like Abraham, “in hope believing against hope” believe that she would bear

a chosen son, but that she also continued in her faith along the journey. To believe, says John Paul, is “to abandon oneself” to the truth of the word of the Living God, knowing and humbly recognizing ‘how unsearchable are his judgment and how inscrutable are his ways’ (Rom. 11:33).<sup>15</sup> Mary’s abandonment to the truth, her obedience in “the dim light of faith,” is what makes her, in the words of the liturgy of John Chrysostom, “higher than the Cherubim, more glorious than the Seraphim.”

### The Startling Mystery Of Christ In Us

**H**ans Urs von Balthasar puts it even more starkly than the liturgy: “[However], faith’s Yes, its limitless readiness for all that God may desire and require, means that in the context of the grace that empowers it (cf. Lk. 1:28), the finite creature can really be ‘co-extensive’ with God’s catholicity. Not in what it does, but in what it allows to be done.”<sup>16</sup> Such language is startling: that a human other than Christ might be higher than the heavenly host is one thing, but that she could be “co-extensive with God’s catholicity”? And yet, is it any different than St. Paul’s claim that “I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13)? St. Paul is not even so careful about the wording of “doing” versus “allowing to be done.” That he doesn’t have to be so careful is a result of the fact that St. Paul has in his sights only the vision of the one Christ, head and body.

As Karl Adam put it, “It is not I and you that pray, but the mystical Christ.”<sup>17</sup> Or as St Paul, put it when he warned the Colossians, Christians should be “holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God” (Col. 2:19). When we are in Christ we are knit together in such a way that to claim that you or I, or Mary, has done something is impossible without acknowledging both the Head, Christ, and the rest of the body. The Church has no better theology than that of the Three Musketeers—One for all, and all for one.

### Mary Does Not Take away From Christ

**M**ary’s mediation, seen in these lights, is clearly not in competition with Christ’s any more than St. Paul’s fatherhood or suffering or co-working with God is in competition with that of the Lord. Nor any more than the mediation of the Church or the co-operation that is demanded of all of us as creatures in response to Divine Grace. The great Protestant theologian Karl Barth correctly discerned Mary’s centrality in Catholic faith, which is why he rejected it:

*It is in the Marian doctrine and in the Marian cult that the heresy of the Roman Catholic Church is apparent—that heresy which enables us to understand all the rest.*

*The “Mother of God” of Roman Catholic dogma is, quite simply, the principle, prototype, and summing up of the human creature cooperating in its own salvation by making use of prevenient grace; as such, she is also the principle, prototype, and summing up of the Church. . . . Thus, that Church in which there is a cult of Mary must itself be understood as at the [First] Vatican Council; is of necessity that Church of man who, by virtue of grace, cooperates with grace.<sup>18</sup>*

If the work of God excludes any part for humans at all, even “by virtue of grace,” then of course Mary and the Church are not mediators. God’s activity is the only activity and we are, at best, puppets. But this rejection is rooted in a rejection more ominous, for as Yves Congar pointed out, for the Protestant Reformers like Luther who rejected human cooperation with the divine, also rejected Christ’s humanity as the instrument of salvation.

Luther’s theology moved steadily toward what Congar calls a “monoenergism” in which Christ is nothing more than “divine activity using human nature as no more than a kind of garment.”<sup>19</sup> The denial of Mary’s mediation or of the Church’s mediation is thus rooted in a practical denial of the reality and importance of the incarnation. That Luther himself kept a personal Marian piety alive does not mean much since his mature theology left no room for it as anything other than a personal affectation.

### Distraction?

**I**t is fairly easy to see why the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council could say that “Mary, in a way, unites in her person and re-echoes the most important doctrines of the faith.”<sup>20</sup> Mistakes about Mary are mistakes relating to the nature of man, the nature of the Church, and even the nature of the Son. As a Catholic, Cardinal Newman preached on this, declaring that “the glories of Mary are for the sake of Jesus; and that we praise and bless her as the first of creatures, that we may duly confess him as our sole Creator.”<sup>21</sup>

He went on to turn this claim around, writing that “The Church and Satan agreed together in this, that Son and Mother went together; and the experience of three centuries has confirmed their testimony; for Catholics who have honoured the Mother, still worship the Son, while Protestants, who now have ceased to confess the Son, began then by scoffing at the Mother.”<sup>22</sup> But it is important to note that even Newman, who as a Catholic constantly defended the Marian dogmas, was repelled by much of the devotion, declaring in the *Apologia* with a certain understatement that certain devotional writings, such as those of St. Alphonsus Liguori, were “suitable for Italy, but they are not suitable for England.”<sup>23</sup>

### A Need For Correct Understanding and Catechesis

For Newman as for the Fathers of the Church, Mary was always seen in the light of her Son, but in the twentieth-century there was some worry even on the part of Catholics that Marian devotion was becoming too separated from its Christological center. Thus, *Lumen Gentium* also includes a warning that theologians and preachers should “be careful to refrain as much from all false exaggeration as from too summary an attitude in considering the special dignity of the Mother of God.” It goes on to make clear that in preaching about her “duties and privileges which always refer to Christ” said preachers should “carefully refrain from whatever might by word or deed lead the separated brethren or any others whatsoever into error about the true doctrine of the Church.”<sup>24</sup>

Catholic theologians and preachers have not always been as careful as they should have been, a fact that Newman showed in a series of quotations from spiritual authorities of various periods of time condemning the misuse of the cult of Mary, a list including St. Peter Canisius, St. Epiphanius, and St. Anselm.<sup>25</sup>

### Excesses And Exaggerations

Is it any wonder that a convert who has stared down the issues of Scripture and Tradition as well as the Mediation of Christ might still feel a hesitation when confronted with the garishness of Marian devotion past and present? Especially if he remembers that a fairly well-educated adult (at least by contemporary standards) could infer from the devotions he witnessed that Mary is divine. The truth is that the Catholic should not feel bad about admitting to a Protestant that devotional and theological excesses have occurred in the history of the devotion to Mary.

These excesses have indeed made Mary a distraction from her Son, or perhaps more often in the modern period, a distraction from the Holy Spirit. Yves Congar quotes St. Bernardino of Siena as writing: “All grace that is communicated to this world comes to us by a threefold movement. It is dispensed according to a very perfect order from God in Christ, from Christ in the Virgin and from the Virgin in us.” Not from the Holy Spirit? Well, in Bernardino’s view, the Holy Spirit is a sort of traveling secretary for Our Lady, for Bernardino adds that the Virgin possesses a “certain jurisdiction or authority over the temporal procession of the Holy Spirit, to such an extent that no creature has ever received the grace of any virtue from God except through a dispensation of the Virgin herself.” To which Congar adds simply and, no doubt, with much embarrassment, “This is clearly unacceptable.”<sup>26</sup>

But what is to be made of this kind of bad theologizing or bad devotional writing? Pope Paul VI, in his apostolic exhortation on Marian devotion, proclaimed quite simply, “The Church’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin is an intrinsic element of Christian worship.”<sup>27</sup> This proclamation is not in itself an exaggeration of Mary’s role, for it is a fulfillment of Mary’s own prophecy that “All generations will call me blessed” (Lk. 1:48).

The Church cannot cease to ponder the marvel of God’s grace in the woman addressed by Gabriel as “Full of Grace,” nor can the Church cease to call her blessed, for if she is not blessed, then, as Newman pointed out, neither is her Son. The prospective convert who thinks he can simply ignore Mary is put at a loss. But the Church has several things to say and do regarding this problem.

### Saints Are Not Infallible

First, the Church is always clear that the saints, no matter how great, are not always right in their theology. The fact that Catholic teaching is defined and regulated by the Magisterium — The Bishop of Rome and the Bishops surrounding him in the Apostolic College — is a fact that many outsiders (and today, all too many insiders) take as the Church’s tyranny over the believer. The truth, writes Karl Adam, is in fact the opposite:

*[Consequently] such a conception of authority does not paralyze and petrify the believer, but enfranchise him, directing his gaze, directing his gaze to Christ and Christ alone. No human authority, no extraneous personality, may stand between Christ and the believing subject. Divine truth, grace and life must flow into the soul directly from Christ himself. Therefore—however paradoxical it may seem—the authority of the Church secures the liberty of the individual Christian, by its impersonal and extra-personal character. It protects that liberty from the spiritual domination and claims to mediatorship of alleged leading personalities, and sets Christ and the believer in direct contact with each other.*<sup>28</sup>

Adam adds that this is no mere boast, for the Church “has not hesitated to override even her greatest sons, an Origen, an Augustine, yes, in some points even a Thomas Aquinas.”<sup>29</sup> If she can override Augustine and Aquinas, how much more easily St. Bernardino?

I say this not to make light of St. Bernardino, but to point out the fact that the Church’s authority is not located in charismatic individuals, Marian apparitions, or even great theologians, but in Christ himself, meaning that the individual who worries about a particular devotion is simply advised to refrain from it.

### Distinguishing Dogma And Private Devotion

Even the great personal revelations that have been approved by the Church are binding only on those to whom they have been received. For in the Church's thinking, an "approved" revelation is only one that the Church has determined is congruent with the Church's dogma, not one that can bind the faith or the devotional life of the individual believer, much less change the faith. In Balthasar's phrase, "Dogma is there [only] to prevent faith veering to right or to the left of the *mysterium*, to keep it docile to the Lord's fashioning of life and faith."<sup>30</sup>

A second reminder that the Church gives is in the kinds of devotion that are fitting. The Church always goes back to the principle of differentiation in the praise it gives to created beings, no matter how glorious, and that it renders to their creator. As *Lumen Gentium* puts it, "This cult, for all its uniqueness, differs essentially from the cult of adoration, which is offered equally to the Incarnate Word and to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and it is most favorable to it."<sup>31</sup>

### Latria, Dulia and Hyperdulia

The traditional teaching of the Church has used the Latin terms *latria*, *dulia*, and *hyperdulia* to designate the different types of honor given to God and creatures respectively. *Latria* is defined as the honor that belongs to God alone—the cult of adoration spoken of in the passage above. *Dulia* is the veneration given to created saints and angels and is, says the Baltimore Catechism, "an act of respect and honor of an entirely different nature." *Hyperdulia* is what is given to the Blessed Virgin: it is a "veneration that surpasses that of the angels and saints."<sup>32</sup> David Gustafson, in the book length debate with Dwight Longenecker that I mentioned earlier, makes a common objection to this scheme when he says that some people lack a "refined religious sensibility":

*Low-grade veneration may be the highest spiritual plane they ever achieve, even when they intend to worship God. If dulia is the best that they personally have to offer, then when they offer dulia to Mary, they are giving her the best they have to offer, and they are saving nothing special for God. On the other end of the human spectrum—say, a very religious Marian devotee—is this person's Marian hyperdulia really subjectively different, in his actual experience, from the latria he offers God?*<sup>33</sup>

There are, of course, several problems with Gustafson's worries. First, all of this business about trying to figure out whether people really get the right levels of devotion to God, saints, and angels is simply impossible. We are not given the ability, and unless we are given particular

pastoral responsibilities over others, we are commanded not to attempt to read and evaluate others' souls. St. Paul, remember, reminds us that he does not even judge himself. Second, Gustafson acknowledges later in the same discussion that he himself gets confused about priorities and even acknowledges the fact that it is possible to be idolatrous with regard to finances, love of one's wife or children, and even in the ostensible worship of God.<sup>34</sup>

This is where the principle known in Latin as *abusus non tollit usum* [abuse does not eliminate proper use] must be brought in. In colloquial English we know it as "Don't throw out the baby with the bathwater." Critics who reject Marian devotion on the basis that it might be malformed or based upon a substandard theology must in the end reject all forms of devotion, including love of wife and children and ultimately, God, because, done by fallible humans, they are all liable to lapse into idolatry of one sort or another. It's not clear on such a principle that one could even keep a dog (though most likely a cat).

### What Is Permitted Is Not Necessarily What Is Prescribed

Leaving aside this broader point, we must return again to what we said before. The Church does not require any of the extra-liturgical forms of piety that seem to worry other Christians so. The popular Catholic writer and radio personality Mark Shea often explains it in this fashion: because the Church permits it does not mean she prescribes it. That she does not immediately squash the practices which are somewhat ambiguous is evidence not of her laxity, but of her commitment to the wisdom enjoined by another "non-Christian," Gamaliel, when he told the Jewish council regarding Jesus' disciples, ". . . let them alone; for if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail; but if it is of God you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God" (Acts 5:38-39).

Even with the danger of heathenism, the Church has always been careful to sift carefully through the wisdom of the world in order to discern which parts of it really count as wisdom. This is not an activity that can be done in an afternoon. But it is an activity at which the Church has been much more successful than most would admit:

*Protestantism has been so bothered by the relation of Catholicism to heathenism—that the Church has made the sign of the cross on some heathen relics and confirmed some heathen thoughts about the hidden God—that the 'reformed' churches have not really bothered to look at what Catholicism received as flowers and what it tread underfoot as poisonous snakes.*<sup>35</sup>

**Conclusion**

I think it sufficiently clear that the last hurdle of the potential convert who has discovered Mary is not so much intellectual as it is visceral. If one has understood properly the kind of justification one needs for Marian belief, seen that its main claims are coherent and not detrimental to belief in her Son, but rather a re-echoing of belief about Christ, then one understands well Chesterton’s third phase of conversion. I described that phase as running like hell to get out of a trap. What makes the trap so powerful, says Chesterton, is that “the trap is the truth” and the potential convert has found that he “himself has made his way towards the trap of truth, and not the trap that has run after the man.”<sup>36</sup> When the trap is the truth and this is acknowledged, then one must resort to worries about the extremes of devotion and particular forms of Marian piety that seem distasteful. “I may say,” said Chesterton, “that I for one was never less troubled by doubts than in the last phase, when I was troubled by fears.”<sup>37</sup>

It is at this point that love of the truth must cast out fear. At this point, the potential convert must begin to honor Mary in the best way that he can, if he is to move forward. If all men should call her blessed, then so should I, he says. If such pillars of sanity and sanctity as John Paul II, Chesterton, Newman, Francis de Sales, Thomas Aquinas, Anselm, Bede, Augustine, Chrysostom, and all the great fathers of the Church going back into the dawn of the Church could love her as a mother and ask for her to pray with them as children do, then who am I, says he, to consider it an unworthy or a useless or a dangerous activity.

That is what I did. I suppose I am not the only convert who physically cringed, perhaps expecting lightning, the first time I asked Mary for her prayers. Nor, I doubt, am I the only one who asked in a somewhat cringing tone that I be forgiven if such behavior were not all right with her son, even though I knew in an intellectual sense that all honor and veneration of saints is ultimately directed to God himself. I persevered, and what seemed unnatural at the time has become more natural.

Better yet, for me, as Richard John Neuhaus said of himself, “Marian devotion has become an exciting and never-ending discovery of deeper dimensions of Christian fidelity.”<sup>38</sup> Those awkward steps of devotion seemed so final—I’m really becoming Catholic—but looking back now they seem to me like the steps of a child learning to walk. And they were necessary for me to begin that never-ending discovery. I’m glad I did.<sup>39</sup>

- 1 G. K. Chesterton, *The Catholic Church and Conversion in Collected Works III* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990), 89.
- 2 *Ibid.* 91.
- 3 *Ibid.* 92.
- 4 Philip Boyce, *Mary: The Virgin Mary in the Life and Writings of John Henry Newman* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 18; John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, 195.
- 5 John Henry Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church*, 2 vols. (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), II: 128-30.
- 6 Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 20.
- 7 Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 10.
- 8 Chesterton, *Why I Am a Catholic in Collected Works III*, 131.
- 9 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I: I.VII.1. For a thorough yet accessible treatment of the Protestant Reformers’ beliefs about Scripture see Robert Fastiggi, “What did the Protestant Reformers Teach about Sola Scriptura?” in Robert Sungenis, ed., *Not By Scripture Alone: A Catholic Critique of the Protestant Doctrine of Sola Scriptura* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Queenship Publishing, 1997): 325-68.
- 10 Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum* 9.
- 11 Catechism of the Catholic Church 113.
- 12 Dwight Longenecker and David Gustafson, *Mary: A Catholic-Evangelical Debate* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2003).
- 13 Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium* 60.
- 14 *Ibid.* 62.
- 15 John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater* 14.
- 16 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *In the Fullness of Faith: On the Centrality of the Distinctively Catholic*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 81.
- 17 Karl Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, trans. Justin McCann (New York: Doubleday, 1954), 135.
- 18 Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik* (1938), vol. 1, 2: 157 and 160, quoted in Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, trans. Michael Mason (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999), 316.
- 19 Yves Congar, *Christ, Our Lady, and the Church*, trans. Henry St. John (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1957), 30.
- 20 *Lumen Gentium* 65.
- 21 John Henry Newman, *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations* (Longmans, Green, 1891; repr. Roman Catholic Books), 344.
- 22 *Ibid.* 348. This analysis surely fits what is known as mainline or even old-line Protestantism. It is unclear what Newman would make of the continuing liveliness of the Evangelical and Pentecostal forms of Protestantism. He might note that such a careful observer as Mark Noll still labels Evangelical piety “nearly gnostic,” in “The Evangelical Mind Today,” *First Things* 146 (October 2004): 34-39, at 34.
- 23 *Apologia*, 176-7.
- 24 *Lumen Gentium* 67.
- 25 John Henry Newman, *Certain Difficulties felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching*, 2 vols. (Montreal: D. J. Sadlier and Co., 1907), II: 107-13.
- 26 Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 163-4. Congar takes these passages from Leo XIII, *Encyclical lucunda semper* (1894) in *AAS* 27 (1894-95), 179.
- 27 Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Marialis Cultus* (1974) in *Mary in the Church: A Selection of Teaching Documents* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003): 556.
- 28 Adam, *Spirit of Catholicism*, 22.
- 29 *Ibid.* 23.
- 30 Balthasar, *Fullness of Faith*, 56.
- 31 *Lumen Gentium* 66.
- 32 John A. O’Brien, ed., *Understanding the Catholic Faith: An Official Edition of the Revised Baltimore Catechism No. 3* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1954), 150 (Question 214).
- 33 Longenecker and Gustafson, *Mary*, 165.
- 34 *Ibid.* 166.
- 35 Sigrid Undset, “Catholic Propaganda,” in Sigrid Undset: *On Saints and Sinners*, ed. Deal Hudson (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), 255.
- 36 Chesterton, *Catholic Church and Conversion*, 92.
- 37 *Ibid.* 93.
- 38 Richard John Neuhaus, foreword of Longenecker and Gustafson, *Mary*, 12.
- 39 A version of this essay was given as a talk at the Church of St. Helena, Minneapolis, Minnesota (USA) on October 24, 2004.

## MARY, THE NEW EVE

What is the great rudimental teaching of Antiquity from its earliest date concerning her? By "rudimental teaching" I mean the prima facie view of her person and office, the broad outline laid down of her, the aspect under which she comes to us, in the writings of the Fathers. She is the Second Eve. Now let us consider what this implies. Eve had a definite, essential position in the First Covenant... Yet though Eve was not the head of the race, still, even as regards the race, she had a place of her own; for Adam... entitled her "the Mother of all the living", a name surely expressive, not of a fact only, but of a dignity; but further, as she thus had her own general relation to the human race, so again had she her own special place as regards its trial and its fall in Adam. In those primeval events, Eve had an integral share... She co-operated, not as an irresponsible instrument, but intimately and personally in the sin; she brought it about.

As the history stands, she was a *sine-qua-non*, a positive, active, cause of it. And she had her share in its punishment; in the sentence pronounced on her, she was recognised as a real agent in the temptation and its issue, and she suffered accordingly. In that awful transaction there were three parties concerned - the serpent, the woman, and the man; and at the time of their sentence, an event was announced for the future, in which the three same parties were to meet again, the serpent, the woman, and the man; but it was to be a second Adam and a second Eve, and the new Eve was to be the mother of the new Adam. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." The Seed of the woman is the Word Incarnate, and the Woman, whose seed or son He is, is His mother Mary. This interpretation, and the parallelism it involves, seem to me undeniable; but at all events (and this is my point) the parallelism is the doctrine of the Fathers, from the earliest times; and, this being established, we are able, by the position and office of Eve in our fall, to determine the position and office of Mary in our restoration.

First, then, St. Justin Martyr (A.D. 120-165), St. Irenaeus (120-200), and Tertullian (160-240). Of these Tertian represents Africa and Rome; St. Justin represents Palestine; and St. Irenaeus Asia Minor and Gaul;-or rather he represents St. John the Evangelist, for he had been taught by the Martyr St. Polycarp, who was the intimate associate as of St. John, so of the other Apostles. Now what is especially noticeable in these three writers, is, that they do not speak of the Blessed Virgin merely as the physical instrument of our Lord's taking flesh, but as an intelligent, responsible cause of it; her faith and obedience being accessories to the Incarnation, and gaining it as her reward. As Eve failed in these virtues, and brought on the fall of the race in Adam, so Mary by means of them had a part in its restoration.... they unanimously declare that she

was not a mere instrument in the Incarnation, such as David, or Judah, may be considered; ... she co-operated in our salvation not merely by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon her body, but by specific holy acts, the effect of the Holy Ghost within her soul; that, as Eve forfeited privileges by sin, so Mary earned privileges by the fruits of grace; that, as Eve was disobedient and unbelieving, so Mary was obedient and believing; that, as Eve was a cause of ruin to all, Mary was a cause of salvation to all; that as Eve made room for Adam's fall, so Mary made room for our Lord's reparation of it; and thus, whereas the free gift was not as the offence, but much greater, it follows that, as Eve co-operated in effecting a great evil, Mary co-operated in effecting a much greater good.

And, besides the run of the argument, which reminds the reader of St. Paul's antithetical sentences in tracing the analogy between Adam's work and our Lord's work, it is well to observe the particular words under which the Blessed Virgin's office is described. Tertullian says that Mary "blotted out" Eve's fault, and "brought back the human race, to salvation"; and St. Irenaeus says that "by obedience she was the cause or occasion" (whatever was the original Greek word) "of salvation to herself and the whole human race"; that by her the human race is saved; that by her Eve's complication is disentangled; and that she is Eve's Advocate, or friend in need. It is supposed by critics, Protestant as well as Catholic, that the Greek word for Advocate in the original was *Paraclete*; it should be borne in mind, then, when we are accused of giving Our Lady the titles and offices of her Son, that St. Irenaeus bestows on her the special Name and Office proper to the Holy Ghost.

So much as to the nature of this triple testimony; now as to the worth of it. For a moment put aside St. Irenaeus, and put together St. Justin in the East with Tertullian in the West. I think I may assume that the doctrine of these two Fathers about the Blessed Virgin was the received doctrine of their own respective times and places; for writers after all are but witnesses of facts and beliefs... Moreover, the coincidence of doctrine which they exhibit, and again, the antithetical completeness of it, show that they themselves did not originate it. The next question is, Who did? For from one definite organ or source, place or person, it must have come. Then we must inquire, what length of time would it take for such a doctrine to have extended, and to be received, in the second century over so wide an area; that is, to be received before the year 200 in Palestine, Africa, and Rome. Can we refer the common source of these local traditions to a date later than that of the Apostles, St. John dying within thirty or forty years of St. Justin's conversion and Tertullian's birth? ... Add to the concordant testimony of these two Fathers the evidence of St. Irenaeus, which is so close upon the School of St. John himself in Asia Minor. "A three-fold cord", as the wise man says, "is not quickly broken."

from A LETTER TO THE REV. E. B. PUSEY, D.D., ON HIS RECENT EIRENICON BY JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, D.D., OF THE ORATORY (Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866). pp.33-46.

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# The Challenge Of Science

*Simon Heans*

*In October of last year Faith Movement hosted a public meeting in London for all those interested in learning more about the thought of the movement. This article is a report of the meeting by the Anglican Vicar of St Barnabas, Beckenham in Kent, who attended. It was first published in the December 2004 issue of "New Directions", an orthodox Anglican monthly magazine with close ties to "Forward in Faith". Its mission statement is "Serving Evangelicals and Catholics seeking to renew the Church in the historic faith".*

*"The painful development of the "High Church" from the heart-searching debate which Cardinal Newman initiated, has not been in the name of Unity or of Ecumenism, but in the name of the rediscovery or the fuller discovery of the truth of Christ."*

## Science A Gateway to God

**C**ast your mind back to your school days. Was there a teacher who made a special impression on you? At John Fisher School, Purley, in the 70s and 80s there was just such an influential figure. Fr Roger Nesbitt was a chemistry master there in that period and was responsible for a number of vocations to the priesthood. He and one of his former pupils, Fr Stephen Dingley, a PhD in Astronomy, both spoke at the October conference, Catholicism and the Challenge of Science, organised by Faith Movement, which I attended on behalf of *New Directions*.

Fr Stephen told us a story about conducting a retreat for teenage confirmation candidates. 'Surely,' one of them said, 'you wanted to become a priest before you became a scientist.' The youth was of course expressing the widely held belief that, if not actually incompatible, religion and science don't mix. 'No, no, quite the contrary,' replied Fr Stephen, 'my vocation to the priesthood grew out of my scientific studies.' The conference talks were about elucidating that response, to explaining how 'science is at the threshold of God.'

Fr Hugh McKenzie, a computer scientist by training, began proceedings by addressing the question 'Why Faith Movement?' He spoke of the prestige of science in our culture and the corresponding lack of respect for religion ('If it's a science programme it's a documentary, if the subject's politics there's a debate, but a religious programme, unless it's hymns for granny, will have people talking about their feelings'). He argued that during the last century, agnosticism 'evangelised the Church' – he did not mean the C. of E! - and that we need a 'new synthesis of faith and reason' which takes seriously the current dominance of scientific reason. He also gave us a memorable definition of science: 'thinking things after God thought of them first'. It was then left to Frs Dingley and Nesbitt to tell us how faith understands God's thoughts.

## Science Discovers A Principle of Unity

**F**r Dingley concentrated on how the physical universe shows evidence of God's thought. He was at pains to show how science has uncovered 'a cosmos, not a chaos'. Picking his way expertly through three centuries of scientific history, from Newton on gravity (the force that causes apples to fall and planets to stay in orbit is the same), through electricity and magnetism (aspects of a single reality), to the present search for a Grand Unified Theory, he argued that the coherence of the physical universe progressively uncovered by science points to a 'unity principle' at its heart.

He then went on to tell us about the history of the universe from the huge explosion of matter and energy (the Big Bang) through the formation of stars and then rocky planets on which complex chemicals were produced, leading to the synthesis of the first molecules of life and the emergence of the plant and animal kingdoms. The fact that we are dealing here with 'a line of development and not a mess' points to 'a Designer who desires development'.

**The Master Key**

Fr Nesbitt introduced us to 'God's Master Key', Jesus Christ. The purpose of his talk was to show us that the 'Unity-Law of Control and Direction' exhibited in creation applies also to the Incarnation thereby linking, synthesizing, faith and reason. But of course before the Incarnation there must be man.

The evolution of man is built into the order and development of the universe as its purpose, for with man creation passes to a higher order of being. Because of his large brain - and Fr Nesbitt's computer images showed clearly just how much larger it is compared with even the chimpanzee's - unlike his fellow creatures, man does not receive his control or direction from the physical environment.

He is part matter but he is also spirit, beyond matter. (The account of human uniqueness given by Faith offers a fascinating approach to the problem of 'ensoulment'.) He will therefore only find real control and direction in God himself, who is pure and infinite Spirit. God is the true environment of man. As animals find their full meaning and happiness in their material environment of food, water, the sun's warmth etc, so man finds his full meaning and happiness only in God. 'Grace is the sunshine of the soul', said Fr Nesbitt.

On this account, the Incarnation follows from Creation, for how else does God control and direct mankind who is both spirit and body. He pointed out the uniqueness of the messianic character of Israel's religion in whose sacred liturgy and moral teaching humanity is prepared to receive Christ who is 'Lord of history and the human heart'. He then went on to speak of the sacramental system - especially the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist - and the teaching of the Church as part of the continuing Unity-Law in its provision for mankind until the Law reaches its final perfection with the Second Coming.

**New movements**

Faith Movement is one of the lesser known 'new movements' in the Catholic Church. The editor of its bi-monthly magazine, Fr Patrick Burke, said with a rueful smile that it has a reputation for holding 'odd views about evolution'. But I hope I have said enough to show that this is not kooky fundamentalism RC style.

In the Faith pamphlet Can we be sure God exists? (which concludes 'modern science has proved that God exists'!) Richard Dawkins is described as 'our favourite atheist', and quoted in support of the view that natural selection is not a random process but an instance of the Unity-Law of Control and Direction.

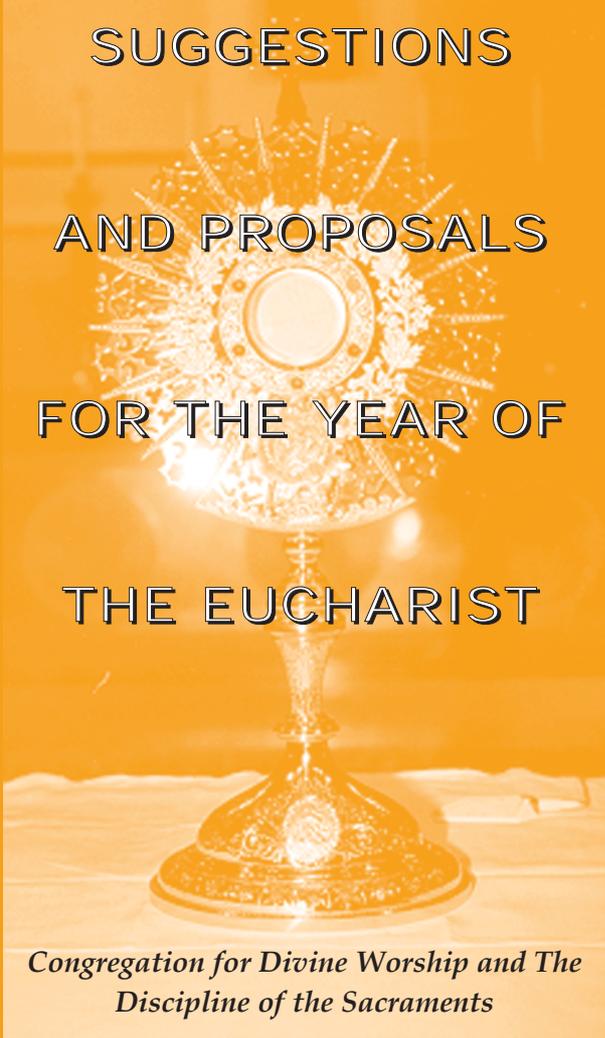
The editorial in the current issue of Faith magazine makes a helpful distinction between the orthodox doctrine of creation for which natural selection poses no difficulty - as long as we believe Dawkins when he says evolution is not 'a theory of chance' - and the creationism advocated by the likes of Southern Baptists.

It suggests that the latter should more properly be called 'special-creationism', for what it really teaches is that every life-form is made by a special act of creation, and it counsels Christians not 'to present God's creative design as if he were grandad in the potting shed with components on a shelf, a workbench and a pencil behind his ear!'

Why should Anglican Catholics be interested in Faith? By way of an answer here are two quotations from the postscript to *Catholicism: A New Synthesis* by Fr Edward Holloway, its founder: 'the painful development of the "High Church" from the heart-searching debate which Cardinal Newman initiated, has not been in the name of Unity or of Ecumenism, but in the name of the rediscovery or the fuller discovery of the truth of Christ.'

Here is the second: 'the Anglican is well aware of that sheer chaos of doctrinal belief which is bringing his own communion to disintegration and public contempt.' The book was published in 1969.





**SUGGESTIONS  
AND PROPOSALS  
FOR THE YEAR OF  
THE EUCHARIST**

*Congregation for Divine Worship and The Discipline of the Sacraments*

The acceptance of the Holy Father's invitation is to do everything possible this year to cede to the Sunday Eucharistic celebration the central position that it ought to have in the parish, which is rightly called an "Eucharistic Community" (cf. SC, 42; *Mane nobiscum Domine*, 23; *Dies Domini*, 35-36; *Eucharisticum mysterium*, 26). Taking this into account, we suggest the following ideas:

- Should, establish a stable location for the various places used during the celebration (altar, ambo, presbytery) and for the Eucharist (tabernacle, adoration chapel) where necessary; obtain the various liturgical books; take care to guard the truth and beauty of the various signs (vestments, holy vessels, furnishings).

- ◆ Should increase or constitute liturgical groups in the parish. Look after the instituted ministers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, altar servers, Schola cantorum (choir) etc.

- ◆ Should dedicate singular attention to liturgical song, taking into account the indications of John Paul II in his recent document on Sacred Music.

- ◆ Should program various formative encounters during periods of the year - the Easter season and Lent - specializing in the Eucharist in Christian life and in the Church; a time that is especially adept for this, for both adults and children, is during the preparation for First Holy Communion.

- ◆ Should take up and teach the *Institutio generalis Missalis Romani* (cf. *Mane nobiscum Domine*, 17) and the *Praenotanda* of the *Ordo Lectionum Missae*; the *De sacra communione et de cultu mysterii eucharistici extra Missam*;

the recent Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* and the Instruction that followed *Redemptionis Sacramentum*.

- ◆ Should educate the faithful on how to "be in the church": what they should do when entering the church; genuflections and low bowings to the Blessed Sacrament; the atmosphere of recollection; indications to help them internally to participate in the Mass, especially during certain moments (the times of silence, personal prayer after communion) and teach them how to participate externally (the way of responding or interpreting the common parts). As regards communion under both species, we hold to the current norms (cf. SC, 55; IGMR, 281-287; *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 100-107).

- ◆ Should celebrate appropriately the anniversary of the dedication of the parish church.

- ◆ Should rediscover "one's own" parish church, making known the sense of that which is regularly seen in it: a guided reading about the altar, ambo, tabernacle, iconography, stained glass, entrance, etc. That which is visible in the church helps contemplate the invisible.

- ◆ Should promote Eucharistic worship - even offering practical approaches - and personal and communal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament (cf. *Mane nobiscum Domine*, 18): visits, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Eucharistic benediction, the Quarant'Ore, Eucharistic processions. Consider the convenience of prolonging Eucharistic adoration after the Mass of the Last Supper on Holy Thursday (cf. *Directory on popular piety*, 141)

- ◆ Should propose concrete initiatives for special occasions (nocturnal adoration)

- ◆ Should check the frequency and the dignity with which Communion is brought to the sick.

- ◆ Should teach the Church's discipline on Viaticum.

- ◆ Should spiritually accompany those who find themselves in irregular situations and, while not being able to receive Holy Communion, participate in the Holy Mass.

**letters to**   
**the editor**

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**THE CENTRALITY OF CHRIST**

*Dear Fr Editor,*

Having read Fr Stephen Boyle's article in the last edition of Faith on "The Centrality of Christ in the Plan of Creation", I feel something should be pointed out.

Whilst I found the article both engaging and thought provoking, I disliked the division between the Scotist and the Thomist thought on this matter. Clearly both schools of thought have different perspectives, however, surely a reconciliation is possible; a third way if you like.

If "God so loved the world that he sent his only son," then can we honestly say it was only because of our guilt, or that he was going to come anyway?

I am firmly in the Scotist camp in the sense that love was the overall motivation for the incarnation, but this is not to dismiss St Thomas' view. Could it not be maintained that his fullest revelation of creation was revealed precisely because he came to wipe away our sins?

If God is indeed "Alpha and Omega" he would have known that man and creation would fall in Adam and Eve. Thus, wishing to instill a greater relationship with man and creation he sent his son to reveal the very heights of creation by having Christ as the lamb "who takes away the sins of the world"?

*Yours faithfully,*

*Douglas Beard  
 Carters Lane*

*Epping Green  
 Essex*

**THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE IN  
 BRITAIN TODAY**

*Dear Fr Editor,*

The appointment of Ruth Kelly MP to the Cabinet is the best political news for a very long time, since, having described Keynes as her hero and having been spotted at the canonisation of Saint Josemaria Escriva, she stands in the same broad political tradition as does the overwhelming majority of Britain's middle and working classes, in marked contrast to the metropolitan political-media elite.

First, that tradition rejects that elite's logically inevitable marriage between the decadent social libertinism of the 1960s and the decadent economic libertinism of the 1980s, choosing instead to conserve such things as national self-government (including the United Kingdom as greater than the sum of its parts), local variation, historical consciousness, family life, religion, agriculture, small business, close-knit communities, law and order, civil liberties, academic standards, all forms of art, mass political participation within a constitutional framework, and respect for the sanctity of each individual human life from the point of fertilisation to the point of natural death.

Second, that tradition recognises that these are not conserved, but rather corroded to nought, by free market capitalism, the effects of which direct millions towards the equally corrosive Jacobinism, Marxism or anarchism. What is needed is the Welfare State, and the strong statutory protection of workers, consumers, communities and the environment, the former paid for by progressive taxation, the whole underwritten by full employment, and all these delivered

by the partnership between a strong Parliament and strong local government. The word for this is Socialism, at least in Britain, where that word was first ever used, to describe the radically orthodox Christian followers of Robert Owen, when Marx (whom all Magisterial condemnations of Socialism have in mind) was only nine years old.

Third, that tradition identifies liberal liberty, equality and fraternity as in fact inseparable from conservative nationhood, family and property. In that order, these six actually comprise a circle, so that one may begin at any point and simply follow one's way round: fraternity leads naturally to nationhood (a space in which to be unselfish), thence to the domestic nation in miniature, and thence to the property basis of a family's independence both from over-mighty commercial interests and from an over-mighty State, making property (as widely diffused as possible) the guarantor of liberty (the freedom to be virtuous, and to do everything not specifically prohibited), which leads naturally to equality (the means to liberty, and never to be confused with mechanical uniformity), and thence to fraternity (the means to equality).

Fourth, that tradition is the free world's alternative, both to the Whiggery well on the way to Jacobinism that is the unchallenged basis of both political meta-traditions in the United States, and to the Jacobinism and/or Marxism (however diluted) that is the basis of all major political traditions on the Continent, including those which, by defining themselves in Romantic terms against such ideologies, thereby accept them as paradigmatic. The history of the twentieth (as of every previous) century has wholly discredited the Whig, Jacobin or Marxist notion of inevitable historical progress. Our alternative and distinctive tradition,

conservative (and thus liberal) precisely by being Socialist and Socialist precisely in order to be conservative (and thus liberal), is shared with Canada, Australia and New Zealand. And our four nations are bound together, as are the four parts of the United Kingdom, by an institution which, because it embodies the conservative (and thus liberal) values, compels the Socialist means to conserving them.

Fifth, that tradition provides the means of binding to each other, to this country's predominant culture, and to the institutions of the British State such elements as Irish, Italian, Polish and Ukrainian Catholicism (largely achieved, not least in Northern Ireland); the black-majority churches; Cypriot Greek Orthodoxy; an Evangelical Protestantism not equating itself exclusively with American culture or politics; Orthodox, Hasidic and other forms of Judaism; Islam; and the metaphysical and ethical systems of South and East Asia; to name but a few. Ruth Kelly is a Northern Irish Catholic who sits in the Cabinet of the United Kingdom while all four of her children have unmistakably Gaelic-Irish names.

And sixth, the threat to all the above comes from the excessive, and historically aberrant, concentration of land ownership and of control of the media in very few hands, whether State or private. The denial of real property to hardworking families, and the difficulty of those who speak for them in gaining access to the media, have left those families powerless against the rise of the destructive double decadence.

These are the views and aspirations of the British people as a whole. The Conservative Party might have returned to them under Ann Widdecombe, and was beginning to do so under the remarkably successful Iain Duncan Smith, but chose not to when it chose to

remove him. The Liberal Democrats ought to be doing so under Charles Kennedy, but for some reason they are not. However, the promotion of Ruth Kelly, as the first of her apparently glittering generation to attain Cabinet rank, demonstrates that Labour is heading back in that direction, always sympathised with by Tony Blair, rather more in his sights now that the likes of Mandelson and Campbell have gone, and very much the position of Gordon Brown.

After Brown, Kelly? Here's hoping, and praying, and working. The "alternative", which now controls both Opposition parties and has long threatened to take control of Labour as well, is utter Marxism, with only the ending changed so that the bourgeoisie (and thus the most bourgeois of countries, which

is not Britain) wins. It is Marxist in its dialectical materialism. It is Leninist in its vanguard elitism. It is Trotskyist in its belief in the permanent revolution, and in its entryism and parasitism. And it is Stalinist in its view that Lenin's dictatorship of the victorious class must be created in a single super state, from which it is to be exported, including by force of arms, while vanguard elites in other countries owe allegiance to that super state rather than to their own countries.

*Yours faithfully,*

*David Lindsay  
Foxhills Crescent  
Lanchester  
County Durham*

## MARY'S PLACE IN THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION

**W**e know that He, before all creatures, proceeded from the Father by His power and will and by means of the Virgin became man, and by what way the disobedience arising from the serpent had its beginning, by that way also it might have its undoing. For Eve, being a virgin and undefiled, conceiving the word that was from the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death; but the Virgin Mary, taking faith and joy, when the Angel told her the good tidings that the Spirit of the Lord should come upon her and the power of the Highest overshadow her, and therefore the Holy One that was born of her was Son of God, answered, 'Be it to me according to Your word.'

*St. Justin Martyr  
Tryph. 100*

**G**od recovered His image and likeness which the devil had seized by a rival operation. For into Eve, as yet a virgin, had crept the word which was the framer of death. Equally into a virgin was to be introduced the Word of God which was the builder-up of life; so that which by that sex had gone into perdition, by the same sex might be brought back to salvation. Eve had believed the serpent; Mary believed Gabriel; the fault which the one committed by believing, the other has blotted out by believing.

*Tertullian  
De Carn. Christ. 17*

*sunday*   
by *sunday*

2ND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

02.01.05, Jn 1, 1-18

1. As if to reinforce the power and significance of the Incarnation, the gospel for today is the same as for the Day Mass of Christmas. John's Prologue forms a profound meditation on the person and pre-existence of Jesus. He is the Word made Flesh (Jn 1, 1), the life that was "the life of men" (Jn 1, 4), the one who gives us "power to become children of God" (Jn 1, 5). In great joy, John reveals the inner heart of the God made man he came to love so deeply. The majesty of Christmas is for every season.

2. Many commentators remark that John is dialoguing with Greek philosophy when he uses the familiar term, 'word' or 'logos' in this Prologue. But, it would be truer to say that he is fulfilling the deepest yearnings of Israel in speaking of Jesus as the personification of Wisdom. When the Word dwells or 'pitches his tent' among us (Jn 1, 14), the verb used recalls the overshadowing presence of God or 'shekinah' in the ancient Temple of Solomon. This is first century Jewish writing of the highest order, rich with allusions to the past history of Israel.

3. John's meditation on the Christ child, who was nevertheless pre-existent with God before all time, is a fitting beginning and end to the octave of Christmas. We have seen the innocent, helpless child in the manger and witnessed the joys and trials of his parents. Now we behold the only-begotten of the Father, "full of grace and truth" (Jn 1, 14), who bestows his fullness upon all who accept him. We need to be utterly clear, as John makes it clear, that

believing in Jesus means believing in God. It is all or nothing because no compromise is acceptable.

BAPTISM OF THE LORD: A

09.01.05, Mt 3, 13-17

1. "We should do all that righteousness demands" (Mt 3, 15). Though sinless, Jesus is determined to submit to John's baptism because he sees it as part of God's design and the last act preparatory to the Messianic era (Mt 3, 6). By accepting it he expresses his wish to satisfy the saving 'righteousness of God' that governs the whole plan of salvation. Matthew is probably thinking not only of the act of baptism but of the new 'righteousness' which, through Christ, is going to perfect and fulfill that of the old Law (cf. Mt 5, 17.20)

2. The Spirit of God descending (Mt 3, 16) is the same Spirit which hovered over the waters at the first creation (Gen 1, 2). Its appearing here marks the beginning of the new creation. It has two functions: firstly, it anoints Jesus for his Messianic mission, which the Spirit is to guide (Mt 4, 1; 12, 18.28). Secondly, according to the Patristic view, it sanctifies the water, preparing the way for Christian baptism. The dove (Mt 3, 16) echoes the new creation and era of peace after the Flood (Gen 8, 6ff), heralding the new dawn of grace.

3. The Baptism of the Lord is a feast suffused with light. Pope John-Paul has made it the first decade of his new Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary. This light is the joy of promise fulfilled from the Old Testament, and the dawn of the New Covenant preached by the One anointed from above by the Holy Spirit. Acknowledged by the Father, the Son shows forth the love of that Father for his creatures in himself. John the Baptist is willingly eclipsed by his cousin, and gives into him (Mt 3, 15). Could we as readily submit to the Saviour?

2ND IN ORDINARY TIME: A

16.01.05, Jn 1, 29-34

1. The witness of John the Baptist is a vital ingredient in the first chapter of John's gospel. It forms a link to the preceding Prologue, and paves the way for Jesus to be declared and acknowledged by men, having been acknowledged firstly by the Spirit of God (Jn 1, 32f). There is no account of the actual baptism in John, only this vital witness of the one called from the start to point out the Word made flesh, who has come to dwell among us (Jn 1, 6-7.14). John fades into the background as Jesus, the Word, takes over.

2. One of the most significant of John's symbols of Christ, the "Lamb" (Jn 1, 29) blends the idea of the vicarious suffering "Servant of God" (Is 53) who himself takes on the sins of men and offers himself as a lamb of expiation (Lv 14) with that of the Passover lamb (Ex 12, 1ff), whose ritual symbolizes Israel's redemption. The theme of the Lamb will be a key feature of Johannine writing, right up to the wedding feast of the Lamb in Revelation (Rev 5, 6ff).

3. The Lamb alone gains victory over the spiritual forces of darkness, which dominate the world through sin and enslave mankind under the dominion of the beast. Those who accept the Lamb are given victory over the beast and all his servants (Rev 14,1), and do not have to taste the second death (Rev 20, 13-15). They are the ones given power to become children of God (Jn 1, 5). The Baptist witnesses to the one who will gain the ultimate victory and draws the disciples to meet the Lamb without blemish, - Jesus, the Word made flesh (Jn 1, 14).

3RD ORDINARY TIME: A

23.01.05, Mt 4, 12-23

1. "...and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum" (Mt 4, 13). How this move must have cost

Mary. Her life and joy had been defined by the care and proximity of her Son - a vocation directly given her by the angel (Lk 2, 1ff). Perhaps it was for this moment, the end of those thirty hidden years, that Jesus had uttered those words in the Temple, "Did you not know I must be about my Father's business?" (Lk 2, 49). Perhaps Mary made a sacrifice of her aloneness, willingly uniting it to the work of her Son.

2. As Nathaniel knew so well (Jn 1, 46), Nazareth was an isolated and obscure backwater. By contrast, Capernaum was a thriving centre on the shores of Lake Galilee, bordering the Tetrarchy of Philip, Herod's brother. As a border town, it would have housed a garrison and a customs house - hated signs of Roman oppression. We learn later in the gospels that it also boasted a beautiful, newly built synagogue (Lk 7, 5). Peter and Andrew, James and John were all from Capernaum (Mt 4, 18-21). Matthew also worked there, but as a hated and ostracised tax collector.

3. There is a sense of real joy about the bursting forth of Jesus upon the world, as he begins his public ministry. Matthew is at pains to state twice that the first four disciples followed his call "at once" (Mt 4, 20.22), giving us a taste of the irresistible attractiveness of this new Rabbi in town. The chord struck in their hearts and souls that day would develop into a majestic symphony during the next three years, and on into the Apostolic era. The Church was formed by the generous response of our forefathers, as it still is today.

**4TH IN ORDINARY TIME: A**  
*30.01.05, Mt 5, 1-12*

1. This extract begins the Sermon on the Mount, one of Jesus' most forceful discourses, spanning three chapters outlining the law of the New Covenant. Five main subjects are

dealt with: the spirit that should animate the 'children of the kingdom' (Mt 5, 3-48); the spirit in which they are to 'fulfill' the laws and practices of Judaism (Mt 6, 1-18); detachment from riches (Mt 6, 19-34); relations with one's neighbour (Mt 7, 1-12); the decisive act of choice that must be made, and the practical consequences that must be accepted, in order to enter the kingdom (Mt 7, 13-27).

2. None of Jesus' sayings here is what it seems. Deceptively simple, the spirit they require is one of total humility and conversion to God. The wisdom of this world, where the poor in spirit loose out, the gentle are crushed, those who mourn are ignored, and the pure in heart need to get real, is totally turned on its head in favour of the new justice of the Kingdom of Heaven. Look for no reward in this life (Mt 5, 12), but store up riches in heaven - riches that last. Radical conversion begins within and then goes outward: nothing else will do.

3. Christ's disciples are the successors of the prophets. Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Hosea all sought to call Israel back to fidelity to the Covenant established by God with Abraham, and ratified by Moses on Mount Sinai (Jer 31, 31; Is 5, 1ff; Gen 15, 1-11; Ex 34, 10). Religious infidelity, where Israel went after false gods, was matched by political infidelity, where the people trusted too much on foreign alliances, and social infidelity, where the claims of the poor went unheard as the rich got richer. The New Covenant etched on human hearts involves an equally radical call.

**5TH IN ORDINARY TIME: A**  
*06.02.05, Mt 5, 13-16*

1. "You must salt every oblation that you offer, and you must never fail to put on your oblation the salt of the Covenant with your God: to every offering you are to join an offering of

salt to Yahweh your God" (Lv 2, 13). Just as every Israelite faithful to God had to make an offering of salt to God in order to make their offering pleasing to the Lord, so the children of the New Covenant in Jesus must be the salt that renders lives and actions pleasing to God and acceptable for the kingdom of heaven.

2. The salt of the earth, which is each one of us, makes the earth pleasing and acceptable to God as an offering of the New Covenant. No longer first fruits or some other produce, the whole world is to be offered back to God in Christ and made acceptable to Him through the good lives of Christians. The children of God will sanctify the world through their obedience to the New Law, which is no less than the person and teachings of God himself, made known in Jesus. The Law is taken up in the life of the Spirit.

3. The whole point of these lines of Our Lord is that our good works should shine in the sight of men (Mt 5, 16). Salt delights the sense of taste, and the eye is made to receive light from the world outside it. Just so, our lives and actions must bring savour and insight to the troubled lives of all peoples. In giving praise to our Father in heaven, they will have been led by our example to the true source of light, who alone can bring abiding savour to their lives on earth. The saints do this supremely.

**FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT: A**  
*13.02.05, Mt 4, 1-11*

1. That these diabolical suggestions were actually made is quite compatible with Christ's sinlessness. Jesus was faced with the idea of being a material and political Messiah with its accompanying human privileges of wealth, glory and power. Instead, he chose utter dependence on God, humility, obedience to God's will (cf. Mt 16, 21-23; 26, 36-46; Heb 5, 7-9; 12,2). Since Jesus was

lead out into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit, the temptation was willed by God. It is the preparation of the Christ for his public ministry, mindful that the principal battle Jesus will fight will be against Satan.

2. "Angels appeared and looked after him" (Mt 4, 11). Jesus showed how human nature can stand up to the devil and his evil suggestions, but the battle was wearying and left him drained of all his strength. In the moment of his victory, Jesus experiences the profound frailty of a spiritual/material nature pitted against a merciless spiritual power. God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our strength, so angels guarded the exhausted Jesus. Such angels easily overcome the ancient enemy, as they adore the one whom they protect. "Holy Michael, defend us in the day of battle..".

3. "He stayed there with Yahweh for forty days and forty nights, eating and drinking nothing. He inscribed on the tablets the words of the Covenant - the Ten Words" (Ex 34, 28). Jesus is the new Moses being prepared by God to announce the Decalogue of the New Covenant, established by his own life, death and resurrection. The Beatitudes (Mt 5, 1-12) will fulfill all that was given through Moses in the Ten Commandments. The 'thou shalt not' of the Old Law (Ex 20, 1-17) will be completed by the rich blessings that will attend those who herald the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5, 1-12).

**2ND SUNDAY OF LENT: A**

*20.02.05, Mt 17, 1-9*

1. "And when they raised their eyes they saw no-one but only Jesus" (Mt17, 8). Many would say that seeing Jesus face to face would be more than compensation for coming down from the mountain of Transfiguration. What more could we want than to be in the close company of the Son of Man? But Jesus standing there among the chosen disciples does not lessen the need to

have faith. Soon, people would behold this same Christ - Truth Incarnate- and spit in his face (Mt 27, 30). We must watch ourselves lest we do the same to our neighbour.

2. Respectively, Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets (Mt 17, 4). As once they were privileged at Sinai with God's revelation (Ex 33, 20ff; 1Kings 19, 9-13), so now they are made witnesses to the anticipated revelation of the Son of Man (cf. Mt 24, 30). They do homage to the founder of the new covenant (cf. Mt 5, 17; Lk 22, 20). Freely talking with the one transfigured, Moses and Elijah are shown on familiar terms with the Messiah whom they saw far ahead in the distance and yet longed to see face to face (cf. Heb 11).

3. Peter and his companions are utterly overwhelmed by what they see (Mt 17, 4). This moment stays with Peter throughout his life, giving him the strength of the Saviour to confirm the brethren in the faith preached by the apostles (2Pet1, 17-18). But first must come a time of desolation and betrayal at the trial of Jesus (Mt 26, 69-75) before the leader of the apostles can begin to be remade in the true likeness of the Master whom he beheld transfigured on Mount Tabor. Like Peter, we must allow the trials of life to purify us.

**3RD SUNDAY OF LENT: A**

*27.02.05, Jn 4, 5-42*

1. "He told me everything I have ever done" (Jn 4, 39). As the Church prepares to baptise catechumens and receive candidates into full communion with the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil, the text of the conversion of the Samaritan Woman is put before us so that all may be encouraged to surrender everything to Christ in a new and radical conversion of heart back to God. The power of this account (only found in John's gospel) lies in the fact that the sinfulness of the woman

becomes the moment of conversion for the whole town of Sychar.

2. The woman drew water at midday (Jn 4, 6) because she had a promiscuous reputation in the town, as one who had had at least five husbands (Jn 4, 18). No other woman would permit her into their company when they all drew water at the usual morning hour. She was ostracised and marginalised. Yet the very reason that caused her most shame - her moral laxity- became the precise that brought the whole town running towards Jesus (Jn 4, 40). Rarely was Our Lord so elated and joyful as at this conversion (Jn 4, 35).

3. Ever since the ancestors of the Samaritans were transported into the territory vacated by the lost tribes of Israel around 720BC, Jews and Samaritans had loathed each other. The Samaritans copied the worship of their neighbours, building a rival Temple on Mount Gerazim. But they were not of the Chosen People, so their attempts were derided by both Judaeans around Jerusalem and the Jews of Galilee. Thus, with great power does Jesus reveal that "true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (Jn 4, 23). Reconciliation between peoples is a key fruit of Our Lord's labours.





### THE VIOLENCE OF LOVE

by Oscar Romero, Orbis Books,  
distributed by Alban Books, 219pp,  
£9.99

Twenty-five years after his death, Archbishop Oscar Romero remains a deeply controversial and troubling figure. To some, his outspoken advocacy of the poor of Latin America was a voice of true prophecy, and his death at the hands of Right-wing assassins in 1980 was an authentic act of martyrdom, demanding immediate canonization. Indeed, a part of his vestments now lies in a reliquary in the Catholic Church at Canterbury, next to the relics of that equally outspoken medieval Churchman, St Thomas Becket. On the other hand, some find in his writings shades of those 'deviations, or risks of deviations, damaging to faith and to Christian living', condemned by Cardinal Ratzinger in the Instruction *Libertatis Nuntius* of 1984. They would also claim that his assassination lacks the traditional criterion for true martyrdom - *odium fidei* - hatred of the Faith.

The present book aims to present Romero in his own words, drawing principally on the homilies and addresses he gave during his turbulent episcopacy. The aim is a noble one, but fraught with dangers. In any work of this sort, a heavy burden lies on the editors, not to sift the evidence in favour of their own foregone conclusions. Moreover, Romero left behind him a vast body of writing - diaries, speeches, homilies, reports to the Vatican. Despite these challenges, however, this little book presents a portrait of Romero which contains something to

challenge everyone, whatever their prejudices. The archbishop would probably have been pleased.

It is clear from these pages, for instance, that Romero never ceased to preach that the only true liberation is liberation from sin. In a homily from 1977 he declared: 'We decry not only the injustices of the social order. We decry every sin that is night, that is darkness: drunkenness, gluttony, lust, adultery, abortion, everything that is the reign of iniquity and sin'. There are also beautiful and moving passages which speak of the archbishop's love of the Mass, and of Our Lady. In one extended passage, taken from a newspaper column he wrote for the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in 1977, he defends popular piety in terms that could well be applied in the Western world today: 'It would be unforgivable to destroy or belittle these lovely and pious expressions of our people merely because they do not fit more sophisticated theological criteria'. Reading these extracts, one is reminded of Romero's genuine religious devotion, which gave a solid foundation to his more controversial actions, and of the traditional formation he had received as a young priest, growing up in the pre-Conciliar era.

At other times, however, the reader is reminded that Romero was also very much a man of the 1960s and '70s: a Churchman of the era of Vatican II and the Medellin Conference, with all the joyful optimism of that period, and the over-zealous enthusiasm for change. Reading some of Romero's words reminds one uncomfortably of the 'radical' theology of the same period, when in every field of dogma it was simply assumed that traditions carried no weight, the old text-books could be torn up and novelty reigned. The Church and the world were both to be re-made from scratch, and there was little patience with those of a conservative tendency who

resisted the revolution. Indeed, it often seemed as if the only real enemies of the Church were those who had previously been its most loyal defenders. Certainly, in these extracts at least, Romero was more stinging in his criticisms of 'traditionalists' and 'capitalists' than he was of Marxists or Communists, more willing to question the good-will of conservative Christians of the past than probe the real motivations of the Church's atheistic enemies.

In short, this book is to be recommended as an introduction to Oscar Romero, if for no other reason than that it accurately conveys the ambiguities which surround him. It is full of short, sharp quotes which often echo the spirit of the Old Testament prophets, and might make good Lenten reading, for someone looking to be challenged. It will leave most readers full of admiration for the boldness and bravery of the man - but is unlikely to answer the question of whether the man was a saint.

Fr Richard Whinder  
Canterbury

### THE INSIDE JOB. A SPIRITUALITY OF TRUE SELF-ESTEEM

by Jim McManus CSSR, Redemptorist  
Publications, 149pp, £6.95

Me, Me, Me. Chapters one and two speak of self-esteem and the wounded self. Chapter three asks 'Who am I?'. Chapter four returns to self-esteem. Chapter five reflects on self-knowledge and self-acceptance. Even the narcissist might ask 'is this book too much about me?'. However, just as you should never judge a book by its cover, the chapter titles of this book do not give the full picture.

The foreword states that 'what this book presents is a new synthesis', an achievement that would quicken the pulse of any follower of Faith. Fr McManus

believes that there is a need for a new synthesis because psychology often ignores 'the possibility of a spiritual dimension to the self' and that, at times, spirituality rejects psychology as a distraction. The author sees the need to integrate the psychological and the spiritual if we are to truly understand ourselves in relation to God. Time will tell whether this book is recognised as having achieved a new synthesis or if it is more akin to a self-help manual. What is fair to say is that Fr McManus has put forward some ideas which are very interesting.

Chapter two treats the notion of the constructive word and the destructive word. Words can have a tremendous power. How we react to the spoken word can affect how we see ourselves and how we will then relate to others. Words that affirm and encourage, that guide and correct are constructive words. Words that reject and condemn, that unjustly criticise and falsely praise are destructive words. If we live in 'the house of the destructive word' then we have a false view of reality and of ourselves. A true self image will come by living in 'the house of the constructive word'. The most constructive word is the creative Word of God, a Word that is spoken in love, a Word that has created us and that gives us a positive self-image. Psalm 52 warns us of the danger of the destructive word while Dei Verbum n. 21 states the merits of the constructive word saying 'such is the force and power of the Word of God that it can serve the Church as her support and vigour, and the children of the Church as strength for their faith, food for the soul and a pure and lasting fount of spiritual life'. Each of us can recognise how we have allowed the positive and the negative words of others to affect us. More importantly, we have seen the tremendous power of the Word of God and the life that He gives.

There is much in Chapter six

entitled 'The Grace of Forgiveness' to command interest. Some of the advice given here is particularly pertinent in light of the trend in society not to forgive - a trend that makes no attempt to try and move on after facing tragedy. Chapter six also highlights an approach which lessened my appreciation of this text. In a chapter on forgiveness there is only fleeting reference made to the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. This deepened my conception that the author, in trying to provide an approachable book for the reader at large, has, in effect, diluted the strength of the Christian message. The interchanging of the denominations 'God' and 'Higher Power' jarred, the self-help exercises at the end of each chapter focus on self rather than on God and it is made clear that it is not the aim of the book to convert anyone to Christianity. This would have been a worthy aim when we know from the power of God's Word that we must go out to the whole world and proclaim the good news.

*Fr Paul Brooks  
Holy Family and Saint Ninian's  
Kirkintilloch*

THE VOICES OF MOREBATH  
*By Eamon Duffy, Yale University  
Press, 232pp*

Twenty five miles north of Exeter on the A396, lies the small village of Morebath. In the sixteenth century it had thirty-three families and one priest, Sir (as they were addressed at the time) Christopher Trychay. As Devon villages go, Morebath was fairly representative but in Sir Christopher it possessed a compulsive and long-lived chronicler.

Trychay was vicar from 1520 until his death in 1574, which meant that he served under Henry VIII, Edward VI, Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth. He was a Devonian, ordained in

1515, and it was his duty to keep 'the church bok'. In his meticulous way, the vicar recorded all transactions, from 'the gift of Agnes Down's mother, 12d' and purchase of 'a new purse for to put the sacrament yn' to William Leddon, 'a ewe hogg'.

What makes his register fascinating is that Sir Christopher could not resist adding his comments, "another wether hogg... in his keeping that came from Richard Hukeley, that should have been brought with John at Burston but he would have none." It is this characteristic which comes into its own when the Reformation begins to have an impact on his parish. Sir Christopher had introduced the cult of St Sidwell from his home city of Exeter into his parish church. He lavished attention on her statue and altar, with 'a canstyck a fore' and 'new gylting' 33/4 (a candlestick a new gilding). This was in addition to the cult of Our Lady, of the patron, St George, St Loy (patron of horsemen) and St Anthony (patron of swineherds). By 1538 the candles had been removed and the ornaments which adorned the statues stripped away, but the vicar still asks William Hurley, the next time he goes to London, to buy 'a banner of sylke of sent iorge' (Saint George). He also is able to buy his black vestments after twenty years of saving, in 1547 when Henry VIII had been in his grave six months. In February 1548 all images were to be removed from churches and their confraternities disbanded.

The newly gilded crucifix of Morebath was burned, but William Morse rescued the figure of St John and John Williams took the figure of the weeping Virgin Mary. In 1549 when there was a rising in the West Country and East Anglia against the new Prayer Book, Morebath played its part, sending money and eventually losing three of its parishioners. Sir Christopher handed over two copes

and two tunicles in 1552 to the commissioners. The other vestments were concealed in parishioners' homes, but by the following year they had recovered the rest including 'a poure lytyll towle' and 'a nackyn (napkin) for the priestis handis'.

In 1553 Sir Christopher remarked, "The church ever decayed: and then died the King, and Queen Mary's Grace did succeed, and how the church was restored again." The table was removed and the high altar returned; 7/11 was found to replace the chalice and Richard Timewell presented a box to keep the Blessed Sacrament in. But five years later, Mary was dead and with Elizabeth, Prayer Book worship was re-imposed. The parish dutifully took its chalice to the commissioners who gave them 20/- for it. But as they had another small chalice that used that instead of the regulation communion cup. When he died, after 54 years service, they buried him between the communion table and the high table which he continued to call the high altar. The following year they bought a communion cup for 29/2.

*Fr James Tollhurst  
Chislehurst  
Kent*

THE SPLENDOUR OF TRUTH: THE THEOLOGICAL VISION OF POPE JOHN PAUL II.

*By Cardinal Avery Dulles S.J.,  
Crossroad Publishing, (distributed by  
Alban Books), 262pp, £17.99*

Cardinal Dulles, provides a magisterial overview of the thought of Pope John Paul II. He opens his account with a biographical overview of the Holy Father's life, looking at his theological formation, at the influence of Carmelite spirituality as well as his developing philosophical work. He then examines the involvement of then Bishop Wojtyla in the work of the Second Vatican Council.

Dulles then goes on to attempt a synthesis of John Paul's thought working through the Trinity, the nature of Christ and the role of Our Lady, the Church and Evangelisation, the Office and Teaching in the Church, the Priesthood and the Consecrated Life, Suffering, Sin and Penance, the Laity, Family and the Status of Women, then on to the Theology of Culture, the Economic and Social Order, the Free Person in a Free Society, Ecumenism and the Religions, and finally on to Eschatology and History.

As Dulles admits "the material vastly exceeds what most students, including the present author, has been able to digest." (p.2). But he manages to achieve a masterful summation of John Paul's thoughts in the areas outlined above. He brings together not just the Encyclicals and Apostolic Letters, but also the vast number of Catechetical addresses, the Angelus addresses, the greetings to various groups of Bishops and is able to show the continuity of John Paul's thought as a student, priest, bishop, theologian and as well as Pope.

Dulles identifies the Holy Father's personalism as being crucial to understanding his theology. Dulles sees John Paul as achieving a synthesis between Thomistic and phenomenological approaches to theological enquiry. Like John Saward before him he identifies "the Christ-Centred Teaching of Pope John Paul II" see Saward's 1995 book "Christ is the Answer." Dulles also links aspects of John Paul's life to his approaches both to theology and spirituality, talking of suffering he quotes from Tad Szulc's biography when John Paul is reflecting on his time in the Gemelli hospital after breaking his hip "I understand that I have to lead Christ's Church into this third millennium by prayer, by various programmes, but I saw this is not enough, she must be led by suffering.... The Pope has to suffer...

the Gospel of suffering by which the future is prepared." Dulles sees John Paul's experience feeding in to his work not just on suffering but on sin, penance and indeed the nature of Christ.

This is not perhaps the easiest of reads but it is one that will allow the reader a real opportunity to come to grips not just with an individual papal statement but to see the unity of thought which guides and inspires all of John Paul's teaching.

Readers of FAITH will be pleased to see that Dulles looks at John Paul's theology of history, quoting from Tertio Millenio Adveniente, quoting Gaudium et Spes "Christ is the centre, the focal point and the goal of human history." (p.233). And readers will be interested in his comments on evolution and science. "John Paul II holds up Albert the Great as an example of a theologian who embraced and mastered the scientific knowledge of his day. In the Counter-Reformation, he believes, the proper distinction between the orders of knowledge was blurred, with the result that Galileo was erroneously condemned. Anxious to prevent any recurrence of such errors, he has expressed openness to the theory of evolution and to various cosmological hypotheses, provided that these are not linked to materialist or reductionist philosophy" (p.259).

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Stafford*



notes from across the

Atlantic

by Richard John Neuhaus

**ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY**

In Hilaire Belloc's *Cautionary Tales*, there is a poem about the unfortunate "Jim" who gets eaten by a lion. Belloc counsels the children, "And always keep a-hold of Nurse / For fear of finding something worse." George F. Kennan, commonly called the father of the containment policy against the Soviet Union, brought the line to the attention of John Lewis Gaddis, the distinguished Yale historian, who uses it to good effect in his little book, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Harvard University Press, 150pp., £9.19). Gaddis provides a marvellously intelligent and lucid evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the foreign policy of the Bush administration. The key elements of that policy, as set forth in the National Security Strategy published in the fall of 2002 – pre-emption, unilateralism and hegemony – go back to John Quincy Adams, the sixth President who, Gaddis convincingly argues, was the architect of a strategy that continues to this day, as is evident in America's response to September 11. A significant change was introduced by FDR, who, in extending America's hegemony to the entire non-Communist world, realized that we would need the help of others and established organizations such as the United Nations and NATO. Others went along with American pre-emption, unilateralism and hegemony "for fear of finding something worse". The problem today is that much of the world sees US hegemony as the "something worse", while the US, Britain and a few others try to make the case that the "something worse" is the

terrorism against which they are defending the world. Although he is very hard on the naïveté and inaction of the Clinton administration, Gaddis is not making a partisan argument. He is sharply critical of Bush on several scores, but he helps us to understand that the US strategy since September 11, including the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, fits into a strategic framework established by Adams almost two hundred years ago. In the current highly politicised and frequently toxic disputes about US foreign policy, a reader looking for an informed perspective on the continuities and discontinuities in America's response to September 11 could hardly do better than to spend a couple of hours with John Lewis Gaddis in *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*. My own expectation is that the world will gradually, or under the pressure of catastrophic surprise, come to realize that there is something much worse to fear than American pre-emption, unilateralism and hegemony.

**MINISTRY OF WELCOME**

"What can we do to show that the Eucharist is a communal activity? Greeting people at the door is a start. It alerts us to the fact that we are going to do something with others ... I have found some Catholics who think this whole 'welcoming' business is destroying our traditional sense of reverence and replacing it with some folksy, feel-good experience. This is a false conclusion. If you wish to invite a guest into your home, you must have space. To invite others into our hearts and our worship, we must make room for them. The enemy of reverence is not hospitality but arrogance." Despite my being intimidated by the flat assertion, "This is a false conclusion", I dare to wonder if the author, a professor of theology writing in *America*, might tolerate a modest dissent. Note the language:

we are going to do something; *our* traditional sense of reverence; *your* home; *our* worship. Is there not something to be said for reverence for what God is doing in *His* house through the liturgy of the *Church*, the saints in heaven and pilgrims on earth? There are many conversion stories in which the narrator describes quietly entering a Catholic church, maybe even sneaking in, and being struck by the statues and candles, and, most of all, by the people kneeling in rapt devotion as the priest at the altar lifts the consecrated host and declares, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." There may be one, but I have never read a conversion story in which a person was drawn to the Catholic church by the kind of chumminess that one might encounter at a birthday party or around the water cooler at the office. "This is a false conclusion," rumbles our liturgist. I'm sorry, sir, but since I've had the temerity to go so far, I'll go a step further and, at the risk of your wrath, suggest that it is really not so important "to show that the Eucharist is a communal activity". That's not the point. The point is what God has done, and is doing in the Mass, reconciling the world to Himself through the sacrifice of Christ. The eucharistic community is created precisely by our turning away from ourselves and toward Christ. The wonderful friendliness of our wonderful selves is really quite beside the point. And to think otherwise is, well, arrogance.

**A LAW WRITTEN ON OUR HEARTS**

On 17 October 2003, there was a dinner held over at the Union League Club and sponsored by the invaluable *Human Life Review* in order to honour its founder, the late J.P. McFadden. William F. Buckley, a close friend of McFadden's, was asked to make remarks, and jolted those present by suggesting that Catholics should relax their strictures against removing

NOTES FROM ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

feeding tubes from the likes of Terri Schiavo, whose life was then hanging in the balance in Florida. Mr Buckley cited favourably an article in *National Review* by the late Ernest van den Haag advocating doctor-assisted suicide. Buckley's remarks were, to say the least, controversial and have occasioned a lively symposium in *Human Life Review*. George McKenna of City College (New York) criticized Buckley on a number of scores, including good taste and logic, but homed in on the assumption that the law against taking innocent human life is a peculiarly Catholic hang-up. Quoting Romans 2 on "the law written in their hearts", McKenna mentions Nat Hentoff's protest against Buckley's suggestion, noting that Hentoff is "an atheist who heeds no theological system but only the law written in his heart". McKenna writes: "Let me cite another person, now dead for many years, who did the same. Mr Buckley and J.P. McFadden knew him very well, because he served for a time as columnist and editor at the *National Review*. His name was Whittaker Chambers. He was a figure of great controversy in the late 1940s because he exposed Alger Hiss, a former State Department official, as a long-time Communist spy. Chambers knew about Hiss' secret Communist activities, because he had participated in the same activities during the 1930s; he had received stolen State Department documents from Hiss and passed photocopies of them along to Moscow. Chambers came from a nominally Protestant home, but he lost whatever scraps of religion he had during college, and of course was a staunch atheist during his thirteen years as a Communist. (He became a Quaker some time after he left the party in 1938). In 1952 he published *Witness*, a memoir of his Communist years. In it he recalls that in the mid-1930s his wife (who also held no religious belief) told him that she thought she

was pregnant. Since this was one of the most intense periods in his career as a Soviet agent, they planned an abortion. His wife went to a doctor to verify her pregnancy, and when she returned, he asked what the doctor said. 'She said that I was in good physical shape to have a baby,' his wife replied. Then there was silence. Finally, it dawned on him: he asked if she wanted to have the child.

'My wife ran over to me, took my hands, and burst into tears. "Dear heart," she said in a pleading voice, "we couldn't do that awful thing to a little baby, not to a little baby, dear heart." A wild joy swept over me. Reason, the agony of my family, the Communist Party and its theories, the wars and revolutions of the twentieth century, crumbled at the touch of the child.'

So it happened that Whittaker and Esther Chambers, having no religious law at the time, joyously went ahead to bring their first child into the world. Their consciences bore them witness. Mr Buckley, I fear, has misjudged his audience and readers because he does not speak to what unites them. It is not religious doctrine, precious as that doctrine is to most of them. It is a law written in their hearts telling them that we may not kill people just because their birth will be inconvenient or their death will be greeted with relief. It is that law which brought them all out to honour the memory of J.P. McFadden, and it is what motivated Mr McFadden to sacrifice so much for the journal he founded. It is a very compelling law and, however complicated its implementation may be in particular cases, a very clear law; it can be obscured only by lies and sophistries."

**CULTURE & SAME-SEX MARRIAGE**

"If they want to do it, let them. How does it affect you?" That's the line that opponents of same-sex marriage have the greatest difficulty in responding to. An interesting

response comes from Adam Haslett, writing in, of all places, the *New Yorker*. "Love Supreme" offers a serviceable, if somewhat misleading, sketch of marriage in Western history, noting the ways in which the institution has been largely disengaged from child-bearing and child-rearing, while at the same time it is connected to a growing number of legal entitlements. Moreover, the proponents of same-sex marriage know that something bigger is involved, says Haslett, namely, "the official recognition of love". "This," he writes, "is the difference between civil unions and marriage: one is a legal certificate and the other is a public endorsement." That is why they insist on the word "marriage". "To discount this as mere semantics misses what the definition points up: that marriage, through all its incarnations, has been the procedure that assigns people a new identity based on their gender. For centuries, it has been the ceremony that makes males into husbands and females into wives. Until very recently, this meant a lifetime commitment to both the security and the constriction of a well-defended social role. The symbolic danger that gay marriage poses to such an arrangement is obvious. It alters the public meaning of the word by further draining it of its power to reinforce traditional expectations of behaviour. What does it mean to be a husband in a world where a man could have one of his own? This is up to each individual couple, one is tempted to say. Fair enough; but the words we use to describe our relationships are shared cultural property. There is no private language. In this sense, granting the word 'marriage' to gay couples will eventually affect everyone." Haslett concludes on the note that same-sex marriage should be seen as a fulfillment of a goal of the women's movement, which, historically speaking, is radical: "the decline of the patriarchal legal structure and rise

of the goal of self-fulfillment". Obligations – patriarchal, matriarchal or simply faithful – are out. Self-fulfillment is in. Get used to it. Or not.

**LIBERAL VICTORY FOR AMERICA?**

I don't know what kind of revolution Robert Reich, labour secretary in the Clinton administration, has in mind, but he does Robespierre proud. Writing in the July issue of the *American Prospect*, he contends that Christian fundamentalists pose a greater danger to America than people flying jetliners into skyscrapers. He writes, "Terrorism is a tactic, not a belief. The true battle will be between modern civilization and anti-modernist; between those who believe in the primacy of the individual and those who believe that human beings owe their allegiance and identity to a higher authority ... between those who believe in science, reason, logic, and those who believe that truth is revealed through Scripture and religious dogma. Terrorism will disrupt and destroy lives. But terrorism itself is not the danger we face." By Reich's definition of "fundamentalist" and "religious zealot", one would have to include Washington, John Adams, Lincoln, Wilson, Carter, Reagan and, of course, George W. Bush. More impressively, the great majority of the American people are, by his measure, enemies of the democracy he envisions. Reich's are not offhand remarks after the third scotch but were written for publication in a magazine of liberal respectability and influence. The thing worth remarking is that most of those who inhabit his ideological *fanum* (from which "fanatic") consider his sentiments unexceptionable. Mr Reich has written a book called *Reason: Why Liberals Will Win the Battle for America*. Recall the recipe for unicorn stew: first, get a unicorn. Robert Reich's recipe for liberal victory in America is similar: first, get rid of the Americans.

cutting/edge

A special feature keeping us up to date with issues of science and religion

**NEW RESEARCH CONFIRMS PRIVILEGED PLACE OF THE HUMAN BRAIN IN NATURE**

In 1982 a ground breaking article entitled "Why chimpanzees are not people" by the distinguished biologist Richard Passingham was published in *Nature*. Passingham demonstrated some key findings about the brain.

First he showed that there is a direct and constant proportion between the frontal lobes (grey matter) and the cerebellum (primitive hind brain which controls automatic bodily processes) in the mammalian line. Increase in brain size can be traced on a straight line graph from hedgehogs to monkeys. In general terms, In general terms, after scaling for relative body size, brains get bigger and more complex as animals get bigger.

But secondly he found that in the primate group (the great apes) the formula for the proportional increase in frontal lobe size as the hind brain gets bigger across evolving species gets larger. The line of the graph gets steeper as evolution appears to home in on the brain itself as its main focus.

And finally he proved that the human brain is fully three times bigger in proportion than it needs to be for the size of our hind brain and therefore for the needs of the human body. There is a demsontrable jump in brain evolution at the moment of man. All of which lends weight to the philosophy of Faith Movement about the creation of the human soul at the peak of material evolution.

Now new research has not only confirmed these findings but has gone even further. Bruce Lahn, an assistant professor of human genetics at the University of Chicago and an investigator at the Howard

Hughes Medical Institute, argues that the human brain came about through a highly accelerated and super privileged evolutionary growth spurt.

In a recent article in *Cell* journal Lahn says: "Our study offers the first genetic evidence that humans occupy a unique position in the tree of life ... Simply put, evolution has been working very hard to produce us humans."

While Passingham used measurements of brain volume to conduct his research, Lahn and his team studied 214 genes involved in brain development in humans, macaques, rats and mice. They found that a large number of mutations in a short space of time must have led rapidly to the emergence of vastly increased cognitive abilities in the production of the human brain.

"We've proven that there is a big distinction. Human evolution is, in fact, a privileged process because it involves a large number of mutations in a large number of genes. To accomplish so much in so little evolutionary time - a few tens of millions of years - requires a selective process that is perhaps categorically different from the typical processes of acquiring new biological traits".

**COMMUNION AND STEWARDSHIP**

The Church's International Theological Commission, a Vatican body of respected theologians appointed by the Pope, has recently published its latest reflection, and has been considering questions of man's relation to the created world. Their theological document, entitled "*Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*", focuses attention on a variety of biological, bio-ethical and environmental issues through the key idea of the *imago Dei*, the concept attested to in the book of Genesis that man is made in the image and likeness of God Himself. This personal communion of man with God, intended by the Creator for His human beings, leads to a rational

basis on which to understand much Catholic doctrine on the nature of man. Of necessity the new document tackles the important question of the biological evolution of earthly species in the ascent to man. Reconciling the truths of man's origins — placing the scientific understanding of the universe within the broader Christian vision of creation — is a crucial task for the Church. The Commission picked up from where Pope John Paul II had indicated in October 1996 in his address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences when he acknowledged how theories of evolution had become well-accepted in the scientific community. Accepting the scientific evidence for the Big Bang, the earth's formation 4.5 billion years ago, the ascent of higher life-forms from lower, and the emergence of man some 40,000 years ago, the new text goes on to teach again that man's nature cannot be explained only in terms of biological evolution. It argues that the appearance of mankind with consciousness, freedom and creativity can only be attributed to divine intervention.

Given this unique character of man as the *imago Dei*, the Commission's report explains how human cloning, genetic engineering, assisted suicide, direct euthanasia, direct abortion, birth control and sterilization, to the extent that they threaten the biological integrity of individual human persons, all go beyond what rights we have over our biological nature. The report says, "The sovereignty we enjoy is not an unlimited one: we exercise a certain participated sovereignty over the created world and, in the end, we must render an account of our stewardship to the Lord of the universe."

**THE 'GOD GENE'**

Controversy and indeed scepticism has greeted the publication in September of research carried out by Dr Dean Hamer, director of the Gene

Structure and Regulation Unit at the National Cancer Institute in America. His book, *The God Gene: How Faith is Hardwired into our Genes*, has caused a stir, principally because it supposedly brings into question the origin of religious belief. In 1993 Dr Hamer claimed the identification of a gene linked to male homosexuality, a result, however, that other molecular biologists failed to replicate. Now he says he has identified a portion of our DNA sequence that is related to our ability to experience self-transcendence and have an aptitude for spirituality. This is his so-called 'God gene' but as yet, this research has still not been subject to peer review in a scientific journal. The technique consisted of giving 1000 volunteers a series of 226 questions to measure the person's spiritual characteristics, such as feeling 'connected to the world' or willing to accept things not objectively demonstrable. DNA profiling of those deemed to show more self-transcendence led Hamer to a particular gene called 'Vesicular Monoamine Transporter 2' (VMAT2). This gene, which regulates the flow of mood-altering chemicals in the brain, is, he claims, a genetic fingerprint of those who are more likely to show a generic tendency towards spiritual feelings. Hamer even suggests that natural selection would tend to favour the occurrence of this gene because people carrying it would tend to be more optimistic and healthier psychologically, and this could lead to them having more children. Whilst admitting many caveats to his claims, still, as a committed materialist, he believes that faith arises as a result of biochemical factors. Confusingly, he is also quoted as saying that "Religious believers can point to the existence of God genes as one more sign of the creator's ingenuity — a clever way to help humans acknowledge and embrace a divine person."

However, there has been much

criticism of his work, especially by theologians, but also by scientists. Dr John Polkinghorne, the physicist and Anglican cleric, was not at all convinced by these findings: "You can't cut faith down to the lowest common denominator of genetic survival. It shows the poverty of reductionist thinking." Most significantly, Carl Zimmer, in his review of Hamer's book in *Scientific American*, is highly critical of the way this research has been presented, particularly with regard to its having been published prior to peer-review and publication in a journal. He sums up the level on which this 'God-gene' result should be accepted: "A gene that accounts for less than one percent of the variance found in scores on psychological questionnaires designed to measure a factor called self-transcendence, which can signify everything from belonging to the Green Party to believing in ESP, according to one unpublished, unreplicated study."





VATICAN DISASTER APPEAL  
HOW WE CAN GIVE

Note that UK banks levy a charge for international money transfers.

The Holy Father, who is constantly monitoring this unfolding situation, and following on from his own appeal to the International Community during the Angelus on Sunday 26 December, has made it his highest priority to help the peoples of the countries hit by the earthquake and tidal wave which engulfed South East Asia and even some African countries. At the encouragement of His Holiness, the Pontifical Council COR UNUM, via the respective Pontifical Representatives, has begun emergency aid work in Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Indonesia and Somalia.

In the Church, as with others throughout the world, a unanimous chorus of fraternal solidarity has resulted in a tangible response to the cry for help of these wounded populations. The Italian Episcopal Conference has raised 3 million Euros, and the charitable agency Caritas has already collected in excess of 2 million US dollars. Some branches of Caritas (Austria, Netherlands, United States) have already sent experts to direct the work of the various national Caritas initiatives on the ground.

Also the "Jesuit Refugee Services" are co-ordinating the action of local Churches. COR UNUM, which, in the name of the Holy Father, brings together the evolving events and efforts of diverse ecclesial organisations, appeals to the faithful, both individually and communally, calling on the generous commitment of the various local Churches and their charitable agencies so that a programme of rehabilitation can quickly be put in place for those who have hit so hard by this devastating tragedy.

Anyone who wants to entrust to the Holy Father their own gesture of love for their unfortunate brothers and sisters in Asia can do so by means of a special postal account set up by the Pontifical Council COR UNUM, indicating clearly that it is for the "Emergency in Asia".

*Communication from the Pontifical Council COR UNUM:  
Humanitarian Aid for the Peoples hit by the Tsunami in South East Asia. 28.12.2004*

*Donations in Euros from European countries may be made to the order of:*

**PONTIFICAL COUNCIL COR UNUM**

**Account No. 603035**

**Bank: Banco Posta, Poste Italiane S.p.A.**

**Address: Viale Europa, 175**

**I-00144 Rome, Italy**

**International Bank Code (IBAN): IT20 S 07601 03200 000000 603035**

**Cause: "Emergency in Asia"**

*Please, clearly specify your name and address.*

*Donations in other currencies may be made to the order of:*

**PONTIFICAL COUNCIL COR UNUM**

**Account No. 101010**

**Bank: Banca di Roma**

**International Bank Code (IBAN): IT93 J 03002 05008 000000 101010**

**SWIFT Code BROMITR1204**

**Cause: "Emergency in Asia"**

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# news

## roundup

### SCOTTISH SECTARIANISM

Sectarianism is alive and well in Scotland say the statistics. According to a Government analysis, sectarian abuse is hurled in Scotland at 63 per cent of Catholics, as opposed to 29 per cent of Protestants. The report, compiled by the Crown Office, reveals that the largest group of offenders are not feckless teens but adults aged between 21 – 40. Bishop Devine of Motherwell has labeled the abuses 'frankly appalling'. They point, he says, to "entrenched hostility towards a religious minority. The fact that at least one religiously-motivated offence should take place in Scotland every day is bad enough, that almost two-thirds of such crimes are direct against the Catholic community who comprise just 17% of the population is both alarming and saddening." And in case any should wonder that abuse is meted out to all and sundry, only one offender has been charged with religious hatred directed towards a Muslim.

### CARDINAL CALLS FOR CHASTITY

Many Catholics in Scotland voiced private doubts last year when the Vatican announced that Archbishop Keith O'Brien of Edinburgh would be made Cardinal. It was even reported that the Cardinal had been obliged by the Vatican to re-pledge his allegiance to the moral teachings of the Church. If this is the case, he certainly has not shrunk from his duties, proving an outspoken critic of plans to sex education plans for Scottish primary schools and recently condemning new NHS figures showing a 40 per cent rise in sexually transmitted diseases since 1999. "These appalling statistics make very uncomfortable reading and highlight how urgently behavioural change is

needed. As long as we teach our young people sexual mechanics rather than sexual morality such devastating figures will remain as a dismal reminder of our failure. I urge the Scottish Executive to reconsider the sexual health strategies which have created this disastrous situation. I ask Ministers to accept that improvements in Scotland's sexual health will not come about without promotion of the institution of marriage, the basic building block of our society and a willingness to pilot abstinence-based approaches on the basis that prevention will always be better than cure."

### A MUCH MALIGNED SPANISH QUEEN

This November saw the 500th anniversary of Isabel the Catholic, consort of Ferdinand of Spain known by her fans as 'the first evangeliser of the Americas'. The cause for her canonization has been shrouded with controversy – Isabel's expulsion of the Jews from Spain and the treatment of the Indians in South America by Spanish missionaries having tainted the cause. But according to her advocates, such taints are merely part of the 'black legend' which has surrounded Spain and Spanish Catholicism since the time of Henry VIII. "These are lies, mendacious opinions concerning Spain that grew up in the time of Philip II in central Europe and according to this Isabel was a female dictator," states Fr Vicente Vara, a priest of the archdiocese of Valladolid who has long laboured for the cause of Isabel. "But this is simply untrue. The Commission for Isabel the Catholic has investigated in depth more than 100,000 archived documents including some kept in the Vatican archives which quite simply disprove this. Such claims constitute a deliberate, malicious attack on Spain's glorious history."

What is more Fr Vara asserts that Isabel was ahead of her time in calling for the human rights of South

American Indians to be recognized by new world colonisers: "In her will the Queen says that the Indians are to be treated exactly the same as any Castilian as they are children of God. During Columbus' second voyage to the Americas he brought back some Indians as slaves and Isabel said 'Who does Columbus think he is to treat my subjects like this? With her own money she bought the slaves, set them free and sent them back to the Americas, bar one who wished to remain in Spain.'" In her will, says Fr Vara, Isabel expressly forbids the mistreatment of Indians: "She explains in the codicil that her and Ferdinand's express intention in colonizing the Americas was to impart the Catholic faith to its peoples, which is why we call her the first missionary and evangelist of the Americas. She urges priests to take the utmost care not to mistreat the Indians, adding that any mistreated Indian is fully entitled to recompense. There were some excesses," Fr Vara added, "But this was never the Queen's intention nor her desire." One wonders what Isabel would have made of the current political rulers of Spain, who seem intent on undoing the country's Catholic allegiance as quickly as possible.

### ANTI-MORAL SPANISH LAWS

No sooner had the Spanish Socialist administration of Jose Luis Zapatero won a surprise electoral victory in March than they announced plans – to the puzzlement of most Spaniards – to legalise gay marriage. A raft of other equally unsound planned laws soon followed, including easier access to abortion and 'Express Divorce' a ridiculous proposal to make divorce available in 10 days. Is this, as Spanish Catholics claim, a deliberate anti-Church agenda, harking back to the bad old days of anti-clerical anarchists and Franco's National Catholicism? Well, it's hard to think otherwise when the ministers also want to stop optional Catholic

RE being taught in Spanish schools, but do wish to offer for the first time classes in Islam, requested by 5,000 Spanish Muslims. Not that ministers are making much effort to disguise their anti-Catholic prejudice: recently the Spanish Secretary of State advised voters to stop paying a voluntary tax to the Church – which funds activities often undertaken by the state in other countries, such as running hospitals and schools – and to devote this sum to NGO’s and charities instead. Oh, and the Spanish minister for education says the law on banning Catholic classes in schools is definitely to go ahead regardless of the numbers of Catholics signing petitions against it.

**PROTEST FROM SPANISH CATHOLICS**

Thousands of concerned parents and lay Catholics were, as faith news went to press, planning to march in the streets of Madrid this December in protest at the new laws. Some bishops have accused the Government of depicting them as ‘a danger to democracy’ with a bravery quite alien to some of their Episcopal counterparts on colder shores. Officially the way ahead is ‘dialogue’ with the Government, but the bishops’ leader Cardinal Rouco of Madrid qualified this with the nifty proviso that “Legislators must adhere to the moral order which is as inviolable as the dignity of the human being whose protection is the purpose of all law. Debate must be centred on the truth, which is, in theory accessible to all. But true dialogue is possible because there is such a thing as truth and it is within reach of all. We are not against real dialogue within the context of a democratic society. The Church has nothing to object to democratic pluralism. The truth about God and about man as summed up in the person of Jesus Christ is not alien to the mind and heart of human beings however much to we fall short of this due to sin and human failings. One

hears much talk nowadays of proposed laws which seek to discredit religion and the Church as behind the times and no ally to man and his future. Perhaps another look at history is called for.

**GOVERNMENT ABORTION REVIEW**

One faintly encouraging sign in this bleak anti-life climate has been the long overdue debate on abortion, unexpectedly prompted by the 4-D images of the unborn foetus developed by Dr Stuart Campbell last summer. His images revealed unborn fetuses giggling, sucking their thumbs and moving far younger than was thought.

This prompted a Government review of the current 24-week abortion limit and it was this renewed debate on abortion that led a young pregnant journalist at the *Sunday Telegraph* to investigate just how easy it would be to get an abortion once past the legal limit. She discovered that BPAS, the British Pregnancy Advice Service, was happy to send her to a Spanish clinic for an abortion desired for ‘social’ reasons. On arriving in Barcelona at the Clinica Ginemedex, she discovered that not only were staff willing to abort a healthy 26-week foetus illegally but they had in the past aborted at 30 weeks. Further taped conversations with clinic employees revealed that eight out of every ten clients were British women, ‘most’ referred to the clinic by BPAS. This is despite the fact that Spanish law – at least at present – allows abortion only up to 22 weeks with the sole exception of the mothers’ health being in grave danger. Breaking these laws carries up to a three year prison sentence in Spain. And it may be the case that BPAS, by recommending this clinic to women in the full knowledge they wish to terminate their pregnancy for ‘social reasons’ has broken British law. The 1967 Abortion Act states that “anything done with intent to procure

the miscarriage of a woman is unlawfully done” unless she fulfills certain stringent criteria. About 70 per cent of BPAS funding comes through the NHS. BPAS receives NHS contracts worth about £12 million annually - about 70 per cent of its funding - to carry out about 35,000 abortions a year for health authorities. BPAS of course are defiant. Carolyn Phillips, BPAS director, initially tried to deny links to Ginemedex in a conversation with the *Telegraph* reporters, but later admitted to attending a conference given by Ginemedex. She put the phone down when told the Barcelona clinic fiddled paperwork to pretend the abortions were legal.

**MONKS RETURN TO THEIR ROOTS**

Most Catholic boarding schools in Britain are struggling for survival, but even if the worst happens and they close, perhaps it is merely part of God’s plan for their future. This is one possible interpretation of the fate of Douai, a Benedictine boarding school in Berkshire that closed, despite valiant efforts of parents and staff to save it, in 1999. But now news reaches me that the monks of Douai are embarking on an exciting return to their roots. The Archbishop of Cambrai, the diocese covering Douai, in Northern France, a town once part of Flanders, has invited the monks to return there. The community left their French base for England in 1903, having previously lived in Douai since 1818, and now the Douai chapter has agreed to a plan to move at least some of the monks back to France. The move is scheduled for next Autumn, and the abbot, I am reliably informed, is learning French.



# REINTERPRETING RAHNER

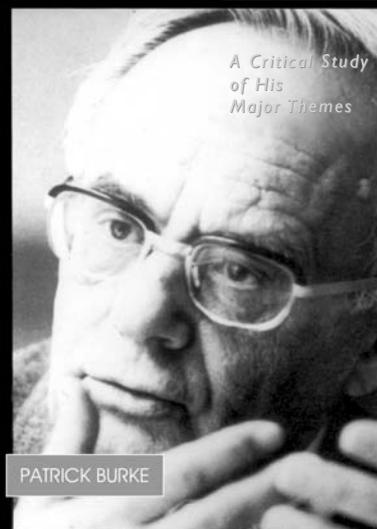
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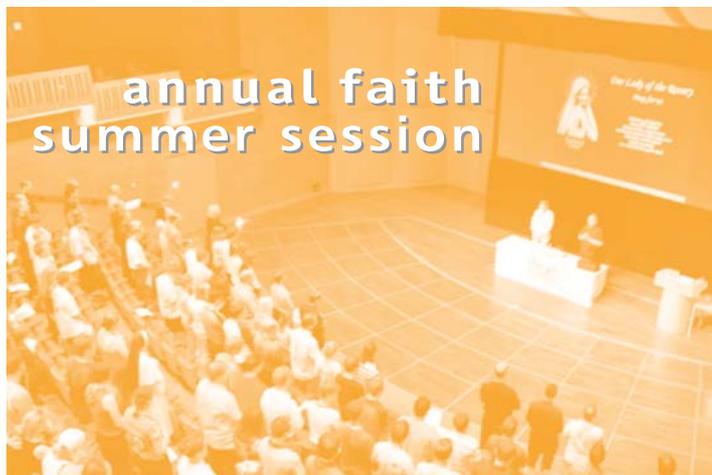
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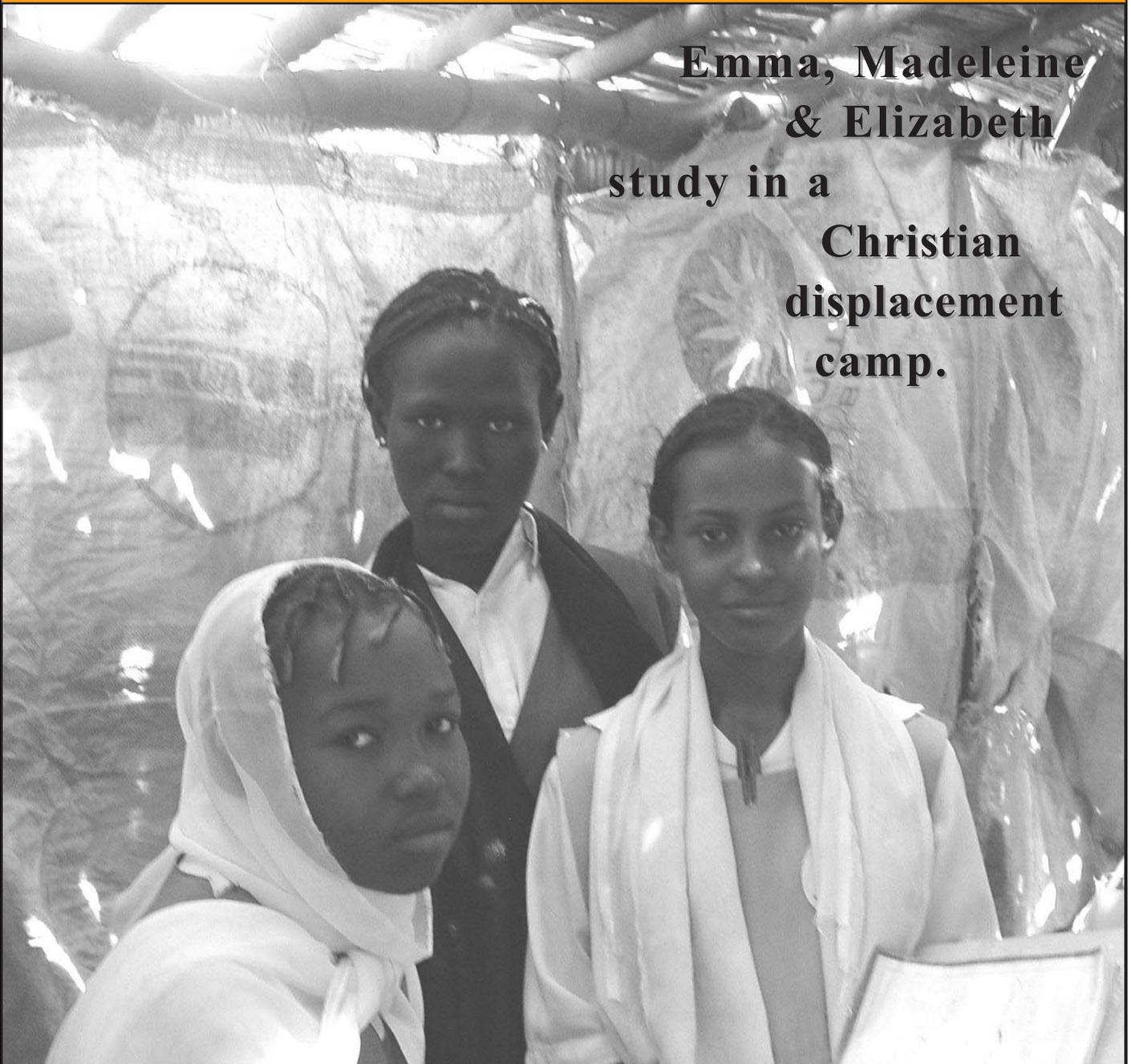
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