

THE PHENOMENON OF FAITH

MANY MOONS AGO one of our readers asked if *Compass* might sometime devote some space to the subjects of the Assumption of Mary and that of the Devil—what are Church teachings on these subjects, and what are the ‘underpinnings’ of that teaching? I suspect the underlying question is ‘What is a Catholic expected to believe?’ In this issue we have at long last attempted to satisfy that request with the article by Marie Farrell on the doctrine of the Assumption and my brief article on the Devil—this latter can be supplemented with pp.28-30 of Fr Tony Kelly’s article on hopeful intelligence and the Catholic intellectual tradition.

Though we might take a long time to satisfy such requests, we do welcome suggestions from our readership. They give us a chance to stimulate into action our many able Australian theologians, scripture scholars, philosophers, experts in spirituality, liturgy, *etc.*

When we stop to think about it, we Christians and Catholic Christians do believe a lot of unbelievable things—looked at from the purely human point of view. We are from time-to-time reminded of it by people who do not share our beliefs. Often Catholics are under fire, since it is usually a discussion that arises when funding of Catholic schools is an issue: ‘Why should the government support a system of education in which impressionable young minds are taught such unbelievable dogmas?’

My own reaction is to agree that what we Catholic Christians believe is very hard to believe. We believe that God exists, a personal, loving God who loves into being all that is and us humans too. God loves us so much that he has sent his only Son to lead us into a communion with our God that transports us beyond all our imaginings. Jesus Christ, Son of God, has promised us eternal life. And all this was accomplished by the most unbelievable act of costly love.

Further, Jesus Christ has established us as a community through which he works for our salvation and the salvation of the whole human race. Our God in Christ is with us, and the Spirit of God urges us on, as we journey towards what God has in store for us.

All this—and so much more when we tease out the detail—is so astonishing that it is no wonder that others marvel that we can believe it. Jean-Paul Sartre, the existentialist philosopher of the mid-twentieth century, stated that it was all ‘Too beautiful to be true’.

But we then remind ourselves of a few facts about the phenomenon of Christian faith. Faith is a gift, one of the three supernatural virtues. Like hope and charity, faith is not from our human resources, it is from God. Faith is described as ‘belief in things unseen’—it is not based on evidence. But is not a belief that offends our reason, either. Our reason is a God-given endowment that is fundamental to our personhood, and we must never accept anything that we find irrational.

Christian faith is liberating; it strengthens us; it gives meaning and hope; it makes life worth living. We have only to ask ourselves, as we perhaps have been asked by others, ‘What would I do if I were to discover that it is all false—too beautiful to be true?’ St Paul gave his reply when he was writing about the resurrection of Jesus:

[I]f Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is without substance, and so is your faith (...) if Christ has not been raised, your faith is pointless and you have not, after all, been released from your sins (...) If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are of all people the most pitiable. (1Cor. 15:16-19.)

Compass, with the generous and dedicated assistance of all our contributors, aims to enable us all to discover more and more the truth and beauty of our Catholic faith.

—Barry Brundell MSC, Editor.

GOD AS WISDOM

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FOR SEVERAL years now I have spent countless hours in the company of the Wisdom Woman, reflecting on her, and on the world she has created. There are many texts in the bible in which wisdom is personified. I will explore some of these texts, to show how they present wisdom in divine categories, that is, she is described in language and concepts that indicate that the bible is presenting her as a feminine expression of God.

There are various senses in which Biblical scholars and theologians use the term 'wisdom'. Sometimes it means those books of the bible that are designated wisdom literature, such as the Book of Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Sirach, Baruch and the Wisdom of Solomon. Sometimes the term 'wisdom' simply means a quality or an attribute, either of human beings or of God. At other times the term 'wisdom' is used of personified wisdom, or Sophia, the Greek form of the word, and it is this personified wisdom who is the subject of my article. When I am referring specifically to personified wisdom I will use the name Sophia to save confusion.

The wisdom literature remains largely a marginalized body of biblical literature. Partly this is because the themes of the wisdom literature are not always so overtly 'religious' as, for example, the books of Exodus or the Prophets, and the literature deals more with themes about creation, and partly because some of the wisdom literature is deuterocanonical, that is, it is not accepted as Sacred Scripture by all the Christian traditions. Yet the popularity of the books of Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon in the medieval period is well attested and the early Christian writers, including Paul and the writer of John's Gospel, were well aware of them and drew upon these texts to

express their christologies.

The biblical wisdom books contain five great poems in which Wisdom is personified as a feminine figure. The poems are to be found in Job 28, Proverbs 8-9, Sirach 24, the Wisdom of Solomon 6-9 and Baruch 3-4. These poems are hymns in praise of Sophia describing her activities, usually in relation to creation. The interpretation and understanding of these poems have been described as 'one of the most thoroughly debated problems in the whole of the wisdom literature.' I will begin by looking closely at two of these poems, one from the Book of Proverbs and the other from the Wisdom of Solomon. I will also refer briefly to some other wisdom texts relevant to the topic. A second part of the article will be devoted to looking at the way New Testament writers used categories from the Sophia texts and applied them to Jesus. The two main texts I will look at in this New Testament section will be the hymn in Colossians 1:15-20 and the Prologue to John's Gospel. In my conclusion I will make some comments on the significance of the Sophia texts for theology.

Proverbs: In Harmony with Creation

The first poem I will look at does come from a canonical book, the book of Proverbs. In the book of Proverbs the poem in question is to be found in Chapter 8:22-9:5 and it reads:

8:22 The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago.

²³ Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

²⁴ When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.

²⁵ Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth—

²⁶ when he had not yet made earth and fields,

or the world's first bits of soil.

²⁷ When he established the heavens, I was there,
 when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
²⁸ when he made firm the skies above, when he
 established the fountains of the deep,
²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that
 the waters might not transgress his command,
 when he marked out the foundations of the
 earth,

³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master worker;
 and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before
 him always,

³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world and delight-
 ing in the human race.

.....
^{9:1} Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn
 her seven pillars.

² She has slaughtered her animals, she has
 mixed her wine, she has also set her table.

³ She has sent out her servant-girls, she calls
 from the highest places in the town,

⁴ 'You that are simple, turn in here!' To those
 without sense she says,

⁵ 'Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine
 I have mixed.

⁶ Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in
 the way of insight.'

The poem falls within chapters 1-9 of the book of Proverbs in which the Wisdom woman summons humankind to a life in harmony with creation. In the poem Wisdom is presented as a woman, but she is no ordinary woman. Her existence precedes the created world. She originated before the sea and mountains, before the heavens and the sky. In Hebrew poetic language, to exist before the created world is in effect a claim to eternity.¹ Thus in the book of Daniel, when God is described in Aramaic as the Ancient One, that does not mean that we should picture God as very old, but as eternal, indeed as eternally young. When Sophia claims in verses 23-30 of this poem to have existed before the mountains and the seas, she too is the Ancient One.

In Prov 8:22 the Hebrew word *qanani* is translated into our English translations of the bible as 'created' and so our texts read, 'Yahweh created me at the beginning of his work'. In Hebrew, however, the word *qanani*



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can also mean 'Yahweh brought me forth at the beginning of his work' or 'Yahweh begot me', or 'formed me', 'acquired me', or 'possessed' me. In other words, the text is ambiguous about the origins of Sophia. Whether or not she was created by Yahweh, she is not as other works of creation. She is brought forth before the world, i.e., she is pre-existent to it. Her existence at least coincides with Yahweh's existence as creator. That means that if God is eternally creator, then Sophia is eternally creator.

In verses 24-26 the ancient world-view of the cosmos is indicated: thus the underworld is presented as the primeval ocean, the mountains are the pillars of the heavens and the foundation pillars of the earth. Sophia is brought forth before the world. The divine passive, 'I was brought forth' evokes an image of her as Yahweh's daughter. Biblical scholars are not sure if the Hebrew word *amon* in verse 30 should be translated as 'artisan' or 'little child'. In our English translations we are told that Sophia was beside God as an artisan or master worker and thus she is presented as an architect of the created world. But if the word '*amon*' means little child, then the verse may actually describe Wisdom as being beside God like a little child. The whole poem may be presenting Sophia as God's beloved daughter, being brought forth from God and participating with God in the creation of the world. The poem thus contains delightful imagery in which Sophia moves between the heavenly realm of a loving parent and the world of humankind. She is daily God's delight, and in

turn, she delights in the human race. She is in a state of joyous play in God's presence, rejoicing in God's work of art, the world of humankind.

In the next part of the poem we are told that Wisdom has built her house, prepared her banquet, and sent out invitations to come and eat of her bread and wine. To do so is to find wisdom and insight. Her house with its seven pillars is a cosmological image, again depicting the ancient view of the cosmos in which the pillars separate the waters above and below the earth, keeping the created world from being overwhelmed by the abyss and the heavens. This section of the poem, then, shows Sophia as building and dwelling in her cosmological house and inviting all who would find wisdom to come to her banquet.

When we think of creation texts of the Bible we think first of the Genesis narratives, and yet, Proverbs 8-9 is one of the most beautiful of the creation texts. Sophia, beside God at creation, spans the distance between God and the world and human beings. She invites us to eat of her bread and drink her wine and is so doing, to gain insight and indeed life itself.

The Wisdom of Solomon: In Love with Sophia

The second poem that I want to explore comes from a deuterocanonical book, the Wisdom of Solomon. While the Wisdom of Solomon is not accepted as canonical by the Protestant tradition, which refers to it as apocryphal, it is accepted as Sacred Scripture by Catholics and Orthodox and therefore the majority of the world's Christians. The poem is taken from Chapters 7:24-8:4 of the book and it reads:

²⁴ For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things.

²⁵ For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her.

²⁶ For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of God's goodness.

²⁷ Although she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets;

²⁸ for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom.

²⁹ She is more beautiful than the sun, and excels every constellation of the stars. Compared with the light she is found to be superior,

³⁰ for it is succeeded by the night, but against wisdom evil does not prevail.

8:1 She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well.

In this poem, Wisdom is described as a breath of the power of God, a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty, a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of God's goodness. The description of Wisdom as a breath of God's power reminds the reader of the breath of God at creation, or the Christian reader of the Holy Spirit. This similarity to the Holy Spirit is affirmed in verse 25 where she emanates from God the Pantocrator, the Creator of all things, and while remaining in herself she dwells in holy souls, making them friends of God. The mention of Spirit, the language of remaining, and the reference to friends are echoed in the Gospel of John in Jesus' farewell address to the disciples whom he calls friends, whom he adjures to remain in him as he is in them, and to whom he promises to send the Spirit who will dwell in them.

Sophia is described as an emanation of God's glory. In the Old Testament, the word 'glory' is used most frequently to indicate the majesty of God. Thus the '*kabod Yahweh*', as the Hebrew has it, the glory of God, rests on Mount Sinai and it fills the Tent of Meeting and even Moses cannot enter. In the Old Testament there is an idea that humankind cannot experience the glory of the utterly transcendent God face to face and live. In Exodus 33 Moses asks to be shown God's glory. God

promises to allow God's goodness to pass before Moses, but warns him that he cannot see God's face, for to look on the face of God is to die. In the Wisdom poem, on the other hand, Sophia as the emanation of the glory of God who passes into holy souls, is able to mediate the presence of God to humankind. Through her, God's glory is able to be experienced by humankind and indeed all creation, for a later part of the poem tells us that God's immortal spirit, that is, Sophia, is present in all things.

The use of the word 'image' for Sophia as the image of God's goodness reiterates this theme of mediation between God and the created world. The Greek word used here for image is 'icon'. The Eastern and Orthodox traditions of Christianity have a rich theology of icons as mediating the presence of God. Jaroslav Pelikan refers to the 'intricate relation between image and idea in philosophy and theology, above all in Byzantine (or for that matter, Russian) philosophy and theology'.² A more poetic description of the icon is 'Theology in Colour'.³ We may go one step further with Sophia as the perfect *eikon* of God in that in her person as icon of God she mediates the reality that is God. The religious philosopher John Manoussakis explains the absolute necessity of the icon. He says that a God who lacks a face is impersonal. A God without a face is radical otherness and cannot be experienced by humankind. He goes on to claim that 'an encounter with the divine without relation, that is, without some form of iconic representation, would not be different in any way from an encounter with ...utter destruction'.⁴ As the experience of Moses reminds us, there is a yearning within us to experience God and yet at the same time we cannot look on the face of God and live. The description of Sophia as icon of God speaks into this theology of the utterly transcendent God. As icon of God, Sophia is the one who is able to bridge the gap between the radical otherness of God and the world of humankind and all creation.

In this poem from the Wisdom of Solomon

Sophia is identified as the teacher of philosophy, the arts and the sciences but she is not an intellectual abstraction. There is an erotic power in Solomon's address:

² I loved her and sought her from my youth; I desired to take her for my bride, and became enamored of her beauty.

³ She glorifies her noble birth by living with God, and the Lord of all loves her.

⁴ For she is an initiate in the knowledge of God, and an associate in God's works.

The ambiguities in the text are noteworthy. Solomon is depicted as a young man falling in love with Sophia and seeking her for his bride, the one to come home to at the end of the day. Yet in these lines she is also depicted as bride of Yahweh, the one beloved of God, the one who shares the life and the knowledge of God and the one who works side by side with God. The Greek text uses the term 'symbiosis' of her way of living with God. She has a symbiotic relationship with God, that is, she shares the very life of God and the knowledge of God. She is the one who works side by side with God at creation. Indeed, the Greek text is more explicit. It tells us that she chooses the works of God. The text is not clear whether this means she chooses to work with God or whether she actually chooses what works God will do.

Wisdom 10:4 depicts Sophia as saviour. She is the one who delivered Adam from his transgression, she delivered Noah from the flood, and she rescued the Israelites through the miracle at the Sea. As the New Zealand scholar Alice Sinnott points out, this attribution to Sophia of the central act of liberation in the Old Testament is astounding⁵. As Sinnott says,

This female personification of the creative and saving power of God in the world is active and present in creation, all-knowing, all-powerful, omnipresent, renewing all things, working in history to save her chosen people, guiding and protecting them through their struggles and crises, and carrying out functions attributed in other scripture texts to God. She

can give instruction concerning ontology, cosmology, physics, astronomy and biology, because she was responsible for their creation (7:17-22) and she is responsible for the regulation and oversight of the cosmos (7:24; 8:1).⁶

What is clear from the poem is that Wisdom is presented in divine categories and because of her intimacy with God she is able to mediate relationship with the divine to Solomon and indeed to all of humankind.

Wisdom Revealing God

Apart from these two major poems, there are other texts from the biblical literature that that speak of Sophia in divine categories. In Sirach 24 Sophia utters the following lines:

³ 'I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist.

⁴ I dwelt in the highest heavens, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud.

⁵ Alone I compassed the vault of heaven and traversed the depths of the abyss.

⁶ Over waves of the sea, over all the earth, and over every people and nation I have held sway.

There are several striking theological elements in this poem. The first is that Sophia describes herself as coming forth from, or originating in, the most High God. The second striking element is that she speaks of dwelling in the highest heavens, with her throne in the pillar of cloud. In the book of Exodus the pillar of cloud is the imagery used to describe God's presence with the Israelites during their wanderings in the desert. Indeed, in the whole of the Old Testament, it is only in reference to God that the throne and the pillar of cloud are used in conjunction with each other. As Sheppard reminds us, the combination of these two images of throne and cloud and the assignment of them to Sophia can achieve the intended effect only when the reader is familiar with the sacred wilderness traditions. Thus, certain familiar language about God in the Old Testament is here applied to Sophia.⁷

The third striking element of the lines

quoted concerns the description of Sophia as alone encompassing the vault of heaven, and treading the depths of the abyss. In Job 9:7 it is Yahweh who says, 'I...alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the Sea'. The implication from these lines, then, is that Sophia is once again described in language and concepts appropriate to the divine.

Thus, in the lines quoted we are being presented with feminine images of God as Wisdom or Sophia. The nature of these texts as poetry raises the issue of whether they can be taken as theological texts which are revelatory of the nature of God. Do they simply portray an attribute of God, namely God's wisdom, in poetic terms, or do they reveal God in God's relationship to humankind and the cosmos?

First we must lay to rest the argument that wisdom as feminine is simply the result of grammatical gender. In Greek the word for wisdom is *Sophia*, in Hebrew it is *Hokmah* and in Latin *Sapientia*, all of which have grammatical feminine gender. English does not have feminine grammatical gender for abstract concepts, but refers to them in the neuter gender. In English, then, the pronoun for wisdom as an attribute of the wise person would simply be 'it' and not 'she'.

Yet in all the wisdom poems where Wisdom is depicted in divine categories, she is almost invariably personified as a woman, albeit no ordinary woman. There is no other attribute of God so consistently personified. As Roland Murphy, the wisdom scholar tells us, 'literary personification is not rare in the bible, but the case of Lady Wisdom is unique in its intensity and scope'.⁸ She is God's wife, God's daughter, God's beloved, God's co-creator, God's mediator to the created world. Of course, these images are metaphorical, as all human language about God is metaphorical. We have no other way of speaking about God. Metaphor works best when a familiar concrete concept, in this case woman, is used to get the message across about the abstract concept, in this case God's wisdom. Poets and writers commonly personify abstract concepts. Thus

in Shakespeare we hear of jealousy as a green-eyed monster, and we speak of Old Father Time and Jack Frost. In film, we may have seen the movie, 'Death Takes a Holiday' or its more recent re-make, 'Meet Joe Black', in which Brad Pitt plays Death as a person, an attractive young man with whom the leading female star falls in love and learns to trust Death as a comforting presence. This personification of Death stands in a long tradition in which *Thanatos*, the Greek term for Death, is depicted in ancient sculptures as a beautiful young man.

Does the personification of Wisdom, the one who gives immortality, speak of something theologically more profound than a literary device to describe an attribute of God? Can Wisdom/Sophia be termed a hypostasis? This term is a very complex one and is used in Trinitarian theology to try to speak of the mystery of the persons of the Trinity. In the context of the wisdom poems, biblical scholars use it to describe a metaphor that, as Celia Deutsch defines it, acquires 'the quality of personal entity, ... a kind of quasi-independent existence'.⁹ Generally the word is taken to mean a revelatory form of a deity. Sophia can thus be described as revelatory of God.

Behind the figure of Sophia, scholars detect the influence of the Hellenistic Goddess Isis, or the Egyptian Ma'at or the Canaanite Astarte. The sages may be extolling the praises of Sophia to counteract Isis in particular and to encourage Jews in a Hellenistic world to recognize the richness and vitality of their own tradition.¹⁰ Yet at no time do the sages of Israel compromise their monotheism, that is, their belief in the one God. At no time does Sophia become a separate figure detached from God. When she reaches her full status as an independent personality, she is at the same time most closely connected to God as the self-revelation of the divine, depicted in language and categories that can only be applied to God.

The noted German scholar Gerhard von Rad broke new ground when he moved away from the conventional view of scholars that

wisdom is merely a goddess substitute or a personification of an attribute of God.¹¹ In von Rad's thesis *Lady Wisdom*, the voice of creation speaking to humankind, is a bearer of revelation. As Wisdom, she is the self-revelation of God's creation and signifies the mystery implanted there by God. For von Rad, this is a real, cosmological process, the bestowal of something special on creation that now mysteriously inhabits it. But she is also orientated towards humankind. She is the active influence of the environment, the ordering power that affects and corrects us. Von Rad argued that the personification of this mysterious order was not merely a decorative, stylistic device, but was actually determined by the subject in question. This was because this primeval order, indeed God's glory reflected back from God, actually addresses humankind. As such, personification was the necessary mode of expression.

In more recent years Roland Murphy, the Dominican biblical scholar, pressed von Rad's thesis even further. In challenging von Rad's identification of wisdom with the order in creation, Murphy argues that the very symbol of the wisdom woman, courted and eventually married, precludes order as the correct correlation. Wisdom, because of her origins and authority, is rather the revelation of God who calls to humankind throughout the realm of the created world.

In a note of caution Claudia Camp suggests that women reject the androcentric view of the male sage desiring and possessing the Woman Wisdom and instead speak of her as a sister or an intimate friend.¹²

To conclude this section of my article, I would argue that the poetic texts in which Wisdom is depicted go far beyond a decorative stylistic device, as Von Rad reminded us. Nor is she an attribute of God, namely God's wisdom, implanted in creation. Rather, the texts are revelatory of the mystery of God's relationship with humankind in and through the created world, a relationship that is mediated by Sophia as feminine expression of God.

I am not alone in this conviction. Contemporary scholars such as Roland Murphy, Kathleen O'Connor, Elizabeth Johnson and Denis Edwards, stand in a long tradition of writers who have recognized in these texts theological truths which reveal to us the nature of God. Indeed, this tradition goes right back to the New Testament itself.

*Agent of Creation: Wisdom and
the New Testament*

Since the texts of the New Testament which have been influenced by these wisdom writings and by personified Sophia are too numerous and profound to deal with in this article, I will be selective. I will offer some general comments on the way the wisdom texts have been employed by the New Testament writers and will look in detail at two of them, namely the Prologue to the Gospel of John and the Pauline letter to the Colossians.

In the New Testament Jesus is presented as the agent of the new creation, in language and themes taken from the Old Testament wisdom texts. Thus in the first letter to the Corinthians chapter 8:6 Paul states:

...for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

In this text Paul is asserting that Jesus is the lord of all creation. Through Christ's death and resurrection he embodies the creative power of God.¹³ Sophia of the Old Testament and Christ of the New is the same divine power of God active in creation and salvation.

In the Letter to the Hebrews Chapter 1:2-3 the connection with the wisdom of the Old Testament is made even more explicit. The writer tells us that God has spoken to us by a Son 'whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the radiance of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being and he sustains all things by his very word'. As James Dunn says, 'the passage is a striking expression of

Wisdom christology'. Hebrews uses the word 'radiance' (*hapaugasma* in Greek) which is the same word used of wisdom in the Wisdom of Solomon 7:26 where it is said that Sophia is the reflection of eternal light. This point becomes significant when we realize that this is the only usage of this word in the whole of the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It is very likely then that the writer of Hebrews had this very text from the Wisdom of Solomon in mind when he or she speaks of Jesus in these terms. In this text Christ is again the agent of creation, as Sophia is in the Old Testament. Thus both Sophia and Christ are agents of creation, both are the radiance of God's glory, and both are pre-existent of creation.

Jesus as agent of creation, the one in whom and for whom all things exist, is the subject of the hymn to be found in Colossians 1:15-20. This is another of the hymns which scholars generally term, wisdom-christological hymns. Scholars believe that these hymns were in circulation amongst the early Christians even before Paul and the disciples who used his name wrote their letters. Possibly the hymns were sung or recited in Christian liturgical celebrations. These wisdom-christological hymns describe the risen Christ in terms taken from the Jewish wisdom writings.

The hymn reads:

1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;¹⁶ for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

The hymn is constructed in two sections. The first, verses 15-18a, deal with Christ's pre-

existent role in creation, and the second section, verses 18b-20 deal with his role in redemption. Another way of expressing the themes of the two sections would be to say that the movement of the poem is from his role in the old creation to his role in the new creation. We do not know who the writer of the poem was. It is possible it was Paul, but unlikely. Probably the writer was an unknown Jewish Christian, who took various qualities of Sophia and applied them to Christ in his relation to the cosmos. In its original form the hymn probably envisaged a disruption in cosmic harmony, and saw Christ as the divine agent in creation but now also the divine agent in reconciliation, restoring harmony to the cosmos.

The line that describes Christ as the image of God is influenced by the wisdom literature rather than the Genesis literature where Adam is the image of God. The word *eikon* is used in conjunction with the phrase ‘the firstborn of creation’, taking us back to the Proverbs text where Sophia claimed that she was the first of Yahweh’s works. ‘Firstborn of creation’ is used not to indicate temporal priority, but priority of rank and the guarantee of a future harvest, as it were. In Greek the word for firstborn is *prototokos*. The word was employed frequently in the Greek Old Testament to indicate not simply temporal priority but sovereignty of rank. Thus Christ, as the firstborn of creation, guarantees all future creation and as the firstborn from the dead, he guarantees the resurrection of all believers. According to Col 1:15-16, therefore, Christ is sovereign over creation, first within creation, and the divine agent of creation. His role in redemption is paralleled with the theme of creation. The praise of Christ’s supremacy over the church as his body matches the praise of his supremacy over the realm of creation. When Christ is called the beginning, the term ‘firstborn from the dead’ signifies that it is his position in the new creation that is intended. He is to be pre-eminent in everything in the new creation on account of his resurrection

from the dead. As the pre-existent agent of creation and the one in whom the fullness of God dwells, he spans the distance between God and the world of humanity, just as Sophia spans the distance between the creator and the world of humankind. The Old Testament Sophia and the New Testament Christ are the manifestations of the divine in the world of humans.

While many more New Testament passages are influenced by the wisdom literature, the final one I want to look at is the Prologue to the Gospel of John.

The Prologue reads:

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was in the beginning with God.³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of humankind, but of God.¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.¹⁵ (John testified to him and cried out, ‘This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’)¹⁶ From his fullness we have

all received, grace upon grace.¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

In the fourth Gospel the masculine Greek term *logos*, meaning the word, has replaced the feminine term, wisdom, or Sophia. In the ancient world the *Logos* was considered to be the principle of reason pervading the entire cosmos and it was thought of as a male principle. Yet, while wisdom became subsumed into the *Logos*, the self-same categories used of Sophia are applied to Christ. One reason for the masculine *logos* is to fit the male historical Jesus, although there is no sound theological reason for doing so. The concept of wisdom is a theological one and need not have been shifted to suit the historical male Jesus. At the same time, however, the Gospel writer uses categories of wisdom even as he speaks of Jesus as the *logos*, that is, the word.

Thus in the Prologue Jesus comes forth from God and all things came into being through him. We have seen that this is Sophia's role in Proverbs. In Baruch, Israel is warned to walk towards the shining of Sophia's light, or she will be given to the Gentiles. In the Prologue Jesus is described as the light who has come into the world, but is rejected by his own people. He is described as having tented among his own. In Sirach, the Creator commands Sophia to pitch her tent among the people of Israel. In the Prologue to John Jesus is described as the one who has the Father's glory and makes it manifest to human beings. In the Wisdom of Solomon it is Sophia who is a pure emanation of the glory of God. As Raymond Brown, the noted Johannine scholar, says,

In the Old Testament presentation of Wisdom, there are good parallels for almost every detail of the Prologue's description of the Word...Jesus is divine Wisdom, pre-existent, but now come among [people] to teach them and give them life.¹⁴

The wisdom themes continue in the rest of

the Gospel. In the Old Testament Sophia is the one who teaches people of the things that are above, she utters truth, she gives instructions as to what pleases God, and she leads people to life and immortality. In the Fourth Gospel these are the functions of Jesus as the one who reveals the Father, the one who is the way, the truth and the life. Sophia uses symbols of bread, water and wine, and invites people to eat and drink. Jesus uses these symbols for his revelation, but those who eat and drink of Sophia's bread and wine hunger and thirst for more, whereas those who partake of Jesus' food and drink never hunger or thirst again. Sophia's disciples are referred to as her children or her friends. In John's gospel the disciples of Jesus are called his children or his friends.

While 'word of God' is the preferred term for Jesus in John's Gospel, it need not continue to carry its ancient masculine overtones. There is a connection between word and wisdom made also in the wisdom literature. In the Wisdom of Solomon 9:1-4 Solomon addresses God thus:

O God...who..made all things by your word
And by your wisdom ..formed humankind,
.....
Give me the wisdom who sits by your throne.

It is the nature of biblical poetry that the first line is synonymous with the second line. Thus in these two lines 'wisdom' and 'word' are equated. It is through God's word or wisdom that all things are created. Again in Sirach 24 wisdom tells us that she 'came forth from the mouth of the most high', imagery that evokes the concept of 'word'. By the usage of both terms, word and wisdom, in parallelism, the gender borders disintegrate or deconstruct.

There are numerous other places in the New Testament where Jesus is equated with Wisdom. He is couched in wisdom terms in particular in Romans, Corinthians and the Gospel of Matthew, but the examples are too numerous to deal with here. Enough has been said to show that when the New Testament writers sought categories to describe the eter-

nal word of God become incarnate on earth in the person of Jesus, they found appropriate categories in Sophia. In conclusion therefore, I would now like to draw out the significance of the wisdom texts I have been dealing with and sum up the way in which God is presented as Wisdom, both in the New and Old Testaments.

Conclusion

In the great wisdom poems I have explored, Sophia is much more than a simple literary personification of an attribute of God. As Elizabeth Johnson says,

Sophia is a female personification of God's own being in creative and saving involvement with the world. The chief reason for arriving at this interpretation is the functional equivalence between the deeds of Sophia and those of the biblical God. What she does is already portrayed elsewhere in the Scriptures as the field of action of Israel's God under the revered, unpronounceable name (YHWH), Adonai, the Lord.¹⁵

What, then, do the personification texts tell us about the nature of God and why is specifically the personification of God's wisdom that is revelatory?

First, they can call our attention to the existence of a significant body of biblical texts which depict God in female imagery. These texts are not small isolated verses but whole chapters of biblical books and indeed complete books of the bible. To ignore these books and conceive of God in solely male imagery is tantamount to denying an important aspect of the revelation of the nature of the divine. These texts from the ancient world offer us feminine imagery of God which is not confined to mothering and nurturing roles. Sophia is creator, saviour, scientist, organizer, and philosopher. The breadth of her descriptions means that we have access to a body of sacred texts which present God in female imagery that is not stereo-typical, but traverses gender barriers.

Second, it seems to me that the question of why it is specifically God's wisdom that is

personified and revelatory is tied to the connection the texts have with creation theology. Von Rad was not wrong in his connection with wisdom and the order in creation, although he did not go far enough. It is specifically wisdom that is personified because it is in the realm of the created world that God's wisdom is at work and is to be made known to humankind. In the English translations of John's Gospel we are told that the Word came to what was his own and his own people did not accept him. In Greek the text indicates that the Word came to his own home. We often talk of the word made flesh and think rightly in terms of the second person of the Trinity becoming incarnate and thereby taking on board all that makes us human, yet how often do we think of the world as a place where God feels at home precisely because it has been made by God?

Often these personification texts come in the deuterocanonical literature. Not all Christian traditions include these books in their canon of Scripture and those that do often marginalize these texts through neglect. It is in these books, and in particular in the Wisdom of Solomon, that the feminine image of God, Sophia, is most clearly expressed. The books are revelatory of the nature of God but also of the nature of all creation as the home of God. It is vital that the books take a central place in our consciousness if we are not to lose sight of what they tell us of the nature of God and the world.

My final point is that it is appropriate that poetry, the highest form of language, should be the vehicle for the texts about Sophia. Through the poems Sophia calls for a response from those she addresses. To answer her call is to answer the invitation of the God she reveals. Later Christian writers, in the light of Jesus Christ, drew theological implications from these texts that were at one and the same time cognizant of her divine status and yet forgetful or even contemptuous of the feminine imagery. As such, they replaced her with the Logos, male principle of reason. Because of the equivalence made in the wisdom literature

between word and wisdom, both terms can be read inclusively.

There is an ambiguity in the Sophia texts which means that she stands up to no clear-cut definition. Perhaps that is why she comes to us in poetry. At times she refers to God as her creator, at other times she is begotten of God and yet again she is present with God at creation. There are texts where she is to be found by those who seek her and in other texts, such as Job 28, only God knows the way to her. She dwells in the highest heavens, yet she pitches her tent in Israel. When all the texts are explored, our analysis completed and our

theology articulated, the mystery of God is never exhausted and Sophia remains elusive. Solomon desired that when he entered his house he would find rest and companionship with Sophia. While a beautiful and appealing image, it is a stereo-typical one of the woman waiting at home for the man to return. A more appropriate image I would like to leave you with is one of the God, not domesticated in the home of the wise King Solomon, but the God who is the artist, the philosopher and the scientist and who delights in each one of us and in her work of creation as she reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other.

NOTES

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THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY

MARIE T. FARRELL RSM

UNTIL QUITE recently the Catholic dogma of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven has been a sign of contradiction among various post-Reformation Christian denominations. However, the final statement from the Anglican-Roman Catholic (ARCIC II) committee has helped remove common misunderstandings of the meaning of this dogma.¹ Of course, belief in the doctrine of Mary's Assumption *per se* has never been problematic for Orthodox Christians; rather Catholic teaching concerning papal primacy and infallibility is where problems arose for Orthodox theology when the doctrine of the Assumption was raised to the status of dogma in 1950. Before attempting to address a request to discuss the theological underpinnings of the Assumption, it is necessary to signal a number of 'contextual' factors.

Popular Piety before Theology

As happened with regard to the declaration of the Immaculate Conception as a Catholic dogma (P. Pius IX, 1854) so too with the Assumption of Mary (P. Pius XII, 1950), popular piety and devotion to Mary ran well ahead of theological interpretation. Confronted with numerous heresies, theologians of the early centuries of the Church's history were concerned with developing theologies of Jesus as the Christ (Christology) and with the meaning of the Holy Trinity. The first formal marian dogma extolling Mary as the *Theotókos* (literally the God-Bearer or Mother of God) testified explicitly to the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word-made-flesh. The 'mind' of the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.) was to proclaim *de fide* the hypostatic union of the hu-

man and the divine in Christ, and not to focus on Mary-in-herself. However, long before 431 A.D. marian veneration was securely rooted in the 'mind' of the Faithful as Christian culture evolved. From the time of the Apostolic Tradition itself, veneration of Mary sprang from the *sensus fidelium* about the person of Jesus as the Christ.² This pattern of devotion before theological interpretation continued with regard to the two 'recent' marian dogmas.

Mary's Assumption: History or Mystery?

The development of critical methods in scriptural scholarship during the twentieth century has severely challenged pious belief in the precise historical nature of the Assumption. As this doctrine takes us into the realm of religious symbol and mystery, any naive literalism as to its meaning prevents proper interpretation of how the ultimate destiny of Mary may be understood only within the mysteries of Christ and the Church.

For a sound theological appreciation, the mystery of the Assumption must be coupled with the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Moreover, this coupling must be recognized as involving the development of doctrine from faith in Mary's divine motherhood. Together the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption form an inclusion that inserts both the beginning and the end (and, naturally, with everything in between) of the life of Mary into the total mysterious action of God in Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Both mysteries allow for our real and symbolic participation in the mystery of the Incarnation.

The Assumption: from Pious Legend to Liturgical Celebration

Belief in the doctrine of the Assumption and expressed in imaginative, mythopoetic ways had developed from as early as the second century. After the restoration of Jerusalem by the Emperor Constantine in the late third century, and after the building of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the fourth century, the supposed tomb of Mary near the garden of Gethsemane became a pilgrim site for remembering the 'Falling Asleep' (*Dormition*) of Mary. As no relics of Mary were ever discovered, apocryphal legends (derived from Greek, Coptic, Ethiopian, Arabic, Armenian and Latin sources) began to circulate about how she died in the presence of the apostles, except for Thomas, and how at his arrival in Jerusalem, the tomb was found to be empty and filled with beautiful flowers.³ Such legends have provided an abundant source of inspiration for the many iconographic depictions of Mary's assumption.

Liturgical celebration spread from Jerusalem to the Mediterranean world quite quickly. In the eighth century St. John Damascene preached his three famous sermons in Jerusalem for the Vigil and Feast of the Assumption (c. 727A.D.). Sermon 1 expresses the belief of the Church that after Mary's death and burial:

Thy soul did not descend into Limbo, neither did thy flesh see corruption. Thy pure and spotless body was not left in the earth, but the abode of the Queen, of God's true mother, was fixed in the heavenly kingdom alone.⁴

Visitors to Jerusalem today continue to celebrate Mary's being taken into heaven at an Orthodox as well as at a Catholic pilgrim site.

Development of Contemporary Theology of the Assumption

Before taking up the idea of the symbolic function of Mary's Assumption, it is useful to sketch briefly how interpretation of this doc-



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trine took on a fresh impetus after the definition of the Immaculate Conception.

Phase 1 (1854-1950): The Assumption was interpreted as representing a final privilege because of the sinlessness of the Mother of God. A privilege centered theology vested Mary with a certain extrinsic and a-historical quality of such uniqueness that, in practice, she was virtually put into a theological 'exile' with respect to the rest of the Faithful! Despite the apocryphal traditions, this was the time when there was debate about whether Mary actually experienced physical death or not.⁵ It was only in 1950 that the debate came to rest in favour of the 'mortalist' theologians. Even so, the formal decree, *Munificentissimus Deus*, of P. Pius XI left the matter of Mary's mortality as an open question:

We pronounce, declare and define it to be a dogma divinely revealed that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was run, was assumed in body and soul to heavenly glory.⁶

Phase 2 (1950-1964) saw a departure from concentration on the 'singularity' of Mary in favour of a theology that interpreted her life in relationship with humanity as a whole and on how, as human beings, we are able to experience the fruits of Christ's saving work. The mystery of Mary's life and vocation was acknowledged as 'a free destiny open to the sometimes unexpected orientations of the Spirit'.⁷ Eminent Catholic theologians⁸ taught that the complete experience of salvation appropriated to Mary in the doctrine of the Assumption was normative for the whole Church,

rather than its being a private exaltation of Mary alone. This was the time when theology of human destiny in Christ (eschatology) was gathering strength; Mary was acknowledged as typifying the bodily redemption of the whole Church.⁹

Vatican Council II (1962-65) adopted the theology of ‘universalising’ the Assumption. The titles of the sub-sections of *Lumen Gentium*, chapter 8, illustrate this very well: ‘Mary as Sign of Sure Hope and of Solace for God’s People in Pilgrimage’, ‘The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Economy of Salvation’ and ‘The Blessed Virgin Mary and the Church’.

Phase 3 (1964-mid 1970s) continued to follow Vatican II’s method of situating Mary’s Assumption within the entire economy of salvation. Marian theologians¹⁰ continued the trajectory of interpreting the final destiny of the *Theotókos* in an ecclesially communal manner. Appreciation of Mary’s place in the communion of saints led to heightened theological interest in the transforming nature of human death, in the nature of Christian hope and in Heaven as a symbol of fullness of life, vision and love surpassing the wildest human imaginings. It led also to how an enhanced recognition of the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church must be included in marian theology generally. Such ‘fresh’ insertion of the role of the Spirit into Assumption theology served to underscore the fact that the full meaning of sanctification and transformation to ‘glory’ in Mary’s case, followed upon a life of grace entirely open to the Holy Spirit.

Since the 70’s, and in keeping with the mind of *Lumen Gentium*: 8 (n. 54) that marian dogmatic statements are open to development in interpretation, Catholic theologians have contributed much to a contemporary theology of the Assumption. In particular I would draw readers’ attention to Elizabeth Johnson’s work, *Truly Our Sister: a Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (2003) and to Tony Kelly’s discussion of the Assumption within theological reflection about heaven in *Touch-*

ing on the Infinite (1991).

Christian Discipleship—a Key to the Symbolic Nature of the Assumption

Since the mid-70s a theology of ‘symbol’ has emerged as a fruitful ‘tool’ for allowing one to become, as it were, an ‘insider’ to mysteries of faith—to participate in the reality of what is being symbolized. The primordial Christian symbol is Christ, the Word-made-flesh in the Incarnation, who is now Risen Lord in glory. As symbol, the Church herself originates in the Christ-event of history. Because of her intimate role in the Christ-event through the Spirit, Mary can be considered as a symbol of the Church, of the community of all who have been baptized into Christ. In a work earlier than the one mentioned above, Johnson has argued that theological statements about Mary also have symbolic value for, she says:

Marian statements originate in the imaginative faculty of the community brought into being by the Christ-event and are uttered as expressions of its search for self-understanding in faithful and creative response (one of its members assumes corporate personality in reflecting back to the community its own gift and task).¹¹

Because the dogma of the Assumption lacks both historical and explicitly scriptural foundations, contemporary marian theology has pursued study of how the scriptural theme of ‘discipleship’ can, symbolically and through Mary’s place in the Church, involve our own destiny for ‘glory’.

We learn the qualities of Christian discipleship from the Gospels. His disciples follow Christ in faith, have a communion of friendship with him and allow themselves to be compelled to live according to his vision – a vision completed for Christ in the mystery of his Ascension to ‘glory’ at the ‘right hand of the Father’ from whence the Spirit of Pentecost is released upon the world in a new way. Gospel discipleship calls us to hear the Word and to live the Word; it challenges us to be servants of the Word and to work towards fur-

thering the Reign of God in the world.

Among the synoptic evangelists, it is Luke who best presents Mary as the true disciple. She is the one who hears the Word, who struggles to discern the Word, is freely and generously open to receive the Word, who ponders the demands of the Word and is faithful in responding to its challenges (Lk 1:26-38; 8:19-21). Because of the sophisticated Christology already developed by the mid-80s of the first century and is represented clearly in the Gospel of Luke, the figure of Mary is deftly portrayed as a symbol of the Church. She is set amongst the *anawim*, the 'little poor ones of Yahweh', whose hopes rest firmly in God alone because their dearth of worldly prosperity leaves them free and unencumbered to know the blessings of God. Mary's *fiat* to the angel Gabriel encompasses the spirit of the *anawim* who are so accurately described by the prophet Zephaniah (c 640-630 B.C.):

On that day you shall not be put to shame because of all the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I shall remove from your midst your proudly exalted ones, and you shall no longer be haughty on my holy mountain. For I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord... (Zeph 3:11-12)

Struggling with experiences of an apparently absent God, much like the experience of the Church in today's context, Zephaniah kept hope alive in the promise that the *anawim* would be heard by God, and that they would surely know the presence of God in their midst. His 'Song of Joy' (Zeph 3:14-20) directed at the Daughter of Zion, stirs memories that were given voice in Mary's *Magnificat* so carefully woven into the narrative of Mary's visitation to Elizabeth (Lk 1:39-56). This great 'cry of the poor' received by the Church as a Mary-prayer in the first instance, is obviously Luke's way of preparing his own troubled community to live out the quality of discipleship represented by Mary. As a disciple-prayer, the *Magnificat* also stirs up memories of Hannah, the mother of Samuel: *My heart exults in the*

Lord; my strength is exalted in my God...I delight in your salvation (1 Sam 2:1-2). The recognition of Mary's 'humble state' (Lk 1:38) echoes the same sentiment found in Hannah's reverent awe in the presence of a God who is holy and merciful (1 Sam 1:11). While there are many other *anawim* memories from the Old Testament to be gathered as indicative of Mary's discipleship, a challenge here might be to plumb the depths of the final versicles of the *Magnificat* with their striking emphases on the reversal of worldly values in order to enjoy the promise made to Abraham and Sarah, our ancestors in the faith.

Further insight into the meaning of the discipleship of the mother of Jesus is presented in the Gospel according to John. Here we meet the Woman whose influence inaugurated the Hour of Jesus at Cana of Galilee (Jn 2:1-11); here too, we meet the Woman and the Beloved Disciple standing beneath the Cross of Jesus on Calvary when the Hour of Jesus is accomplished and where the Church is 'gathered' symbolically to receive an outpouring of the Spirit in the final breath of Jesus (Jn 19:25-30).¹²

When the Assumption of Mary is approached within the richness of discipleship-theology, the person of Mary is appreciated as being in solidarity with all who are journeying in faith towards their destiny in Christ for:

[W]e know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Rom 8:28-30)

The 'Mind' of P. Pius XII

Following the declaration of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, petitions for the dogmatic status of the Assumption began

to flow into Rome—over nine million of them in total. These petitions are well documented.¹³ Pius XII's devotion to Mary and his desire for definitive acknowledgement of the Assumption were well known. In the aftermath of the horrific slaughter of World War II that culminated with Hiroshima, the Pope wished to offer new hope to a world so lately involved in genocide. In declaring that the Assumption was to be 'of faith' to Catholics, the Pope wished to emphasise that human life was never to be reckoned as 'cheap', that the whole of humanity is, in faith, destined for 'glory'. Because in the act of extending Tradition, the Pope needed to be certain of the consensus among Catholics that this marian doctrine was faithful to the 'deposit of faith', he issued an encyclical (*Deiparae Virginis*, May 1, 1946) asking the Bishops of the world two questions (i) if it would be proper to define this pious belief as an act of faith and (ii) whether this definition were indeed desired by the universal Church. In fact there were six dissenters who could not accept that the Assumption of Mary was 'revealed truth'. Sixteen other respondents thought that the definition would be ill-timed. The Pope concluded that the results of the survey constituted universal agreement and indicated a genuine *sensus fidelium*. On October 30, 1950, Pius XII held a semi-public consistory attended by the College of Cardinals and hundreds of Bishops from the entire world.¹⁴ At this meeting he indicated the extent of consultation, study and discernment that had gone into a final decision for solemn definition. The pastoral intention behind this 'people's doctrine' was stated in part of the prayer closing the Pope's allocution:

May she[Mary] obtain from her divine son that peace which is based, as on a most solid foundation, on the tranquility of right order, on the just treatment of citizens and peoples, on the liberty and dignity due to all, may finally return to shine among nations and peoples at present divided to the common detriment. (*Nostis profecto*, n 5.)

The Definition, Munificentissimus Deus
(*The Most Bountiful God...*)

The day chosen for the solemn definition was the Feast of All Saints! How wonderfully appropriate to celebrate the cosmic dimension of the mystery! The official records describe the event: 'In a memorably brilliant outdoor ceremony, from his throne in front of the façade of St. Peter's, in the presence of hundreds and thousands of the Faithful who overflowed the vast square in front of the Vatican basilica, His Holiness, Pope Pius XII, solemnly declared the dogma as an article of faith.'

The full text of *Munificentissimus Deus* is too long to cite here, however a few points should be noted. Quite clearly Assumption theology is based upon Mary's dignity as the *Theotókos*. Testimony as to historical evidence regarding the continuity of belief is provided from patristic, mediaeval and later scholars who collectively situate the Assumption within a broad scriptural and ecclesial context – something that has been particularly significant for recent ecumenical dialogue. Thus, the 2006 ARCIC statement, *Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ*, has been able to state that 'the teaching that God has taken the Blessed Virgin Mary in the fullness of her person into his glory as consonant with Scripture and that it can, indeed, only be understood in the light of Scripture.' (n.60) Notwithstanding the fact that the wording of the decree is weighted towards a theology of 'privilege', there is recognition that the Assumption of Mary is 'of blessed profit to human society'—that while 'the illusory teachings of materialism and consequent corruption of morals threaten to extinguish the light of virtue...' there is hope that faith in Mary's being taken into glory by God, will strengthen our belief in the credal confession of resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

* * *

Liturgical Celebration of the Assumption of Mary

The celebration of August 15th, of Mary's whole person being taken by God¹⁵ into eternal life remains a holy day 'of obligation' in Australia. The liturgy of the feast provides an excellent source for gathering 'theological underpinnings'. The Vigil readings from the first Book of Chronicles and the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians along with the responsorial Psalm 131, together point to the prophetic dimension of the life of Mary—she is a living Ark of the Covenant, the desired dwelling place of God, the one whose death 'has been swallowed up in victory' through Jesus Christ her son. The Gospel is simply one sentence from Luke 11:27-29; she is proclaimed as the perfect disciple:

As Jesus was speaking, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said: 'Happy the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked!' But he replied, 'Still happier are those who hear the word of God and keep it.'

The first reading of the Liturgy of the Day associates Mary with the ancient figure of the Church, the pregnant Woman of the Apocalypse 'clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet and crowned with twelve stars', whose newborn son was rescued from the great red dragon and taken with her by God to a heavenly place a safety. What powerful Mary-Church symbolism! The second reading from 1 Corinthians 20-26 also places Mary within the Church, within the company of all members of Christ who is the first-fruits *of all* who have fallen asleep in death.¹⁶ Selections from Ps 44 proclaim Mary as the Daughter-Queen who 'gives ear' to God's words and who is joyously escorted with her retinue to the palace of the King. The Gospel (Lk 1:39-56) takes us with the pregnant Mary into the hill country of Judah to the home of Elizabeth and Zachary where she receives (and the Church receives again year by year...) the blessing of Elizabeth, 'Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would

be fulfilled.' Then, how better to enter liturgically into the spirit of the feast than to hear the words of Mary's *Magnificat* on the lips of the Church?

Conclusion

In attempting to address theological 'underpinnings' for the mystery of the Assumption of Mary, we have emphasized that all marian theology is Christological and Ecclesial in intent. Exultation of the Mother of God is never directed to Mary-in-herself. Within the Catholic 'hierarchy of truths' marian dogmas stand in relationship 'under' the central truths upon which Christian faith is founded and are given verbal expression in the great Creeds of the Church.¹⁷ It is useful to remember that a definitive text such as *Munificentissimus Deus* is time bound; it reflects sensitivities of the mid-twentieth century. While the formula of definition itself is 'set', so to speak, its theological interpretation has been developed in succeeding years. We know from the history of its inception about the meaning lying *behind* the text; we have tried here to explore the meaning on our side, *in front* of the text. In 'receiving' the Assumption of Mary as an article of faith, contemporary theologians have sought to 'unpack' its meaning in terms of Christian life, death, of human and cosmic destiny in Christ.

[Mary's] Assumption nourishes hope with an assurance that our nature and our history have already, in her, reached their term. She embodies the reality of our world as having received into itself the mystery that is to transform the universe in its entirety.¹⁸

Mary assumed into heaven and *Spiritualised* in her whole personhood is a prophetic symbol of hope for us all. In his Resurrection-Ascension, Jesus has shown the way to eternal life. In the mystery of Assumption, the Church sees Mary as the first disciple of many to be graced with a future already opened by Christ, one that defies comprehension for '...no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him...' (1 Cor 2: 9)

NOTES

1 See Marie Farrell, 'Ecumenical Consensus on Mary', *Compass*: 41 (2007), 37-38.

2 See Marie Farrell, 'Ancient Marian Piety: Testimony to the Doctrine of the Incarnation', *Australasian Catholic Record* lxxvi:4, 1999, 449-461.

3 A number of these texts are now available in English. See Daniel Rops, *The Book of Mary* (1960), 192-214

4 Mary H. Allies, *St John Damascene on Images followed by three Sermons on the Assumption* (London: Thomas Baker, 1898) 147-211. Literal translation of the Greek into English.

5 A debate sparked by Rom 5:12, that 'death has spread to all people because of sin'.

6 Literal translation: cf. DZ 3800-3804.

7 Rene Laurentin, *Queen of Heaven: a Short Treatise in Marian Theology* (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1956), 10.

8 Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeekx, Otto Semmelroth *et al.*

9 Note focus on the 'whole' human person (body, soul & spirit) vs. the philosophical idea that the 'body' is merely an 'instrument' of the soul.

10 Donal Flanagan, Hugh McElwain *et al.*

11 Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'The Symbolic Character of Theological Statements about Mary', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 22:2 (1985), 324.

12 For meditation on the role of the Mother of Jesus as Disciple in Gospel IV, see Francis J. Moloney sdb, *Mary, Woman and Mother* (Homebush: St Paul Publications, 1988), 31-55.

13 G. Hentrich & R.G. de Moss, *Petitiones De Assumptione Corporea B.V. Mariae in Caelum Definienda Sedem Delatae* (Vatikan, 1942).

14 See William J. Doheny & Joseph P. Kelly (Compilers), *Papal Documents on Mary* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1954), 215-219.

15 While the Assumption is theologically analogous to the Ascension of Jesus, the mode of glorification is passive in Mary's case; Jesus' ascent was by virtue of his own power.

16 Emphasis mine.

17 See Vatican II's Decree on Ecumenism (n 11) for teaching on the 'Hierarchy of Truths'.

18 Tony Kelly, *Touching on the Infinite* (Blackburn Vic.:Collins Dove, 1991), 213.

Therefore, having directed humble and repeated prayers to God, and having invoked the light of the Spirit of Truth; to the glory of almighty God who has bestowed his special bounty on the Virgin Mary, for the honour of his Son the immortal King of ages and victor over sin and death, for the greater glory of his august mother, and for the joy and exultation of the whole Church; by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we proclaim, declare and define as a dogma revealed by God: the Immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, when the course of her earthly life was ended, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven.

Wherefore, if anyone—which God forbid—should wilfully dare to deny or call in doubt what has been defined by us, let him know that he certainly has abandoned the divine and Catholic faith.

—Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, 1950.

A TRADITION OF HOPEFUL INTELLIGENCE

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition

ANTHONY J. KELLY, CSsR

This article reflects on the ways Christian hope affects intelligence. Without the sustaining influence of hope, intelligence suffers. With it, intelligence can overcome diffidence in the search for truth, and contribute more creatively to the common good. Christian intelligence, deriving from the wisdom of the cross, anticipates both an ultimate fulfilment and an ultimate judgment on evil. The article concludes with a reflection on Christopher Dawson's analysis of the modern cultural situation.¹

IN WHAT follows, I will be bringing together what is normally kept apart, namely, the energies of hope and the activity of intelligence in working for the good society. Christian hope has, in fact, brought forth its own kind of intelligence, habits of mind and imagination, as in its theologies, philosophies, law, literature and art. But this is a critical time for both hope and intelligence. Theoretically and practically, we must, as Christians, keep on 'accounting for the hope that is within us' (1 Pet 3:15-16). This is to say, intelligence can take the path of 'hope seeks understanding' (somewhat parallel to the traditional 'faith seeking understanding' of the Anselmian adage) in the present historical, social and cultural contexts. Hope inspires and sustains its own kind of intelligence in regard to the direction of history, the meaning of the good society, and the destiny of the universe. It bears on the ultimate worthwhile-ness of the values we most cherish—including the value of intelligence and truth itself.

In the classic Thomist presentation expressed in terms of an Aristotelian form of faculty psychology, hope is not, technically speaking, an intellectual virtue, but resides in the will.² On the other, hand a broader considera-

tion of human consciousness would suggest that hope in all its forms, all the way from an elemental passion or emotion,³ right up to the theological virtues, underlies all aspects of life, above all the hard labour to understand and to come to the truth and to reach its practical implications in our social conduct. Hope preforms and conditions the way we understand. It amplifies the scope of that understanding and gives confidence in the truthfulness or real bearing of our intellectual activity.

Notion of Hope

All life is to some degree is an uphill struggle, a *bonum arduum*, even for animal life intent on survival. Hope, in all its registers, implies a trustful and confident movement toward the future. It is trustful, for it is relying on something or someone for the help that is needed. Whatever the evils that threaten, hope anticipates an escape or release into a fuller dimension of life. It is always about a movement forward. While it is not always easy to find words for what we are hoping for, at very least hope is moving from defeat, danger or despair to something more positive. It shows a certain defiance: the future has to be more than the

present. Hope outstrips what can be controlled and planned for, and senses, however implicitly, that, hidden in the present, there is a promise that can and will be kept.

Indeed, our ultimate life-form, the life of grace, is impossibly uphill without a God-given gift by which we can rely on God for the final attainment of the divine purpose for all creation. St Thomas Aquinas, along with Christian tradition generally, understands hope in this manner. It relies on God to achieve what faith reveals and charity most desires.⁴ Because of its God-given and God-directed character, hope is classified among the 'theological virtues'.⁵ The adjective, 'theological', when applied to faith, hope and charity, is used to contrast what is within the natural scope of human action. Hence, in line with Aquinas' description, theological hope is for the good—in fact the supreme good of God.⁶ Yet it is a future good, since we are not yet united to God in the face-to-face vision of eternal life. In this regard, hope deals with a possible good, since eternal life is exactly what God has promised. Nonetheless, hope is concerned with a difficult good. To desire the good that is promised as the supreme goal of our existence is a choice. It involves what is experienced as a risk. It means choosing the greatest good over lesser goods. And this choice is made in the context of a certain tension. An idolatrous bias towards the attractions of power, pleasure, possessions or an all-permissive nihilism has radically affected human history. Hence, the theological virtue of hope sustains the courage necessary to rely on God alone for the fulfillment of the divine promise.

A Dwindling Hope?

But hope, in whatever form, seems to be becoming a non-renewable resource. The fund of trust and confidence that our different cultures once had has dwindled. There is an oppressive dearth of good news. Our staple media diet is largely one of doom-laden reports and the record of death, violence and catastrophe of



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one kind or another. Given the dire predictions concerning the world economy, the ecological well-being of the planet, to say nothing of the intractability of peace-making efforts in many regions, the path to the future seems increasingly arduous: the good intended seems less possible and more uphill...

Because of this depressed cultural mood, basic human experiences which once held their own promise are now far more ambiguous. Marriage and family, for instance, were once the sturdy inter-generational basis of a confident world. But in that area now problems multiply. The fragility of human relationships is evidenced in divorce and family breakdowns in most cultures. There is overpopulation in some regions and increasing sterility in others. In the West, ageing populations shuffle from retirement villages to nursing homes, there to contemplate their end, often in sad isolation. A 'happy families' view of things seems hopelessly naïve.

Many once entered the professions, say, of education, science, medicine, law, politics, media or business with youthful enthusiasm. These were motivated by high ideals of serving and protecting society. Not uncommonly, people now feel trapped in enormous networks of contrary influences. Their confidence in doing something worthwhile for society is undermined by quite radical questions: Who, or what, am I working for? What possible difference can my contribution make? And, of course, the postmodern situation almost forbids one to ask, How can I ever know anything? A loss of cultural self-confidence

reaches into intelligence itself.

Refined planning skills can express a great deal of what needs to be done in a determined context. But planning by itself cannot do much about changing human beings, if only for the reason that it leaves out the ultimate questions of human destiny. The greater the vision of a good society, the more it is faced with the question of how the human heart can be transformed. Despite the good will and intelligence of the participants, no ‘peace process’, no ‘Justice and Reconciliation Commission’, is assured of a happy conclusion.

Effects on intelligence

With the present celebration of the cultural differences, common intellectual or moral criteria are hard to find. The promotion of human rights remains one of the noblest carriers of hope for a community of justice and personal dignity. Yet even this is imperiled. A consumerist world favours an endless litigious catalogue of ‘my rights against all others’. As a result, the common good is interpreted in an increasingly solipsistic and fragmented manner. A good society looks more like a truce amongst the selfish rather than a self-transcending concern for the good of all, especially the most defenceless.

French intellectuals of a previous generation became appalled at the murderous impracticability of the Marxism they had so promoted and exported. They concluded that since this ‘grand narrative’ no longer worked, and that all big stories and all great hopes were oppressive. The restless, darting intelligence of a Derrida, say, was ever busy assuring us that reality, whatever we thought it to be, was ‘otherwise’. Still, there is a constructive side to this.⁷ Deconstruction removes the immobilism of big systems and allows for a fresh conversation between hitherto excluded others.⁸ In some ways, intelligence is freed, to play unhampered; but if diffidence and even despair over ever coming to the truth is the presupposition, then any new conversation, however

lively, leads to a deeper intellectual depression.

Add to this the extremely bleak views represented by some Nobel Laureates in science, such as Jacques Monod⁹ and Stephen Weinberg. The latter writes, ‘The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless. The effort to understand the universe is one of the very few things that lifts human a little above the level of farce, and gives it some of the grace of tragedy’.¹⁰ Mix this cosmological gloom with the superficial simplicities of much of the media, and the future would seem not to belong to intelligence, nor would intelligence have much of a bearing on the future.

We ask, then, how this diminishment of hope affects our ways of understanding, and the very scope of the questions we consider worth asking? When the evils are so obvious, the language of hope seems too good to be true. And yet, the gods of progress promised so much; but *this* is what they delivered. As a result, the deepest self remains unemployed, depressively wandering in an irrational world with nowhere to go.

Legal and Social Effects

The traditional definition of law was picked up by Aquinas and examined in each of components: a determination of reason for the common good, made and promulgated by whoever had responsibility for the community (*dictamen rationis ob bonum commune ab eo qui curam communitatis habet promulgata*).¹¹ I must leave to expert judgment how much the making of law has become a counsel of despair rather than a *dictamen rationis*, that is, a practical determination of reason on behalf of the common good. But we can wonder about what kind of reason is at work in contemporary law-making. Is it veering toward an arbitrary imposition of a political correctness that owes little to the elaboration of reason—or at least to reason enlivened with a comprehensive sense of proportion and sense of the

whole. Has the transcendent value of reason, a participation in a universal order of intelligence and value, been replaced by the will of the majority or the effectiveness of a pressure group? The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) was a noble achievement. But, as its framers admitted, it left open the question of who was responsible for the implementation of such rights.¹² With no reasoned grounding of universal human rights in a universally shared responsibility, rights language can appear oddly abstract and uncontrolled in its extensions. Endless disillusioning complexities have resulted. In a different perspective, the old legal axioms expressed in such phrases as 'innocent until proved guilty' seem to proceed from a deeply hopeful understanding. But now with the enormous censorious power of the media, guilt, rather than innocence, is taken for granted. Moreover, it used to be said that 'hard cases make bad laws'. But now a hard case, or at least a dramatic one, places a demand on the legal structures to come up with a new law. Does not this increase the prospect of more bad laws, with precious little of 'reason' in them? Then, there was the grandly confident axiom, *lex non curat de minimis*—that is, the law does not consider slight or purely individual matters. The self-referential litigiousness of today finds that hard to swallow. Have 'the slight matters', not the great, transcendent values at the foundation of society, become the driving force?

The common good, for its part, presupposes a dynamic confluence of self-transcending personal values. These are ideally evidenced in faith and art, in all the deeper reaches of culture. Such values find expression in a workable politics and the economic structuring of the social reality, and thus extend into life of families and schools, hospitals and universities. Ideally, these values motivate government and business, science and scholarship and all the uses of practical intelligence to achieve the concrete, possible good, now and for the future. The self-transcending respon-

sibilities of a good society would also include the vital values of public and individual health, along with a wholesome environment within a sustainable ecological ambience.

In short, the good of society presupposes the rationality of values. They are inscribed in the objective order of the human good by the self-transcending capacities of human subjects—not simply as good feelings, but as determining rational judgments and decisions on the nature of society and its good. Not only are values rational; there is the value of rationality itself, a confidence in our capacities to find, tell, and apply the truth.

A hopeful intelligence is realistic. Given the contrast between, say, the noble conception of human rights and the self-serving virus of litigiousness, it is clear that our world is not populated by archangels; and even if saints occupied the high places of government in any domain, there would be clash of viewpoints regarding priorities, and the conditions in which the freedom of the less angelic or the less saintly should be respected, tolerated, restrained or punished. Evil has its strange parasitical attachment to any good we do, especially if we pursue it impatiently to the detriment of a prudent discernment of the concrete situation, its possibilities and its limits.

As Christians we believe that we live already in the light of an immense transformation that has occurred in human history through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, for others nothing has happened to affect 'the real world' in which violence, envy and the lust for power and possessions are the order of the day. The world has not changed, and the real world cannot change. If you want to live in that real world, then waste no time on how it is meant to be; for the issue is simply one of surviving against the odds, and loading the dice as much as possible in your favour. Hope, consequently, is dismissed as irrational attitude, divorced from that world calculation and control. From this perspective, Christian hope is peculiarly impractical, not to say self-defeating. Why should it so curi-

ously linger around the cross of an executed criminal, and then go on to speak of his resurrection in a world where the dead simply do not rise? In contrast to a hope seeking further intelligence, this flatly pragmatic, self-serving attitude comes dangerously close to despair seeking its own confirmation, and cultural depression seeking to justify its own apathy.

In that desperate perspective, the rule of law means a bigger police force, larger prisons and the unsleeping, technological surveillance of every life in its every transaction. When the recognition of human rights collapses into a welter of litigiousness, a huge haemorrhaging of social resources results. The impenetrable carapace of political bureaucracy and economic institutions, unable to envisage any good other than maintaining itself, weighs ever more heavily on freedom and exercises ever tighter controls. As Christopher Dawson pithily puts it, 'It is the great paradox of civilisation that every victory over nature, every increase of social control, also increases the burden of humanity. When man builds a fortress, he also builds a prison'.¹³

When there is no eschatological hope, no hope beyond this world as it is, freedom begins to emerge as the enemy. The transcendent values of human dignity, honesty, justice, loyalty and moral conscience are of little value in the management of society. As laws pullulate, the inevitable tendency is presumptively to criminalise every citizen and to turn even the most peaceful society into a kind of detention centre. The tensions inherent in such a culture feed a mindless adversarialism. The 'other' is automatically demonised and scapegoated. The resultant absurdity is magnified by image-obsessed media exchanges in which no one ever learns, no mind ever changes, and no one can admit to being wrong. Again, to quote Dawson,

The whole tendency of modern life is toward scientific planning and organisation, central control, standardisation and specialisation. If this tendency was left to work itself out to its extreme conclusion, one might expect to see the

state transformed into an immense social machine, all the individual components of which are strictly limited to the performance of a definite and specialised function, where there could be no freedom because the machine could only work smoothly as long as every wheel and cog performed its task with unvarying regularity. Now the nearer modern society comes to this state of total organisation, the more difficult it is to find any place for spiritual freedom and personal responsibility. Education itself becomes an essential part of the machine, for the mind has to be completely measured and controlled by the techniques of the scientific expert as the task which it is being trained to perform.¹⁴

This is to suggest that, when a culture loses its hope, it loses a good deal of its intelligence and educative power. The depressed mind, whenever it meets with a difficult situation, is already closed to the grace of a larger humanity and a more imaginative intelligence. The virtues of humility, forgiveness, compassion and religious faith, hope and charity are demeaned as impractical. When the hopeless intelligence loses so much of its cognitive power, at least in regard to unmanageable truths and values, the sense of human proportion vanishes. Only problems and unresolved grievances remain. History is reduced to a catalogue of defeats and a precarious clinging to supposed victories. The resultant despair underwrites a culture of oppressive conformity. Nothing new can happen. The good and the bad are clearly identified, and in that frozen mindset, extreme adversarialism becomes the thinking-machine of any given society. The only way forward is more oppressive control. When the resources of hope cannot be renewed, intelligence settles into a kind of psychic and social permafrost that no appeal to possibilities of community, compassion or reconciliation can melt. When unlimited technological power operates in the vacuum of intellectual diffidence, if not in nihilism, the very possibility of a human future is called into question.

* * *

A Hopeful Intellectual Tradition

The Catholic intellectual tradition, as a tradition of hopeful, creative rationality, sees things otherwise. Beyond what we have already suggested regarding the rationality of values and the value of rationality, how is this best expressed? In contrast to a bleak, oppressive outlook, the intellectual dimension of hope is always open to a larger conversation. For hope can never recover from its initial surprise: the Lord rose from the tomb. As the Spirit breathes, there is always room for more surprises; the great human conversation is never over. Hope must gently insist that no one be left out of the unending human search for our common good. Each individual brings his or her own hopes, sufferings and even guilt, to the table of life. Each is to be welcomed in the open space, beyond any human imagining, of God's saving will for the salvation of all.

Hope thus looks beyond frozen alternatives in order to refresh the human condition with the promise of a final reconciliation. People and systems can change, because something that makes all the difference has occurred. Here, hope shows its long-term patience. It accepts the reality of dialogue with different faiths, philosophies, scientific explorations and the arts. Its hope-sustained intelligence unfolds in an horizon shaped by the conviction that 'God our Saviour...desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim 2:4). Genuine intelligence is not to be feared. It has the capacity to search for, and find, truth; it is made for meaning: the universe is radically intelligible, no matter what the evils and the experience of absurdity which tempt one to despair. For the intentionality of hope, *i.e.*, a hope-enlivened intelligence, is an activity within a universe of God's one creation and its reconciliation in the cross and resurrection of Christ Jesus. God alone is the originating and final principle. There is no original or final conflicting dualism of light and darkness, good and evil, truth and absurdity. In the created universe, there is a struc-

tured and dynamic unity of relationship-in-difference which manifests itself, not in mutually contradictory principles, but in what has been called, an 'analogical imagination' (D.Tracy).

The hope-oriented understanding of the human world can appeal to the unprecedented 'eschatological' emphasis of Vatican II, as it invites intelligence to see what is most meaningful and valuable and as having a future in the transformed world to come. *Gaudium et Spes* speaks with special assurance:

When we have spread on earth the fruits of our nature and our enterprise—human dignity, fraternal communion, and freedom ... we will find them once again, cleansed from stain of sin, illuminated and transfigured, when Christ presents to his Father an eternal and universal kingdom....¹⁵

The hope for the transformation of what we already most value is meant to release new energies in the domain of our worldly activities:

Christians, on pilgrimage toward the heavenly city, should seek and think of these things which are above. This duty in no way decreases, rather it increases the importance of their obligation to work with all men in the building of a more human world. Indeed, the mystery of the Christian faith furnishes them with an excellent stimulant and aid to fulfil this duty more courageously and especially to uncover the full meaning of this activity, one which gives to human culture its eminent place in the integral vocation of man.¹⁶

Hope in and for the World

The Church exists in history to be the space of hope in the world. As that part of the world that has awoken to the plenitude of the divine promise, it expresses not only hope in the world, but an unconditional hope for the world. In this regard, the Church is the community of those who have a sense of a future so full of promise that nothing and no one is excluded. To be the People of God is to live as the peo-

ple of hope. Christians are called to witness to the great transformation now afoot which promises the liberation of all human hopes to their fullest dimensions, including, let us remember, the consummation of human intelligence in the vision of God, face to face.

Yet it is not as though Christian hope occupies some deathless standpoint, untroubled by the agonies of the world and invulnerable to its sufferings. The life of hope is not a matter of watching in armchair-comfort a replay of the highlights once 'our team' has won. For, in this case, the team is everyone; and the game has not yet been played to the end. The followers of Christ are not passive spectators, once or twice removed from the agonizing contest of history. Immersed as they are in the great human and cosmic drama, Christians still have to confront the many faces of despair—in themselves and others. Hope must arise and grow in the midst of inexplicable suffering, inevitable death, humiliating failure, meaninglessness, guilt, and fear in all its forms. It is always up against the sheer power of evil in all its virulent manifestations. Whatever the joy and peace inherent in the Gospel of hope, it offers no complacent, passive preview of things. For hope must share in the patience of God. Only in that divinely loving patience can the promise latent in the unfolding of human time and in the meandering history of human freedom be finally kept and revealed. Because hope lacks this final evidence, it is always being refashioned, and its intelligence forced to consider new questions. Whatever the unpredictable turns of history, whatever the mysteries of the cosmos yet to be discovered, hope is always open to new dimensions of Christ, moving forward with 'the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen' (Heb 11:1). As the Marxist philosopher, Ernst Bloch remarked, 'Christianity seems like a final emergence of what religion is—a total hope and an explosive one'.¹⁷

There is, indeed, a distinct originality in Christian intelligence that tends to break out of all categories in the way the incarnation,

death and resurrection of Christ are beyond worldly comprehension. The historical concreteness of the mystery of Christ hones this intelligence to a special edge. It cuts through to the core of reality and existence. Theologians have tellingly exploited the works of René Girard at this point.¹⁸ The Cross, to the wisdom of the world, is the point of darkness and defeat, where violence and the vicious circles of scapegoating are powered by the false gods of any culture. For Christian intelligence, however, the Cross is the point of light and revelation. The stone rejected by the builders of the world has become the cornerstone (cf. 1 Pt 2:4-8// Mt 21:42; Mk 12:11; Ac 4:11. Cf. Ps 117). However vulnerable the truth of ultimate love, it is never overcome: 'the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it' (Jn 1:5). The Cross of Christ does indeed reveal the defencelessness the good in its exposure to evil. Yet, at the point of defeat, the absolute values of love and forgiveness radiate with a greater intensity. The truth and the good buried in the graves and prisons of the victims of history are vindicated in their eternal significance when the crucified One rises from the tomb. This hope-filled intelligence exposes the absurdity of the violent efforts of power and greed to shrink the world to its purposes alone. Paul, in line with both the prophetic vision (Isa 53) and the wisdom of Israel (Wis 1-2), allows that that the deepest wisdom of the Cross must appear foolishness; but in the perspective of ultimate hope, it is wisdom: 'For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength' (1 Cor 1:25). The intelligence appropriate to non-violent love expresses a hope for all, and for an ultimate reconciliation. It cannot but appear ridiculous in the eyes of worldly calculation and ideological control. For all that, it is not a lesser form of intelligence, for it shares in a wisdom transcending everything in the world, yet gathers into itself wisdom and truth wherever it is to be found, as is expressed in a precious aside of St Thomas Aquinas, 'every statement of

truth, no matter who makes it, is from the Holy Spirit' (*omne verum a quocumque dicatur a Spiritu Sancto est*).¹⁹

In this perspective, let me make two remarks, both dealing with the eschatological orientation of the Catholic intellectual tradition: the one anticipates the beatific vision of heaven; the other, paradoxically, presumes the terminal reality of hell and an ultimate judgment on evil, in the sense to be explained.

The Dynamism of Existence

Bernard Lonergan's *Method in Theology*²⁰ expresses the Thomist tradition concerning the 'the natural desire to see God' in a more contemporary, psychologically attuned idiom. He articulates how the self-transcending and unrestricted drive toward truth and goodness constitutes the basic dynamism of our conscious living. He is not talking about a theory. He is appealing to a set of experiences intimately accessible to everyone. We are present to ourselves in our questioning of what and why and how. The open-ended dynamic that is evident in our questioning finds a particular point of rest when we make a considered judgment on what is the case. Yet it keeps moving: a deeper level of responsibility is engaged through the decisions we make in the light of the truly good. We are in this way registering in our deepest selves the attraction of meaning, truth and goodness. The dynamism driving our conscious existence is ever taking us beyond all limited attainments. The meaning of all meaning is the goal. The ultimate worth of all we have found to be good is the promise. It would seem, then, that hope is inscribed into the dynamism of our being. Yet there is a question, and Lonergan conveniently asks it,

But is the universe on our side, or are we just gamblers and, if we are gamblers, are we not perhaps fools, individually struggling for authenticity and collectively endeavoring to snatch progress from the ever mounting welter of decline?²¹

A hopeful answer to such questions, however

it is expressed, has a profound effect on attitudes and resoluteness. Lonergan teases out the questions implicit in our living:

Does there or does there not necessarily exist a transcendent, intelligent ground of the universe? Is that ground or are we the primary instance of moral consciousness? Are cosmogenesis, biological evolution, historical progress basically cognate to us as moral and intelligent beings or are they indifferent and so alien to us?²²

The mind and heart cannot rest content with a little bit of meaning, truth or goodness. We look to the full disclosure of the reality that is already sustaining our existence and drawing us on. We cannot be content with 'partly living'. The ultimate exerts a gravitational pull on our intelligence and freedom. Our present participation in being and goodness impels mind and heart to anticipate a fulfillment and completion. There is an anticipation of a final homecoming built into the self-transcending dynamics of our conscious existence. Hope thus stirs in our every waking moment. It moves in the deepest orientation and longing of our being. It is an openness that resists any form of self-enclosure, for it unfolds in the limitless horizon. It borders on 'a region for the divine, a shrine of ultimate holiness'.²³

Such an account of human experience can, of course, be dismissed by those who are overcome by despair or see no point to the universe. The atheist will say there is nothing there, that this radical openness and longing of our being is futile (Monod and Weinberg)²⁴; it means nothing, and is going nowhere. An agnostic can hesitate over the direction of this radical hopeful thrust of life, and assert that it lacks any real proof. A humanist concern to improve the world might consider that any hope for a transcendent, eschatological fulfillment is a distraction from the real challenges that face society. But however the question of hope is asked or answered, the deeper question of life keeps reoccurring. Is our search for meaning, our concern for truth, our struggle against evils and celebration of the good,

nothing but a journey to nowhere and an eternally frustrated hankering for the unattainable? Is there is no 'last thing', no eschatological reality, in which the final answer resides, in which the heart comes home and towards which the universe is tending? Hope gives a positive answer.

The Gift from Above

Yet the fullness of Christian hope is not reducible simply to an upward movement from the core of our being. However precious the intimations of our deepest thinking, our most passionate loves and creative actions, we never simply think or will ourselves into this ultimate realm. This upward and forward journey leads to an impenetrable darkness and silence. Courage can fail; our failures can seem too numerous and the challenge too great. The sheer weight of the world's ills and evils tempt one to lose heart. The 'one thing necessary' is something so 'other', so far outside the 'system', at once so unattainable and all-demanding, that the spirit can wilt.

If hope is to be a world-shaping energy, it is desperately in need of a gift that will make all the difference. But such a gift from above is exactly the source and foundation of Christian hope. The Word has become flesh and dwelt amongst us, to take on himself what we most fear. His tomb is empty; and his Spirit is the fresh air our souls now breathe. Hope is not disappointed. St Paul understands it as continually sustained by the love that is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). In this sense, hope is born of a gift; and that gift is precisely the energies of God-given love. The fulfilment that this gift of 'grace' or 'being in love' is eloquently described by Lonergan:

As the question of God is implicit in all our questioning, so being in love with God is the basic fulfilment of our conscious intentionality. That fulfilment brings a deep-set joy that can remain despite humiliation, failure, privation, pain, betrayal, desertion. That fulfilment

brings a radical peace, the peace the world cannot give. That fulfilment bears fruit in a love of one's neighbour that strives mightily to bring about the Kingdom of God on this earth.²⁵

This gift makes all the difference. Without it, life would be dissipated and directionless. The power of evil would be too great, and the noblest lives of self-sacrificing love would be futile gestures in meaningless universe.²⁶

The Word of God, irrevocably incarnate though it is, does not kill the ongoing conversation of human history. It comes to its fullest human hearing only in the kind of hope that welcomes the creativity of dialogue among all peoples and their deepest hopes. The Word becomes flesh, and the flesh is the story of a conversation unfolding throughout the whole human story. It includes the life-stories of individuals and communities, of societies and cultures, and the great cosmic story of the universe itself. Everything we are in this corporeal, earthed, communal and individual historical existence is now part of the story of the incarnate Word. The Gospel story is told and retold within all the variety of contexts that make up our human condition. It provides no catalogue of information about the future, but illuminates the direction of life at whatever point hope stirs and despair threatens.

You might say, given this account of things, that Christian intelligence anticipates the heaven of a final vision, when God will be 'all in all' (1 Cor 15:28). But there is a second point, a kind of anticipation also of the hell, and the final, utter defeat of evil. We now move to a consideration of that.

Ultimate Judgment

The hopefulness of Catholic intelligence does not permit any ultimate judgment in this ambiguous world of the penultimate. In this connection, Hannah Arendt wrote that 'the most significant consequence of the secularisation of the modern age may well be the elimination from public life, along with religion, of the only political element in traditional reli-

gion, the fear of hell'.²⁷ One immediate result of the modern elimination of the religious symbol of hell is its continuing reemergence in a secular guise. Floating free from its original religious significance, hell begins to occupy a dark region in the secularized world of self-enclosed human experience. There are consequences. James Schall makes a good point:

...Whenever hell is neglected, it returns under another form. The tradition of Aquinas is that all evil will be punished ultimately, that all human evil is precisely chosen. But it need not be the function of politics to punish all evils or to correct all evil choices... the effort to create a perfect, self-conceived society on earth invariably seems to result in a kind of incarnate hell...²⁸

The result of reducing the religious symbol of hell to an empirical historical form of reprobation has a double consequence. First, theologically speaking, hell ceases to be understood as an objective eschatological possibility calling all to humility and repentance. Secondly, hell is now projected onto the dreadful 'other' (people, country, party, etc) within the world and its history. This damnable and dreaded 'other' becomes the focus of historical hatred and reprobation. Forgiveness and reconciliation are not only impossible, but also undesirable. Human freedom is frozen into the hopeless divisions of the good and bad. Possibilities of growth or change cannot be entertained. Satan reigns in the realm of the evil 'other'.

Shorn of its theological significance, hell becomes a human projection in the history of violence. The imagination of hope is stultified. History is no longer the ever-inconclusive play of the human drama. It is burdened with the weight of ultimate judgments. Those 'on the side of the angels' have to keep up the pretence of being inhabitants of a heavenly city. Their judgments on anything or anyone on the other side cannot allow for any ambiguity. There can be no compromise with the realm of the evil 'other'. There Satan reigns. Forgiveness is irrational. There arises the feroc-

ity of a merciless moralism permitting no response save that of eliminating the enemy.

In contrast to a socially or politically determined hell, the theological doctrine of hell frees social and political interactions from being terminally overloaded. Schall makes an anthropologically astute point. Hell, theologically understood, 'frees politics from an impossible worldly burden inasmuch as it enforces a contingent, imperfect civil order in such a way that the same civil order is not required to exercise absolute justice and punishment'.²⁹ In any theological understanding, ultimate judgment is not pronounced and executed by some group of the enlightened. Hence, it is not the function of politics to punish all evils and correct all abuses. If any political group attempts to implement an ideologically pure society in the world, the last state is worse than the first. The unfortunate result can be described as 'hell on earth'.

I would suggest, then, that the symbol of hell, for all the reserve with which we must explore it, has a place in the intelligence of hope. It denotes the final reprobation of the actual evil-doing that we experience in ourselves or others. It forbids any representation of God's love as tolerance of evil or a compromise with it. For hell is where evil is contained and rendered impotent, and made to serve the higher purposes of a good creation. Evil will be revealed for what it was all along, the parasite living off the original good of creation. The light of God is the radiance in which no pretence, no evasion, no compromise, no further subversion of the good will be tolerated. The mighty will be toppled from their thrones. The mass-murderer will no longer triumph over innocent victims. Pride and violence will be brought to nothing, and Satan will disappear in a puff of smoke.³⁰

What conscience has found most hateful and worthy of utter reprobation will have no part in the new creation.³¹ Though it is true that evil has no power unless it is the work of evil-doers, today we have learnt to identify more clearly the social structures of evil and

the social and cultural conditioning that makes it morally impossible for people to act in peace, reconciliation and forgiveness. Hell, from this point of view, must mean the inglorious collapse of these evil social conditions.

In Johannine theology, for example, the life-giving generativity of God is frequently set in contrast to the perverse generativity of evil. Believers must choose that which is to be the determining factor in their lives.³² In a terrible conflict with his adversaries, Jesus speaks of opposed generative principles, different ‘paternities’ to which we might lay claim:

You are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and has nothing to do with the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies’ (John 8:44).

In this dramatic language, the diabolic power at work in human history is expressed as an intrinsically murderous and mendacious force, enlisting human beings into its dominion. John’s First Letter takes up these themes: ‘everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil’ (1 John 3:8). It goes on to say, ‘we must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous’ (v. 12). The destructive power of evil is further expressed as a form of murder: ‘all who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them’ (v. 15).

We note, in this regard, different New Testament expressions of the nullification of the diabolic powers. Jesus destroys the influence of the evil one: ‘The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil’ (1 John 3:8). The epistle to the Hebrews is even more direct in regard to the devil-destroying power of Christ: ‘so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear

of death’ (Heb 2:14-15). We can say, in fact, that the only role which the devil/ Satan plays in the New Testament is as the one who is in the process of being defeated. Jesus has seen him fall like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18). In an image taken from a Roman military triumph, Colossians 2:15 describes Christ having ‘disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them through the Cross’. The stone which the builders rejected reveals the mechanism by which the powers of evil infesting the world order are unmasked and defeated. A new understanding of history begins.³³

All Things in Christ

Since the death of Jesus was brought about by the powers of evil, his rising means a radical victory over the world-forming destructive forces that were ranged against him. God, then, is revealed as the love that overcomes evil; and the followers of Christ are called to be participants, in our different vocations, in its revelation. When this sense of proportion is lost, any tendency to theorise on the powers of evil is more likely to diminish experience of salvation than enlarge it. Evil is personified in the devil, the *diabolos*, literally, ‘one who throws things apart’. Diabolic influence is evidenced in human history as a disintegrating and isolating force. It is the root of envy and of defiant alienation from God.³⁴

In contrast to the rending and disintegrating nature of the diabolic, is the ‘symbolic’ (lit., ‘bringing things together’) reality of Christ. Paul speaks of God’s plan for the fullness of time ‘to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth’ (Eph 1:10), for ‘all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together’ (Col 1:16-17). The only proportionate response to this totality of all things in Christ—in their origin, goal and coherence—is a truly Catholic intelligence (*kat’holou*—open to the whole).

It is not the time for the Catholic intellectual tradition to lose its hope, even if when we consider the ever-expanding range of current knowledge. Keeping the 'holic' in the 'catholic' is the continuing challenge. And yet, the crucified Christ remains the focus. He reaches into the violent dismemberment of histories and cultures caused by evil, and yet embodies the hope of a final vision of truth: 'for in him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by through the blood of his cross' (Col 1:19-20).

Conclusion

The great historian of culture, Christopher Dawson, in many of his writings, recognised the transforming power of Christian hope in human history. This was well before the days when Liberation Theology began its productive and often heroic account of hope as inspiring new cultural, political and economic ways of conduct in the light of the Gospel. Dawson foresaw many of the dimensions of the problems we are now facing, though I doubt that even he anticipated the extent of the nihilism and the loss of meaning that looms today. Still, he suggests some similarity of the present cultural situation to that in which the early Christians found themselves, with its implications of mission and witness to hope:

But today we have seen that these materialist hopes have proved delusive and the new Babylon is threatened by an even more catastrophic and suicidal end than any of the world empires of the past. Thus we find ourselves back in the same situation as that the Christians encountered during the decline of the ancient world. Everything depends on whether the Christians of the new age are equal to their mission—whether they are able to communicate their hopes to a world in which man finds himself alone and helpless before the monstrous forces which have been created by man to serve his own ends but which now have escaped from his control and threaten to destroy him.³⁵

Forty years ago, Dawson saw the world as far less stable than the situation of the Roman Empire, seventeen centuries previously. The rate of change is momentous. Yet he detects nothing that should cause Christians to despair since faith has prepared them for exactly this kind of crisis as an opportunity to fulfil their mission. Though no one can predict how it will end, perhaps in large-scale self-destruction or in the emergence of a new stage of Christian culture, he writes,

All we know is that the world is being changed from top to bottom and that the Christian faith remains the way of salvation: that is to say, a way of renewal of human life by the Spirit of God which has no limits and which cannot be prevented by human power or material catastrophe. Christianity proved victorious over the pagan world of the past, because Christians were always looking forward while the secular world was looking back.³⁶

This is an arguable point today: perhaps we Christians are the ones who are looking back, instead of forward to the fulfilment of history. One way of looking forward is to renew our confidence in hopeful intellectual tradition in which we are participating. In an essay entitled 'Civilization in Crisis',³⁷ Dawson touches more directly on our topic. He observes that, with the progress of science and technology, there is a huge concentration of power in institutions of government, so that:

Even the weakest and mildest of modern governments possesses a universal power of control over the lives of its citizens which the absolute monarchies of the past never dreamt of'.³⁸ This has consequences for any form of education that might stand for something different. He allows that '... the modern Leviathan is such a formidable monster that it can swallow the religious school system without suffering indigestion'.³⁹

But he sees an exception, and this has consequences for our topic: on the level of higher education: 'The only part of the Leviathan that is vulnerable is its brain, which is small in comparison with its vast, armoured bulk'.⁴⁰ He asks whether we could develop Christian higher

education to a point at which it meets the attention of average educated person in every field of thought and life, the situation would be radically changed. He proceeds,

The difference is that today the intellectual factor has become more vital than it ever was in the past. The great obstacle to the conversion of the modern world is the belief that religion has no intellectual significance; that it may be good for morals and satisfy man's emotional needs, but that it corresponds to no objective reality.⁴¹

The horizon, in which the Catholic intellectual tradition operates, unfolds in an openness to the reality of God, the self, history, the world and the universe itself. It tends to an objectivity that is the fruit of all our capacities to sense and to feel, to imagine and to question, to reflect and decide, to believe, to hope and to love. It is an objectivity determined, not only by the fullest deployment of our subjective capacities, but also by the appearance of a gift in our history, namely, God's own self-manifestation in Christ, and in the words, the sacraments, and the inspired witness that serve it. In that objectivity, the self-transcending capacities of the human spirit are met with the self-communicating gift of God.

For Dawson, this tradition must continue with assurance. It is first of all a matter of recovering an intellectual and educational creativity with new confidence:

It is the task of Christian education at the present time to recover these lost channels of communication and to restore contact between religion and modern society—between the world of spiritual reality and the world of social experience.⁴²

In the recovery of 'lost channels of communication' between the transcendent or spiritual dimensions of hope and its social applications, we are in the happy position of having plenty of resources which, I have no doubt, would have delighted Dawson—as with the recently published *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. True, documents cannot do our thinking for us, given the concreteness and complexity of the cultural and social realities

in which we live. This tradition has developed, making bold connections between the Gospel and its social and cultural applications, all in specific relationship to the human person.

Here Dawson makes two suggestions that bear on the task ahead:

This reform can be conceived in two alternative ways. On the one hand, it can be seen as a return to the tradition of Christian education which has always been one of the main sources of Western culture and which still remains today as the representative and guardian of the spiritual traditions of our civilisation. On the other hand it can be seen in terms of psychology as a movement to bring modern education into closer relation with the psychological bases of society and to re-establish the internal balance of our culture.⁴³

Dawson's first suggestion would mean a return to the tradition of Christian education through the classic texts and persons that most form and interpret the tradition. Here the doctors of the Church, especially St Thomas Aquinas, and of others reaching to our day, as in the case of Dawson himself, not to mention Edith Stein, Karl Rahner, Simone Weil, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Bernard Lonergan and so on. You might say this is a movement 'from the outside in'. It leads to a deeper appropriation of the tradition in its power to form, inspire and sustain the creativity of the Catholic intelligence.

The second suggestion envisages a movement as more 'from the inside out'. It entails an examination of human interiority and an exploration of consciousness characterised by the self-transcending dynamism in which intelligence operates and objectivity, in terms of truth and value, is possible: the 'psychological bases' of social existence. Unless there is a rationality connected with values, unless there is value in our rationality, science becomes mere cleverness; and morality a matter of sentiment or tolerance, and human rights at best a matter of law, at worst a field to be exploited. Social existence would have no basis, and nihilism would be the presumed standpoint.

I have given here the barest indications of the continuing challenge. It is no use pretending that the opposition to the Christian tradition expressed in various forms of ignorance, resentment and cultural dissipation is easily overcome. Here hope moves into a larger range, the shared hope of the Church to address even this age. In that larger, long-term range, I will leave to Dawson the final word:

Though the Church no longer inspires and dominates the external culture of the modern world, it still remains the guardian of all the riches of its own inner life and is the bearer of a

sacred tradition. If society were once again to become Christian, after a generation or two, or after ten or twenty generations, this sacred tradition would once more flow out into the world and fertilize the culture of societies yet unborn. This movement toward Christian culture is at one and the same time a voyage into the unknown, in the course of which new worlds of human experience will be discovered, and a return to our fatherland—to the sacred tradition of the Christian past which flows underneath the streets and cinemas and skyscrapers of the new Babylon as the tradition of the patriarchs and prophets flowed beneath the palaces and amphitheatres of imperial Rome.⁴⁴

NOTES

1 This article was originally in the form of a paper presented at a conference entitled, 'The Catholic Intellectual Tradition and the Good Society', sponsored by the Schools of Law and Catholic Studies at the University of St Thomas, Minneapolis, in April, 2005.

2 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Pars Prima Secundae, question 62, article 3: hereafter, *STh* 1-2, q. 62, a. 3.

3 For example, there is a 'passion' or emotion of hope present in the sensitive and 'irascible' appetite, as a living thing seeks its future good in the midst of danger and threat. Cf. *STh* 1-2., q. 25, a. 3-4.

4 *STh* 1-2, q. 62, a. 1.

5 *STh* 1-2, q. 62, a. 1.

6 For a concise, culturally relevant and Thomistic treatment of hope, Joseph Pieper, *Hope and History*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (London: Burns and Oates, 1969) is outstanding.

7 Anthony J. Kelly, CSsR, 'Blessed Negativities: The Contribution of Deconstruction to Theology', Australian EJournal of Theology 2 (February 2004): http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_2/

8 In the previously mentioned article, I engaged with Kevin Hart's influential *The Trespass of the Sign. Deconstruction, Theology and Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000). His more recent, *Postmodernism. A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2004) is a re-

markably accessible exposition of this style of thinking, illuminating for all readers, whether they be beginners or advanced.

9 Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity*. trans, Austyrn Wainhouse (New York: Knopf, 1971).

10 Stephen Weinberg *The First Three Minutes* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 149.

11 *STh* 1-2, q. 90, aa. 1-4.

12 See Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001), 36.

13 Christopher Dawson, 'Christian Culture as a Culture of Hope', in *The Historic Reality of Christian Culture* (NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), 61-62.

14 Christopher Dawson, 'The Outlook for Christian Culture', in *The Historic Reality of Christian Culture* (NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), 26-27.

15 *Gaudium et Spes* #39 ('The Church in the Modern World'), as in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery, OP (ed.) (Dublin: Dominican Publications, Rev. Edition, 1988), 938. For the centrality of Christ, see G&S, #45, 947.

16 *GS*, #57: Flannery, 961; Cf. also *GS*, #92: Flannery, 999-1000.

17 As quoted by John Macquarrie in *Frontispiece of Christian Hope* (London: Mowbray, 1978). See also in Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* vol. III, 1125-1131; 1256-1274.

- 18 James Alison, *Raising Abel. The Recovery of the Eschatological Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1996); *The Joy of Being Wrong. Original Sin through Easter Eyes* (New York: Crossroad Publishers, 1998); Raymund Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation. Toward a Biblical Doctrine of Redemption*. trans. James G. Williams and Paul Haddon (New York: Crossroads, 1999); Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled. Humanity at the Crossroads* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1997).
- 19 *STh* 1-2, q. 109, a. 1 ad 1.
- 20 Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972).
- 21 Lonergan, *Method*, 102.
- 22 Lonergan, *Method*, 103.
- 23 Lonergan, *Method*, 103.
- 24 In the interests of dialectic, see the devastating critique of biologist Richard Dawkins' ideological in Alister McGrath, *Dawkins' God: Genes, Memes and the Meaning of Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005)
- 25 Lonergan, *Method*, 105.
- 26 Lonergan, *Method*: 'On the other hand, the absence of that fulfilment opens the way to the trivialisation of human life in the pursuit of fun, to the harshness of human life arising from the ruthless exercise of power, to despair about human welfare springing from the conviction that the universe is absurd' (105).
- 27 Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking, 1968), 133.
- 28 James V. Schall, 'Displacing Damnation: The Neglect of Hell in Political Theory', *The Thomist* 44/1, (January) 1983, 43.
- 29 Schall, 'Displacing Damnation', 33.
- 30 Quoted in Hans Küng, *Eternal Life?* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 198.
- 31 Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers. The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1986), 39-40.
- 32 Anthony J. Kelly and Francis J. Moloney, *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2003), especially Chapter 7, 'Between Different Paternities: Making the Choice', 169-204.
- 33 James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong. Original Sin through Easter Eyes* (New York: Crossroad Publishers, 1998), 157. He refers further to René Girard, *The Scapegoat* (London: Athlone, 1986) 184-197.
- 34 For the resentment of the wicked against the ways of the wise, see the Wisdom of Solomon (Wis 2:12-20).
- 35 Christopher Dawson, 'Christian Culture as a Culture of Hope', in *The Historic Reality of Christian Culture* (NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), 67.
- 36 Christopher Dawson, 'The Outlook for Christian Culture', in *The Historic Reality of Christian Culture* (NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), 26-27.
- 37 Christopher Dawson, 'Civilisation in Crisis', in *The Historic Reality of Christian Culture* (NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), 79-98.
- 38 Dawson, 'Civilization in Crisis', 81.
- 39 Dawson, 'Civilization in Crisis', 88.
- 40 Dawson, 'Civilization in Crisis', 89.
- 41 Dawson, 'Civilization in Crisis', 89.
- 42 Dawson, 'Civilization in Crisis', 90.
- 43 Dawson, 'Civilization in Crisis', 98.
- 44 Dawson, 'The Outlook for Christian Culture', 29-30.

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THE DEVIL

BARRY BRUNDELL MSC

A NUMBER of recent experiences have caused me to suspect that we are now by-and-large post-rationalists. It may not be glaringly obvious, not yet at least, but there are signs. Just the other day, with two very different groups of Catholics—different in the sense of their familiarity with Catholic doctrine, one being ‘beginners’ the other being ‘veterans’—when discussing the subject of the devil no-one raised the question I most expected, *viz.* ‘Do we have to believe in the devil?’ It was I who eventually raised the question. I am sure sophistication was not lacking in the groups. I rather conclude that contemporary Catholics are more ready to believe the mystery that talk of the devil expresses. And that, I believe, is a sign of greater sophistication in our reception of the teaching of Scripture and Tradition: we are more concerned with matters of substance than with questions (such as: Does the devil really exist?) that distract us from the main concerns.

In our earlier, more rationalist days, as sons and daughters of the Enlightenment, we were more prone to measure all that is and all that can be by the criteria of our human reason. If we decided that something did not make sense to us then that something was ruled out of existence as impossible—it offended our sensibilities as rational human beings. I am suggesting that we are less like that now: I believe we are more humble and more mature. Our rationalist selves are kept more in check and do not so easily get in the way of our acceptance of the main message. Of course, there is a multitude of rationalists around us, but we are not greatly disturbed by them or their arguments or even their occasional efforts to bully us.

On the other hand, our awareness has deepened also. We have left behind the images of

the devil that we have grown up with—the pantomime devil with tail, pitchfork and horns. But we do not feel satisfied to explain the devil away as a mythological creature from earlier cultures. For one thing, the devil is too much a part of our tradition to be dismissed airily.

All this is in contrast with the way we were not so long ago. In a General Audience at the Vatican Paul VI (Nov 15, 1972) warned the tourists that at that time the devil was not being taken seriously enough, and that even students of Catholic doctrine were neglecting him and dismissing him as a superstition, a relic of past cultures. Pope Paul stated:

There is a chapter of Catholic doctrine that is very important and that needs to be studied again, as it is not being much attended to today: it is the one that concerns the Devil and the influence he can exercise over single persons, communities, entire societies and events. Some believe that they can find sufficient explanations in psychoanalysis and psychiatry or substitutes in spiritual experiences that today are all too common in some countries. People worry about throw-backs to old Manichean theories or about being led astray by fantasies and superstitions.

As students of Catholic doctrine, then, let us explore the data from tradition and the issues it raises.

The Prayer for the first Sunday in Lent goes to the heart of the matter for us. It reads:

Father,
through our observance of Lent,
help us to understand the meaning
of Your Son’s death and resurrection...

Christ’s death and resurrection is redemptive—it is the way that humankind has been rescued from sin and the power of evil. That tells us how profound is the mystery of evil: it was necessary for the All-Holy Son of God to enter into our world by way of Incarnation to

overcome the power of sin and death and lead us to life. If we have some appreciation of the power of evil we will have some appreciation of the mystery of our redemption by way of Incarnation. God in person had to come down and live amongst us to make holy what had been ravaged by sin. One of my favourite Christmas carols is an Italian one that contains the line addressed to the baby Jesus: 'Ah! How much it cost you to have loved me!'

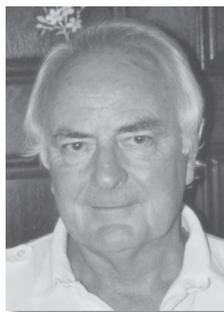
This is the essential Good News: that God has loved the world so much that he gave his only Son to rescue us. Hence, to talk of evil and Satan and the devil is not to concentrate on subjects that are morbid and not in keeping with the Gospel in Post-Vatican II times. Rather, it is to 'understand the meaning of [Christ's] death and resurrection'. It is to remind us of the greatness of Christ's victory, the greatness of God's love and mercy.

Scripture

Every New Testament writer mentions demons and demonic power, and scholars recognise that these references are essential to the Gospel message, not mere reflections of the culture. New Testament scholars have recognised that:

Jesus himself assigned to these demonic powers a significance beyond the merely accidental, discerning in the background the mystery of spiritual evil, and a recognition that this fact can lead us towards a truer idea of His interpretation of His own mission. (Prof. Fridrichsen, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 4, Sept. 1951, p.300.)

According to the Gospel witnesses, Jesus took demonology to a new level. Whereas his contemporaries attributed local and particular instances of evil (diseases, possessions...) to the work of single demons and groups of demons, Jesus focussed on Satan. He told Peter that he was the mouthpiece of Satan. It was Satan that entered into Judas. Jesus presented Satan as the head and commanding devil who controlled all the others. When the disciples returned astonished and excited that they had



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been able to work exorcisms in Jesus' name, Jesus emphasised the fact that it was the whole kingdom of evil that was being vanquished in the person of Satan himself. What had happened was far more important than a few victories over local demons: the disciples had exercised an authority in Jesus' name to conquer the entire kingdom of evil.

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke Jesus' ministry began with Satan's temptations in the desert, and very clearly in Luke's Gospel his ministry ends with a final intimidation of Jesus by Satan: Jesus was alone in the final engagement with Satan. In this way, the beginning and end of Jesus' ministry is depicted as a struggle with Satan. Satan is 'the tempter', 'the devil', 'the deceiver', 'the Adversary'—a powerful, malevolent enemy. Jesus was aware that his role was to combat these demonic powers; the confrontation was central to his ministry. Jesus' struggle against Satan is an essential element of the Gospel message, not something that can be discarded as a temporary, purely cultural accidental. As one scholar has written:

In the New Testament this dark background—the existence of the powers of darkness (however this may be conceived) is integral to the story of Jesus Christ. (Emil Brunner, 1952: *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, London, p.134.)

The account of the temptations of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel shows something of Satan's technique. The first temptation—'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves'—Satan has picked on Jesus' weak point, his hunger after his long fast. The second temp-

tation—‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down’, that is, do something spectacular so that everyone will believe you here and now—Satan made a bad action look good and attractive. The third temptation—‘I will give you all of these [the kingdoms of the world], if you fall at my feet and do me homage’—is one of Satan’s ‘empty promises’ that the parents and godparents are asked to reject prior to the pouring of water at baptism. Satan was claiming to offer to Jesus, especially in the second and third temptations, a much less tedious and less painful way to achieve his mission of earth than the way of obedience to his Father.

Matthew showed up the deceitfulness of Satan: the evil of the actions that Satan suggested - distrust of God, disobedience, rejection of the way of love - was disguised as good. What would in effect have been a rejection of God’s love and demands was made to appear attractive. When ordinary humans like us are his targets, then we understand that the primary activities of Satan—his principal aim—is that of tempting us and having us transgress and so increase his power over us.

Tradition

Having noted all that, and especially having emphasised the menacing nature of the forces of evil, it might seem something of an anticlimax to have to report that the question of the existence of Satan, or the devil, as a person is still a question that can be argued about. The evidence from tradition is inconclusive.

The Council of Braga (Portugal) (561) rejected the teachings of the Priscillianists, Spanish Manichaeans who were teaching that the devil was the evil principle and creator of matter and of the human body; that the human soul is divine and imprisoned in the body as a punishment for sins. In rejecting the doctrines of the Priscillianists, the Council proclaimed that Satan was a created being; he did not emerge from darkness; there is no eternal evil principle; there is no creator except God; the devil did not create the human body; only God

the Creator is eternal. The Council in this way rejected the radical dualism of Manichaeism, but it was not teaching that the devil exists.

The Council of Trent, in its decree on Original Sin (1546) presupposed the existence of the devil, but did not teach it.

Recent Documents

Paul VI (Nov 15, 1972) has been the most emphatic proponent of the real existence of the devil as a living being. In that Wednesday General Audience that we have already quoted he sobered up the pilgrims (tourists) with these further reminders:

We find sin, the perversion of human liberty and profound cause of death because it cuts us off from God the fountain of life (Rom. 5.12), and then in its turn the occasion and result of the intervention in us and in our world of a dark enemy agent, the Devil. Evil is not now a mere defect, but an efficient agent, a living spiritual, perverted and perverting being. A terrible reality, mysterious and frightening.

Pope Paul thus left us in no doubt about his mind on the matter of the existence of the Devil as personal spiritual being. But an address during a Wednesday Papal Audience does not qualify as magisterial teaching, so it does not terminate discussion.

But we surely need to be careful if we wish to dismiss his existence. He *could* be there. It is repeated often in the literature that there is nothing the devil wants more than for humans to dismiss him!

We also need to emphasise that teaching on the devil has never been a first level teaching in Christianity—the devil and the powers of evil are the terrible forces that Christ has rescued us from. The first level of Christian teaching is reserved for the Good News. Maybe any debate about whether or not the devil, or Satan, is a real existent being or not is a distraction from the real issue, which is that we must fully appreciate the forcefulness of the message from Scripture and tradition that is bound up with the figure of Satan.

THE RATIONALE BEHIND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

GIDEON GOOSEN

WHILE SOME Christians are barely catching up with what has happened in the field of Christian ecumenism over the last century, a new trend of interreligious (‘interfaith’ or ‘the wider ecumenism’) dialogue has taken hold and mushroomed, especially since the events of the 11th September 2001. Some would even say it has put Christian ecumenism in the shade. While an enthusiasm on the part of many people and agencies is to be applauded, the reasons why people might engage in interreligious dialogue are not always apparent. And while politicians might support the rationale that interreligious dialogue lessens the chances of terrorism, Christians ought to scrutinize the reasons with greater perspicacity and faith. The aim of this article is to examine, from a Christian perspective (rather than a political or sociological one), the rationale for engaging in interreligious dialogue and to do this with reference to official documents of both the World Council of Churches and of the Roman Catholic Church. In the case of the former we will be referring to its 1979 document, *Guidelines on Dialogue with people of Living Faiths and Ideologies*, and the 2002 document, *Ecumenical considerations for dialogue and relations with people of other religions*. In addition the WCC publishes the journal, *Current Dialogue*¹ which provides updates on what is happening in interreligious dialogue. The Roman Catholic Church bases its approach on the documents of the Second Vatican Council, especially *Nostra Aetate* (hereafter *NA*) and papal teachings. The Pontifical Council of Interreligious Dialogue also produces a journal, *Pro Dialogo*² for the latest developments. Of course other than using official documents

to establish the rationale, one could examine what theologians are saying on the topic, but that will be left to another occasion.

Although the focus of this article is on the reasons why one engages in interreligious dialogue, it is useful to draw attention to the many meanings of ‘dialogue’ in this context. Dialogue takes place between two or more people (or groups)³; it is an encounter⁴. It is a two-way street with both listening and speaking constituent elements of this encounter. Without both speaking and listening, it would lapse into a monologue. In this sense ‘conversation’ might be a better word. Lest one thinks that dialogue only takes place amongst learned theologians around a table (dialogue of discourse), it is essential to remind ourselves of the distinction made between various kinds of dialogue: we speak of the dialogue of life (an encounter), of actions (‘mutual witness’)⁵, of discourse and of religious experience. Added to this is the further point that ‘dialogues’ may be formal or informal. Thus when we use the word ‘dialogue’ we actually refer to a range of meanings, although there is perhaps the constant danger that the word is reduced to the single meaning of the dialogue of discourse.

The rationale for Christian ecumenism (as opposed to interreligious dialogue) has also varied greatly. In the past the Christian message appeared to the listeners to be fragmented because the churches were seen to be in competition and even, on occasions, to be contradicting each other. This caused scandal among those to whom the gospel was preached. For this reason, some would say, the churches need to unite so that the gospel is seen to be one.

Others see ecumenism as necessary and

pragmatic because the denominational numbers are dwindling and therefore Christians need to unite (especially in the light of a perceived advance from Islam); yet another group sees it as something to be done because the hierarchy demands it (hence the establishment of ecumenical commissions, which will appear in annual reports and satisfy those higher up); or, to give a humanistic reason, because it is better and nicer to make friends than enemies. Thus it is better to establish good relationships between Christian churches. This latter reason is supported by the amount of hatred and violence in the world which needs to be overcome by kindness, so the argument goes. Then there is the theological reason of doing the will of Christ who prayed that his followers be one, and the shame at the scandal that Christians have caused by their divisions.

What it is Not

If now we go back to interreligious dialogue, what are the reasons for engaging in this activity? Before we do that, it is necessary to mention and reject certain ideas by clarifying what interreligious dialogue is not. This would not be necessary but for the simple reason that some people express these as valid reasons. Interreligious dialogue is not an attempt to work towards a new homogenous world religion. There is no thought of trying to amalgamate the world's religions into a new super-religion. Nor again does it try to find the lowest common denominator among religions.

Associated with the above, there is another unworthy reason which one should mention: careerism. Interreligious dialogue should not spring from a personal or career motive. The opinion that it is good for one's career and promotional chances to be seen to be promoting interreligious dialogue as it is the political flavour of the month, should be rejected as unworthy. This applies to church-related people as much as to others. The opinion takes the position that it looks good to be seen to be promoting good relationships between religions.



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Anyone who is worth their salt is doing it. One's superiors and masters will note this and promotion may be close at hand. It can in fact be a form of hollow grandstanding and will be seen as inauthentic. A Buddhist monk related to me how he had initially collaborated with interreligious forums, but after a while he judged that they were occasions for some people to grandstand and that people were not serious about listening and learning from other religions. This careerism approach represents the instrumentalization of interreligious dialogue. The exact opposite of this approach is mentioned in the *WCC Guidelines for Interreligious Dialogue*, when it says the aim of dialogue is the spiritual encounter between two (#22). It is important that there be some of the genuine 'passing over' into the other's shoes, if dialogue is to be fruitful.

Here it might be appropriate to situate the whole discourse about interreligious dialogue into a larger framework. The rationale for engaging in interreligious dialogue is closely linked to the theology of religions. In the last century much has been written about the theology of religions and I do not intend to recount that history here, but it should be noted in passing.⁶ On the side of the Protestant churches, the chequered history of trying to develop a theology of religions, can be traced from the 1910 Conference in Edinburgh to the present, as Ariarajah does in his book, *Hindus and Christians*⁷, and to which other theologians like, Kraemer, Samartha, Newbigin, Cragg, Coward, Race, Cantwell Smith, Cobb, Lindbeck and Hick have contributed in a significant way. On the other side, the

Roman Catholic Church in recent times established its official position at the Second Vatican Council.⁸ Catholic theologians who have helped to develop the thinking on this topic would include, Rahner, Küng, Dupuis, Ratzinger, Knitter, Panikkar, Griffiths and D'Costa. Suffice it to say that both the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church are still engaged with formulating an adequate theology of religions.

Pragmatic Reasons

So what are the more positive reasons for engaging in interreligious dialogue? First of all there are a number of pragmatic reasons expressed in a variety of different ways. We will work through them in the paragraphs below.

Interreligious dialogue is useful to prevent terrorism, war, and fighting. *Guidelines on Dialogue*, points this out when it says that dialogue will meet the needs of the wider community 'in which peace and justice may be more fully realized'.⁹ According to the same document dialogue will help to 'free religion from being misused in conflict as a fault line between communities' (#7). Similarly it can help build peace in another part of the world through good example. Benedict XVI in his address to the president of Religious Affairs, in Turkey, in November, 2006, pointed out that as men and women of religion, we are challenged by the widespread longing for peace (#10). The Dalai Lama confirms this when he says that concord between religions is no pie-in-the-sky: 'It is possible and under present world conditions it is extremely important'.¹⁰

The need to promote good relationships among all nations, is another reason to engage in dialogue. *Nostra Aetate* (the 'magna carta' of Catholic interreligious dialogue¹¹ says as much: dialogue is also necessary to maintain good fellowship.¹² Benedict XVI was doing this in his greeting to the Turks with the words: 'I now have the joy of meeting you, the President of the Religious Affairs Directorate. I offer you my sentiments of respect, in recognition of your great responsibilities, and I extend my greetings to all the religious leaders of Turkey, especially the Grand Muftis of Ankara and Istanbul.

In your person, Mr President, I greet all the Muslims in Turkey with particular esteem and affectionate regard.'¹³

There is also the reason that relates to the good in others. Wherever good values are found they should be preserved. So we find *NA* saying that one reason to pursue dialogue is to preserve and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among those men (= men and women!) as well as the values in their society and culture.¹⁴ Close to this point is that of the common good. Christians should consider the common good, which is not so easy in contemporary western society where personal good often takes precedence. But the WCC has expressed it by saying that Christians should engage in dialogue, 'so as to contribute from their resources to the good of the community of humankind in its wholeness'.¹⁵ Allied to this is the idea of ensuring that others enjoy life to the full.¹⁶ Here the scope of Christian mission is emphasized – a very important point to which we will return below. Everyone, all people, should enjoy life to the full, not just the Churches' immediate congregations.

Then there is the reason that springs from the importance of knowledge about other religions and the reality and growing awareness of religious diversity.¹⁷ These reasons are expressed in various ways thus: it is better to know something about strange religions so that people can get on together; it is good for business with people of different religions; if we live together we might as well try to know a little about each other; avoiding clashes with neighbouring nations of a different religion is worthwhile. The WCC makes the point that religion has a growing role in public life, hence the need to know about others.¹⁸ This latter reason is all the more obvious if we think of the movements of peoples since the Second World War all over the world and how many cities have now become multicultural and multifaith. Whether one likes it or not, today people of different faiths rub shoulders far more than in the past. The Dalai Lama says that in order to manifest unity across humankind and across all religions, 'followers of every religion should know something about other religions'.¹⁹ These are all reasons that come from the politi-

cal and economic worlds.

Another reason is that flowing from our survival and liberation. The struggle for survival and liberation can only be worked out if all peoples co-operate. Survival can mean many things, and today we think not only of wars and conflicts, but of global warming, pollution, population explosions, reduced resources, and the ever-present threat of nuclear disasters. Liberation could be applied to all these things as well, but one should not forget the need for liberation from greed, consumerism, material things and self-centredness which perhaps underlie many of the above interpretations of 'survival'. Full co-operation between religions is needed to confront these problems.

Theological Reasons

What then may the theological (as distinct from the pragmatic) reasons be for engaging in interreligious dialogue? One of the oft repeated reasons is the link between dialogue and the Christian church. Interreligious dialogue maybe seen as part of the Christian Church's mission. The church is there to foster unity and love among all human beings, not only among the circle of those who call themselves Christian. The WCC says they are called because Christians are concerned with the unity of the church and the unity of humankind.²⁰ Church unity and the unity of humankind are like two concentric circles. One can look across all nations and ask: what is it that we all have in common? It is our common humanity. Therefore as we are all children, sons and daughters of God, we need to promote friendship among everyone.

The WCC vision is that of the Church's mission to bring about the good of all creatures and the wellbeing of the earth.²¹ So, in pursuing dialogue, one is fulfilling part of the Church's mission. This is a key Roman Catholic point as well. Interreligious dialogue is seen as part of the church's mission which is to foster unity and love among all human beings. Among other reasons, the Roman Catholic Church wants to focus on what human beings have in common and 'to what promotes fellow-

ship among them' (*NA* #1).

In another document the WCC pursues the idea of serving the community. Here 'community' goes beyond the immediate church congregation. 'To better gain knowledge about other faiths and to gain insights through dialogue so that they can better serve the community in which they give witness, since the Christian community shares a common human heritage with other faiths.'²² Dialogue is thus a fundamental part of Christian service within the community. Love of neighbour is living out one's faith in service of community with one's neighbour.²³ The Church, in struggling against sin, suffering and injustice, is doing this to ensure the fullness of life, not just for its members but 'for all people'.²⁴ The pope endorses this point of building up the whole of society: 'Freedom of religion, institutionally guaranteed and effectively respected in practice, both for individuals and communities, constitutes for all believers the necessary condition for their loyal contribution to the building up of society, in an attitude of authentic service, especially towards the most vulnerable and the very poor.'²⁵

The common ground of origins, is another theological reason and links up with us all being sons and daughters of God. The pope in Turkey, repeating the Second Vatican Council, gave us this foundational orientation: 'Following the Biblical tradition, the Council teaches that the entire human race shares a common origin and a common destiny: God, our Creator and the goal of our earthly pilgrimage. Christians and Muslims belong to the family of those who believe in the one God and who, according to their respective traditions, trace their ancestry to Abraham ...'.²⁶ This is what *NA* meant by encouraging all to promote fellowship among human beings (#1). We are asked to keep peace 'so that they may truly be sons of the Father' (#5). This reason will be valid among the monotheistic religions but less applicable to others, where more emphasis on a common humanity would prevail. Nevertheless there is a unity among all human beings as the Dalai Lama avers when referring to a 'seamless unity between all religion'.²⁷

The pope also stressed that our common origins demand that we co-operate in building the future: ‘This human and spiritual unity in our origins and our destiny impels us to seek a common path as we play our part in the quest for fundamental values so characteristic of the people of our time. As men and women of religion, we are challenged by the widespread longing for justice, development, solidarity, freedom, security, peace, defence of life, protection of the environment and of the resources of the earth. This is because we too, while respecting the legitimate autonomy of temporal affairs, have a specific contribution to offer in the search for proper solutions to these pressing questions.’²⁸

Another reason is the one found in Ephesians 4:14-15: to speak the truth in a spirit of love. This reason is cited in *Guidelines for Dialogue* (#19). We are required to speak the truth in a spirit of love. This is easier said than done in the context of interreligious dialogue for one must avoid the extremes of arrogance (having all the right answers) and indifference (the truth is completely relative). The danger is that fundamentalists will use this injunction to ‘set people right’ about what they should believe, while pluralists might give the impression that anything goes. With this problem one is raising the question of the kinds of attitudes and stances one should adopt for dialogue. There are a number of useful guidelines available on this topic, but important as it is, we cannot discuss it further here.

The commandment, ‘Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour’, is another reason taken from the *Guidelines on Dialogue* (#17). The argument goes as follows: one way of fulfilling the command, ‘Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour’ is to take precautions and find out the truth about your neighbour (through dialogue). In this way you will speak the truth about him/her and avoid spreading false information, or ‘false images’.²⁹ How many Christians grew up in the past with incorrect gossip about other Christian churches? And today, what do Christians actually know about Muslims? Hindus? Jains? Jews? What are their sources of information? Correct information about different religions

must be sought after, and this is best done through direct dialoguing.

Lastly there is a theological reason that needs to be added and is related to the theology of revelation and a theology of religions—two very contentious areas in Christian theology. Not all Christian churches have developed a theology of religions. Some are developing such a theology with some difficulty, others refuse even to discuss it. The question is: what is God’s plan for all these religions? Once we thought they would disappear as Christianity spread all over the world. Now we think that perhaps they are here to stay and have a role to play in God’s plan. If God speaks to us through many prophets and religions, then they will have something to teach us too. We are therefore required to follow this up and learn what might be revealed in these religions. There is an obligation to do so. At the same time, Christians believe that Christ has revealed many things to us of great importance that are not revealed in these other religions. What we might learn from these religions will complement, not contradict, what Christ has revealed.

There is another reason that seems to me to be rather an outcome of interreligious dialogue than a reason to engage in it. It is mentioned by the Victorian Council of Churches in their document, *One Faith- Multifaith*.³⁰ This document actually has two statements I want to mention. The first one is that the idea of dialogue is to reinforce the consciousness of Christian identity and place denominational differences in perspective. I would disagree with this and say that this is rather an outcome than a reason to engage. The second statement is similar: ‘The wish to engage in interreligious dialogue requires Christians to establish unity of faith with each other’. This also seems to me to be capable of misinterpretation. Christians do not in fact unite first, and then engage in interreligious dialogue. I would say that while engaging in dialogue with people of other faiths, they become more aware of the shame of Christian divisions. It is a kind of bonus spin-off. It is more an outcome than pre-requisite.

Before I draw this examination of the ration-

ale to a close, let me mention a number of pitfalls and points critical of interreligious dialogue lest one thinks that it is all easy and positive. Interreligious dialogue can be manipulated for various reasons. It can be used for grandstanding and personal promotion as mentioned above. It can also be abused and used for stirring up passions and hatred towards another religious group. Particularly in large groups, some may come along merely to abuse members of another faith. Likewise there will be disappointments if interreligious dialogue is used as an instrument to procure quick political results.

It can also be used for proselytism. This is by no means something of the past.³¹ There are still some who use every opportunity to try and convert others to their faith. Part of the problem here is that of how individuals interpret their ideas about mission and evangelism. Dialogue can also be artificial. If there is genuinely no disposition to listen to the other, then the dialogue will be fruitless. Indeed, as was said at the beginning, unless both sides are prepared to listen as well as speak, there is no dialogue.

Another aspect of dialogue is that it is difficult to initiate in geographical areas where the population tends to be mono-religious or monocultural. If there is no firsthand experience of another faith, dialogue is not impossible, but certainly more difficult. Dialogue can also collapse into a disaster if the dialogue is not properly planned. That would include the need for both sides (or all sides) to be involved in the planning. For example, if the speaker for a particular religion is not familiar with his/her own tradition, then the encounter could become counter-productive.

Dialogue needs patience and persistence. If the rationale in the first place was shaky then once the initial phase is over, the whole endeavour may be abandoned. For example, present Christian-Muslim dialogue is popular at the moment. Once this has passed will the promoters of dialogue continue with other world faiths and indigenous spiritualities?

There is finally another phenomenon which I find a bit disturbing. In pursuing interreligious

dialogue, some individuals, groups, or institutions limit what they do to the so-called Abrahamic religions, i.e., Judaism, Christianity and Islam. I have no quarrel with the plain fact that they share a common background and are monotheistic. However working in the wider field of ecumenism, the principle of inclusivism should apply as *Ecumenical considerations* states: 'In dialogue we strive to be inclusive, since dialogue can easily become an elitist activity...'.³² That is, one should try to unite all as far as possible, whether it is all of Christianity or all of humankind. When groups, engaged in interreligious dialogue, focus on the Abrahamic religions they are consciously or unconsciously excluding other world faiths like Hinduism and Buddhism as well as the local indigenous religion. Hence their methodology inadvertently sends the incorrect message that interreligious dialogue is for an exclusive club. This is most unfortunate, counter-productive and self-defeating.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have identified that there are many different reasons, pragmatic and theological, for engaging in interreligious dialogue. These reasons are often closely related to each other and have solid support from many Christian churches. Educators and preachers could help significantly if they teased out some of these reasons with their audiences and encourage people to think not only about the pragmatic reasons but also about the theological ones. People might then think a bit more about what it is they are doing and why, in relation to interreligious dialogue, and avoid some of the pitfalls outlined above. This hopefully will lead to a greater conviction of why it is that we should be promoting interreligious dialogue. A strong conviction will be able to support commitment and action when the going gets tough and when interreligious dialogue is no longer simply the politically correct thing to do. In this way a more mature and profound approach to interreligious dialogue will be developed.

NOTES

1. Cf. WCC 's programme Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation, website: <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/cd39-01.html>
2. Cf. Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, website: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interrelg/index.htm A very detailed, and updated account of the Roman Catholic teaching on this topic can be found in: Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Interreligious dialogue: the official teaching of the Catholic Church (1963-2005)*, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006).
3. The more structural aspects of dialogue at governmental and intergovernmental levels with international interreligious organizations and the involvement of Christians in these, is taken up in a 2002 consultation: WCC, *International and Global Interreligious Initiatives: Reflections from a World Council of Churches' Consultation. Tao Fong Shan, Hong Kong. 8-12 April, 2002*, (Geneva: WCC, 2002).
4. WCC, *Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations: Ecumenical Considerations*. (Geneva: WCC, 1992), #1.
5. WCC, *Ecumenical Considerations on Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, (Geneva: WCC, 1982), #4.6.
6. A good overall treatment is given by Paul Knitter, *Theologies of Religions*, (New York: Orbis Books, 2002).
7. Wesley Ariarajah, *Hindus and Christians: A Century of Protestant Ecumenical Thought*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991). Also: Knitter, Paul F., *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Towards the World Religions* (London: SCM; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985).
8. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) was set up to oversee interreligious matters. In 2006, Pope Benedict XVI seemingly downgraded this council by placing it under the wing of the Pontifical Council for Culture. However in 2007 the PCID was re-instated with Cardinal Taunus as its head.
9. WCC, *Guidelines on Dialogue with people of Living Faiths and Ideologies*, (Geneva: WCC, 1979), #16.
10. Dalai Lama, *Mein Leben und Mein Volk: Die Tragödie Tibets* (Munich: Droemer-Knaur, 1962; TB Edition 1982), 189, cited in Whalen Lai & Michael von Brück. *Christianity and Buddhism: A Multi-Cultural History of Their Dialogue*, (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 14.
11. *Pro Dialogo Bulletin* 123, 2006 (3), 327.
12. Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate, The Documents of Vatican II*, ed., W. Abbott, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), #5.
13. Pope Benedict XVI, Meeting with the president of the Religious Affairs Directorate. *Address by the holy Father*, 28th November 2006, #3. Although this address talks about Christian-Muslim dialogue, much is applicable to interreligious dialogue in general.
14. *NA* #2.
15. WCC, *Guidelines*, #8.
16. WCC, *Called to be church*, #11.
17. WCC. 2002. *Ecumenical considerations for dialogue and relations with people of other religions*. (Geneva, 2002), #5.
18. *Ibid.*, #9.
19. Dalai Lama, *Mein Leben*, 14.
20. WCC, *Guidelines*, Introduction.
21. WCC, *Called to be the One Church*, 9th General Assembly of the WCC, (Porto Alegre, 2006), #11.
22. WCC, *Guidelines*, Introduction.
23. *Ibid.*, #18.
24. WCC, *Called to be church ...* #11.
25. Benedict XVI, *Address ...*, #13.
26. *Ibid.*, #10.
27. Dalai Lama, *Mein Leben*, 14.
28. Benedict XVI, *Address ...*, #10.
29. Cf. WCC, *Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations: Ecumenical Considerations*, (Geneva: WCC, 1992), #1; WCC, *Ecumenical Considerations on Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, (Geneva: WCC, 1982), #1.1.
30. Faith and Order Commission, Victorian Council of Churches, 'One Faith—Multifaith': *A theological basis for multifaith gatherings*, (Melbourne: VCC, 2005).
31. Cf. WCC, *Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations: Ecumenical Considerations*. (Geneva: WCC, 1992), #7; WCC, *Ecumenical Considerations on Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, (Geneva: WCC, 1982), #4.2.
32. WCC, *Ecumenical considerations...* #26.

PREPARING TO CELEBRATE THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

APRIL—JULY

From the Sixth Sunday of Easter to the Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Prepared by Michael Trainor

PART ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE READINGS

The following is a brief overview of the readings of the Liturgy of the Word for major celebrations proclaimed while this issue of *Compass* is current. It focuses on the readings for Sundays between April and July 2008, from the Sixth Sunday of Easter to the Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year A. Please feel free to use or adapt these reflections, with the customary acknowledgement of source.

1. The First readings in Easter focus on the story of the early Christian community, as portrayed through Luke in the Book of Acts. Each of the selections over Easter picks up important stories enabling our Christian communities to reflect on the importance of the Easter event. These include the Samaritan or Gentile ‘Pentecost’ event (Easter 6) which expands further on the action of the Spirit, Jesus’ ascension to God forty days after Easter (Ascension), and the Pentecost story itself (on Pentecost Sunday), which is a climax of the Easter Season.

After Pentecost, the first reading selections in the Solemn Feasts of Trinity and Body and Blood help to explore the theological and liturgical significance of these feasts, with their emphasis on the nature of God (Ex 34—Trinity) and God’s wilderness nurture of Israel with food and drink (Body and Blood).

When we return to the readings of Ordinary Time on June 1, we will see how the first reading for these Sundays in Ordinary Time covers a wide range of First Testament litera-

ture, with a particular focus on the prophets. In each case, the theme of the gospel has determined the selection of this reading. It is useful to be reminded (and to celebrate) the First Testament readings in their own right. They are stories of Israel’s experience of God and foundational for the Christian community.

2. The Second Readings in the Easter Season come from 1 Peter, written not by Peter himself but by a Christian leader in Rome concerned about the pastoral care of Christian in Asia Minor. The letter addresses religious people experiencing turmoil and confusion in their day-to-day lives. The writer seeks to encourage his addressees and remind them of their baptismal life. For this reason 1 Peter is appropriate for reflecting on the implications of our baptismal commitment in this Easter season.

When we move into Ordinary Time, the second reading is predominantly from Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapters 3 to 8. These semi-continuous selections cover some of the most profound insights into Paul’s theology of God, the Spirit and the life of the Spirit into which Christians are called through Baptism. These selections in this time of the Liturgical year (from OT 9 to 12—June 1 to Jul 27) are rich and powerful. They offer an opportunity for each of our local faith communities to name and celebrate what is at the heart of Christian living.

3. The Gospel readings in the Easter

Season help to celebrate the liturgical theme celebrated. Easter 6, for example, continues a theme from previous Sundays of preparing for the coming of Jesus' Spirit. The Ascension Gospel of May 4 is a summary of Matthew's Gospel. In a simple, climactic scene, the Easter Jesus empowers the disciples to teach and make disciples of all peoples. In light of this, Pentecost becomes a liturgical highpoint. The Spirit's presence breathed into the community by the Johannine Jesus (Jn 20) confirms God's empowerment of the disciples.

When we return to Ordinary Time on June 1, after the Solemnities of the two previous

Sundays, we also return to Matthew's Gospel. As we remind ourselves that this gospel is addressed to a Jewish-Christian community in the later part of the first century, we note some how Jewish themes permeate these gospel readings. The selections from Mt 7 to 14 enable us to experience the figure of Wisdom revealed in Matthew's Jesus: He teaches, calls into discipleship, nurtures and empowers. It is this figure that is important for a world searching for wisdom today, and a Christian community seeking wisdom in how to form itself into an authentic presence of God to this world.

PART TWO: NOTES ON THE READINGS

April 6—Easter 3: *Acts 2:14, 22-28.* Luke summarises Peter's Pentecost sermon in terms of the Gospel's story about Jesus. *1 Pet 1:17-21.* God's vision of the relationship to God which all the baptised share. *Lk 24:13-35.* Two unfaithful disciples experience the presence of the Risen Jesus in the 'breaking of bread,' the moment of Eucharistic communion. *Theme—Jesus' Presence.* Jesus continues to be present to all, especially when darkness, blindness or personal issues seem to cloud life's journey. The centrality of the Sunday Assembly becomes the place of our encounter with the Risen Jesus.

April 13—Easter 4: *Acts 2:14, 36-41.* Peter appeals to his attentive audience to be converted to God. *1 Pet 2:20-25.* Jesus is the model of how to be with God in the midst of life's suffering. *Jn 10:1-10.* Jesus is the sheep-fold gate who allows access to God and protection for his community. *Theme—Jesus, the Gate:* We seek safety, security and protection. Jesus offers us a community where we can be at ease with God. What are some of the ways in which this happens in Sunday Eucharistic Assembly?

April 20—Easter 5: *Acts 6:1-7.* Seven are appointed to minister to the practical needs of the Jerusalem Christian community. Luke shows how ministry must be flexible, inclusive and respectful of all. *1 Pet 2:4-9.* All those baptised form a holy priesthood and spiritual household. *Jn 14:1-12.* Jesus is the way, truth and life for troubled people. *Theme—Call of the Baptised.* Our community that gathers each Sunday is precious. It is God's 'royal

priesthood,' blessed and beloved by God. Baptism empowers us all to ministry, especially in a Church once dominated by ordained ministry. Baptism is at the heart of future ministry and lay ecclesial leadership.

April 27—Easter 6: *Acts 8:5-8, 14-17.* Philip preaches to the Samaritans. Peter and John visit them and pray that the Samaritans will receive the Holy Spirit. A second Pentecost now takes place amongst a non-Jewish people! *1 Pet 3:15-18.* Reverence for God is at the heart of the Christian life. This enables the believer to act with integrity especially in times of difficulty or false-accusation. *Jn 14: 15-21.* Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit. This 'Advocate' will be with his disciples. *Theme—Release of God's Holy Spirit.* God's Spirit permeates every human being and atom of creation. This empowerment guarantees God's Spirit in directing the future of our churches.

May 4—Ascension: *Acts 1:1-11.* Luke's community grieving for the physical return of the earthly Jesus is encouraged in its ongoing life. *Eph 1:17-23.* Jesus is central in God's plan and God's communion with us. *Mt 28:16-20* This is the climax and summary of Mt's Gospel. *Theme—Fidelity and Confidence.* The Ascension feast reminds us of God's continual presence with us in our church, local and personal struggles. We can be confident of the future, despite the struggles we experience.

May 11—Pentecost: *Acts 2:1-11* God's Spirit empowers and unites the fragile Jerusalem community of disciples. *1 Cor 12:3-7.12-13* The many gifts evident in the Christian community are the

signs of the ongoing activity of God's Spirit that brings about communion. *Jn 20:19-23* Jesus breathes his Spirit of forgiveness and peace on to his frightened disciples. *Theme—Courage*: In times of fear or anxiety, our celebration of this Pentecost reminds us we are empowered by God's Spirit.

May 18—Trinity: *Ex 34:4-6.8-9.* Moses declares the essential truth about God: God is merciful. *2 Cor 3:11-13.* God is a community of lovers, into which disciples are called. *Jn 3:16-18.* God's love for us is revealed in Jesus. *Theme—God's life*: The Trinity is an essential truth of God: a communion of Persons, in love, into which we are invited and out of which we love. We reflect God's triune life in world, just as others reflect God's inner life to us.

May 25—Body and Blood: *Deut 8:2-3.14-16* Moses reminds Israel about God's care of them revealed through food and drink in the desert. *1 Cor 10:16-17.* Eucharist is communion in the one body. *Jn 6:51-58.* Jesus is the living Bread of God. *Theme—The Sunday Assembly*: At a time when we think about new ways of liturgical life as priest numbers decline, the Sunday Eucharistic Assembly become more important than ever. Here we celebrate God's life with us and our communion with all who gather, and those who feel excluded.

June 1—Ordinary Time 9: *Dt 11: 18. 26-28. 32.* Moses teaches the heart of religion: a total focus on God. This is the heart of Judaism. *Rom 3: 21-25. 28.* Paul also teaches the heart of religion: Focus on God through Jesus. This is called 'righteousness.' *Mt 7: 21- 27.* Jesus teaches the heart of discipleship: A focus on Jesus and his words. *Theme—Focus on God.* Living each day with an explicit consciousness of God is at the heart of Judaism, the faith life of Jesus and Mt's community. How can this awareness be encouraged and celebrated in our local Sunday Assembly?

June 8—Ordinary Time 10: *Hos 6:3-6.* The prophet invites Israel to a genuine love of God rather than religious exhibitionism. *Rom 4:18-25.* Paul presents Abraham as the exemplar of hope and faith. *Mt 9:9-13.* Jesus forms a renewed community of disciples, in the spirit of Hosea. *Theme—Authenticity*: The first and third readings invite us to reflect on the authenticity of our church life and practice. Where do we see today authentic religious life and practice? Who exemplifies this spirit?

June 15—Ordinary Time 11: *Ex 19:2-6* God reminds Moses (and his people) of the care and protection shown to them. *Rom 5:6-11* Through Jesus

we are brought into deep communion ('righteousness') with God. *Mt 9:36-10:8.* Jesus forms his renewed Israelite community of disciples to proclaim 'good news.' *Theme—Good News.* The good news of God's caring protection of us (first reading) and the kind of community that gathers around Jesus (Gospel) needs to be celebrated today.

June 22—Ordinary Time 12: *Jer 20:10-13.* The prophet is faithful to God's call despite his struggle with God. *Rom 5:12-15* Paul celebrates the gift of divine deliverance through Jesus' ministry. *Mt 10:26-33.* Jesus reminds his disciples not to be frightened but trust in God. *Theme—Don't Be Frightened*: Fear dominates our world and community. We are being invited into a community, protected and cared for by God.

June 29—Peter and Paul: *Acts 12: 1-11* God delivers Peter from imprisonment. *2 Tm 4: 6-8. 17-18.* The apostle reflects upon his fidelity to God and God's fidelity to him. *Mt 16: 13-19.* Peter publicly identifies Jesus as the 'Messiah' ('Anointed One'). Jesus calls Peter as the 'rock' upon which the Christian community is built. *Theme—Apostolic Witness*: The faith obvious in our community is the fruit of faithful witness to Jesus over the centuries in every generation. This faith is founded on the faith of the first community disciples, symbolised in Peter and Paul and their missions to the Jewish and Gentile worlds respectively. This mission continues today amongst us.

July 6—Ordinary Time 14: *Zech 9:9-10.* God as King will come to deliver, protect and offer peace. *Rom 8:9.11-13* We possess God's Spirit who empowers our daily lives. *Mt 11:25-30* We are invited to come to Jesus who wants to be with us in our daily struggles. *Theme—God's Comfort.* Many people today feel the burdens of life. Our faith community gathered in this Sunday Assembly reflects a gentle God who seeks to offer support and comfort to those who struggle. How is this happening practically at a local level?

July 13—Ordinary Time 15: *Is 55:10-11.* God's Word is eternally effective. *Rom 8:18-23.* The whole of creation is caught up with humanity in the inward search for God and the release of God's spirit of renewal. *Mt 13:1-23* This is the 'Great Parable' chapter of Mt's Gospel: God's Reign is present mysteriously and unexpectedly. *Theme—God's Presence.* To dispirited people the invitation to contemplate a God who is present, active and mystery is an essential truth. It uplifts, converts, strengthens and offers a fresh perspective.

July 20—Ordinary Time 16: *Wis 12:13.16-19.* God teaches, offers hope and wisdom. *Rom 8:26-27.* God's Spirit helps us in our weakness. *Mt 13:24-43.* This is the parables of good and evil.. *Theme—Weakness.* The human experience of weakness and disaster invites us to draw close to a God who is present in our struggles. Mt's parables remind us of the realism of life's ambiguities which are part of discipleship and mysteriously reveal God's presence.

July 27—Ordinary Time 17: *1 Kings 3:5.7-12.* Solomon is blessed for seeking wisdom and discernment rather than wealth *Rom 8:28-30.* God invites us to live in the image of Jesus. *Mt 13:44-52.* The parable of the search for the pearl of great price. *Theme—Wisdom:* All of us desire deep, lingering wisdom to live in peace and happiness with ourselves, others and God. Many illustrations abound where such wisdom is practiced by unwitting disciples.

THE TRIDENTINE MASS AGAIN?

Dear Editor,

Comment is called for on Fr Joseph Grayland's article published in the spring 2007 issue of *Compass*, 'The Tridentine Mass Again: Can the Church Celebrate in Two Rites?'

The answer to Fr Grayland's question is a resounding Yes, as that is what the Church has been doing for centuries. Historically, the liturgical life of the Catholic Church has been carried on through about 20 ritual traditions. Most of these are found in Eastern Catholicism but even today in the Western Church the Roman rite does not have a monopoly.

The Western Church used to have more rites until most of them fell into desuetude after the Second Vatican Council even though the Council itself directed that all existing rites were to be preserved and respected (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, 4). This was just one of many liturgical principles enunciated by the Council which were disregarded in the post-conciliar reform.

The main problem with Fr Grayland's position is that it is based on a faulty understanding of the history of the Roman missal promulgated by Pope John XXIII in 1962. Fr Grayland insists that the precursor of the 1962 missal, the missal promulgated by Pope Pius V in 1570, was the product of the theological perspectives and polemical mindset of the Church in the context of the Protestant Reformation.

Far from being something created to deal with the politico-ecclesiastical struggles of the sixteenth century, the 1570 missal was merely a codification or standardisation of the Roman rite of Mass as it then existed and had been celebrated for some centuries. Unlike the 1969 missal of Pope Paul VI, the 1570 book was not a general, far-reaching overhaul of structure, texts and rubrics. The main

change was a reduction in the number of prefaces and sequences. In every other aspect, the 1570 missal was almost identical to the first printed edition of the Roman missal, which appeared in 1474 and which was itself little different from Mass as it was celebrated at the papal court in the thirteenth century. In other words, the essential form of the missal of 1962, via the missal of 1570, cannot have been a reaction to events in the sixteenth century as it preceded them in time by several hundred years.

Fr Grayland's confusion is reinforced by calling the 1962 missal 'Tridentine'. It is Tridentine only in the sense that Pius V's codification of the Roman rite was ordered by the Council of Trent. The origins of that missal and of the theological, ecclesiological and liturgical presuppositions underpinning it lie hundreds of years before the Council of Trent and have nothing to do with either the Protestant or the Catholic Reformations.

This confusion might be avoided if the 1962 missal were called by some such designation as 'the old Mass', 'the traditional Mass', 'the Latin Mass', or, better still, 'the Mass of John XXIII' which describes it exactly.

Fr Grayland is also mistaken when he claims that Pius V's intention was that all the liturgical rites other than the Roman would, over time, cease to be used. The exact opposite is the case. The Pope ordered that all rites which had been in existence for at least 200 years, including the rite of his own Order, the Dominican, were to continue. The disappearance of most of these rites was delayed until the 1960s in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council.

Yours sincerely,
Christopher Dowd OP