

## Letters To The Editor

From the FAITH Magazine May-June 2005

### Mary and the Convert

Dear Fr Editor,

David Paul Deavel is to be highly commended, as a convert, for producing such a magnificent defence of the role of Our Lady in your last edition against all-comers, including Calvin and the other protestant reformers. The biblical evidence for Marian devotion is, of course, powerful but perhaps Mr Deavel could help other potential converts by pointing in a practical way to the miraculous fruits, signs wonders and healings associated with the reported apparitions of Our Lady, especially those of the 19th/20th centuries. Lourdes , Fatima and Medjugorje spring to mind, having produced large numbers of converts to the Catholic faith, including leading Protestants especially in the USA . The number and variety of miraculous cures in these places, especially Lourdes , provides very impressive scientific evidence for those who seek to discover Our Lady's powers of intercession. Another good example of this can be found in the secret prophesies (recently revealed) of the 1917 Fatima apparitions predicting the outbreak of the Second World War, the fall of communism in Russia and the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II, who himself attributes his escape to the intercession of Our Blessed Mother. If someone has had half his stomach removed by operation and, after visiting Lourdes finds it totally restored, the onus is on the doubters to provide some plausible explanation. The same can be said about the many malignant tumours which have disappeared without treatment after visiting Lourdes (e.g. the 1976 cure of Delizia Cerolli). If no scientific or natural reason can be found for these inexplicable cures and events, then surely Divine intervention as a result of the intercession of Our Lady is the only answer.

Yours faithfully,

Hugh Lynch  
Burnhead Road  
Larbert  
Stirlingshire  
Scotland

Dear Fr Editor

With regard to the article Mary and the Convert (Faith Jan/Feb 2005) I would like to add some additional insights. As a Sola Scriptura protestant in the late 1950's I adopted, half consciously, the general working principle that the truth of a doctrine was directly proportionate to the amount of space allotted to it in the Scriptures. Then it gradually dawned on me that the greatest doctrine of all, the Holy Trinity, was by no means self-evident in the Bible: Mary actually gets more

space in the New Testament than God the Father. So much for proportional representation! And yet most Protestants accept the Trinity – that is to say, they accept that the doctrine can be drawn out and developed by the Church even if not explicitly formulated in the scriptures. Why cannot the same process be applied to the Mother of God? If Mary had written a Gospel or an Epistle herself surely she would have diminished in stature. She is the very channel of life and inspiration that enabled the (male) apostles to do all the talking! It would have been very unfitting that she should descend from her divine motherhood to be a ‘mere’ writer or preacher. After Pentecost she lived quietly in the home built for her by St John in Ephesus . I think that the silence of Mary is much more powerful and eloquent than any words or actions of hers would have been. As for the title ‘Co-Redemptrix’ – I think that this will always present a problem for non-Catholic Christians, there is simply no getting away from it. To the uninstructed, ‘Co-Redemptrix’ plainly implies equality with her Son – and first impressions are very important. A title that requires an explanatory footnote is not a good one. Apart from inventing a ponderous new compound phrase, I see no way out of this difficulty except perhaps by defining Mary by one of her titles in the Litany of Loreto (remember that?) How about “Mother of Divine Grace”? This differentiates her from her Son while preserving in a very attractive way her power, dignity and uniqueness.

Yours faithfully,  
Jim Allen  
Seymour Drive  
Torquay

## **The Problem of Suffering**

Dear Fr. Editor,

I read the recent editorial, “Tragedy and Suffering: What can we say?” with some interest. But what I have to say is that I found some of its claims disturbing. We read that “to be an atheist who is outraged or incensed by human misery is incoherent.” I set aside the question of the truth or otherwise of this claim; what concerns me is the misleading non-sequitur: “If the cosmos is just a vast accident of random, pointless events, then why grieve at death or disaster?” Why should not an atheist grieve? There is surely no logical connection between the two ideas. An atheist, while he may accept the fact of human misery, that it’s “just how it is”, is a human being with the usual emotions, and quite entitled to grieve at the suffering of others. I see no conflict of interest here. In the case of the discussion about original sin, I was more puzzled than disturbed. “[W]e say that sin made its entrance at the outset of the history of humanity, with our first parents. That first sin fundamentally wounded our human nature ...” Does the writer believe that Adam and Eve, our “first parents”, were historical persons; or is he speaking here in a metaphorical or mythological vein? If the former, I find this hard to reconcile with “the promotion of a new synthesis of faith and reason”.

It would take much more time and space than is possible in a short letter to discuss the question of causality and freedom. But the writer's argument comes close to that sort of Deism that sees God as Creator, but who takes no further interest in His world and leaves it to its own devices. There is admittedly a let-out in the phrase "God does not constantly intervene ...". Then under what circumstances does He intervene? Finally, a remark about Professor Dawkins and the selfish gene. I do not think it correct to say that he "argues that all life, even at the genetic level, is fundamentally selfish." Dawkins' argument is that life is fundamentally selfish, specifically at the genetic level. He does not in any way deny the possibility of human generosity and altruism.

Yours faithfully,

John Boutland

Name and Address Supplied

Dear Father Editor,

Thank you for your thoughtful contribution on God and Suffering. Great opportunities were lost during the recent disasters to spell out realities especially, as you say, in the light of the unique saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. No wonder the unbeliever was scoffing. We finite ones with such limited understanding and poor judgement of God's mysterious ways, need more and more to bow down before and acknowledge Infinity. The more we do so, the more we grow in God's outstanding love and peace to help us endure, go forward and at times, start all over again when everything has been lost. What opportunities for grace there are in these situations, to go and drink from God's infinite well of love. In that, we find all that we have lost and much more besides. We begin to see more and more the profound limitations of doubting and keeping on about design or no design while failing to grasp the vital centrality of the Third Way. Hence, with the Angelic Doctor, we demand appropriate and concentrated scientific inquiry into adequate and ultimate explanation for contingent existence. The money and marvellous help being given are very little compared with the new strength, vision, peace joy and love that come from our God who embraces so wonderfully all our sufferings and wants so much to translate them into a constant, never ending, mysterious rising again.

Yours faithfully,

Father Bryan Storey,  
Tintagel Catholic Church,  
Cornwall

## **The Forthcoming Election**

Dear Fr. Editor,

It seems that we are in the season of 'Parliamentary Election Fever'. The political parties are exchanging insults and making wild promises as usual in the hope of receiving the support of the voters. But it occurs to me that many of the problems

a British government has to deal with, in 2005, have been self-induced by past governments which in Christian terms avoided the 'narrow way' and took the 'broad and easy way'. It has been said by anthropologists that Moses' Ten Commandments were the obvious basis for an ordered society and were commonly found in the diverse societies of the world. During the last fifty years nine of these Commandments were discarded in British Law, which might therefore seem to have been a recipe for social disorder: -God and Belief is mocked in public;

- Respect for Sunday has gone;
- Marriage (& the Family) has been replaced legally by temporary relationships;
- Killing the unborn is legal; (killing the aged and 'useless' is proposed)
- Stealing is common: speak to any hotel owner, welfare cheating, business fraud etc;
- Adultery and fornication is 'encouraged';
- False witness and dishonesty is praised as expedient and as 'strong leadership';
- Envy and covetousness are promoted as necessary to the economy. The nine Beatitudes have suffered a similar fate: -Humility is despised (I suppose it always was);
- Meekness is mocked;
- There is less Christian comfort for those who mourn;
- Standing up for what is 'right in God's sight' is a career risk;
- Mercy has been discarded in favour of the philosophy of "the end justifies the means";
- Purity is unfashionable;
- Peace: (As George Orwell prophesied in his novel "1984" the slogan of Big Brother has arrived -"war is peace";)
- Hopefully not many in Britain are persecuted in the cause of right;
- Christians are certainly an object of calumny. This leaves me with the thoughts: Have our governments passed laws which will lead to an increasingly disordered society? Is that why there are now millions of CCTV cameras in public places and plans for new laws which are like those we used to criticise in 'totalitarian' societies? (Laws which our Christian Ancestors cancelled 800 years ago) Did we sow the wind...and will we soon be reaping the whirlwind? Was it a mistake to give the people all the freedoms they desired? Is it (and was it) better to LEAD 'the people' away from those behaviours in which 'the bosses' always indulged because they were "above the law"? I would like to suggest that this coming election is a challenge to Catholics, but not because we might worry about for whom to vote. I think this election should challenge Catholics to think deeply about European society and what are our responsibilities in a society in which God is mocked and Christian values derided? Do we Catholics still believe that souls may be lost? Do we care if souls are lost? Should we remaining Christians think ourselves in any way responsible if souls are lost? Do we sincerely believe that it is a great blessing to be a Catholic?

Yours faithfully,  
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