ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

JULIE MACKEN

THE PUBLICATION of Pope Francis’ Encyclical Laudato si’ has probably received more media attention than any other Encyclical in history. In part because information technology has meant the Encyclical is only a click away from being read by everyone with access to a computer, but also because the contents impact each and every one of us alive today. The central theme of how we rightly relate to this glorious creation that has been entrusted into our care is as relevant to my little grand daughter as it is to Pope Francis.

From the beginning of the document it is clear what kind of relationship Pope Francis believes we need have with the earth and with our environment. He begins:

‘Laudato si’, mi Signore’—‘Praise be to you, my Lord’. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. ‘Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs’.

He then immediately locates the problem, saying:

This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are made of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.

Pope Francis clearly connects our collective alienation from the earth with a debasement of each other and ourselves—the interdependency of this primary relationship is clear as the Pope says:

The destruction of the human environment is extremely serious, not only because God has entrusted the world to us men and women, but because human life is itself a gift which must be defended from various forms of debasement. Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in ‘lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies’.

It is clear from reading Laudato si’ that Pope Francis loves this earth. In fact love is the central, though largely unnamed, motivation for this teaching document. This Encyclical calls us to a truly resilient love that acknowledges our intimate relationship with the earth, with the suffering wrought by greed, with the limits of our own works and economies and ways of being in the world.

The case for action on global warming is very carefully and fully laid out—as it has been elsewhere by others. We share a powerful self-interest in cutting our carbon emissions because if we don't the world will heat past the critical point of two degrees and we could create a planet unable to support life as we know it today.
The moral case is clear, and again this has also been made by aid organisations across the globe for the last few decades. There is no doubt these organisations were heartened to have the Pope now included in their number.

However, the Pope has done what no world leader has done before. He has challenged all of us to create national and global economies that are no longer predicated on endless growth. He has challenged a largely capitalist world to find a way to live without endless consumption.

He has challenged all of us to create the intellectual frame—the scaffolding on which we build a world economy that has the humility of living within the earth's means. He challenges us to create economies that recognise the essentially moral character of development, saying:

Authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us and ‘take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system’. Accordingly, our human ability to transform reality must proceed in line with God's original gift of all that is.

The last century has been dominated by two grand ideologies—International Socialism and Capitalism and neither ideology gave credit for a transcendent authority. With both of those meta narratives finished—for reasons too complex to go into here—Pope Francis is calling on all of us to create a new story, a new narrative that will allow us to recognise and live within the earth's limits, our own fragility and interdependence with each other, and to live in a right relationship with the biosphere.

When Pope Francis says: Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies’, he is walking in the steps of the prophets that have gone before him. It is no small task to find new lifestyles, models of production and consumption and to change the established structures of power which today govern societies, but at least we know that if we fail to do all of that, the result will be dire.

This is an historic document. Future generations may point to this moment and this document as the time when the tide turned on global warming, global inequality and species extinction. And for that we are all responsible.

We can be silent witnesses to terrible injustices if we think we can obtain significant benefits by making the rest of humanity, present and future, pay the extremely high costs of environmental deterioration.

—Pope Francis, Laudato Si’, 36.
THERE PERSISTS a common tendency in some Church circles to define a 'Good Catholic' as one who accepts Church teachings and pastoral practices. But surely, are there not good Catholics who do not accept some Church teachings and/or pastoral practices?

While ordinarily, Church teachings and pastoral practices may jointly operate in everyday parish life, they are analytically separable. This is apparent, for example, when priests, lay Catholics and non-Catholics talk about the Sacrament of Penance, the Sunday Mass obligation and the dispensation for a mixed marriage or a dispensation from place of marriage. Perhaps today, this separability is most apparent when bishops, priests, parents and young adults talk about the forthcoming Synod on the Family. Many Catholic parents particularly seem to separate Church teachings and pastoral practices when they talk about their adult children and the Church's teachings on the exclusivity of sex within marriage and the monogamous, heterosexual and indissoluble nature of marriage and the pastoral practice of commonly restricting eucharistic reception to people in irregular sexual unions. Such talk is often heart-felt because they grieve that their children are no longer practicing the Faith; they commonly assume these Church teachings and pastoral practices contribute to their children's religious estrangement. Regardless of the validity of their assumptions, their talk on Church teachings and practices may be schematically diagrammed in the following table:

Responses to Church Teachings and Pastoral Practices

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The table presents four possible responses to Church teachings and pastoral practices in any particular ecclesial arena—e.g., Penance, Sunday obligation, irregular sexual unions, etc.: (1) Good Catholics accept both Church teachings and pastoral practices; (2) Reformers reject current pastoral practices yet accept Church teachings; (3) Resigned Catholics may reflect particular Church teachings but, resigned that teachings will not change, accept the relevant current pastoral practices; and (4) Alienated Catholics reject both Church teachings and pastoral practices in a particular arena.

With respect to parents of adult children and Church teachings on sex and marriage and the pastoral practice of eucharistic exclusion of their children in irregular sexual unions, 'Good Catholic' parents accept the Church's teachings on marriage and sex; they also accept eucharistic restriction for their children who engage in premarital sex or gay sex and for their children divorced and 'remarried'. With love for Church traditions, they reason that the indissolubility of the marital bond and the exclusiveness of sexual intercourse within marriage between a man and a woman follow a long, well established tradition culminating in a rich deposit of moral and sacramental theology and Canon Law; furthermore, they cite the sacredness of marriage and sex as gifts coming from God Himself for the procreation of children and the continuation of the human race. They argue, not without empathy for the difficulties of married life, that marriage is a covenant that cannot be wished away because of mistakes, hardships or disappointments; only the validity of the marital bond not its difficulty in a particular case, governs the nullity of the bond. They posit that Church teachings on the indissolubility of the marital bond and the exclusiveness of sexual intercourse within marriage between a man and a woman should be reasserted by maintaining eucharistic restrictions on people, even, sadly, their own children in irregular sexual unions.

The 'Reformer' parents accept the Church's teachings on marriage and sex again because of their love for the Church and its traditions; they also include the perceived familial need for absolute moral guidance in a confusing, sexually permissive world as a reason to accept these Church teachings. Nonetheless, they want the pastoral practice of eucharistic restrictions lifted for their children divorced and remarried or in other irregular sexual unions. These parents say that eucharistic restrictions do not seem to be settled and fixed, noting differences in its 'enforcement' in parishes and dioceses and at liturgical events; furthermore, they cite Gospel narratives telling stories of Jesus sharing his table with those broken by sin, sadness, doubt and weakness. They argue that the mercy and compassion of Jesus rather than a legal or dogmatic perspective should govern eucharistic admissions. They desire that the Church act more inclusively of all in a family by lifting restrictions to the Eucharist not only for those in irregular sexual unions but also for the non-Catholic partner in mixed marriages. Furthermore, they commonly reason that there should be Church acceptance of marital breakdown and the allowance of remarriage.

The 'Resigned' and 'Alienated' parents may seem dissimilar to each other—but after all, isn't the 'Resigned' more noble bowing in obedience...
to Church practice even if they think their children are somehow 'OK' in an irregular sexual union? However, the 'Alienated' parent may be more nobly authentic—rejecting Church teachings about their children and rejecting the practice of restricting their children from the Eucharist. Both perceive the need for the Church to 'get real' about the realities of twenty-first century psychological and biological knowledge and the Australian life style of 'change', 'pluralism' and 'postmodernity'. As people live in this changing society the parental 'talk' here is for the need of a Church that embraces and supports their children while they make wrong decisions, yet without losing the capacity to change. Both the 'Resigned' and the 'Alienated' parents similarly fear that if the Church is not inclusive today, in word and deed, of their children just as they are, the Church will lose them forever.

What do we make of all this? One thing is that this conceptual schema is merely a tool to look at, to appreciate and to understand perhaps a bit better the relationship between Church teachings and pastoral practices in different ecclesial arenas for a variety of people; while this note looked at parental response to Church teachings and pastoral practices with respect to sex, marriage and eucharistic restrictions, it may be useful in understanding other arenas of Church teachings and practices for people in different positions in life and in different positions in life.

Secondly, the responses people make to Church teachings and pastoral practices do not necessarily make them more or less 'Good Catholics'; indeed, Catholics struggling with Church teachings and/or pastoral practices need to be embraced as Catholics.

Thirdly, there are many reasons why people stop practicing the Faith that go beyond Church teachings and practices—still, let us ensure that our Church teachings and practices do not drive unnecessarily people from the Church.

Fourthly, as the acceptance of the idea of the 'development of doctrine' preoccupied many in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the Second Vatican Council the idea of the 'development of pastoral practice' may characterise the late twentieth century and the first half of this century.

In elaboration of this last point, John Henry Newman argued that the development of doctrine was present from the beginnings of the Church implicitly in the Divine Revelation in Sacred Scripture and Tradition. Pastoral practice today seems more linked to buttressing Church teachings than to Divine Revelation and the beginnings of the Church. That the former link is understandable does not obviate the significance of Scripture and Tradition in developing our pastoral practices. I suggest that the idea of the 'development of pastoral practice' needs to be pursued so that the Church, in accordance with Divine Revelation, an example of which is the Council of Jerusalem, is pastorally inclusive while continuing to be magisterially strong.

NOTES


2 Circa 48, this Council decreed, amongst other things, that Gentile Christians did not have to observe the Mosaic Law (Acts 15).
THE POPES AS FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGIANS

GLENN SINISCALCHI

ONE OF THE principal convictions of fundamental theology is that reasoned explanations of Catholic faith can play a pivotal role in making a case for the Gospel. Undoubtedly, fundamental theologians want to affirm and utilize philosophical and evidential approaches in giving an account of faith.

Be that as it may, a careful examination of papal teaching indicates that popes are much more concerned to reinforce or highlight existential means of persuading skeptics. Popes are also heavily concerned to elaborate upon the meanings of divine revelation and Catholic teaching. To support my thesis, I comprehensively engage all papal encyclicals spanning from John XXIII to Pope Francis.

Papal Teaching and Human Reason

In the classical method of apologetics, theologians began their case by providing philosophical arguments for the existence of God. Of all the popes in recent memory, John Paul II is the only one to defend or mention natural knowledge of God. Elsewhere, we find mere allusions or indirect references to issues related to natural theology. The closest we ever get to hearing commentary on Aquinas' Five Ways is when the popes argue for the connection between objective morality and the Eternal Law-Giver (here we are close to Aquinas' Fourth Way). Instead of defending the existence of God, contemporary popes are much more concerned with eliciting action in defense of basic moral truths. Thus the words 'defend' and 'safeguard' (and this includes variations on those words) are used more often in reference to human life, dignity, rights, and duties than any other topic related to defending the Catholic faith.

Another contrast pertains to the person and work of Jesus Christ and the Church. After demonstrating the existence of God, the classical apologists provided evidence for the unique character and claims of Jesus. Catholic teaching continues that tradition and holds that a historical and theological study of Jesus can draw individuals to faith. John Paul II is the only pope to mention the fundamental reliability of the New Testament writings and the eyewitness testimonies of the first apostles. Here and there we find the popes mentioning or alluding to Christological signs, such as miracles or the cross of Christ.

However, fundamental theologians should take notice of the unique emphases of the popes. The pontiffs rarely mention issues related to Jesus for the sake of improving the case for faith. Rather, there is much greater interest in the supernatural work of the risen Jesus in the Church. The Church itself is both sign and instrument of grace in the world. Thus the Church, insofar as she remains faithful to the Gospel, serves as sign of credibility. Regardless of whether certain cultured despisers acknowledge the fact or not, many established institutions of the West are direct outcomes of a Catholic Christian frame of mind.

Unity, Holiness and Love

Mentioned earlier, the popes are not heavily invested in philosophical, historical, and/or sociological defenses of faith. Although the amount of references is not always indicative of how important the popes view a particular
topic, the encyclicals demonstrate that the credibility of Christianity is usually found within the realm of lived experience. Here I highlight some commonly overlooked issues in the popes’ case for faith: human holiness, love, and unity.

First, the experience of Church unity is directly related to issues related to credibility: ‘that they may all be one...so that the world may believe that you have sent me (Jn 17:21).’ I do not doubt that Catholic apologetic debates with Protestant Christians can help spur on unity. But the major impetus behind the ecumenical movement is about producing interior conversions to Christ, and working together in providing a comprehensive, ecumenical witness.

Also, the unity engendered by marriage and family life can serve as a sign of God’s love; marriage and family life need to be continuously safeguarded. Similarly, priests and those called to religious life express their love for Christ by living a celibate life. A priestly life, faithfully discharged, can serve as a convincing sign of the Kingdom of God.

Unanimously, popes emphasize the potential of charity and holiness for the purposes of evangelization. An example is displayed brilliantly by the life and death of the martyrs. As Tertullian famously said, the ‘blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.’ John Paul II argued that martyrs ‘provide evidence of a love that has no need of lengthy arguments in order to convince. The martyrs stir in us a profound trust because they give voice to what we already feel and they declare what we would like to have the strength to express.’ Or again: ‘This universal presence of the Saints, is in fact a proof of the transcendent power of the Spirit. It is the sign and proof of God’s victory over the forces of evil which divide humanity.

**Fundamental Theology and the Religious Others**

One of the perennial challenges to Christian faith lies in reconciling the omnibenevolence of God and the historicity of Christ’s revelation. It should go without saying that the popes emphasize the universality of Catholic mission. Nowhere do the popes qualify who should (or should not) be evangelized. Everyone is called to believe in the Gospel.

Interestingly, even given that strong call to evangelize the world, one is very hard pressed to find the popes modeling or even endorsing issues related to interreligious apologetics. Once again, the emphasis is on clarifying the theological meanings of Church teaching, not with providing arguments for Jesus in a world of different religious founders. Meaning itself can have an apologetic draw upon skeptics and lukewarm believers in a world of conflicting religions.

For example, Jesus Christ is the one redeeming mediator between God and humanity. It follows that Christ's revelation is unique, full, ultimate, and definitive. However, to accept that Jesus is the one true savior does not mean that 'formal outsiders' cannot be saved. Rather, the risen Christ makes himself present to everyone, including those who are inculpably ignorant of the Gospel.

Because the 'formal outsiders' can be saved, a type of revelation must be accessible to them. This general sense of revelation is, in the words of John Paul II, 'always fragmentary and impaired by the limits of our understanding. Faith alone makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently.'
COMPASS

By accepting God's revelation in Jesus, Catholics can know something about the 'formal outsiders' that the latter do not know about themselves. It follows that non-Catholic worldviews are not as objectively salvific as Catholicism. 'Indeed,' says Paul VI, 'honesty compels us to declare openly our conviction that the Christian religion is the one and only true religion, and it is our hope that it will be acknowledged as such by all who look for God and worship Him.'

Conclusion

Today fundamental theology serves to correct and complement the older classical apologetics. The signs of salvation cannot be reduced to theoretical defenses, but are seen directly in the multifaceted meanings of Catholic teaching and in the lives of believers working together.

NOTES


3. John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, 63; Paul VI Humanae Vitae, 8, John Paul II, Veritatis Splendor, 73, 79; Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate, 29, 74, Spe Salvi, 5; Francis, Lumen Fidei, 34.


5. John XXIII, Princeps Pastorum, 24, Ad Petri Cathedram, 129, 139, Gratia Recordatio, 15, Mater et Magistra, 1, 15, 16, 20, 22, 37, 85, 89, 103, 108, 109, 111, 179, 249, Pascem in Terris, 9, 14, 24, 50, 56, 68, 56-60, 63, 65, 77, 104; Paul VI, Mense Maio, 8, Populorum Progressio, 39, 42, Humane Vitae, 20, 23; John Paul II, Redemptor Hominis, 10, 12, 13, 17, 18, Dives in Misericordia, 1, 11, Laborum Exercens, 8, 13, 20, Slavorum Apostoli, 9, 10, Redemptoris Missio, 60, Centesimus Annus, 3, 6, 7, 13-15, 22, 24, 29, 30, 36, 46, 55, 61, Veritatis Splendor, 34, 51, 101, Evangelium Vitae, 1, 2, 5, 6, 27, 34, 41, 42, 48, 55, 57, etc., Ut Unum Sint, 74, 76, Fides et Ratio, 60, 90, 102, Ecclesiae de Eucharistia, 20; Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, 28, Caritas in Veritate, 11, 22, 34, 29, 43, 55, etc.; Francis, Lumen Fidei, 54.

6. For all commentary on the person and work of Jesus Christ, see Paul VI, Sacerdotalis Caelibatus, 20, Populorum Progressio, 13; John Paul II, Redemptor Hominis, 7, Dominum et Vivificantem, 31, Redemptoris Mater, 16, 37, Dives in Misericordia, 3, Redemptoris Missio, 11, Veritatis Splendor, 2, 66, 106, 108, Evangelium Vitae, 29, 36, 100, Fides et Ratio, 11, 13, 80, Ecclesiae de Eucharistia, 38; Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, 17, Spe Salvi, 43.

7. John Paul II, Dominum et Vivificantem, 1, 5, 6, 19, Redemptoris Missio, 23, Evangelium Vitae 80, Fides et Ratio, 94.

8. John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, 4; Paul VI, Ecclesiam Suam, 75; John Paul II, Redemptoris Mater, 37, Redemptoris Missio, 11, Evangelium Vitae, 50, Fides et Ratio, 13, 16; Francis, Lumen Fidei, 30.

9. For remarks on the positive impact of Christianity on civilization (including the relevant commentary on the negative impacts caused by dechristianization), see John XXIII, Ad Petri Cathedram, 6, 8, 19, 21, 25, 26, 58, 130, 140, Mater et Magistra, 89, 178, 179, 209, 217, 256, 259, Principe Pastorum, 14, Pascem in Terris, 1, 37, 46, 147, 151, 152, 167, 168; Paul VI, Ecclesiam Suam, 10, 13, 14, 42, 51, 64, 95, 98, 100, Mense Maio, 8, Mysterium Fidei, 33, 67, 69, Populorum Progressio, 53, 55, 73, 76, Sacerdotalis Caelibatus 47, Humanae Vitae 18, 20, 22; John Paul II, Redemptor Hominis, 10, 11, 15, 21, Dives in Misericordia, 11, 14, Laborum Exercens, 8, Dominum et Vivificantem, 7, 25, 30, 40, 57, 60, 61, 63, Redemptoris Mater, 25, 43, 52, Sollicitudo Rei
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12. For all passages that explicitly link married life with credibility, see Paul VI, Sacerdotalis Caelibatus, 57; Humanae Vitae, 8, 16, 18, 21, 25, 26; John Paul II, Redemptor Missio, 42, Evangelium Vitae, 86, 92, 93, 99; Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate, 44, 53.


14. Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, 31. For all passages that connect love and credibility, see John XXIII, Princeps Pastorum, 26, 37, Mater et Magistra, 1, 239, Aeterna Dei Sapientia, 75, 76, 79; Paul VI, Ecclesiam Suam, 63, 103, Sacerdotalis Caelibatus, 24, 26, 45, 56, Humanae Vitae, 29; John Paul II, Dives in Misericordia, 3, 6, 12, 13, 14, Slavorum Apostoli, 9, 10, 11, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 42, 48, Redemptor Missio, 42, 43, 70, 89, 91, Centesimus Annus, 57, Veritatis Splendor, 3, 20, 26, 89, 95, Evangelium Vitae, 63, 77, 81, 86-88, 99, Ut Unum Sint, 36, 93; Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, 8, 17, 19, 24, 28, 30, 32, 33, 40, 42, Spe Salvi, 28, 38, 39, Caritas in Veritate, 1, 2, 4, 5, 78, Francis, Lumen Fidei, 45, 51.

15. John Paul II, Fides et Ratio, 32. For all commentary on martyrdom as a testimony to faith, see Paul VI, Sacerdotalis Caelibatus, 26, Mysterium Fidei, 15; John Paul II, Dominum et Vivificantem, 60, Redemptoris Missio, 11, 45, Veritatis Splendor, 89, 91-94, Ut Unum Sint, 1, 47, 84, 90, 103, Fides et Ratio, 32; Benedict XVI, Spe Salvi, 39.

16. John Paul II, Ut Unum Sint, 84. For all commentary on the saints and human holiness as motives to believe in Jesus, see John XXIII, Paenitentiam Agere, 15, 32, 41, Grata Recordatio, 13, Princeps Pastorum, 14, 34, 35, Ad Petri Cathedram, 2, Sacerdotii Nostri Primordia, 3, 10, 13, 14, 16, 29, 39, 79, 80, 81, 84, 101, Aeterna Dei Sapientia, 2, 8, 12, 27; Paul VI, Christi Matri, 1, Ecclesiam Suam, 10, 41, 42, 51, 63, 88, Mysterium Fidei, 33, Christi Matri, 9, 10, Sacerdotalis Caelibatus, 16, 39, Humanae Vitae, 21; John Paul II, Redemptor Hominis, 19, Redemptor Missio, 43, Dives in Misericordia, 13, Redemptoris Missio, 36, 42, 43, 66, 69, 70, 77, 87, 90, 91, Centesimus Annus, 5, 57, Veritatis Splendor, 26, 88, 89, 91, 107, Ut Unum Sint, 15, 21-23, 26, 48, 57, 82, 87, Fides et Ratio, 105, Ecclesia de Eucharistia, 62; Francis, Lumen Fidei, 45.

17. For the universal call to evangelize the world, see John XXIII, Princeps Pastorum, 4, 23, 40, 55, Ad Petri Cathedram, 108, Sacerdotii Nostri Primordia, 98; Paul VI, Ecclesiam Suam, 19, 88, 91; John Paul II, Redemptor Hominis, 6, 7, 10, Redemptor Missio, 49, Redemptor Missio, 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 18, 20, 23, 24, 28, 35, 36, 39, 45, 46, 49, 52, 55, 61-63, 77, 82, 86, 89, Veritatis Splendor, 2, 106, Evangelium Vitae, 2, 3, 78, 80, Ut Unum Sint, 5, 7, 19, 98, Fides et Ratio, 5, 38; Benedict XVI, Spe Salvi, 2, 28, Caritas in Veritate, 55; Francis, Lumen Vitae, 37.

18. It is very difficult to find passages that openly state the inadequacies or errors in other religions. For all commentary, see Paul VI Ecclesiam Suam, 107; John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio, 1, 5, 46, 55, 56, 63; Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, 9, Spe Salvi, 2, 5, Caritas in Veritate, 55.

19. For the universal nature of the redemption won by Jesus Christ, see John XXIII, Ad Petri Cathedram, 2; Paul VI, Ecclesiam Suam, 69, 76, 95; John Paul II, Redemptor Hominis, 4, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, Dominum et Vivificantem, 16, Redemptoris
It is possible for us to attain natural truth by virtue of our intellects. But all cannot do this easily; often their efforts will result in a mixture of truth and error. This is particularly the case in matters of religion and sound morals. Moreover, we cannot possibly attain those truths which exceed the capacity of nature and the grasp of reason, unless God enlightens and inspires us. This is why the word of God, ‘who dwells in light inaccessible, in His great love took pity on man’s plight, ‘became flesh and dwelt among us,’ that He might ‘enlighten every man who cometh into the world’ and lead him not only to full and perfect truth, but to virtue and eternal happiness. All men, therefore, are bound to accept the teaching of the gospel. For if this is rejected, the very foundations of truth, goodness, and civilization are endangered.

It is clear that We are discussing a serious matter, with which our eternal salvation is very intimately connected. Some men, as the Apostle of the Gentiles warns us, are ‘ever learning yet never attaining knowledge of the truth’. They contend that the human mind can discover no truth that is certain or sure; they reject the truths revealed by God and necessary for our eternal salvation.

Such men have strayed pathetically far from the teaching of Christ and the views expressed by the Apostle when he said, ‘Let us all attain to the unity of the faith and of the deep knowledge of the Son of God... that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine devised in the wickedness of men, in craftiness, according to the wiles of error. Rather are we to practice the truth in love, and grow up in all things in him who is the head, Christ. From him the whole body ... derives its increase to the building up of itself in love.’

—Pope John XXIII, Ad Petri Cathedram, 6-8.
PRIESTS: SERVANTS OR SHARMANS?

ALL THE PEOPLE of the Church have been shamed by the clerical sexual abuse scandals that have ravaged the Church over the last two decades, and none more so than the priests. So maybe it is time to look at one of the possible strands that may contribute to the phenomenon of the pedophile priest. This particular strand has many names, but for the present we might call it 'angelism', a term to cover the pietistic miasma and practices descending from Jansenism to the present day and that have passed themselves off as Catholic spirituality. But most alarmingly, a resurgent attempt to elevate the priest to a status of being above all others in the Church, demonstrates that life-denying Jansenism is alive and well in Catholic seminaries and houses of priestly formation.

When Pope Benedict XVI opened the year for the priesthood on Friday 1 June 2009 he endorsed the idea that priests are fundamentally different spiritual beings from the rest of humanity. This idea is gaining momentum and is still being taught in seminaries and from the point of view of the eastern Churches, and the Apostolic tradition for that matter, is as close as it gets to being crypto-heretical.

It the same week of Pope Benedict's pronouncement, Nicholas Lash cited Newman's warning that 'the Church is never in greater danger than when a Pope becomes the spokesman for his own party.' (The Tablet, 27 June 2009) This is exactly what is occurring in Rome and a particular theological issue, embedded in Rome's announcement of the 'Year of the Priest', raises the alarm. It also is surprising that the theologians of the wider Catholic world have not reacted to this a decade past. Perhaps this was more from embarrassment than fear of censure?

Let it be clear from the outset that, particularly in the face of recent events, the exercise of the priesthood in the Catholic communion is in need both of aggiornamento and support. Whether the 'Year of the Priest' achieved this is quite another matter. Indeed, the statements on priesthood inaugurating that special year may indicate that Rome has theologically shot itself in the foot.

In a speech in Rome on 24 June, Pope Benedict declared that 'The priest is a slave of Christ in the sense that his existence, ontologically configured to Christ, takes on an essentially relational character'. On the same day, citing his own observations from years past, the Pope identified what he believes to be the two contrasting and even opposed concepts of priesthood that are employed in the formation of clergy. 'On the one hand a social-functional understanding ... on the other hand there is the sacramental-ontological understanding.' Priesthood declares the Pope, is 'anchored in the being of the minister.' As it happens, neither of these concepts represent the Tradition, but the 'ontological change' theory is that espoused increasingly from the latter part of John Paul II's pontificate. Cardinal Ratzinger was one of its chief ideologues. Then, as Pope, he was very much 'spokesman for his own party'.

However, the honour for the most extravagant insistence on ontological change has to be that of John Cardinal O'Connor in an address in Fatima on June 18, 1996, 'The Necessity of Continuing Formation for the Priest'. The Cardinal uses the word ontological five times in almost as many sentences and
finishes with ridiculous analogies drawn from the mystery of the Holy Incarnation and from the transforming consecration of the eucharistic elements. He deserves to be cited in full. The saddest thing about this Fatima address is that not one of the clergy or faithful present on that day cried out, 'nonsense!'

Above all, formation, the Pontiff tells us, must be rooted in 'awareness of the specific ontological bond which unites the priesthood to Christ the High Priest and Good Shepherd'.

[n. 11] In my judgment, this concept of the ontological nature of the priesthood, is critical. We don't just put on vestments; we don't just receive an assignment. Neither makes us priests. We become priests at ordination. There is an 'ontological change' in our spiritual nature. Such is a profound mystery. Is it too bold an analogy to compare the change to Christ the Son of God: retaining His Divinity while becoming a man? Or to observe that after bread becomes the Sacred Body of Christ, it still tastes like bread and feels like bread, but is now the Body of Christ? There has been an ontological change. A cup of wine still smells like wine and tastes like it, but it is now the Blood of Christ. At ordination an ontological change takes place.

The use of the term 'ontological' and 'ontologically' is novel and risky. The Fathers of Nicaea in 325AD agonized over the use of homousios realising that it was a risk to introduce a philosophical term with no biblical or theological pedigree into the deliberations on the question of identity of being in the Holy Trinity. Introduce it they did because there was no other way of expressing orthodoxy. Scripture could not provide the term. The same degree of caution should be exercised before using 'ontological change' which strictly means a change in being, that something new has come to be in the world.

Admittedly many use the word ontological very loosely and in areas other than theology and generally mean different, which is the word with which ontological is often paired in a kind of tautology. However, that is not how it is being used by the Pope and the Vatican theological school responsible for the dissemination of this novelty. A good example of how this word is generally understood in...ological circles came to light during the first visit to the United States of His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew of Constantinople in 1991. In a speech at the University of Georgetown he said that the separation between the Eastern and Western churches was not merely one of geography, structure, or religious law. Rather, he declared, 'the manner in which we exist has become ontologically different.' Ecumenical panic ensued on both sides. The Patriarch later declared he did not intend this literally. He meant something like very different.

On the question of priestly ordination there is indeed solid tradition, from the time of the Fathers variously expressed, concerning the character bestowed upon the one ordained. Words such as 'indelible', 'mark' and 'grace' spring to mind, but ontological change is a bridge too far, much too far. Priesthood is not merely functional, nor does it involve ontological transformation. The Eastern Christian approach to the matter, always liturgical in nature, may help clarify the issue, lex orandi, lex credendi. At the Great Entrance in the Byzantine Divine Liturgy the priest or bishop prays,

By the power of the Holy Spirit, make me worthy—since I am clothed with the grace of the priesthood—to stand before your holy altar and consecrate your sacred and immaculate body and precious blood.

An ontologically changed being is not speaking here, but your sinful and unprofitable
servant to whom the Holy Spirit is faithful because of the grace bestowed, by that same Holy Spirit, at ordination. The ordination prayers say this clearly. The Christian priest is no shaman, which the use of ontological change can imply. Rather,

Divine Grace, which always heals, that which is infirm, and completes that which is wanting, elevates, through the laying-on of hands, the most devout (Subdeacon to Deacon, Deacon to Priest). Wherefore, let us pray for him, that the Grace of the All-Holy Spirit may come upon him.

The second prayer at ordination makes it even clearer.

Do you, the same Lord, fill with the gift of your Holy Spirit this man whom it has pleased you to advance to the degree of Priest, that he may be worthy to stand in innocence before your Altar, to proclaim the Gospel of your Kingdom, to minister the word of your truth, to offer you spiritual gifts and sacrifices, to renew your people through the bath of regeneration.

Clearly it is the Holy Spirit who will make up whatever is lacking in this unworthy candidate.

Pushed too far, Rome may be generating yet another ecumenical theological obstacle with the Orthodox Church which most definitely does not subscribe to the theory of ontological change. It will also cause little surprise to learn that the Vatican theological school also uses this novel theory to bolster the argument for clerical celibacy. That is another story. However, the connection between the angelic, ontologically changed man who falls from grace into shameful sexual abuse is a strand in the tangled skein that deserves to be examined.

And then, He does something that the disciples don’t understand: washing the feet. In that time, this was usual, it was customary, because when the people arrived in a home, their feet were dirty with the dust of the road; there were no cobblestones at that time.... There were dusty roads. And at the entrance to the house, they washed their feet. It was not done by the master of the house but by the slaves. That was the task of a slave. And like a slave, Jesus washes our feet, the feet of his disciples, and that is why He says: ‘What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand’ (Jn 13:7). Jesus’ love is so great that He became a slave to serve us, to heal us, to cleanse us.

Today, in this Mass, the Church would like the priest to wash the feet of 12 people, in memory of the 12 Apostles. But in our hearts we must be certain, we must be sure that, when the Lord washes our feet, He washes us entirely, He purifies us, He lets us feel his love yet again. There is a very beautiful phrase in the Bible, the prophet Isaiah says: ‘Can a mother forget her child? But even if a mother could forget her child, I will never forget you’ (cf. 49:15). God’s love for us is like this.

And today I will wash the feet of 12 of you, but all of you are in these brothers and sisters, all of you, everyone. Everyone who lives here. You represent them. But I too need to be washed by the Lord, and for this you pray during the Mass, that the Lord also wash away my impurities, that I might become a better servant to you, a better slave at the service of the people, as Jesus was.

—Pope Francis, Holy Thursday, 2015.
As a freshman at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, I sat in a classroom that usually pulsed with nervous excitement and energy due to weekly quizzes and a desire to impress fellow classmates with profound comments and questions. However, on this particular day, the class sat hushed under a dark cloud of somber uncertainty. The profound fear and terror within each student made quizzes and grades and even college seem trivial. We all sat silent, wondering if anyone would even attempt to articulate our existential insecurity. Studying British Literature, we appreciated the power of language yet also knew its limitations and that it would only capture the foam on the surface of our fear.

Even so, our professor invited us to share our thoughts. After more silence, one young woman finally broke the hush, saying that she found comfort in our class's reading assignment. The reading that was due on September 11th included excerpts from 'the first known woman of letters in English literature' who proved to be 'an accomplished prose stylist.' The student read the following portion to the class:

'Sin is behovely, but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.'

And a blanket of hope fell warmly upon the class.

I recall this class experience every year on May 8th when the Episcopal Church celebrates the Feast of Dame Julian of Norwich. Among the feast's Scripture readings is a crucial clue to the source of Julian's hope: 'Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy Name' (Ps. 103:1). Julian's hope emerges from a spirituality of prayer that invites her readers to encounter the divine within their being, even in the midst of emotional dryness. In her spirituality of prayer, the call is to pray with the soul and with all the emotions within and in so doing, bless the Lord.

In the Showings Long Text, Julian writes, 'Pray interly, though the thynge it savour the nott, yett it is profitable inowgh, though thou fele it nowgh(t).' Through a closer look at the word 'interly,' a mystical spirituality of prayer emerges in Julian's Showings that creates space for radical union with the divine in the midst of emotional barrenness. Translators choose to interpret 'interly' as either 'inwardly' or 'wholeheartedly.' However, Wolters asserts that, for Julian, 'the object of prayer is to be united to our Lord... and therefore prayers should be bold and broad.' In seeing 'interly' as meaning both 'inwardly' and 'wholeheartedly,' we begin to see how bold and broad Julian's spirituality of prayer can be.

This work will investigate the abundant meaning of 'interly' by first probing the linguistic meaning within the context of the Middle English language. Then, in order to find evidence to support the polyvalent meaning, the investigation will plumb the Showings Long Text alongside the texts of the anonymous author of The Cloud of Unknowing and the Ancrene Wisse. After utilizing linguistic and intertextual methods of investigation, the theological and spiritual
implications of praying ‘interly’ will be considered.

**Lingistic Investigation of ‘Interly’**

In examining Julian's word 'interly' in the context of the Middle English language and the surrounding text in Chapters 1 and 51 of the _Showings_ Long Text, evidence will emerge that shows two general meanings for the _hapax legomenon_: (1) 'Interly' means 'wholeheartedly' or 'entirely' and (2) 'interly' means 'inwardly.'

**‘Interly’ as ‘Wholeheartedly’ or ‘Entirely’**

Wolters, John-Julian, and Skinner interpret the phrase 'pray interly' as 'pray inwardly.' However, some evidence fails to support this translation. First of all, if Julian had intended to write, 'pray inwardly,' then she would have written, 'pray inwardly' as she does later in the same chapter. Julian had no problem using the word 'inwardly' in describing the joy and gratitude that one feels during prayers of thanksgiving:

Thankying is a true inward knowing, with grett reuerence and louely drede turning oure selfe with alle oure myghtes in to the werkyng that oure lorde steryd vs to, enMoyeng and thankyng inZardO\[ emphasis added].

Also, in Chapter 51, Julian writes, 'I cryde inwardly with all my might.' In Middle English, the word translated as 'inwardly' is the very same word. So Julian would have most likely used this same word if she wanted to say, 'pray inwardly.' Instead, she uses an entirely different word: 'interly.' The _hapax legomenon_ 'interly' does not appear in Oxford's _A Middle English Dictionary_, which means that it does not appear in any of the numerous Middle English texts available.

However, the word 'enterly' can be found in the Middle English dictionary, where it is understood as an adjective or adverb for 'enter,' equivalent to the modern English 'entire.' In another, more exhaustive, Middle English dictionary, the word 'enter' is defined as 'whole, entire, intact.' When used as an adjective, the word means 'in entirety' or 'as a unity.' So why does Julian spell 'enterly' as 'interly'?

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to be acquainted with the linguistic world of Middle English. Within this linguistic world, the Old French and Latin languages were actively used. As a result of the Norman invasion, the French language dominated the aristocracy in England until the mid-fourteenth century. The gentry also spoke and wrote in French even though it became quickly recognized as a foreign language. According to Burrow and Turville-Petre, a great deal of exchange and borrowing took place between French, Latin and English 'for various contemporary terms of technology, law and the like.' However, because of its low status among the three languages, English proved to be 'the chief borrower.' Because it is nearly impossible to distinguish the Latin roots of Middle English words from the French roots, it is more accurate to label such intermingled words as 'Latin-French.' Julian's unique word 'interly' seems to be one of these Middle English words of Latin-French origin. In French, the word _entier_ means 'entire, whole,' whereas in Latin, the same meaning is captured in the word _integrum_. So _interly_ appears to be a fusion of these two words, with the 'i' from _integrum_ being borrowed and added to the Middle English word 'enter,' which has roots in the Old French _entier_. The -ly ending, of course, makes the word an adverb. Therefore, the
word interly could be understood as *enterly* or *entirely*. According to this train of thought, the translation, 'pray wholeheartedly' comes much closer to the Middle English phrase than 'pray inwardly.' Another rendering could be 'pray entirely,' or, in other words, 'pray with your entire self.'

'Interly' as 'Inwardly'

Although evidence supports the translation of 'interly' as entirely, evidence still remains for the *hapax legomenon* to be translated as 'inwardly', one cannot dismiss the resemblance that 'interly' shares with the Middle English word 'innerli,' which holds its own plethora of meanings: 'inwardly, strongly, extremely, earnestly, sincerely.' Yet why did Julian not use the word 'innerli' if that was her intention?

Although a vowel may be dismissed as a mere spelling variation, the consonant difference between 'innerli' and 'interly' cannot be ignored. The Middle English word 'innerli' comes from the German word 'innerlich,' which also mean 'internally' or 'inwardly.' The difference between 'interly' and 'inderlig' is found primarily in the consonants 't' and 'd.' These are called *fortis* and *lenis* consonants with the 'd' as the voiced *lenis* and the 't' as the aspirated *fortis*. Similar to the words *piano* and *forte*, which describe the level of hardness and softness of a particular note, *fortis* and *lenis* describe the level of hardness and softness of a particular phoneme. Thus, the primary difference between 't' and 'd' is in the level of hardness and softness. Julian used the *fortis* 't' where the Danish use the *lenis* 'd.' Such a difference influences pronunciation rather than meaning.

Another Middle English 'interiali' holds the same *fortis* 't' and carries nearly the same meaning as 'innerli': 'within the body, internally; within one's mind, secretly.' This suggests that the *fortis* 't' was already present in Middle English words denoting inward phenomena. The *fortis* 't' persists in such Modern English words as 'interior' and 'internal.' Therefore, evidence supports the translation of 'interly' as 'inwardly' as well as 'entirely.'

With the evidence given, any attempt to assert exactly what Julian meant in using the word 'interly' remains guesswork. However, I assert that the ambiguity of the word 'interly' was intentional because such ambiguity creates a polyvalence of meanings, which coincides with the rest of Julian's text. Of course, 'interly' does not mean whatever the reader wants it to mean. The word 'interly' holds primarily two general meanings: 'entirely' and 'inwardly.' Instead of arguing over which one of the two Julian meant, the word 'interly' invites the reader to hold both meanings together: 'entirely' and 'inwardly.'

A more accurate rendering of the text, which holds the polyvalent meaning of 'interly,' would be 'pray entirely and inwardly.' 'Entirely' connotes the *entire self*, including one's emotional barrenness, while 'inwardly' connotes an introspective meditation and alignment of the soul with God. Both of these approaches to God can be seen in Julian's *Showings Long Text*, thus supporting the above translation and the abundant meaning found in 'interly.'

Throughout the *Showings Long Text*, Julian invites the reader to hold multiple meanings in single ideas. For example, she sees Christ's thirst as both physical and spiritual, the Lord's intention as both prayer and trust, and God's 'one loue' manifested in both sorrow and joy. She holds love and fear together like 'brothers' and sees an inward and outward significance in both the lord and the servant of the parable. Furthermore, Julian asserts the need to hold multiple meanings rather than 'one special' meaning when contemplating the divine: 'Take it generally, and beholde the curtesy of thy lorde god as he shewyd to the, for it is more worshype to god to beholde hym in alle than in any specyalle thyng.'

However, even after making the dichotomy between general and particular, Julian
brilliantly calls the reader to hold both the general and the particular together in prayer: 'It is his wiylle that we pray therefore eyther in specialle or in generalle.' With these examples in mind, it is not hard to imagine Julian's invitation to hold multiple meanings within the word 'interly.'

After making the case for two general meanings of the hapax legomenon rather than one single meaning, it is now necessary to follow Julian's advice and hold the general meanings along with the particular. Through intertextual analysis, the phrase 'pray interly' will begin to take on particular meanings with both theological and spiritual implications.

**Intertextual Investigation of 'Pray Interly'*

The intertextual investigation of the phrase 'pray interly' will examine evidence within the Showings Long Text, the texts of the Cloud author and the Ancrene Wisse to support two general meanings of the phrase: (1) To 'pray interly' means to pray with the entire self, including dry and barren emotions and (2) to 'pray interly' means to pray inwardly in order to encounter God within one's very being.

**'Pray Interly' as 'Pray with Entire Self, Including Dry Emotions'**

In examining the Showings Long Text, a spirituality of prayer emerges which includes many aspects of the entire self: dry emotions, a variety of bodily experiences, questioning God, and even laughter. However, within the scope of this project, a close look will be given to dry emotions in prayer since that is the particular emphasis in Chapter 41 when Julian writes, 'Pray interly.' Before delving into the dry emotions, it will behoove the reader to be acquainted with how emotions were discussed among the religious authors of fourteenth-century England.

Due to Richard Rolle's excessively emotional Fire of Love, many English authors in the fourteenth century reacted with condemning words to those who relied too heavily on their emotional experience of God. For example, the anonymous author of the Cloud of Unknowing wrote a particularly clear condemnation against those who felt moved to rebuke sin in others: 'Alle men wil thei reproue of theire defautes... thei sey that thei be steryd thereto by the fiire of charite & of Goddes loue in theire hertes.' Notice the 'fiire' and 'loue' in the above quote, which appear to be directed towards Richard Rolle and his readers. 'Trewly thei lighe,' the Cloud author continues, 'for it is with the fiire of helle wellyng in theire braynes & in theire ymaginacion.'

Julian shared a similar distrust towards emotions when she wrote: 'For we be alle in part trobelyd, and we schal be trobelyd, folowyng our master Jhesu, tylle we be fulle purgyd...of all oure inwarde affections which be nott very good.' Based on the rest of her Long Text, however, it seems clear that Julian is not saying that all inward affections are 'nott very good,' but is rather referring to all the inward affections that are not good.

Julian does not condemn emotions with the same directness as the Cloud author, but rather counterbalances Rolle's intense emotionalism by emphasizing the presence of God in the midst of dry and barren feelings. In order to understand Julian's position on emotions, it is helpful to explore her image of 'oure curtesse lorde' who 'drawyth us to hym by loue.' Often describing the Lord as 'curteys,' Julian even refers to Christ as 'feyer,' which is best translated as 'handsome.' This same word is used to describe Christ in a parable found within the Ancrene Wisse, which will be referred to as the Christ-Knight parable.

As an anchoress, it is very likely that Julian was acquainted with the Ancrene Wisse, a Guide for Anchoresses written in the thirteenth century for three young anchoresses of noble birth. Within the Ancrene Wisse, a parable describes Christ as a rich, powerful and handsome ('feye') knight who falls madly in love with a lady. Yet the
lady responds to all of Christ's gifts and tender messages with hard-hearted scorn until finally Christ dies in order to protect her from her enemies. 'But,' the story concludes, 'by a miracle he rose from death to life.' The story never describes the lady eventually falling in love with the Christ-Knight, but simply asks the question, 'Would not this lady have a base nature if she did not love him after this above all things?'

When Julian uses the words 'curteys' and 'feyer,' she invokes the 'Christ-Knight' motif. With this passage from the Ancene Wisse in mind, one can assume that this story, with which Julian was most probably familiar, was implied in her imagery. Although loving and prayerful emotions are upheld in Julian's spirituality of prayer, she also makes room for dryness and barrenness. Even when one lacks love and warm emotions towards Christ, the divine knight still persists in wooing his beloved. Even when one feels no tenderness, God is still present. Merely directing one's attention to the divine knight makes God 'ful glad and mery.'

This is why she says, 'Pray interly, though thou fele nought-for in dryenesse and barrenesse, in sickness and in febelnes, than is thy prayer full pleasannt to me.' Praying interly means praying entirely, even if that includes dry and arid emotions.

'Pray Interly' as 'Pray Inwardly to Encounter God within One's Being'

In order to understand the 'inward' nuance of the word 'interly,' an intertextual analysis will be made between the Showings Long Text and two texts by the Cloud author: The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counselling. The analysis will investigate the possibility of apophatic prayer in Julian and the presence of God within one's being.

In The Book of Privy Counselling, the Cloud author refers to his contemplative prayer practice as the 'inward ocupacion.' Also writing in fourteenth-century England, the Cloud author may provide the reader with insight into the 'inward' nuance of Julian's word 'interly.' However, the contemplative prayer practice of the Cloud author is heavily apophatic. Is the cataphatic anchoress encouraging her readers to pray apophatically when she writes, 'Pray interly?'

In the Cloud of Unknowing, the anonymous author exhorts his readers to 'put a cloude of forghetyng bineth thee…and alle the cretures that euer ben maad' in order to penetrate the cloud of unknowing. 'Although Julian of Norwich does not directly speak of such a cloud in her Showings,' Masson explains, 'she does refer to a moment of forgetting prior to receiving her revelations.'

Julian's desires to see the Passion and experience bodily sickness both 'passed from my mynd.'

Masson highlights the juxtaposition of Julian's forgetting her desire for bodily sickness in Chapter 2 and the description of her bodily sickness 'during which she experiences her showings' in Chapter 3.46 Masson suggests that Julian puts her desire for bodily sickness under the cloud of forgetting and in so doing, penetrates the cloud of unknowing in her visions. Although her visions include vivid images that seem far from apophatic, Masson asserts that the ineffable God is still at the center of her experience. The ineffable God is expressed in 'the coincidence of opposites—a concept rooted in Christ, the embodiment of coincidence between the human and divine.' Perhaps Masson's assertions about apophatic prayer in Julian suggests that praying 'interly' involves beholding the ineffable God who cannot be contained by images alone, but remains hidden behind the clouds of paradox and unknowing.

It is a bold assertion that apophatic prayer spawned Julian's sixteen revelations of divine love, which overflow with images of the blood and motherhood of Christ, the freckled-faced devil, the Christ-Knight and much more. Not only is it bold, this writer asserts that Masson's
reading is actually a misunderstanding of Julian's spirituality of prayer. Although Julian invites the reader to hold multiple meanings in single ideas, she does not hold both the apophatic and the cataphatic approaches to God. Julian upholds the cataphatic approach to the divine, which welcomes a variety of images and expressions of God. Julian clearly utilizes images to understand and penetrate the divine. One might argue that the apophatic Cloud author also uses imagery (like a 'cloud' for instance) to point to the ineffable God and Julian perhaps does the same with her images. However, such an argument would collapse the distinction between apophatic and cataphatic. Authors of the apophatic tradition intentionally reflect thoughts and images as vehicles for encountering the divine whereas cataphatic authors intentionally utilize images to encounter the divine. Julian clearly belongs to the latter category. In fact, in order to understand Julian's 'inward' spirituality of prayer, one of her many images will now be revisited.

The image of the Christ-Night, which was examined above in the $Frene :isse$, will now be investigated within the SKoZings Long Text. In Chapter 8, Julian writes,  

I saw the soule so large as it were an endless warde, and also as it were a blessyd kyngdom; and by condicions that I saw there in I understode that it is a wurschypfulle cytte, in myddes of that cytte (sits) oure lorde Jhesu, very god and very man, a feyer person and of large stature, highest bysschoppe, most solempne kynge, wurschypfullest lorde. And I saw hym clothyd solemply in wurschyppes. He syttyth in the soule evyn right in peas and rest, and he rulyth.

Here, Julian places the handsome Christ-Night within the soul. With the Christ-Knight image, the phrase 'pray interly' resounds with both the 'entire self' meaning and the 'inward' nuance. By praying 'interly,' Julian encounters the 'curteys' Lord in the midst of her emotional dryness and also within her own soul, where the 'feyer' Lord dwells. The divine is experienced both transcendentally and immanently in the act of praying 'interly.'

A closer look at the immanent experience of the divine will require looking at the theology within The Book of Privy Counseling by the Cloud author, for the theology underlying this work offers a helpful entry way into Julian's 'inward' spirituality of prayer. Although it has already been established that Julian and the Cloud author are not describing the same prayer practice (the Cloud author is apophatic while Julian is cataphatic), the word 'inward' is used by the Cloud author in The Book of Privy Counseling and therefore can still offer insight into the 'inward' nuance of Julian's 'interly.'

By praying inwardly, one focuses on what the Cloud author calls 'being' and Julian calls 'substance.' In The Book of Privy Counseling, the Cloud author writes,  

For he is thi being, and in him thou arte that at thou arte, not only bi cause and bi beyng, bot also he is in thee bothe thi cause and thi beyng.

In The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing, William Johnston develops the phrase that the Cloud author repeats like a refrain in Privy Counseling: 'He is your being.' Johnston attempts to unpack this phrase when he writes,  

God is united with all men, including sinners, precisely because they exist. God is one with all that he has created in such a way that the author can address his disciple with the words: 'He is your being.'

God is intimately connected to everyone and everything that exists because God is Existence, because God is everyone's and everything's Being; and because God is being, the author wants his disciple to get in touch with his being, which is God. Johnston explains, 'God is the cause of all things and the being of all things: to think on oneself, in the true sense of the word is to think on God.'

Furthermore, when the one thinks on God as the ultimate cause and being, one actually discovers the true self in God. 'See God as your true being,' Johnston continues, 'and you see your real self.' For Julian of Norwich, this
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is when 'substance' and 'sensuality' unite, when God and the soul become one. Praying 'interly' means focusing on the reality of one's existence. One is connected with all things by one's very being, which is God. In fact, all things that exist are one in that all things share existence, which is God. This prayer, in the words of the anchoress, 'onyth the soule to god.'

With the theology of the Cloud author in mind, a deeper penetration into the words of the anchoress can now be made. Julian describes God as Being in her own words:

'I saw that he is in althyng'

'He is beyng'

'Our lyfe and our beyng is in god'

'Oure god in whome we haue oure beyng'

'He is the grownde, of whom we haue alle oure lyfe and oure beyng'

Julian understands God as Being, similar to the Cloud author. By praying inwardly, Julian directs her attention within to encounter God in her very being; and in her being, Julian meets the source and foundation of all things. She continues to use the image of foundation or 'grounde' for God in her visions:

'I am grounde of thy besekyng'

'I am grounde'

'Oure lorde is grounde in whom that oure prayer spryngyth'

'I am the grounde of they besechyng'

According to Julian, praying inwardly involves directing attention to one's very being. By doing so, one encounters not only the God who is Being and the source of Being, but also the God who is the source of prayer. 'Oure lorde,' Julian says, 'is grounde in whom that oure prayer sryngth' and 'we can pray right nought but as he steryth us for the tyme.'

Inward prayer calls one to dwell within the divine Being and ground. This is why Julian describes the soul as castle where the handsome Christ-Knight rules. This is why Julian describes Christ as a Mother in whose arms one falls. Julian uses a colorful panoply of images to describe the divine, who dwells within, constantly inviting the individual to accompany him. Praying 'interly' or 'inwardly' is Julian's way of accepting the divine invitation.

So what prevents Julian and others from dwelling permanently in this 'grounde'?

According to Julian, this divine being and ground is 'substance.' All humans have this 'substance,' but humans also have 'sensuality.' In describing the nature of Christ, Julian describes these two aspects of humanity: 'And theyse two pertyes were in Crist, the heyer and the lower, whych is but one soule. The hyer pert was evyr in pees with god in full moy and blysse. The lower pert, whych is sensualyte, sufferyd for the saluacion of mankynd.' Because humans are made in the image of God, Jantzen asserts that these same two 'pertyes' are present in humans, which coincides with the rest of the Long Text. 'Our essential selfhood, our substance,' Jantzen elaborates, 'is eternally united with God from whom it flows forth.'

The union of substance and God is clearly seen when Julian writes, 'And I sawe no dyfference betwen god and oure substance, but, as it were all god' and 'betwene god and oure soul may be right nought.' However, Jantzen also highlights the 'sensuality' of humanity when she writes, 'Our sensuality, our ordinary physical and psychological life, is something else, and is very far from being always united with God.'

Sensuality serves as a helpful word to describe the aspects of the entire self mentioned above: the varieties of bodily experience, questioning God, laughter and especially dry emotions. As discussed above, dry emotions do not cause one to feel close to God, but rather the opposite. God often feels distant and difficult to perceive. 'W[e] fayle
oftymes of the syght of hym,' Julian admits, 'and anon we falle in to oure selfe, and than fynde we felyng of ryght nowght but the contrarous that is in oure selfe'. Though the substance of humanity is united with God, the sensuality seems to distance humanity from God.

However, praying 'interly' means praying with both substance and sensuality, inwardly and entirely. Praying 'interly' means praying with the parts of the self that feel deeply connected to God and also the parts of the self that feel far from God. This prayer unites the soul to God while also uniting substance with sensuality. 'Prayer,' Julian explains, 'onyth the soule to god, for though the soule be evyr lyke to god in kynde and in substance restoryd by grace, it is ofte unlike in condescion by symne of mannes perty.' By praying 'interly,' even the parts of the self that feel far from God are enveloped in God who 'is all.'

Dry and barren emotions along with anger and frustration are welcomed in the practice of praying 'interly.' Even such negative emotions are met with God's benison. 'For thowe we fele in us wrath, debate and stryfe, yet we be all mercyfully beclosyd in the myldehed of god and in his mekehed, in his benyngnite and in his buxomnesse' Julian sees 'wrath, debate and stryfe' as parts of the entire self and 'sensuality' which are brought to the Lord in the act of praying entirely.

God mercifully encloses these negative emotions with love the same way the Christ-Knight showers the hard-hearted dame with tenderness. By enrolling the dry and negative emotions, God who 'is all' unites substance and sensuality. '[God],' Julian explains, 'is the mene that kepyth the substancce and sensualyte to geder, so that it shall nevyr parte.' The God encountered within one's very being is the same God who lovingly holds one's dry and negative emotions. By praying with both parts of the self, the inward and the entire, the substance and the sensuality, one encounters the God who sustains and unites them together.

The haps legomenon 'interly' holds two general meanings: 'entirely' and 'inwardly.' Within the Showings Long Text, 'entirely' refers to the variety of bodily experiences, questioning God, laughter, and an array of human emotions. All of which can be summed up in Julian's word 'sensuality.' 'Inwardly' refers to the divine ground and being which unites the human soul with God. Although the apophatic author of the Cloud of Unknowing primarily calls this 'being,' the cataphatic, the anchoress uses the word 'substance.' By engaging the Christ-Knight image in both the Ancrere Wisse and the Showings Long Text, it is clear that God is lovingly present both transcendentally and immanently. God lovingly woos and sacrificially gives in the midst of one's dry and negative emotions while also dwelling within one's being, inviting the individual to accompany Him. Just as God unites 'substance' and 'sensuality' in prayer so does the word 'interly' unite 'entirely' and 'inwardly.' In order to participate in the reconciliation and union of 'substance' with 'sensuality,' the reader is invited to pray 'entirely' and 'inwardly,' that is, to pray 'interly.'

The word 'interly' in the Showings Long Text implies a God who is deeply invested in the human experience since God, like the word, is able to hold and be present in both the 'entire' range of human experience, even negative emotions, along with the 'inward' ground of all being. God does not exclude or condemn those who experience dryness, barrenness, sickness, weakness, anger, and strife. God does not exclude or condemn those who boldly question Him about the problem of evil or those who seek to experience Him bodily. Instead, God is 'ful glad and mery...and he lokyth ther after, and he wyll haue it.' This is a God who loves and enjoys it when His children bring to Him their human experience, even (and especially) when the experience feels dry and difficult. God encloses the human...
experience of 'sensuality' within His loving womb and unites it with the human and divine 'substance.'

So how does one pray 'interly'? Because the word holds polyvalent meaning, praying 'interly' can involve either praying with the entire self or praying inwardly to meet God in one's being. Both prayer practices are expressed in the word. However, to enjoy the fullness of 'interly,' one can practice holding both the entire 'sensuality' and the inward 'substance' together in prayer. Just as Julian invites her readers to hold multiple meanings in single ideas, praying 'interly' involves holding one's 'sensuality' along with one's 'substance.' During times of anger, 'interly' calls the one in prayer to hold the angry emotion before God while also acknowledging that God is already present within. Since God is the ground of beseeching, the very act of turning to God in prayer reveals the truth that God is already present within.

According to Julian, prayer is not possible without God's inward initiation. If one brings dry or angry emotions to God in prayer, God certainly welcomes the emotions and encloses them in his love. Yet more than that, God is the one who directed the prayer in the first place. Simply put, one cannot pray 'entirely' without praying 'inwardly.' The immanent God springs forth prayer within the individual to pray to the transcendent God. Yet the immanent God and the transcendent God are One and the same. So the immanent God is praying to the transcendent God, uniting the 'entire' sensuality and the 'inward' substance of the one who is in prayer.

Conclusion

When Episcopalians chant the opening line in Psalm 103, Julian's spirituality of prayer can be heard, 'Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy Name.' Like the Psalmist, Julian invites her readers today to pray 'interly,' with their inner being ('my soul') and with all of their emotions ('all that is within me'). Even (and perhaps especially) when the emotions are dry and empty, the invitation is to direct attention to God who dwells within the soul, who unites 'substance' with 'sensuality,' and who is Existence itself. By praying 'interly,' Julian was able to encounter the loving presence of God within, even in the midst of emotional dryness. She could bring her emotions honestly to the Lord, trusting that He would be 'ful glad and mery' and meet her in very being. As a result, she could confidently assert the loving presence of God in the midst of barrenness: 'Synne is behouely, but alle shalle be wele, and alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thynge shalle be wele.' And in so doing, Julian's bold words of hope provided comfort to a classroom full of terrified college students on September 11th, 2001. By following Julian's path in praying 'interly,' this hope and consolation can be accessed even now by uniting fragmented selves in a world that may often feel dry and barren.

NOTES

1 Homage to Paul Ricoeur who said, 'Language only captures the foam on the surface of life.' Paul Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory (Texas: Texas University Press, 1976), 63
3 This is a translation from the Middle English text from The Norton Anthology of English Literature used in class. The Middle English text itself will be used in subsequent references. The Norton Anthology of English Literature, 7th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 2000), 1: 356.
5 Although Julian wrote a Short Text soon after receiving her visions, this study will focus solely on the Long Text, which was written later, after many years of theological reflection and maturation.
6 A Book of Showings to the Anchoress of Julian of Norwich, ed. Edmund College, O.S.A. and James Walsh, S.J. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of...
9 A Book of Showings, College and Walsh, 466.
10 Ibid, 512.
11 A Middle English Dictionary, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963) s. v. 'enter.'
12 Middle English Dictionary, rev. ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1953) s. v. 'enter.'
14 Ibid, 18.
15 Ibid, 18.
16 Ibid, 19.
20 'Oon bodily and a nother gostly.' A Book of Showings, College and Walsh, 360.
21 'One is ryghtfulle prayer; a nother is seker trust.' Ibid, 460.
22 'This blyssydyffule felyng…and sufferyth…both is one loue.' Ibid, 356.
23 'Loue and drede are bredryn.' Ibid, 673.
24 'Oone owtwarde…another inwarde.' Ibid, 516.
25 Ibid, 432.
26 Ibid, 472.
27 Julian prays specifically for a 'bodily sicknes' and desires a 'bodely sight…of the bodilypaynes of our sauiour.' Ibid, 286. Julian even appreciates the body in the wondrous process of bowel elimination. Ibid, 306.
28 Julian asks why the prescient God did not prevent sin from the beginning. Ibid, 404. Even after receiving the answer that all shall be well, Julian continues to ask, 'How might alle be wele?'' Ibid, 412. Finally, Julian states, [O]jure good Lord answeryd to alle the questions…that I might make.' Ibid, 417.
29 Julian writes, 'I light myghtely,' and continues, 'we may laugh, to comfortyng of oure selfe and joyeng in god for the feend isovercome.' Ibid, 348-349. Again, in Chapter 77, Julian says, 'This made me myghtely to lawgh.' Ibid, 690.
30 The Middle English letter 'thorn' which looks like 'p' but sounds like 'th' will be written in the text as 'th.' The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counseling; ed. Phyllis Hodgson (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), 102. Translation: 'They reprove all men of their faults…saying that they are moved todo this by the fire of charity and of God's love which is in their hearts.' The Cloud of Unknowing. Translated by James Walsh, S.J. Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist, 1981), 226.
31 The Cloud and the Book, Hodgson, 102. Translation: 'But they are liars for it is rather by the fire of hell welling up in their brains and in their imaginations.' Cloud, Walsh, 226.
32 A Book of Showings, College and Walsh, 406.
33 Julian unintentionally forged a Via Media between Richard Rolle's saccharine Fire oI LoYe and the anti-emotionalism found in the anonymous author of the &Ooud oI 8nNnoZing, which is appropriate considering her recognition as a saint in the Anglican Communion.
34 Ibid, 477.
36 Ibid, 640.
37 Although it is not certain that Julian read from the Ancrene Wisse, it is highly probable that she did, or was at least acquainted with its stories and motifs.
39 A translation is provided for the benefit of the reader. The Middle English reads, 'Ththurh miracle aras thah from deathe to liue.' Ibid, 114.
40 Again, a translation is provided as the Middle English reads, 'Nere theos ilke leafdi of uueles cunnes cunde yef ha ouer alle thing ne luuede him herefter?' Ibid, 114.
41 A Book of Showings, College and Walsh, 463.
The Middle English letter 'yogh' which looks like 'ȝ' and sounds like either 'y' or 'gh' will be written in the text as either 'y' or 'gh' depending on the context.


Translation: 'I saw the soul as wide as if it were an endless citadel, and also if it were a blessed kingdom, and from the state which I saw in it, I understood that it is a fine city. In the midst of that city sits our Lord Jesus, true God and true man, a handsome person and tall, highest bishop, most awesome king, most honourable lord. And I saw him splendidly clad in honours. He sits erect there in the soul, in peace and rest, and he rules.' Edmund Colledge, O.S.A. and James Walsh, S.-. Julian of Norwich Showings, (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 313.

Translation: 'He is your being and in him, you are what you are, not only because he is the cause and being of all that exists, but because he is your cause and the deep center of your being.' William Johnston, The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counseling, (New York: Image Book by Doubleday, 1996), 138.

Translation: 'Often we fail to perceive him, and presently we fall back upon ourselves, and then we find that we feel nothing at all but opposition that is in ourselves.' Colledge and Walsh, Showings, 177.


70 A Book of Showings, Colledge and Walsh, 562.
71 Ibid, 493.
72 Jantzen, Julian of Norwich, 147.
73 A Book of Showings, Colledge and Walsh, 499.

Translation: 'And these two parts were in Christ, the higher and the lower, which are only one soul. The higher part was always at peace with God in full joy and bliss. The lower part, which is sensuality, suffered for the salvation of mankind.' Ibid, 287.

74 A Book of Showings, Colledge and Walsh, 475.
75 'I it am that is alle.' Ibid, 664. Translation: 'I am he who is all.' Colledge and Walsh, Showings, 321.
76 Ibid, 506-507. Translation: 'For though we may feel in ourselves anger, contention and strife, still we are all mercifully enclosed in God's mildness and in his meekness, in his benignity and in his accessibility.' Ibid, 264.
77 Ibid, 571.
78 Julian also uses the word 'Being' as seen above.
79 Ibid, 464.
80 Ibid, 463.
OUR PATHWAY TO GOD: SCENT

TOM RYAN SM

AT A FAMILY Christmas gathering recently, one of the women opened her gift. She found a bottle of Chanel No. 5. Need more be said about her reaction…?

Why? This particular designer brand name has been almost cauterized into our modern consciousness—much to the dismay of its competitors. Think of the billions of dollars spent annually on perfume, eau de cologne and after-shave lotions. Or in the advertising industry that surrounds them…

For Marcel Proust, the taste of a small cake or madeleine triggers his literary journey into his childhood. But perhaps fragrances and scents are the most powerful triggers to memories. The aroma of bread in a toaster evokes for me a winter night with a family having soup with toast made on an open fire.

Or we catch the lingering scent of someone who has left a room and a forgotten world reappears. Or it may tell us who was in the room without actually seeing them…

Again, think how we appeal to the sense of smell as a benchmark for our everyday life and, even, of a basic moral code. 'That's a bit off' or 'it's on the nose.' Staying out of trouble is 'to keep one's nose clean.' We evaluate someone as being in 'good' or 'bad' odour. And, of course, a good journalist needs to 'to have a nose for a story' or a detective to have the confidence to 'follow his nose.'

It is interesting how scent, goodness and authenticity are so often connected. This will be a theme we return to as we reflect on how the sense of smell can be a pathway, not only to God, but between God and us.

Scent and the Lavishness of Love

Let's start with graphic stories about scent as found in Luke 7: 36-50, Mark 14: 3-9 and John 12:1-11… Discussing these fully and their differences is not our task here. Perhaps take time to read the passages. Let's ponder two thoughts.

First, in each scene a costly ointment is the common factor. The washing of Jesus' feet and the 'anointing' with the 'pure nard' highlights the excess of love expressed. Further, when, as in the John scene, we are told that 'the house was full of the scent of the ointment', this is an evocative way to reinforce the extravagance of the gesture of love. The excess of love is matched by Jesus' graciousness, even, a sense of 'hang the expense.'

Second, let's focus on the final phrase in the Luke version: 'your faith has saved you, go in peace.' This phrase illuminates what 'salvation' means in Luke. It is certainly an expression of the expansive hospitality of God. This whole episode is a miniature drama. It shows us that salvation is not only a matter of being forgiven. It is about what happens to the whole person from that experience. The woman is transformed, coming to see herself and the world with different eyes, with a different heart. By contrast with Simon, she now shares in the divine impulse to love and serve with extravagance. Her tears 'bathe' Jesus' feet; she does not 'cease' kissing his feet. But, importantly for our purposes, the lavish desire driving her love is captured in the use of costly ointment and its pervasive fragrance.

Scent, Jesus and Wisdom

In what way is scent used in relation to Jesus? We find in Ephesians 5:1:

Try, then, to imitate God, as children of his that
he loves, and follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself up in our place as fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.

The reference (italicized phrase) to Exodus 29:18 points the way. Our lives are to be modelled on the love of the Son of God manifested in his sacrificial death, 'whose fragrance will appease Yahweh.' This is expressed both in self-surrendering in love for God and for our neighbour.

But there is also the suggestion of a link between fragrance and the power of witness, something taken further in a text from 2 Cor. 14-17.

Thanks be to God who, wherever he goes, makes us, in Christ, partners of his triumph, and through us is spreading the knowledge of himself, like a sweet smell, everywhere. We are Christ's incense to God for those who are being saved and for those who are not; for the last, the smell of death that leads to death, for the first the smell of life that leads to life…In Christ, we speak as men of sincerity, as envoys of God and in God's presence.

This passage is rich in its theology and its associations. It is built on the analogy of a victorious general making his ceremonial entry into Rome. However, rather than subservient foot soldiers under a leader, we are 'partners' with Christ in his triumph. Further, we are both collaborators with, and instruments of, Jesus in spreading of the 'knowledge' of Jesus, namely, of God revealed in him. The allusion here is to Ecclesiasticus 24:15 where personified Wisdom has 'exhaled a perfume like cinnamon and acacia (and) breathed out a scent like choice myrrh.' Together with Christ, the Wisdom of God, as faithful disciples, we are called to be transformed from within by divine wisdom. This enables and impels us to be carriers of divine wisdom (its incense, aroma) both in preaching and our way of life. The scent of God, here, is mark of authentic existence, a pointer to what is true and good. This raises another consideration.

* * *

Scent and the Spiritual Senses

In an earlier article, we mentioned how, in the Christian tradition, the language of sense-perception is used to describe the divine-human encounter. In other words, while it is not the physical mode of perception of the five senses (since God is not material), it is still an experiential reality somehow involving the whole person. It is appropriate, then, to speak either metaphorically or by analogy, of seeing/hearing/touching/tasting/smelling God. Authors suggest these are the forms of a more generic 'sense' expressed in Proverbs 2:5. By searching diligently for wisdom, clear perception and discernment for the 'heart' (the seat of intellectual and moral life), one will 'discover the knowledge of God' or wisdom.

It is instructive, for our purposes, to note a distinction found in some 13th century authors (Alexander of Hales, Thomas Gallus and St Bonaventure). They aligned spiritual sight and hearing with the intellect (intellectus) whose object is what is true. Whereas they associated touch, taste and smell with affectivity (affectus) whose object is what is good.1 Further, the best image or analogy for the higher forms of theological contemplation are the senses of touch, taste and smell because they have more immediate proximity to their object compared to sight and hearing.

Bonaventure sees spiritual sensation as following the presence of grace. It brings
the apprehension of a spiritual object, namely, the uncreated, incarnate and inspired Word and the associated delight in the Word. The soul recovers the spiritual senses through the theological virtues whose object is the Uncreated Word: hearing and sight through faith; taste and touch through the delight in embracing with the Word with love; and, leading from faith into love: ‘when the soul longs with hope to receive the inspired Word, she recovers, because of her desire and affection, the spiritual sense of smell.’

It comes as no surprise, then, that the spiritual sense of smell, in patristic and later sources, was associated with spiritual discernment and discrimination. Smell and scent, so understood, are aligned with the Scriptural passages just discussed together with common usages noted earlier in this article in relation to moral sensitivity. Smell is the sense that is the paradigm for those of maturity with ‘minds trained by practice to distinguish between good and bad’ (Hebrews 5:14). Through the practice of virtue, a moral benchmark has been interiorized that brings a ‘nose’ for what is right and wrong in judgments and decisions. It is a share in the wisdom of Christ, as noted earlier. The faithful are said to inhale the ‘sweet aroma of Christ’, in another rendition of 2 Cor. 2:15.

In pondering these scriptural scenes of texts about smell and scent, we have seen their association with the lavishness of love and sacrifice—in divine and human form—and of wisdom’s pervasive aroma from sharing in the life of Christ and in living authentically. But there is another dimension to scent, suggested by a Gospel scene in Matthew, namely, the visit of the Magi. They came to venerate the child as Son of God (‘they did him homage’). Their gifts, in later tradition, take on a theological significance: gold for Christ’s kingship; incense for his divinity and myrrh for his redemptive suffering. The association, then, between scent and adoration offers further possibilities for our reflections.

**Incense, Adoration and Wonder**

In a religious context, incense filtering into the atmosphere, evokes an aura of silence and prayer. We see wisps of incense at a funeral - the gesture acknowledging a sacred gathering place (Church or chapel) or the deceased as a temple of the Holy Spirit. We speak of the 'odour of sanctity' to capture a certain 'other-worldliness' revealed in a person who is close to God.

In terms of prayer, it is interesting that if we look at the Psalms, it is difficult to find one whose dominant theme is Adoration. Consistently we find attitudes of Praise, Petition, Sorrow and Thanksgiving. We do find a sense of wonder and awe in response to the glories of creation (Ps. 8 and 104).

Throughout the Bible incense is used as a symbol of prayer rising to God. For instance ‘Let my prayer rise before you like incense and my hands like an evening offering.’ (Ps. 141: 2). The attitude naturally evoked by incense is Adoration. There is silence that brings reverence, an urge to bow, to be prostrate before the mystery of God. We are in the presence of what is so far beyond us.

We find ourselves with the Psalmist in the *Office of Readings*.

**Come in; let us bow and bend low;**

**Let us kneel before the God who made us**

**For he is our God and we**

**The people who belong to his pasture,**

**the flock that is led by his hand.**

**Wonder and Creation**

In our lifetime, in reaction to the God who is distant and demanding, there has been a needed and healthy emphasis on the God close and loving.

But it can be at a cost. It is easy to 'domesticate' God. We can overlook that aspect of the divine mystery in which God is totally beyond us. At times, we need to be aware of the God who prompts awe, wonder and adoration.
We know that divine love (given for us and to us) is celebrated in the Eucharist. But that mystery has another side. It is of the all holy God present in our midst in the Blessed Sacrament in Church or chapel. Love leading to silent adoration in Jesus' presence is a precious Christian practice that we should not lose.

We mentioned earlier Psalms celebrating God in creation. St. Thomas Aquinas said God is revealed to us through a work of two volumes—Creation and the Scriptures. For Aquinas, theology starts with the sense of wonder—in the experience of beauty in people or nature, in moments of amazement at mysteries so great that we are totally lost for words. But it also leads us to ask questions, to want to learn and understand.

The rediscovery of nature for many people today may not just be a reaction to their blockages with institutional religion. Think of couples who request a garden or a beach wedding. Perhaps we need reminding that the primary religious experience for most of humanity is a response to the wonder of creation.

The Anglican writer Evelyn Underhill suggests that adoration 'is the first and greatest of life's responses to the spiritual environment.' She cites a story by Osbert Sitwell about a traveller in equatorial forests.

He is awakened in the night by strange sounds. He looks out and sees a great ape, 'one of those tragic creatures just verging on the human', in its fenced enclosure. He sees it 'bowing in solemn adoration before the splendour of the rising moon.' The traveller, filled with awe at the spectacle, says 'I had seen the birth or religion.'

Underhill sees this primitive, instinctive act of worship as creation, through this creature, in profound abasement before the mystery beyond itself. It is nature 'finding in that first vague moment of consciousness something beyond itself which it must adore; the first and simplest of the self-disclosures of God.'

What does all this have to do for us today? It is a call to revive our sense of wonder. Advances in cosmology, physics and biology have generated questions for scientists and theologians—questions concerning creation, how it grows and continues through evolution and the origins of the universe—by design or by chance? In terms of our Australian environment, Eugene Stockton points out that there are a number of signs that are leading us to 'the prospect of reaching out to God through our own environment, of seeking the face of God in our own land.' It is a call to learn from the aboriginal mysticism and from dadirri—described by Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr as 'the inner deep listening and quiet still awareness...and waiting.'

Stockton observes that advances in science, a greater sense of the environment and learning from indigenous spiritualities are opening up incredible wonders of creation and of the One behind it all. A fitting response to that wonder is our echo of wonder. Wonder, I find, is the single English word closest in spirit to Aboriginal dadirri...wonder recaptures that sense, long suppressed and long forgotten, of the wild-eyed child who once explored his or her new world.

Again, nature is both a pointer to God beyond us but also mediates God as close and reassuring. There is, then, a healing side to nature. In A Sense of Wonder, Rachel Carson points out that those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts...there is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter.

For some, however, nature may be healing and also sustain a sense of wonder. It may open up to the mystery of life and of the universe. But it may not be expressed in terms of belief in God.

Some may be turned off by caricatures of God. Often, those who deny there is a God are denying distorted images of God or the God
presented by other people. Others may find that they cannot reconcile evil and suffering, especially of the innocent, with the idea of a good and loving God.

We need to recall the wisdom of Karl Rahner SJ. A person's expression of an 'anguished atheism' may, in reality, be a 'sharing in the desolation of the Cross.' Or when a writer implicitly or explicitly denies Christianity, such writing may, in fact, be the 'false or inadequate explanation and interpretation of a quest for the fullness of life, which is nevertheless, under God's blessing.'

These considerations point to some of the anomalies arising in people's lives, and here, in those of non-believers. David Hay has remarked that, in our secularized era, recognition of the Spirit and its fruits can take puzzling forms. The dissonances between head and heart, image and reality, illusion and truth can be resolved in ways that are harmonically paradoxical. For instance, Hay cites someone saying

I know that since I concluded some years ago that my mind could not accept a personal God I seem to have become more aware of this all-pervading power which to me is strength, comfort, joy, goodness.

Whether this is reflection of a distorted image of a personal God or not, it is clearly an instance of Rahner's comment above. The person's openness to the 'fullness of life' is an openness to transcendent mystery, to divine grace and its effects. Or, as Bernard Lonergan once observed, they 'may love God in their hearts while not knowing him with their heads.'

Let us consider a final thought on wonder, worship and hope.

Where are your Heart and your Hope?

First, Jesus links worship with the values that drive our life. See Luke 4:8 and Deuteronomy 6:4: 'You must worship...serve [God] alone.' In Matt. 6: 24-34 Jesus takes this further. 'Worship' here is being obsessed with 'idols', e.g., money and possessions. Worship now is related to what is at the centre of my life ('where is your heart?).

Second, one of life's struggles as we get older is between hope and despair. It can involve a sort of sadness, even cynicism—'what's the point?' It is a shrinking of mind and heart about God's goodness and love. It is accompanied by a curving in on oneself.

In the spiritual tradition this is known as acedia or sloth. It is not really about physical or emotional laziness, becoming an 'all-round couch-potato.' That may be a symptom. Another is a constant restlessness whereby we are 'distracted from distraction by distraction' (TS Eliot).

But in its deeper and subtle roots, sloth is lethal (as a deadly 'sin' or more accurately 'vice') because it is an ingrained disposition to give up on hope. Aquinas considered such movements against hope as more dangerous than those against faith and love. They erode the instinct to be nourished by life itself. For Aquinas, sloth means 'I can't be bothered' to let myself be touched by awe and wonder. From a modern perspective, Dag Hammarskjold reminds us

God does not die on the day we cease to believe in a personal deity, but we die on the day when our lives cease to be illumined by the steady radiance, renewed daily, of the wonder, the source of which is beyond all reason (Markings).

Conclusion

Some years ago, Australian journalist Barry Oakley wrote that the French dramatist Jean Cocteau once asked Sergei Diaghilev (Russian composer and art critic) what he could do for him in the theatre.

Diaghilev's reply was 'astonish me.'

If life, people, nature and art continue to 'astonish' me, I have little to worry about acedia and sloth. I am open to life, to mystery, to God and to prayer.

Finally, the example of a virtuous life and its association with the scent is captured in
COMPASS

this prayer of the Divine Office for the third week of the Church's year:

All-powerful, ever-living God,
direct our steps in the way of your love,
so that our whole life may be fragrant

with all we do in the name of Jesus, your
beloved Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever, Amen.

NOTES

2. George F LaNave, 'Bonaventure,' in Gavrilyuk & Sarah Coakley, The Spiritual Senses, 159-173, at 164.
10. Summa Theologiae 2.2.20, 3-4.

Saints are not those who cultivate their own self-abnegation; they are engaged in the honest and forgetful business of giving themselves freely and freely receiving from others. In a remark on religious humility, Williams observes that the kenosis of Christian sociality means not that we should go about saying 'no' to who we really are but that 'each self hears its "yes" from the other and not from its own depths.' Indeed, a saintly life might be marked by a sort of 'holy egotism,' a term he used of figures like Desmond Tutu and Karl Barth. Such egotism is neither pride nor false humility, only an unconscious enjoyment of the expansive capacities of the self. The ego is displaced just by regarding it lightly, by treating it with reckless enjoyment, as though it were a gift. CS Lewis has finely observed that humility means enjoying your own gifts as thought they were somebody else's; you could design the world's best cathedral and rejoice just as much as if someone else had done it...

...That is what Williams means by holy egotism: not pushing everybody else to the edges to make room for your own inflated ego, but sharing yourself around in such a way that helps others to become truly themselves...someone like the title character in the 1987 film Babette's Feast (a film Williams has described as an 'animated icon'). When unassuming Babette wins the lottery, she spends the entire fortune on the flagrant extravagance of one glorious, stupendous dinner for her friends. That is what the holy life looks like: a joyous intensification, a generous and reckless enlargement of the self, as one particular human life is placed wholly at the disposal of others.

—Benjamin Myers, Christ the Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams, 76
JESUS, QUMRAN AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

DARYN GRAHAM

Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls

EVER SINCE THE discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in caves surrounding the ancient Essene settlement of Qumran by the northwest shoreline of the Dead Sea in 1946, these scrolls have been the subject of intensive scholarly analysis and research.1 But because publication of the Scrolls in their entirety is still today something quite recent, perhaps not surprisingly some scholars have claimed a conspiracy over what might be contained within them in a cover-up of the possible dangers those contents pose to universal religious institutions like Christianity. Although with publication it is clear that there is no cause for concern about the scrolls’ contents, claims of a conspiracy still persist.

This article seeks to reassure the reader that such claims are groundless and that the content of the Dead Sea Scrolls need not shake the foundations of one’s Christian faith. As Klaus Berger puts it, there was never any conspiracy concerning the Scrolls’ contents, although I would disagree with Berger in that I believe that this all would still make exciting material for a ‘spy’ thriller—were it not for the simple fact that, as Berger rightly observes, there is nothing within the scrolls to warrant one.2 What actually delayed publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls were in fact the usual international political jousting and regional unrest between nations in the Middle East, as well as international ownership disputes over them and the sizable egos of scholars trying to monopolise their study. That is often the case with the most important archaeological discoveries. Still, the scrolls’ recent publication offers lay readers the opportunity to make some fresh insights about the scrolls and their authors for themselves. As for the remaining thousands of small fragments still left unpublished, there is no cover-up there either. They are still being studied by a team of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish scholars, who hope to translate and publish them in the near future.

The area in and around Qumran has also been a centre of archaeological analysis. The fruits of excavation and research tell us that Qumran was once inhabited by the Jewish sect called the Essenes who were very active throughout Judaea between the second century BC and the first century AD. Before the scrolls’ discovery the only items of information we had about the Essenes were from brief descriptions of the sect by the Jewish historian Josephus. Although Josephus is a very useful when it comes to Jewish history in the first centuries BC and AD, his remarks about the Essenes are of limited value. However, when Jewish experts began comparing the writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls to Josephus’ account, the scholars discovered they now had a virtual whole Essene library at their fingertips.

Sensationalised Claims

Scholarship regarding the Dead Sea Scrolls and their place in Judeo-Christian studies essentially falls into two camps: the sensationalised, and the more serious. That has been a feature of Dead Sea Scrolls study ever since their discovery. Almost immediately after their discovery some scholars, eager for fame however fleeting, announced that they could only have been written by the early Christians.3 These were fabulous claims to make, and especially so since some who made them were respected scholars for their time. Indeed, that is why a minority of scholars still, even today, maintain such a line. Yet, even
among exponents of such a theory the desire to stand out has meant that there are now many diverting splinter-arguments as to how to link the scrolls to the early Christians.

The earliest sub-argument in this trend was that formulated in the early 1980s by R. H. Eisenman, who put forward the notion that Jesus' brother James must have been a great leader in the group at Qumran; and that the scrolls generally, and the Commentary on Habakkuk in particular, should be viewed in light of James' life and career. Given James was a leader of the Christian Church in Jerusalem following Jesus' death together with the disciples John and Peter, Eisenman claimed that his influence must have extended to Qumran as well.4

While Eisenman was crystallising these views, Australian academic Barbara Thiering, began formulating a different splinter-argument. According to Thiering, the cryptically labelled 'Righteous Teacher' who is referred to in the Dead Sea Scrolls repeatedly as the religious founder of the group at Qumran, was John the Baptist, while the 'Wicked Priest', who the scrolls say was his rival for power, was Jesus. According to Thiering, both were active at Qumran between 26 to 30AD during the last four years of the lost years of Jesus' life before the start of his ministry.5 In addition to this wild theory, Thiering claimed that Jesus had actually been married during this time, and that he even divorced and then remarried, this second time to Mary Magdalene. Furthermore, Thiering claimed that Jesus had four children with her during this time. All of these things, Thiering argues, mark Jesus out more as an anti-Christ than as a true Messiah.6

Notwithstanding all this, at the same time Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, whose best-selling book The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail inspired Dan Brown to write his now infamously dubious The Da Vinci Code, weighed heavily into the debate. In a follow-up book The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception, Baigent and Leigh proposed that the Dead Sea Scrolls were actually written between 66 and 74AD by Christians living in Qumran. Hence, they claimed that all similarities between early Christianity and the writers of the Scrolls are proofs that they must have been one and the same religious group. Therefore, Baptism was a form of the same ritual cleansing that was practiced at Qumran. Furthermore, the communal sharing, the Messianic hopes, and the fact that at Qumran there were twelve male leaders all point to the conclusion, these authors suggest, that Qumran had been populated by early Christians and that the Dead Sea Scrolls had been written by them.7 These two authors also proposed that the Righteous Teacher was actually Jesus. Given that the Scrolls portray the Righteous Teacher as a simple man without any claim to divinity, Baigent and Leigh argue that the divine nature of Jesus must have been a later construct by the apostle Paul.8 Inspired by these claims, as well as Baigent and Leigh's fame, Upton Clary Ewing and others have rather too hastily accepted that the Righteous Teacher must have indeed been Jesus.9

But even these claims were not the final say on the spurious link between Jesus and Qumran. Other writers have also put forward their own splinter-arguments too. One such argument is that put forward by Walter Parks. Parks disputes that the Scrolls were written by Christians. Instead, he follows established scholarship and upholds that they were indeed, written by Essenes, not Christians, at a point in time sometime before Christ's birth. But from there Parks diverges, and claims that during the 'lost years' of Jesus' life between ages thirteen to twenty-nine Jesus was sent by his parents to be schooled in Qumran by
Essene teachers, and that his textbooks were the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves!"²

However, needless to say, Jesus could not have been all these things at the same time. Moreover, all of these sensationalised claims have been countered by many of the most reputable of historians and archaeologists who have extensive expertise with regard to Qumran and early Judeo-Christian history.

**Offerings by Serious Scholarship**

Essentially, the aforementioned sensationalisms fail to convince on three counts as set forth by more serious scholars. The first count concerns the actual dating of the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves. Independent scientific testing of the scrolls has shown that they are much older than is sometimes presumed. Palaeographic testing has proven they were written between the start of the second century BC and the mid-first century AD; Radio-carbon testing of a scroll's wrapping in 1951 gave a date during the start of the first century AD; and independent radio-carbon testing carried out during the 1990s on eight manuscripts dated them all to the first century BC. Accordingly, there is consensus among serious scholars today, that given these tests and the contents of the scrolls themselves, the Dead Sea Scrolls must have been written between 200BC and just prior to Qumran's destruction by the Romans in the Great Jewish War in AD70 when the Essenes hid them in their caves to preserve them. As a result the Righteous Teacher could never have been either Jesus or John the Baptist, but has to be someone who lived centuries earlier. In fact, it is now accepted that this person was the original founder of the Essene sect and the Qumran community. According to this view first introduced by renowned Jewish scholar Geza Vermes, the Righteous Teacher had been a priest of some standing in Jerusalem in the early second century BC, but became despondent with the established priesthood's moral corruption there, whereupon he left Jerusalem and founded the Essene sect which, in turn, founded Qumran - hence his celebrated posterity there in the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves.³

The second count which proves the above sensationalised claims as untenable is derived from what the Gospels and the Dead Sea Scrolls actually say about Jesus' standing with the Essenes themselves. The scrolls certainly do say that the Righteous Teacher had certain qualities which Bible readers would also notice in Jesus as well: a burning desire to preach salvation, a view of himself as a prophetic figure, and a sense that the end times were immanent.⁴ But Jesus and the Righteous Teacher also had glaring differences which discount the idea that they were the same person. It must be noted that, for one thing, the Dead Sea Scrolls never mention Jesus at all, and nor do they give the slightest hint that Jesus and the Righteous Teacher were the same person. For another, whereas the Righteous Teacher fled Jerusalem and sought self-preservation in the wilderness near the Dead Sea, Jesus went boldly to Jerusalem, even though he knew he was going to face death and martyrdom there.⁵

Furthermore, whilst it is certainly true that the Gospels and the Dead Sea Scrolls both refer to Isaiah's prophecy that the way of the Messiah would be prepared 'in the wilderness', their definition of that preparation is quite different. The Community Rule Dead Sea Scroll says explicitly that the whole purpose of the Essene sect's presence in isolated Qumran was to 'prepare the way in the desert' for the Messiah; for they believed that in this way they might endear themselves to God and to His Messiah when he should arrive on the scene.⁶

However, the idea that the wilderness was one place where God chooses to reveal his will to humankind was a long and popular one, and it was one that was widespread in Jesus' time. As for Jesus himself, he never once identified himself with the Essenes of Qumran throughout the Gospels. Instead, Jesus taught that it was not the Essenes of Qumran, but rather it was John the Baptist, who was baptising and calling people to repentance along the Jordan River, who was really preparing his way in the wilderness in
compared in accordance with God's plan. Therefore, it is impossible to trace any Isaianic lines of direct influence by the Essenes over Jesus in this regard.\textsuperscript{15}

The third count upon which these sensationalised claims fail is with regard to the finer details of the actual arguments themselves. Put simply, they lack historical accuracy. Baigent and Leigh claim a link between the Essene use of ritual washing and the baptism practiced by John the Baptist and Jesus and his disciples. But ritual washing was practiced throughout the whole Jewish world as Jews for the purpose of becoming ritually pure for worship. That was the case at Qumran too. At Qumran, as elsewhere throughout Jewish settlements in Judea and Galilee, ritual washing pools called Mikva'ot were built to accommodate this very Jewish practice, and the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves speak of 'sprinkling' with 'purifying water.'\textsuperscript{16} But the Gospels state that the baptism that John the Baptist and Jesus taught was a once-off immersion, and a sign of personal repentance and devotion to God.\textsuperscript{17} Other details fray under closer scrutiny as well. The Essenes' Messianic hopes, for instance, were very different to that of Jesus'. Jesus taught that he was the one and only Messiah, and that followers should beware of others claiming to be him or of having the same divine status as him. But the Dead Sea Scrolls actually refer to several expected Essene messiahs.\textsuperscript{18} In regard to the pooling of resources, Essene practice was very different in nature to the early Church's. The Essenes forced devotees to pool their resources, whereas in the Christian context that sharing was voluntary.\textsuperscript{19} In other words, Jesus was very different to the 'Righteous Teacher', and the early Christians were very different to the Essenes.

**Jesus, The Righteous Teacher, and Love**

If anything, we discover a glaring fundamental difference between Jesus and the Essenes as we read the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospels that shows that Jesus and the Righteous Teacher of Qumran were two very different kinds of teachers: that difference concerns the place in one's life for love and friendship. Whereas the Righteous Teacher of Qumran taught his followers to keep to the Law of Moses on pain of punishment and even the death penalty, Jesus preached a message of love, forgiveness and grace. The Righteous Teacher advocated harsh compliance; yet Jesus brought to common people the possibility of a loving and understanding relationship with God and with each other.\textsuperscript{20}

These two very different types of teaching had marked effects upon their respective followers. The Essenes became famous for their displays of justified indignation. Josephus wrote that the Essenes 'showed indignation when justified.'\textsuperscript{21} That was putting it mildly. Qumran's Community Rule scroll encouraged its Essene inhabitants to hate all of those who lived outside their sect.\textsuperscript{22} It states that all those 'chosen' by God (i.e. the Essenes) should 'hate all that He [God] has rejected' (i.e. everybody else).\textsuperscript{23} The Community Rule then goes on to stipulate that the Essenes were to 'love all the sons of light, each according to his lot in God's design', and also 'hate all the sons of darkness, each according to his guilt in God's vengeance.'\textsuperscript{24} In this Community Rule's there is even a pledge and motto to the effect, 'Everlasting hatred in a spirit of secrecy for the men of perdition!'\textsuperscript{25} In fact, at Qumran the Essenes prided themselves so fiercely on hating outsiders that they even composed a War Scroll. This scroll actually set down guidelines that Essene members were expected to honour when taking on the Romans and the rest of the world in the final eschatological battles between good and evil, light and darkness. Indeed, such was the sense of spite for those outside the Essene community at Qumran that the Community Rule even lays down that they should not have anything to do with outsiders at all. It states:

Likewise, no man shall consort with him in regard to his work or property lest he be
burdened with the guilt of his sin. He shall indeed keep away from him in all things... No member of the community shall follow them in matters of doctrine and justice, or eat or drink anything of theirs, or take anything from them except for a price... For those not reckoned in His Covenant are to be set apart, together with all that is theirs. 26

Jesus, however, preached very differently, and he appears to have strongly criticised the Essenes for their sanctioned hatred in his Sermon on the Mount. If this is a correct interpretation, then Jesus actually sought to correct the Essenes and steer other people in his audience away from the Essenes' spiteful rules and teachings as contained in the Community Rule and the War Scroll. Hence, in his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his audience which was made up from people of all walks of life, including Essenes or at the very least those who knew Essenes, that:

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. 27

Of course, these are teachings for all time, but they applied no less to Jesus' own day as they do ours. Indeed, they seem to be a critique of Christ's contemporary Essenes. To love one's neighbour might have been a well-known Biblical teaching in Leviticus 19: 18, but hating one's enemy finds no mention whatsoever in the whole Bible. But it was an Essene doctrine and it was promoted in the Community Rule of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Therefore, far from being the Essene Righteous Teacher, as James H. Charlesworth has put it, Jesus was probably familiar with the Essenes' doctrine of sanctioned hatred, and 'abhorred it, and spoke out against it.' 28

Children of Light

It is true that both the Essenes and Jesus had much to say about the 'Children of Light', as opposed to the 'Children of Darkness'. But the Dead Sea Scrolls placed a very different emphasis upon these to Jesus. According to the Community Rule, the 'Sons of Light' were made up of those among the Essenes who followed God's commandments with their actions. They 'walk' in God's ways and are protected by God against the forces of evil. 29

The 'Sons of Darkness', by contrast, are those who practice evil actions and who seek to overthrow the Sons of Light. 30 Conflict between these two groups, the War Scroll states, would escalate exponentially until their last final battle, whereupon the Sons of Darkness will be exterminated by God and the Sons of Light shine forever like stars over the earth. 31

In Luke 16: 8 Jesus does indeed comment that 'the sons of this world are more clever in dealing with this generation than the sons of light'; but to draw the conclusions that Jesus was here making reference to the Essene community at Qumran and that he was saying that they were not as clever in dealing with that generation as the sons of this world as some have, 32 is too hasty. Other parts of the New Testament illustrate this point. In John's Gospel Jesus clearly stated that he considered his own followers, and not the Essenes, are those who 'trust in the light', and who are true 'sons of light.' 33 This same motif was also adopted by the early Christians themselves. In his letters, John taught that Jesus is this world's true light and that all who love their neighbour walk 'in the light' of Jesus. 34 Paul also taught through his letters—in the same vein—that Jesus is the Lord of light and that all who follow him should 'live as children of light' and not in their former sinful lifestyles. 35

In essence, for Jesus and for his followers, to live as children of light meant to live as exposed lights for all the world to see, and not as people who practice their lives in secret and the dark. According to Jesus that was the best way for one to live a righteous life before the God who sees all. 36
Armed with this knowledge the conclusion that the 'Sons of Light' Jesus was referring to in Luke 16:8 were not the Essenes at all is solid. Jesus was simply stating his observation that his own followers lacked the shrewdness of the children of the world. Granted, he used the same imagery and symbolic language as the Essenes in the DSS, but as Geza Vermees puts it sharply, that can only be put down to the 'Palestinian religious atmosphere of the epoch' generally, 'without entailing any direct influence.'

**Jesus and Mary Magdalene**

Of all the sensationalised theories, it is that of Jesus' relationship with Mary Magdalene during the lost years which has received the most attention in recent times; especially since screening of The Da Vinci Code. Therefore it is to that claim, that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and had a family with her in Qumran during the lost years that we now turn.

According to Barbara Thiering, Mary Magdalene anointed Jesus' feet once at a dinner party in Bethany, a small township near Jerusalem, with expensive perfume, and on other occasions as well. This was a sign, Thiering argues, that Jesus and Mary Magdalene had been married because the tenth century BC Biblical Song of Solomon portrays marital affection by a wife as pouring perfume on a husband's feet. Thiering then goes on to cite the Gospel of Philip, which says that Jesus often kissed Mary Magdalene, (although upon what part of her has dropped out of this very fragmentary gospel) and that he loved her more than his other disciples. Thiering thereby concludes by adding that Jesus had married Mary in order to preserve his bloodline and dynasty.

However, this claim, imaginative to a point, falls flat in light of the ancient evidence itself. The Gospels of Luke and John clearly state that it was not Mary Magdalene who anointed Jesus' feet with the expensive perfume nard at this dinner party at all, but another Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus—the same Lazarus who Jesus had raised from the dead. She washed Jesus' feet with nard and her own hair on one occasion, six days before his crucifixion. Now, this Mary had originally purchased the nard to embalm Jesus' body after he died, but when he began to teach Mary and Martha and the rest at the party that his death was imminent, Mary decided to use the nard on him in worship and humble gratitude. It was not a marital act. It was an act of a different kind of love: a love for the divine Lord who had raised her own brother, Lazarus, back to life; a love for her Messiah; and a love for her Master who would be killed in less than a week.

As for the use of the Gospel of Philip, this now very fragmentary gospel was not even a Christian Gospel at all. Nor was it even an Essene gospel. Rather, it was a Gnostic gospel written centuries after the events it 'describes', for the purpose of capturing the reader's imagination. It was never intended to be factual, researched history. Nor was it factual biography for that matter even by ancient standards. Rather, its purpose, as for all Gnostic gospels, was to imaginatively fill out an image of Jesus that is wholly missing from the earliest Christian Gospels in the Bible and thereby attract converts to the Gnostic religion. Gnostic 'gospels' were never written for the sake of serious historical enquiry, but to compete with the Christian religion and claim excitable Christians for the Gnostic religion.

Yet, even if we presume that on this occasion this particular Gnostic gospel was actually stating the truth, and that Jesus did on occasion kiss Mary Magdalene—even that is not in itself proof that they were ever married. Quite the contrary, in fact. In some modern Western countries kissing often implies a deep level of intimacy, but in ancient times people often kissed each other as a greeting, and this was especially so among the early Christians themselves whenever they met together for worship. The apostle Paul often wrote in his letters encouragements to Christians that when they meet to greet each other with 'a
holy kiss. So even if Mary and Jesus had ever kissed, they would only ever have done so as a greeting between siblings under their heavenly Father, and not as husband and wife. They would have kissed out of faith and as a mutually respectful greeting.

**Conclusion**

Attempts to link Jesus with Qumran Essenes fall short at every turn, except of course where Jesus actually criticises the rules of the Essenes in the Gospels. There is no unequivocal evidence whatsoever anywhere in the ancient sources that proves that Jesus spent any time at Qumran, or even why he should have. As a result, serious scholarship concerning the Dead Sea Scrolls ultimately soars well above the sensationalised claims which link Jesus to them. Qumran was one of many Essene communities whose inhabitants Jesus must have come into contact with or heard about, but we must inevitably conclude, however, that Jesus did not establish Qumran as its Righteous Teacher, and nor was he tutored at Qumran, and nor did he ever live there in a marital relationship. In fact, Jesus probably never went to Qumran at all. That is not to say that studying the Dead Sea Scrolls has no future role to play in the ongoing study of early Christianity. Both the Dead Sea Scrolls and early Christianity emerged out of the same ancient Jewish cultural ferment and milieu. But they progressed in two very different directions from the very beginning, starting with the life of Jesus himself.

**NOTES**

16. For a good overview on the Biblical background for God's actions in the wilderness, see Craig A. Evans, 'Jesus, John and the Dead Sea Scrolls', 46-47.
17. On the impossibility that exists in tracing lines of influence about this theme in Jesus' own time, see page 52.


PART 0NE

PHILOSOPHERS who are theologians have been making outstanding contributions in recent years to the explication and defence of Christian belief. My purpose in offering this report on philosopher/theologian Richard Swinburne is to furnish a weapon for the Christian apologist (defender of the faith) with which to defend his belief in God from the attacks of the current brigade of popular atheists.

There is a great need for apologists, defenders of the Christian Faith. One cannot even start to present a case for Christianity, if the hearer does not believe in God. Some 16% of Australians say, in the national census, that they have no religion. Most are atheists. In the Netherlands some 40% are atheists. They are a fast growing sector of the US population. Yet most Catholics of my acquaintance, including theologians, reject any attempt to argue for the existence of God. Producing apologists is an uphill task.

Here Richard Swinburne can help. He belongs to the tradition of Analytic Philosophy. Archbishop Eric D’Arcy, himself an outstanding philosopher, argued forcefully in 1997 for the importance for theology of this philosophical tradition.1 He said that the twenty-first century could well see the first golden age of English-speaking systematic theology, provided ‘that Modern Logic, and the Analytic Philosophy evolved out of it are made intrinsic to the theological process.’

What distinguishes analytic philosophers? Careful analysis of uses of language and definition of concepts, and, as D’Arcy says, clarity in statement, sharpness and depth in analysis, rigour and tautness in argument. Such philosophers have no use for key concepts which are fuzzy, and they are quick to point out instances of meaningless pieces of language.

Many readers will be aware of the great care that St Thomas Aquinas took in framing precise questions, and in defining terms and concepts. His standards do not meet those of twentieth century philosophers, however. As D’Arcy says, philosophers are now writing theology ‘with a penetration never before possible.’

Richard Swinburne

He is retired after holding the Chair of Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion at the University of Oxford. In an intellectual autobiography he tells us that he entered Oxford in 1954 as a convinced Christian. Soon he discovered that sophisticated intellectuals were basically anti-Christian, mostly materialists. Worse was the realisation that Christian preachers were doing nothing to answer the despisers of Christianity, relying on the notion that religion was a matter of ‘faith’ or commitment, not one of rational assessment and, consequently, making no attempt to show that reason had a place in establishing the foundations of Christianity. These preachers derived their philosophy from Continental philosophers who are characterised by ‘a certain sloppiness of argument, a tendency to draw big, vague general pictures of the Universe, without spelling them out very precisely or justifying them very thoroughly’.4

Oxford philosophy was dominated by
ordinary language philosophy. A central tenet of it was that discussion needs to ‘begin with words used in their ordinary sense, even if thereafter one introduced new technical terms by means of the former.’ Swinburne fully subscribes to that philosophy.

By this time he was convinced that modern theoretical science dominated the world view of both academics and the man in the street. He spent ten years studying it. Early in this study he realised that science posited theoretical entities—atoms, electrons, quarks—far beyond observation. These entities were posited to explain what was observed. Why could not God be posited as a theoretical entity: one which would explain how things are, but which itself is not observable?

It was at this time that I discovered that someone else had the programme to use the best science and philosophy of his day to rigorously establish Christian theology. I read Part I of the *Summa Theologiae* of St Thomas Aquinas. This is significant, for if one reads Swinburne's works, one notices his deep acquaintance with St Thomas, whom he frequently cites.

In 1963 Swinburne took a lectureship at the University of Hull. He began a life-time project of demonstrating that the foundations of Christian theology can be justified by appeal to the canons of science. The key to this project is the notion of probability. Much modern science is based upon estimates of probability. Indeed, Swinburne came to the view that all beliefs are estimates of probability. However, in order to prepare the ground for an argument for the existence of God based on probability, he wrote two substantial works: *Space and Time* (1968) and *Introduction to Confirmation Theory* (1973). This is typical of Swinburne. In order to establish one step in an argument he is planning to produce, he first writes a whole book proving the one step.

What he was planning was a new proof for the existence of God. In 1972 he became Professor of Philosophy at the University of Keele, and began to write his famous trilogy on the claim that there is a God: *The Coherence of Theism* (1977), *The Existence of God* (1979), and *Faith and Reason* (1981). Then he wrote *The Evolution of the Soul* (1986) to prove substance dualism, that minds are not material, ‘the essential part of the person must be something other than the body’.

He was already planning four books on specifically Christian doctrines when he became Nolloth Professor at Oxford. Since then he has produced the four books, plus many more, and numerous articles. These writings are of great value to apologists.

I have dealt only with the development of his philosophical theology. His personal history warrants a mention. The Nolloth Professorship is traditionally held by an Anglican. Swinburne was an Anglican until some years ago, when he transferred to the Greek Orthodox Church.

**Proving the Existence of God**

I want to focus on Swinburne's proof for the existence of God. It has features which may be novel to Christian readers.

In *The Coherence of Theism*, Swinburne argued that the traditional concept of God is coherent, that is, makes sense. It is not possible to prove or disprove that there is a four-sided circle, because such a concept is incoherent. There is nothing to prove. There are philosophers who argue that the very notion of God is like that of a four-sided circle: it does not make sense, so it is pointless to try to prove or disprove the existence of God. In this book Swinburne methodically argued that there is a notion of God that makes sense. Note that a
A 290 page book is devoted to the analysis of concepts—a mark of the analytical philosopher.

It is a further and altogether different question to ask: Does this thing exist? Swinburne’s answer to this question lies in *The Existence of God*. His argument for God’s existence can be described as an argument based on an accumulation of probabilities. Traditional arguments for God’s existence, e.g., those of St Thomas, take a set of premisses from which the conclusion ‘God exists’ must follow. These are deductive arguments. Swinburne employs inductive arguments which are of a different form: the evidence cited in the premisses makes ‘God exists’ more probable than ‘God does not exist’. So the conclusion is more weakly established than that of a deductive argument. Swinburne is not bothered by this at all, because he points to the behaviour of scientists who appeal to probability all the time. His argument is that his proof for God’s existence meets the standards of science; hence, it is as rational to believe in God’s existence as it is to believe in the existence of atoms, quarks, black holes, minds, and the unconscious in humans, or the process of organic evolution. We cannot observe these things, but their existence better explains what we observe than their non-existence.

However dubious we are about most of these reports, they are too widespread and persistent to be dismissed.

These are facts. How do we explain their existence? Maybe there is no explanation. Things do not have to have an explanation. But a scientific mind tries to find an explanation, and is not satisfied until it has an explanation or is certain than none is obtainable.

On this basis, Swinburne begins to try to find an explanation for the occurrence of the seven sets of evidence. He argues that on the basis of our background beliefs, i.e., the beliefs we have prior to trying to find an explanation, we would have a low expectation that any of these things would occur, if God did not exist. God’s existence raises significantly the probability that they would occur.

So let us adopt as a hypothesis that God does exist, where God is defined as having these properties: God is a personal being (having powers to act intentionally, and having purposes and beliefs); his powers are infinite (he can bring about any event he chooses); he is omniscient (whatever proposition is true, God knows that it is true); he is perfectly free; he is eternal in the sense of being everlasting (at any time, God exists); he is the creator and sustainer of the universe; and he is perfectly morally good.

If there is such a being, argues Swinburne, it is significantly more probable that the seven sets of evidence would exist than if it were the case that God did not exist. One set of evidence does not make it sufficiently probable that God exists. But as we add each set of evidence, it increases the probability of God’s existence, just as in a murder case the one fact that the accused had a motive does not settle that he is the killer, but if we add that he was at the scene of the crime when it was committed, that he was seen to be armed, and so on—each piece of evidence increases the probability that he committed the murder. God is the best explanation for the occurrence of the seven sets of evidence; therefore, it is more probable...
COMPASS

than not that God exists, so it is rational to believe in God.

PART TWO
His argument summarised in Part One

I cannot convince you that God exists, if you do not care whether he exists or not. Nor can you convince me of the truth of atheism, if I could not care less whether God exists. One is likely to care if he has a clear idea of the nature of God. In Part One I sketched the essential properties of God: God brought into existence all that exists and keeps it in existence whilst it exists. What a marvellous being is that! Moreover God is said to be unsurpassingly good and makes possible our lasting and deep happiness. It is very worthwhile investigating whether he exists.

So let us examine in more detail the argument summarised in Part One. Of course, I am summarising a detailed and technical argument.

The philosopher, Aristotle, said philosophy begins by wondering. Science is similar in that scientists begin by wondering why things behave the way they do. Both are looking for explanations. We are looking for an explanation for something—the existence of a complex physical universe. It is enormously complex. But it is possible that this sort of universe did not exist. It could have been simple: one inert atom of hydrogen, for example. So a universe could be much simpler or more complex than the actual universe; the range of possibilities is immense. Why this one?

A possible answer is that the present universe is the result of a previous state of the universe. Thus we commonly explain something. But why does the previous state cause the present state? Because the previous one had the power and the liability (tendency) to do so. But why those precise powers and tendencies rather than any other of the vast possible range of powers and tendencies? We tend to think that things could not be different. But there is no limit to these possibilities. Yet all the possibilities would have to be eliminated to get a state of the universe which would produce the present state.

It is common to offer a scientific explanation at this point. Such an explanation employs as data (a) the set of initial conditions of the universe and (b) the laws obtaining at that time and thereafter. But why the precise set of initial conditions and laws? Science cannot answer that question. Maybe there is no explanation. However, consider as a hypothesis that there exists at all times a being bearing the description of God that I have given. Such a being has the power to bring about this or any other universe, knows how to do so, is free to do so, and has good reasons to do so. Such reasons include providing for the possible occurrence of humans with capacities for knowing and controlling things, and for building a good character and achieving lasting happiness. Such a universe could also be beautiful. God could have good reason to bring about such a universe, whereas God could not have a good reason to bring about a universe consisting of an inert atom. Were the universe one inert atom, the atom would furnish insignificant confirmation for the hypothesis that God exists.

Let us consider the second set of evidence: the law-like behaviours of all physical things. The same laws of nature govern the most distant galaxies we can observe through our telescopes as operate on earth, and the same laws govern the earliest events in time to which we can infer as operate today. If things behave in the same way every time, one seeks for an explanation of the sameness. Is there an explanation for the occurrence of these laws? Maybe there is no explanation but that does not prevent our trying to discover one.

To this end, suppose there exists a being with power to bring about the laws, and who brings it about that they do operate, and who could have good reason to bring them about. One good reason is that humans could come to know how things work and thus learn to control them, and thus live and achieve goals.
and satisfaction. A world containing human persons is a very good thing.

So the hypothesis that God's existence and choices explain why things behave in law-like ways is confirmed by the evidence. Given God, we would have some degree of expectation of such regularity. Without God, we would have a much lower expectation. The manifest regularity, then, better confirms the hypothesis that God exists than does the hypothesis that he does not.

That the universe contains conscious beings, notably humans, constitutes the third set of evidence which Swinburne considers.

The universe could have been exactly the same as the existing one, except that it contained no conscious beings, animals and humans. The occurrence of conscious beings is extremely rare. As far as we know, such beings occur only on planet Earth. Not only that, the conditions in nearly all the universe are ferociously hostile to life, and even more hostile to conscious life, and such conditions are many and exact.

From what we know of the universe, there is a very low probability that animals and humans would exist, for they have minds (souls). Minds have mental properties such as sensations, desires, beliefs, and purposes, and are joined to bodies. Is there an explanation for this fact? It is much more probable that minds would exist if something like a person chose to bring them about than if the normal processes of nature took place.

The fifth set of evidence is the existence of providential features of the universe. The universe contains (1) humans with felt desires and opportunities to satisfy those desires; (2) interdependence: opportunities for human cooperation; (3) opportunities for influencing others, and for increasing each other's power, knowledge, and freedom; (4) moral capacities, including the capacity to cultivate a good character; (5) brevity of life, which gives seriousness to our decisions: they do make important differences; (5) opportunities for limitless growth in knowledge, control over the world, and for the exercise of responsibility.

In citing these evidences, Swinburne is challenging our taking them for granted. They cry out for explanation. How is it that in all this unimaginably vast and complex and mindless universe—how can we explain their improbable presence?

Were there to exist a being with a mind, beliefs, intentions, power, knowledge, and who is good in the sense that he is disposed to promote good things, the existence of this being would make the fact of the providential features more likely than otherwise. The evidence confirms the hypothesis of the existence of God.

The Problem of Evil

The ascription of goodness to the creator and sustainer of the universe seems to be contradicted by the presence of much evil. Evil is of two kinds: natural (e.g. diseases and earthquakes) and moral (e.g. deceiving and murdering). If there is God, then he could have created a universe in which such evils did not occur, or in which only lesser evils occurred.

So runs the objection which social research shows to be the commonest cause for rejection of belief in God.

Swinburne does not deny the existence of evil. Evil exists as surely as goodness. He argues God is good in the same way as, say, a human father is good.

Swinburne picks out the assumptions behind the argument from evil. They are that a good person (a) never permits evils or (b) permits evils less than those of some given level.

But, replies Swinburne, there seem to be many good persons who not only allow evils but also promote them. They are good persons in that they permit and promote evils in order to promote a greater good. Examiners fail students and judges impose penalties to promote a greater good. And they are good persons. In general, the greater goods that God makes possible are those of humans' capacities.
to make very important choices, to exercise vast responsibility, and to form noble characters. These are very great goods. However, it is impossible for them to occur unless there are evils. Humans must have the capacity to harm others, and to control natural forces so as harm, and be inclined to promote evils yet be able to resist (often with difficulty) temptations to do evil. Also the universe must contain a mixture of natural goods and evils, which must, to some extent, be beyond human control. God could have created a universe with no evils in it, but the consequence would be that there are no good persons. Moreover, there is no way of knowing what kinds of evils and degrees thereof are incompatible with there being a good God.

In short, the existence of natural and moral evils supports the hypothesis of the existence of God.

The sixth set of evidence comes from history. Many are the reports of apparent revelations by God to individuals. Many such reports will not stand scrutiny, so can be dismissed. That still leaves reports for which the evidence seems very strong. The evidence for Jesus Christ's being the bearer of a message from God is particularly strong. How can we explain this sort of evidence?

Swinburne's answer is that the kind of God he has been describing so far is a person who is supremely good and so could be expected to make provision for contact with humans. Revelations are to be expected, if God exists, but not so, if God does not exist. Therefore, the strong evidence for revelations increases the probability for the existence of God.

The vast multitude of claims to religious experience comprises the seventh set of evidence. They pervade the history of every society in every age. It seems to many people that they have had direct experience of something divine. Swinburne does not think this evidence is compelling—on its own. But on the hypothesis that God exists, such experiences are much more likely to occur if God exists than if he does not. So religious experience goes some way to confirm the existence of God.

Note that God is a personal explanation for the evidences. There are only two ways of explaining the occurrence of anything: scientific or personal. Science can offer some explanation, but not a full one. Only a personal explanation fully explains.

Swinburne's argument for God's existence is very valuable to the apologist because it appeals to scientific method, which has come to dominate thinking, even by those who are unconscious of their use of it. His short book: Is there a God? deserves to be mastered by all who seek to defend a rational case for God.

NOTES

2. ibid., 294.
4. ibid., 2.
5. ibid., 3.
6. ibid., 8.
10. On the Christian view of Heaven, it is impossible to perform morally good acts there—'[Heaven] lacks a few goods which our world contains, including the good of being able to reject the good.' Swinburne, Is There a God?, 113.
11. '... I do not deny that science explains, but I postulate God to explain why science explains.' Swinburne, Is There a God?, 68.
PREPARING TO CELEBRATE THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

From October 2015 to January 2016

From the Twenty-seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time in Year B to the Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time in Year C.

Prepared by Michael Trainor

PART ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE READINGS

The following is a brief overview of the Liturgy of the Word for major celebrations proclaimed from the Twenty Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time to the Feast of Christ the King in Year B. Please feel free to use or adapt these reflections, with the customary acknowledgement of source.

Concluding the Liturgical Year B

As we move towards the final weeks of the liturgical year B, we celebrate also the beginning of the new liturgical year beginning on Advent 1 with the Gospel of Luke—the gospel for this new liturgical year C. Luke writes for a missionary-challenged faith community in a multicultural and diverse Greco-Roman world. In this season of Advent we look back over the year that has been and forward to the one that is about to unfold. We prepare for the eschatological coming of Jesus specifically in the final Sundays of Advent and celebrate his birth. As indicated below, the birth of this child on December 24-25 is explicitly theological and ecological. Luke's story celebrates God's beloved disposition upon all beings of our planet revealed in Jesus' birth. This is the essential truth and mystery in the angelic chorus sung to the shepherds and the repeated sign, of Jesus 'wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger'. Jesus' presence in a manger (a product of Earth) and surrounded with Earth's cloth highlight Jesus as Earth's child. Ecological implications to celebrate with our planet flow from this and provide a wonderful opportunity to reflect on Jesus' birth in the light of Pope Francis' Encyclical, Laudato Si.

PART TWO: NOTES ON THE READINGS

Oct 4—Ordinary Time 27: Gen 2: 7, 8, 18-24. The creation of the 'earthling' ('Adam') leads to the creation of the human community—ultimately God's act. Heb 2:9-11. Jesus is exalted by God and in solidarity with us. Mk 10:2-16. Jesus teaches about those who have been excluded through divorce. Jesus protects these and 'little children'. Theme—Community: God's vision for inclusivity and unity, especially between men and women, becomes the basis for Christian community life. How is this divine vision expressed in our local faith community?

Oct 11—Ordinary Time 28: Wis 7:7-11. The search for true wisdom is the focus of prayer. Wisdom is a rich, life-sustaining gift. Heb 4:12-13. God's Word is powerful, acts, reveals and is affective. Mk 10:17-30. Jesus teaches the heart of true religious life—not to be confused with wealth. Freedom from wealth is a gift. Theme—Wisdom: The attachment to wealth and power today is revealed in many stories of business and politics. Jesus' call, bound up with the search for Wisdom, is for a spirit of personal freedom that is neither bought nor manipulated. Freedom is ultimately God's gift.

This song of God’s servant affirms how life and light can come out of a life of anguish and suffering. "Heb 4:14-16. Jesus can sympathize with us in our suffering and weakness. Mk 10:35-45. Discipleship is based on service, not power or prestige—a dilemma even for today's leaders. Theme—Service: Servant leadership may be difficult to define but it is very active in the community around us. Examples of selfless service abound, not often noticed or celebrated.

Oct 25—Ordinary Time 30: Jer 31:7-9. God promises to console, heal and liberate a disconsolate people. Heb 5:1-6. Jesus was appointed as High Priest by God. He knows us and loves us in our weakness. Mk 10:46-52. This is a wonderful story of liberation of a potential disciple. The community (the ‘they’ of the story) have the power to oppress or liberate. Theme—Community Power: The story of Bartimaeus reveals the power of community to encourage or block liberation and discipleship. Through its action God heals and frees. How is that happening among us?

Nov 1—All Saints: Rev 7: 2-4. 9-14. God's vision to John, the writer of Revelation (not the John of the Gospel or the Letters) identifies God's holy ones. It is an innumerable group, clothed in their baptismal garment and faithful to God through suffering. 1 Jn 3: 1-3. We will become like God as we see God face to face. Mt 5: 1-12a. Jesus acknowledges the blessedness of those who are poor in spirit, meek, merciful, peace makers and suffer. Theme—Sanctity: We know people who have been close to us and have died; we know their sanctity. We celebrate them today. We also affirm our call to sanctity and the many ways that we live this out in our way.

Nov 8—Ordinary Time 32: 1 Kings 17:10-16. A widow's hospitality to the prophet Elijah in difficult times brings her great blessing. Heb 9:24-28. Jesus is in the heavenly sanctuary with God, in God's very presence. Mk 12:38-44. Jesus highlights how the unprotected ones, here the widow, can be victimised and oppressed by a religious system that fails to liberate Theme—Religious Freedom. The two widows in today's readings (1 Kings and Mk) are contrasting figures: One is liberated and blessed by the prophet; the other is a victim to religion. Vatican II's document on religious freedom affirms adult Christians in their daily lives. It is a document in harmony with the intended aspirations of our readings; it could be dusted down and highlighted for this Sunday's worship.

Nov 15—Ordinary Time 33: Dan 12:1-3. God (= 'Mich-a-el' = 'One-like-God' Hebrew') will protect and deliver the people from cosmic anguish and bring them to everlasting life. "Heb 10:11-14,18. Jesus is at God's 'right hand,' an image emphasising Jesus' as God's agent and sharing in God's power. Mk 13:24-32. This 'apocalyptic' passage emphasises Jesus' continuing liberating presence with those who are faithful despite difficulties. Theme—God's Apocalyptic presence. Dan and Mk presume their audience's familiarity with apocalyptic thought. This unique form of writing does not offer a literal divine timetable for things to come, but a reassurance of God's presence in the present struggles of those open to this presence. Who are those struggling around us? Who are those we know are constantly faithful to God? What kind of liberation do we seek?

Nov 22—Christ the King: Dan 7:13-14. God's agent judges and comforts as he reveals God's glory. Rev 1:5-8. A beautiful song celebrating God's powerful, gentle and comforting presence. Jn 18:33-37. The central message in John's passion narrative, here revealed, is that Jesus is truly King. Theme—Jesus, revealer of God's power: The final liturgical celebration of the year traditionally spotlights Jesus as God's agent, revealing God's power and presence. In a world broken, uncertain and seduced by political voices, this is an important celebration. This feast also provides an opportunity to celebrate how this community has lived out its conviction of God's presence and Jesus' leadership throughout the liturgical year concluding today. Stories would abound, if only they were recorded or remembered.

NEW LITURGICAL YEAR C

This coming happens mostly unexpectedly, and especially in pain, suffering and death. This first celebration of our new liturgical year invites us to ponder God's presence to us in all these different ways.

**Dec 6—Advent 2:** Bar 5:1-9. This is a celebration of God's delight in creation and humanity. Phil 1:4-6.8-11. Paul delights in the Jesus followers at Philippi. They witness to the gospel and he encourages their ongoing discernment. Lk 3:1-6. Baruch's vision finds its expression in the historical and social preparation for the birth of Jesus. Theme—*God's delight:* The advent of Jesus soon to be born among us reveals God's delight for creation and humanity. Jesus' birth involves the whole of creation that God has blessed. This powerful theme has profound ecological implications for faith communities that seek to ponder the implications of Francis' Encyclical, *Laudato Si*. Jesus' birth commits us to this planet and invites us to celebrate our world with lives that are good, holy and blessed.

**Dec 13—Advent 3:** Zeph 3:14-18. The prophet announces God's gladness with humanity renewed through God's love. This affirmation removes judgement and offers freedom. Phil 4:4-7. Paul encourages joy—a deep gift from God that alleviates 'all worry.' Lk 3:10-18. Jesus' coming invites conversion back to God. This has economic and social implications for daily living. Theme—*Joy and Conversion.* These two themes (joy in Zeph and Phil; conversion in Lk) are powerful and appropriate on the eve of our Christmas celebrations. Joy is God's gift in the midst of life's struggles; not simply the ever-smiling Christian immune to what is happening. The kind of conversion suggested by John the Baptist is an openness to be touched and guided by God. It has practical, personal and social implications for how we live out these days in preparing for Jesus' birth.

**Dec 20—Advent 4:** Micah 5:1-4. The smallest and most insignificant tribe will be selected by God to rule Israel. Heb 10:5-10. Jesus comes to do God's 'will.' This 'will' is to reveal God's love and kindness towards all. Lk 1:39-45. Mary and Elizabeth meet. And the child whom Mary carries is recognised as Lord; joy surrounds this declaration. Theme—*Smallness.* Micah and Lk reveal that God's attention is focussed on the insignificant and unknown. Israel's smallest tribe is praised; Mary a village woman is blessed. Who are those in our communities that are God's 'little people' and reveal something of God's presence to us?

**Dec 25—Feast of the Nativity**

**Midnight**

Is 9:2-4, 6-7. God's light shines on a people that walk in darkness. Their hope is in the birth of one who will usher in God's authority and justice. Tit 2:11-14. God's love for us is tangible in the birth of Jesus. Because of this we live holy lives. Lk 2:1-20. Jesus is born to a peasant couple, victims of taxation, in a world controlled by foreign powers. Theme—*God's Welcome:* So many will crowd into our churches this night. All seek to hear a word of hope and encouragement. In the birth of a child God is imaged as helpless, childlike, and welcoming. Mistaken notions of God as vindictive or vengeful are completely overturned. This affects the way we see our world and God's embrace of us.

**Morning**

Is 52:7-10. The prophet speaks to an exiled people. They hear a message of salvation, of a God who ultimately reigns over disaster. Tit 3:4-7. God's utter love and compassion enabled Jesus to reveal to us a God of goodness and kindness. Lk 2:1-20. Jesus is born to a peasant couple, victims of taxation, in a world controlled by foreign powers. Theme—*Hope.* So many will crowd into our churches this day as at midnight Mass. All seek to hear a word of hope and encouragement. The readings powerfully provide the opportunity to celebrate a God revealed in a child, seeking to console and tenderly walk with us throughout the rest of our year and lives.

**Dec 27—Holy Family:** Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14. Wisdom is found in respect and care for the older members of the family. Col 3:12-21. Mutual love and compassion should characterise members of the Christian household. If it is not excluded, special preaching care should also accompany the last verses of this reading, written at a time when subordination represented order and stability. Lk 2:41-52. Jesus is found as the teacher in the temple, and surprises his parents. Theme—*Surprise.* Families can be communities of great love and growth; at times they are also places of difficulty and pain. No family is ever perfect. Today's readings encourage an attitude of openness, mutual respect and forgiveness in family or community.
living. Thought should be given on how to celebrate those who live on their own. In Australia, almost a half of our households are single-person dwellings. How can this feast speak to those who live singly, are unmarried, divorced, gay, widowed or do not have children?

Jan 3—Epiphany of Jesus: Is 60:1-6. God’s light shines on creation and humanity. This makes a difference to how our world is perceived. Eph 3:2-3.5-6. The mystery of God’s universal and hospitable love means that we share in God’s life. Mt 2:1-12. The wise follow the stars; there eyes are on the heavens, their ear to the Scriptures and their desire on Jesus. Theme—Being Enlightened. At the core of every being is the inner light of God. We affirm our search for God and the way we draw close to God through Jesus. Epiphany is a continuous feast (however unrealised) in the heart of every human being. Can we identify some of the ways this happens?

Jan 10—Baptism of Jesus: Is 40: 1-5. 9-11. Isaiah’s vision of God’s comforting presence expressed through the image of the shepherd gathering sheep and carrying them in his bosom. Tit 2: 11-14; 3: 4-7. Through Jesus we are reborn into God’s life, purified, and renewed through the Spirit poured out upon us. Lk 3:15-16, 21-22. Jesus’ baptism is a scene of prayer and communion with God. He becomes an agent of God’s spirit. Theme—Agent of God’s Spirit. Baptism is more than God’s recognition of someone, or of a person’s communion with God. It is a commitment to communal service and social justice. These aspects are found in all the readings. We are baptised to reveal God’s inclusive community. This is challenging in a world were exclusivity, prestige and favouritism permeate all sectors—even our church.

Jan 17—Ordinary Time 2: Is 62:1-5. In a time of exile and apparent abandonment, God reveals to Israel that they will be God’s delight. 1 Cor 12:4-11. God’s spirit permeates the household of Jesus followers, releasing spiritual gifts upon them. Jn 2:1-12. Jesus’ first sign symbolically underscores God’s joy with humanity symbolised in a wedding feast with an extraordinary quantity of exquisite wine. Theme—Be Delighted. The first reading and the gospel invite us to celebrate how God delights in and cherishes us. Sometimes this theological conviction is hard to come by, especially when things seem pretty tough. Today’s word offers another perspective.

Jan 24—Ordinary Time 3: Neh 8:2-4, 5-6, 8-10. After exile, the temple is rebuilt, the Torah is found, and the first liturgy of the word celebrated. This is a fine picture of how the Liturgy of the Word should be celebrated in every generation. 1 Cor 12:30. Everyone is important in the household of Jesus followers. Those most honoured are those considered socially dishonourable. Now that’s a challenge! Lk 1:1-4; 4:14-21. We hear the first verses of Lk and then (skipping over the story of Jesus’ birth) Jesus’ proclamation of his ministry. His ministry is essentially about liberating human beings. Theme—Proclaiming Freedom. Neh and Lk both present scenes of biblical preaching, one in the story of the renewed people of Israel, another at the commencement of Jesus’ public ministry. The scriptures are intended to nurture, liberate and bring their hearers a sense of happiness. This offers an opportunity to name and celebrate ways this Christian community honours this today.

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