

From *Truth* and *truth*



# From *Truth* and *truth*:

*Volume I—  
Faithful Reason*

By

Francis Etheredge

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From *Truth and truth*:  
Volume I—Faithful Reason

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## FOREWORD

In this first volume of Francis Etheredge's trilogy we are invited to reflect upon and engage with some of the great questions raised by the philosophical tradition, as these have a bearing upon the truths of Catholic faith and life. Etheredge approaches these philosophical themes, including those of metaphysics and ethics, in a way which utilises the great tradition of Aristotle and St Thomas Aquinas in conjunction with the phenomenological elements manifest in the thought of St John Paul II, particularly as these pertain to the theology of the body. However, Francis Etheredge also develops insights from these traditions in novel ways which bring home to the reader his own very reflective appropriation of the philosophical resources he turns to for illumination.

In responding to the grace offered us through our Lord's life, death and resurrection we are called to mirror ever further the infinite life of love and unity that is among the Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity. I believe the reader will be struck by ways in which Etheredge challenges us to think through more deeply this communal call to imitate the Trinity in his reflections on our profoundly relational being as human persons. This theme is explored in the work in the context of the theology of the body and in the very insightful handling of the Church's social teaching. Naturally, we cannot go to the extreme, condemned by the Church in ideologies like Nazism and Communism, in which the freedom of the individual disappears as persons are subsumed into some kind of organic whole of interpersonal networks. But the other extreme of selfish atomism is also only too evident in the falling apart of family life or the 'weakest go to the wall' versions of capitalism excoriated by Pope Francis. Francis Etheredge provocatively, and in a philosophically stimulating way, asks us to think through how this reality of persons in relation is to be understood and lived in the Mystical Body of Christ of which we are by grace members. Certainly the author's own delicately dialogical style shows forth the virtues of interpersonal respect and fellowship in truth seeking that he would have us appreciate more fully.

The reader will, of course, want to engage in his own dialogue with the philosophical traditions invoked and with the sometimes original ways in which Etheredge adapts them and presents them. In doing so the reader will attest to the success of the project: for like one of his masters, Pope

John Paul II, the author is concerned above all to help us realise that we are philosophers, lovers of and seekers after wisdom, in virtue of our very nature as human beings.

Dr Andrew Beards  
9 June 2015

# INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME I— FAITHFUL REASON<sup>1</sup>

## Preamble

**“Faith and Reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth – in a word, to know himself – so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf. Ex 33: 18; Ps 27: 8-9; 63: 2-3; Jn 14: 8; 1 Jn 3: 2)”** (*Fides et Ratio*<sup>2</sup>). ‘Science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both’ (*Laudato Si*, 62).

Thus there are the great questions about the nature of reason and faith, their differences, the dialogue between them and their collaboration. Furthermore, the very existence of both “faith” and “reason” raises the question of why they exist as well as the variety of possible relationships between them; indeed, the very coherence between *faith and reason* raises the possibility of a kind of proof of the existence of God: a creative act which expressed an original “unity” of these two “principles” of operation.

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<sup>1</sup> These essays originated in the same period out of which was drawn the material for *Scripture: A Unique Word*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, and, similarly, at least one of them goes back sixteen years. I bless God and thank Cambridge Scholars for the opportunity to bring this collection together. I would like to thank, too, a number of people for their help, notably the late Rev. Dr. John Redford for his longstanding encouragement, the Rev. Dr. Richard Conrad OP, Blackfriars, Oxford, for his ongoing, critical support over many years and, similarly, the many helpful conversations with Dr. Andrew Beards, now Academic Director of the School of the Annunciation, Buckfast Abbey and Dr. Petroc Willey, a former, senior member of staff, who helped me to accept the challenge of many academic opportunities and the invaluable experience which they brought. Other acknowledgements are in the footnotes of particular essays. Finally, I am again indebted to Mr. Martin Higgins, MA, for his painstaking proof reading; and, finally, for the additional proof reading help of Dr. Anthony Williams. However, I apologise for any remaining omissions or errors.

<sup>2</sup> This quotation is from the “Prologue”, although it is not called such, which comes before the first article of the encyclical.

Considering, then, that this collection of essays was written over a number of years, the present “divisions” have surfaced as a result of seeking criteria by which to distinguish one part of the collection from another; and, in so doing, so the type of classification has become a contributing stimulus to thinking about the nature of reality. Indeed, yet another question is raised, namely, whether “faith and reason” constitute a kind of “natural” division into which, following the fall of Adam and Eve, the *preceding*, “*original*” *unity of human experience has now been “divided”*? But on the one hand, then, the “ultimate” explanation for the existence of faith and reason is not so much that they are “separable entities”, although grace and nature do seem to be their subsisting structure, as that they have existed from the beginning and are a part of the original structure of creation. Thus, on the other hand, given that “faith and reason” are an expression of an *original integrity of creation*, then it follows that the relationship between them is subsumed within that greater unity which, as it were, *has a bearing on the possible range and variety of their relationships*; however, having said that, it is still possible that an “unnatural” ontological division could exist, namely that of “man” extricating himself so completely from all trace of participation in the grace of God that, ultimately, “he” condemns “himself” to the experience of a graceless existence.

Even if, then, in the end, this collection constitutes a kind of “fragment” of the whole range of possible conversations between faith and reason, it nevertheless makes sense to recognise some of their fundamental features; and, therefore, in what follows, there are some broad divisions of material which indicate, diversely, the multiplicity of ways that we “go between” knowing God and ourselves (cf. *Fides et Ratio*, Prologue).

Part One of this introduction is to the three volumes of essays. In Part Two there is an “existential” point of departure: how questions arise out of experience and challenge the person to think through the nature of meaning. Following the former introduction to the work as a whole, in Part Three there is an overview, specifically, of the general themes of volume one; and then, finally, there is a brief introduction to the four chapters that constitute this first volume of essays.

## **I. General Introduction to each volume (I), “common reason” (III) and the experience of philosophy and faith (III)**

**General Introduction to Volume I: Faithful Reason; Volume II:  
Faith and Reason in Dialogue; and Volume III: Faith is Married**

**Reason (ii).** This collection of essays has been built up over many years and, as it began to be assembled into a single volume, so certain themes began to emerge; and, as those themes became explicit, so the dialogue of ideas develops and impacts on the structure of the whole work. Thus the structure of a single volume has had to change; and change is understood here as making more explicit the variety of work subsumed under the original title: *Faith is Married Reason*. Thus, while it is clear that each volume still addresses the relationship between Faith and Reason, each volume now has a specific identity within that overall framework; however, the first volume, *Faithful Reason*, seems less obviously a part of the whole. It is necessary, then, to address that question; and, therefore, to begin with the expression, *Faithful Reason*, as it entails a very relevant relationship to our subject.

At the very least, then, it can be said that *Faithful Reason* implies that path wherein reason “tracks” the indications in the universe to the existence of truth, what truth is and where truth leads. Thus the very exercise of the power to think in terms of truth is already about embarking on a quest that is implicated in the whole universe; indeed, just as God has given us His Scriptural word as an explicit witness to His work, so he has given us the existence of natural truth as an implicit witness to the existence of His presence. Thus there is also the significance of the incredible coherence between natural and supernatural truth as a kind of “argument” for the “one” act of creation bringing this about<sup>3</sup>; for, if there was no act of creation, then how is the existence of a natural truth, embodied, as it were, in creation itself, to be explained?

Moreover, even if it cannot be pursued more extensively here, the existence of a natural path of truth<sup>4</sup> raises the question of *an intrinsically graced path of reason*. For just as St. Thomas Aquinas says that all truth is of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Fides et Ratio*, 44<sup>5</sup>; and cf. Jn 14: 26), so it seems that any progress that is made with respect to the truth must be through an implicit if not an explicit cooperation with the Holy Spirit. For how could the Holy Spirit not impart grace in the very act of assisting us in the activity of disclosing the truth? Indeed, while it is not exactly the same thing as the inspiration of the Scriptures<sup>6</sup>, there does seem to be an

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<sup>3</sup> This is also explored in Part II of Chapter 9 in Volume III.

<sup>4</sup> This is also explored in Chapter 1 in Volume I and in Chapter 6, Volume II.

<sup>5</sup> St. John Paul II cites the following reference, *Summa Theologiae*: ‘I-II, 109, 1 ad 1, which echoes the well known phrase of the *Ambrosiaster*, *In Prima Cor* 12: 3: PL 17, 258.’

<sup>6</sup> Cf. “The Sacred and Inspired Page: A Proper Understanding of Biblical Inspiration”, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Br. Athanasius Murphy, who says: ‘*Dei Verbum*

intimate interrelationship between *the human search for truth and the help of the Holy Spirit coming to us*. In the words of Pope Francis we read: ‘The gaze of science thus benefits from faith: faith encourages the scientist to remain constantly open to reality in all its inexhaustible richness’: a richness that entails recognizing that ‘nature is always greater’ and ‘that faith broadens the horizons of reason’ (*Lumen Fidei*, 34). In other words, there is almost a process of reason defending itself from a tendency to “foreclose” on the fullness of reality; and, in that respect, faith enables reason to remain open to the dimensions which are made explicit by faith.

On the one hand, then, if all truth is of the Holy Spirit then the very existence of truth itself *is not an invention of human judgement*; rather, truth itself is a kind of “connatural” expression of God Himself. But, in so far as there is a natural and a supernatural order of truth, each of which corresponds to what can be known by reason or is revealed more directly by God, there is the question of the relationship between God and each type of truth. Thus while the existence of natural truth is both what is embodied in creation and, at the same time, can be disclosed by various kinds of investigation, its very “implicit” presence is almost a “natural symbol” for the presence of the Holy Spirit, both in the act of creation and in the divine-human dialogue about it. Whereas the existence of supernatural truth, that which *intrinsically requires to be revealed as it exceeds the ordinary paths of investigation* (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 24), suggests the existence of the Holy Spirit as a “being” independent of creation and indeed an “agent” in bringing creation to exist.

On the other hand, there is the recognition of that correspondence between our understanding of a real object and the *idea embodied, as it were, in the real* object itself, where correspondence refers not just to the two poles of “understanding” and “object”, but to the whole process of there being a truth to apprehend and a process which discloses it. In other words, the pursuit of truth takes up all that is characteristically human and yet, *in virtue of the very existence of truth itself and our capacity to perceive it, natural truth is itself a witness both to the existence of what transcends the visible order of creation and to the presence in it of what could not have come from it*. Just as the design of a machine “embodies” a logic within it which the machine itself cannot implant, so creation cannot “self-construct” the logic out of which it functions. If, then, truth and how we come to it, cannot be an invention of human beings, then truth itself is

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echoes this relationship of instrumentality when it speaks of the human authors composing the sacred texts through “their own powers and abilities”; yet doing so with God acting “in and through them,” as the principal cause of their activity’ (at: <http://www.hprweb.com/2014/10/the-sacred-and-inspired-page/>).

an argument for the existence of an act of creation through which the Creator brought about the “coherence” between what exists and the possibility of understanding it.

In both cases, then, of the human being’s pursuit of truth, there is the witness of *faithful reason*: of the positive capacity of reason to accomplish its goal of arriving at the truth. Even if, however, the human pursuit of truth is full of difficulties and strays, losing its way and ultimately needs help to come to its goal (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 6; and cf. *Fides et Ratio*, 22), still that very activity of reason *is a witness to what is beyond itself and is full of indications for the right path the person is to take*.

**If there is a “common reason” on account of it being  
an expression of human being and activity, there are also  
the dimensions of “dialogue” and thinking through  
the faith (II)**

Thus in what follows there is a brief account of these “polarities”.

***The “polar opposites” of Faith and Reason***

In one sense, then, it could be argued that reason in the pursuit of natural truth and reason as “implicated” in divine Revelation, where ‘Faith is in a sense an “exercise of thought”...’ (*Fides et Ratio*, 43), are the corresponding poles of *reason-as-faithful* and *faith-as-married-reason*. Thus the investigations in this volume are principally concerned with reason’s objective of defining itself, particularly in relation to the whole human nature of which it is an expression but also with respect to some of its particular branches of inquiry, modes of operation and natural objects<sup>7</sup>. By contrast, the investigations in the last volume, *Faith is Married Reason*, are about thinking through the word, the doctrine, the practice and the “experience” of faith<sup>8</sup>.

***The “polar” dialogue of Faith and Reason***

On the one hand, both *faith* and *reason* are an expression of human thought and both, as has been argued already, entail an interaction of grace

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Chapters 1-3 of this Volume I.

<sup>8</sup> Thus the third Volume includes chapters on the following: the sacrament of marriage; on the transition from the Jewish to the Christian understanding of marriage; and, in addition, on witness and pilgrimages.

and nature. But, on the other hand, these two “poles” express a kind of “middle ground” where, as distinct from the implicit features of reason indicating the presence of a mystery or the explicit identification of that mystery by Revelation, there is the dialogue of faith and reason. This dialogue of faith and reason is about two, if not three tendencies.

The first tendency is to a “polarisation” that besets the community of the human race. Thus there is always a process of bringing into dialogue what has been “estranged” and thus has developed by a false “opposition” or “confrontation” of what are in fact complementary points of view, conclusions or observations. Thus, for example, modern political institutions have both a legitimacy and, at the same time, a tendency to absorb uncritically the “ideas of the day”; and, as a result, there is a constant need for a critically constructive dialogue between the Church and society on the value, nature and activity of the family<sup>9</sup>. The second tendency is that natural process of different thoughts and investigations being pursued throughout the world, sometimes in ancient but also in modern cultures, such that there comes a point when these developments need to be embraced, where possible, by a new synthesis of their coherent and mutually enriching elements. Thus psychology, for example, has now “multiplied” into a variety of disciplines and needs, both in its historical development and diverse present forms, a dialogue with the corresponding theological and Scriptural truths and insights. Similarly, philosophy makes progress, too, either in recovering old insights or in deepening contemporary concerns with subjectivity, such that a new reconciliation is possible between a philosophy of being and an account of human experience<sup>10</sup>.

The third tendency is that, while faith is not always the “immediate” arbiter of what belongs together, yet there is a kind of rational infrastructure which indicates what does belong to the truth and what, alternatively, is an idea too embedded in a particular culture to contribute, as it stands, to the communion of truth. On the one hand, then, the existence of a first man and a first woman is *integral to understanding the transmission of original sin as the transmission of an incomplete gift: a gift of graced human nature which was lost in the “reception” of it, as it were, by Adam and Eve*<sup>11</sup>. On the other hand, the reconciliation between the testimony of Scripture and the witness of human history is an ongoing work; and, at the same time, a work which cannot ignore the full truth

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<sup>9</sup> This is particularly explored in Chapter 8 of Volume II.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Chapter 5 of Volume II.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, 37.

concerning the human person nor the full truth concerning the actual evidence of human existence. Thus the existence of a human soul, created by God<sup>12</sup>, remains a reasonable basis on which to understand the natural powers of man, male and female; and, at the same time, opens up the whole horizon of *the full interpenetration of intelligent human* action, an immortal soul and therefore the possibility of eternal life and the resurrection of the body<sup>13</sup>. Thus, more and more, the marvellous coherence of each human person, one in body and soul, raises the question of a coherent, single act of human creation; and, as such, *argues against* a preexisting “creature” that was infused with a human soul. Thus the further expression of this critical capacity of the discernment of faith is the recognition of inadequate or incoherent answers which, generally, both distort an account of human nature and derail the pursuit of truth.

In summary, then, there is an underlying nature to human reason *as an expression of the whole person*; and, at the same time, there are characteristically different *degrees of participation, implicit and explicit, between faith and reason*. In what follows there is a more “experiential” account of the general interrelationship between faith and reason.

### **In the experience of a particular person there are also the characteristics of the pursuit of philosophy and the encounter with God which constitutes the beginning of faith (III)**

‘All men and women, as I have noted<sup>14</sup>, are in some sense philosophers and have their own philosophical conceptions with which they direct their lives. In one way or other, they shape a comprehensive vision and an answer to the question of life’s meaning; and in the light of this they interpret their own life’s course and regulate their behaviour’ (St. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 30).

Given this marvellously concise expression of the “vocation” of each one of us to philosophise, this collection of essays begins with some thoughts on *beginning to philosophise*. The question of what it is to philosophise is also in the context of what was the original title of this collection of essays and is now the last volume, namely, *Faith is Married*

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. for example, Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, 36.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. F. C. Copleston, *Aquinas*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1955, pp. 162-163.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Fides et Ratio*, 27.

*Reason.* Thus there are two related questions: What started me on the search for philosophical answers; and what, in the end, brought about the beginnings of faith? What, then, is the relationship between the philosophical search and the “gift” of faith? In the first place I do not speak as a professional philosopher and in the second place I do not speak except as a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon and had mercy (cf. Mt 9: 9-13<sup>15</sup>). Faith and reason, then, while operating on the basis of different principles, one supernatural and the other natural (cf. *Fides et Ratio*, 9), are yet coherently connected in that they constructively coexist in the one person, in this case myself and, at the same time, they “are” the “two wings”<sup>16</sup> which belong to the human person and which help us “fly” to God. The metaphor of flying to God is apt in that “naturally” we cannot fly unaided; and, therefore, our “ascent” to God is clearly a combination of faith and reason; and, as such, I am writing about that *inseparable connection of the two subsumed in the concept: Faith is married reason.*

In my own life, then, while religious experience was almost embedded in my earliest years, what came first in terms of “waking up to questions about reality” was the question of meaning: why did I not know what to do with my life when others, around the same time, were beginning to choose “A” levels and to set out on a particular path of work? Chronologically, then, the psycho-philosophical question came first; and then, later, there was a “moment of bankruptcy” and the ‘gift of faith’. Thus I will begin with philosophy and go on to faith. However, I do not know if this reflects the history of salvation as a whole, except perhaps in this sense, that just as the fall of Adam engages him with the “limits” of his nature so all of us, “in Adam”, experience that *suffering that reveals what is in us and broaches, intrinsically, the question of who will help?* Just as with Adam, what he did affected what he was, his relationships and, at the same time, set him upon the path of self-knowledge (cf. CCC, 236<sup>17</sup>), so it is with each one of us: what we do tells us about who we are. These initial

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<sup>15</sup> In answer to the question “Who is Jorge Mario Bergoglio?”, Pope Francis said: “I am a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon”; and, in so doing, the Pope is identifying his own call with the call of Matthew (cf. Mt 9: 9-13).

From an interview with Antonio Spadaro, “Pope Francis’ interview to Jesuit journals around the world: I am a sinner but I trust”, *L’Osservatore Romano*, number 39, Wednesday, 25 September 2013, p. 11; but cf. also the excerpt from St. Bede’s *Homelia*, 21, cited on p. 10 of that same article and other insights on those same pages of the paper, pp. 10-11.

<sup>16</sup> *Fides et Ratio*, Preamble.

<sup>17</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, cf. the following for an online version: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM)

reflections, then, are not so much about ‘philosophy’ and ‘faith’ in depth so much about how, in our concrete lives, we express the truth of St. John Paul II’s claim: ‘All men and women ... are in some sense philosophers’ (*Fides et Ratio*, 30).

**Philosophising arises out of human experience and, in addition, manifests a characteristically human nature.** To begin with there are wider questions which will have to wait, such as what is philosophy?<sup>18</sup>, for this is an opportunity to give an account of actual questions of life and meaning as they arose, as it were, out of my concrete life.

At around fourteen I became aware of an unhappiness in my life which I could not define but which, for example, showed itself in running away from home to London. Although I did not stay long in London, being rather small, young, lonely, ill-equipped, penniless, afraid and unused to finding my way about on my own, it nevertheless helped me to see that there was something wrong with my life. Thus, together with trying to commit suicide a couple of years later, and now just remembering the sheer anxiety in front of the possibility of meeting God and being judged for this action, I began to wake up to the question of why did other people know what to do with their lives and I did not.

So began an inquiry that led into all sorts of reading, dialogues and experiences. I can remember, for example, staying with some friends of my parents and, being unable to sleep, having a waking dream about a horrible creature being shaken off my hand. Between the context of associations and the relationship to my hand, it was a kind of image of sexual self-absorption; and, what then followed was an image of a dam breaking, leading to a whole river of memories coming into consciousness. Thus, you might say, it was as if I had been “digging” around in consciousness and “reconnected” with my historical past which, as it happens, I had not realised that I had not remembered. This was similar, in a sense, to wearing glasses for the first time at around five years of age and not realising that, until then, I had assumed that the world was “blurred” for everybody.

***Conflicting anthropologies or a singularly comprehensive account of the nature of the human person***

These surfacing questions, then, were largely of a psychological nature and occupied me for some time; indeed, in the course of a number of years

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Chapter 1 of this volume.

I began to “trace”, as it were, the following, fundamental question: From what do psychological problems originate? At first one read of two general possibilities. On the one hand, there are various kinds of possible, physical causation, whether “genetic”, the effects of addictions or other abnormal functioning of the brain analogous to epilepsy; and, indeed, it is possible that some kinds of problems arise in this way and are manifest, as it were, in the psychological structure of the person or the range of what it is possible for that person to do. On the other hand, there are various schools of psychoanalysis trying to understand the “present” problem as manifesting some kind of past, partially or wholly hidden trauma or event; and, in conjunction with the latter, is the type of explanation to do with relationships, either within or beyond the family. There is also what I would now call the “habitual” response syndrome, namely always running or hiding from difficulties instead of sharing and working through them. On the whole, however, while there is a tendency to think that these “poles” are reconcilable in some global, anthropological explanation of a person’s psychological state, there does seem to be some justice to the perception that these tendencies, psychological and physical, represent a “polarised” humanity and, to some extent, present irreconcilable anthropologies of man.

This is because the “genetic” or “physical” explanation of a state of mind is more in the nature of a reductive materialism that does not recognise the relevance of the question of meaning in a person’s life. Just as, for example, recourse to contraception and being open to life entail radically dissimilar anthropologies of man: the former being about the “use” of a person and the latter being about the love of a person<sup>19</sup>. Similarly, abortion, non-therapeutic, destructive embryo experimentation and euthanasia are radically different to responses that recognise the value of a person’s life in the act of helping and admitting the challenge of understanding what suffering is about: the former are about objectively harmful acts and the latter is about objectively helpful acts. In other words, there is a radically reductive materialism in the presumption that the human person can be treated as if “he” is an expendable “quantity” in a financial or emotional calculation. Whereas the challenge of addressing or accompanying a person in “his” actual difficulty, without eradicating “him”, opens us up to the full range of human existence and meaning.

In general, then, there is common ground between a “physical” and a “psychological” approach in that man, male and female (cf. Gn 1: 27), is at

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, translated by H. T. Willetts, London: Fount, an Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, 1982, pp. 21-39.

once bodily and spiritual (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 11). The problem, however, is that a reductive materialism treats the human person as a “meaningless plastic”; and, according to this “logic”, there is no real difference in doing harm or doing good to the person concerned. Whereas what is required is a discriminating response; and, as such, one that recognises that the precise nature of an illness always entails an aspect concerning the meaning of a person’s life; and that, in some cases, the meaning of a symptom is *profoundly ordered to the psycho-spiritual unity of man*. In other words, while there may be illnesses which have manifestly “physical” symptoms, it is clearly a question of determining the appropriate “meaning” of such a symptom. In the case, for example, of a woman, a catatonic schizophrenic, holding a particular body position, it is clearly the case that “holding” such a position determined by another is “symptomatic” of how the woman “experiences” the will of another. Thus, for example, a woman refusing to marry a man chosen by her parents may make the internal crisis of will visible in a bodily fashion by “holding a position” given by another<sup>20</sup>; and, conversely, the identification and support of the woman’s own unwillingness to marry the man concerned leads to the disappearance of the symptom<sup>21</sup>. Furthermore, it is clearly possible that there is a reciprocal effect of “life-stress” on our embodied, psychological health; and, therefore, if a person undergoes prolonged difficulties it may well result in, for example, stomach ulcers or other effects, just as digging can result in blisters on the hand. Conversely, just as eating too many plums can result in loose bowels which, in its own way, impacts on our behaviour, so the generally beneficial effect of what we eat can become “disordered” if what we eat, however accidentally, disrupts the normal functioning of the nervous system or other features of our psychosomatic unity. In other words, prolonged drinking of alcohol, whatever its “root” cause, has its own effects on the functioning of the human person and, if it is habitual, so those effects become “visible”, whether the person continues to drink or suffers the consequences of withdrawal.

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<sup>20</sup> I remember that this sort of real life evidence is to be found in Silvano Arieti’s, *Interpretation of Schizophrenia*, New York: Basic Books, 1955 but extensively revised in 1974, ISBN 0-465-03429-2.

<sup>21</sup> Clearly there is implied, too, the whole family history of her parents not “listening” to their daughter and understanding her reality; and, therefore, there is more to a “cure” than the disappearance of a symptom.

***Anthropological questions and their contribution to the vocation to philosophise: to think through the “problems” of conflicting points of view***

In sum, then, these anthropological questions led, little by little, both personally and in terms of an account of actual human history, to the question of the origin of both “psychological disorder” and sin. In other words, it made more and more sense that although *psychological disorder* and *sin* are different to one another yet, it would seem, they are related as personal *imperfections to the effect of those imperfections in the psychological history of peoples, families and individuals*. In other words, although beginning with the question of the aetiology of psychological illness, it seemed inescapable that the question had to be answered in the wider and deeper context of the mystery of original sin, the fall of man and the unfolding of their implications in creation as a whole.

As time went on the evidence, as it were, accumulated of being unable to settle to any particular trade or possibility of vocation; and, in addition, there arose the “leaven”, as it were, of particular religious experiences. For example, when I was in my early twenties I was on holiday with a few people who lived in a remote, mountain cottage and, unable to sleep, there was a brief dialogue with an unknown “person” and then I became aware of a shepherd holding a lamp standing next to my bed. I got up, almost elated and went and sat outside until the dawn arose; however, as time went on, the hope, or the expectation of something changing or being different subsided and I returned to work only to leave it to return to study. At times, too, I would pray; however, there would also be times when, it seemed to me, none of this made any difference to anything.

There was, also, a different type of experience which arose, a few years later, while agonising over whether it was wrong to sleep with a woman to whom I was not married; and, at a certain moment, there was a distinctly “audible” answer: Yes! It was wrong! In other words, it was an instance of the voice of conscience in a very decisive moment; however, I argued myself into a complete disregard of this voice and entered into sin. These different, but related experiences, created a new dynamic in my questioning and, ultimately, intensified my search for what my life was about to the point of turning me more and more to others. After a number of years of much suffering, travelling, failed courses and spiritual direction, being unable to marry, become a monk or a priest or anything, I began to realise that it had something to do with not having Faith. I began to see that although I was baptised and brought up a Catholic that I did not have Faith, Christian Faith, because I could not bring myself to marry;

marriage, I imagined, was full of suffering and I could not bring myself to “enter” for I could not see myself “remaining” married. Thus there were all kinds of pointers that, eventually, led to thinking that it was a good thing for the Church that there was a collaborative ministry of married people and clergy, recourse to Scripture and a lay community life. I therefore joined a “movement” that seemed to entail all these good ingredients: the *Neocatechumenal Way*.

**Philosophising and the call to Faith.** In the course of analysing my own reactions, behaviour and history, I began to become more and more conscious of what Scripture says: that giving up one bad thing and sweeping the house clean will, possibly, lead to worse evils coming to dwell in one’s life (cf. Mt 12: 43-45). In other words, if through our own “will power and effort” we rid ourselves of one vice it is possible that the underlying spiritual illness, remaining hidden and unaddressed, regains a greater and more destructive hold on the person. I began to see that sufferings in my childhood which, at the time, had seemed so unjust, such as being caned for failing at my studies, had another dimension to them, namely that of revealing that there was a hidden history of sin that stretched right back into my childhood: stealing; lying; and hating my father and certain teachers. In other words, I began to see that such acts, for example, of refusing to cry and completely suppressing my suffering were, in fact, an expression of pride and engendered a whole history of psychological problems. All these insights, however, did not overcome my outrage at the sufferings of Christ, the burden of life and the inconclusiveness of my own search for a vocation.

Eventually, at a *convivance* of the *Neocatechumenal Way*, I found myself in the Gospel of the man who was at the wedding feast and who had not changed his garments and who, therefore, was thrown out into the dark (Mt 22: 11-14, but also 1-14). Thus, without a word to anyone, I stopped attending the meetings and, like a dog that goes back to its vomit (cf. Prov 26: 11), I returned to sin. As that sin unfolded and my heart, as it were, collapsed, all I wanted to do was to go insane, die or commit suicide. In that “moment” I remember reading the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which said: ‘Since God could create everything out of nothing, he can also, through the Holy Spirit, give spiritual life to sinners by creating a pure heart in them’<sup>22</sup> and, what is more, believing it! The miracle of faith: believing that *nothing is impossible to God* (Lk 1: 37). The *Catechism* cited a reference to Psalm 51, which says: ‘Restore to me

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<sup>22</sup> The *Catechism*, CCC, 298, at footnote 148, cites Ps 51: 12.

the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit' (51: 12). At the time I never looked up the reference; but, in reality, a joy had come into my heart from the very possibility that if God can create from nothing, then He can make a new beginning possible for me!

This *miracle of faith*, then, unfolded in a pilgrimage to Loreto, during which I was given the word of the Lord to the woman caught in adultery: 'go; and do not sin again' (Jn 8: 11); and, as I listened, this word was fulfilled in me like the original word of the Creator at creation. In other words, it was not through my own effort that I ceased to sin: it was an effect of the word of God. In time, I came to the possibility of marriage; and, as I stood in the morning sunshine I could almost see the words emblazoned on the day: 'This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him' (Ps 34: 6). Thus, to put it briefly, *faith in God came as a gift "from" God*; and, *acting as God does*, He unfolded faith as His faithfulness to me a sinner! This poor man called and the Lord heard him! This is not to say that God did not act before I came to hope in His help; rather, in retrospect, one can see that in fact He was acting all the time. What was different, then, was that the "eyes of faith" increase the range of vision; and, therefore, what seemed to be an account of misery was, in effect, unfolding a hidden history of sin and revealing, increasingly, the *cry of the heart that needed to be both "uttered" and "heard"*! The miracle of faith, however, does not mean a cessation of reason's investigations; rather, it means that there are 'new horizons' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 24): new and unprecedented horizons: the horizon of God and His action. Thus God and His action are not something separable from history, whether personal or social, but exist precisely as *a principle of operation within the very mystery of human origin, being and activity*.

In what follows, then, these reflections that *began, in part, from experience* will unfold in a variety of complementary directions.

## **II. An Overview of the Themes in Volume I— Faithful Reason**

### ***Philosophy and Being: A Primarily Philosophical Dialogue which "Touches" on the Christian Faith***

As I have noted, this collection germinated around the twin themes of "Faith and Reason"; and, as such, considers how these two "poles" are, as it were, dynamically related, like the positive and negative poles of a battery. In other words, in one sense faith and reason "need" each other to illuminate what the "other" is. What each offers exists in "dialogue" and,

whether that dialogue is “internal” to the person, between disciplines or across the difficulties of the contemporary world, each needs the other to be itself. For what kind of faith would it be if reason could not develop the “natural questions” which arise out of a supernatural foundation? The concept of “Person”, for example, was developed in order to understand that the mystery of Christ is “one subject” and two natures, both man and God; but what does “person” tell us about man, male and female, made in the image and likeness of God? Conversely, if reason cannot be challenged to recognise its limitations, namely that of envisaging the possibility of a rational order but being “unable”, of “itself”, to accomplish a real, radical change within the person or society, then the “natural” openness of reason to faith is not “awakened”.

Faith extends the horizon of reason beyond its natural limits (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 24); however, reason must in some sense be “ordered” to faith, if faith is to be intelligible to reason and reason is to be able to investigate the intellectual possibilities of faith. In other words, while both reason and faith are gifts of God and proceed, as it were, from different and complementary principles of action (natural and supernatural) – precisely because both are from God they “belong” together, both in the person and in society. On the one hand there is a constant tendency to consider evidence, objections, alternative explanations and the progress of understanding along a particular path. On the other hand there is a “guiding certainty” which assists the progress of reason and yet opens up questions incapable of being adequately or exhaustively answered by reason’s investigations. Questions, for instance, concerning the identity of human being which, in the light of revelation, shows reason that the whole realm of “relationship” is as fundamental as “individual substance” and that, in a sense, individual substance cannot any longer be identified without reference to “another”: either God or each other<sup>23</sup>. Thus the

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. David L. Schindler, “The Embodied Person as Gift and the Cultural Task in America: *Status Quaestionis*”, *Communio*, 35 (Fall 2008), pp. 397-431. In this essay Schindler explores the metaphysical expression of how our entire being bears a Trinitarian-christocentric trace in the very structure of an anterior being-for-another, such that making a gift of ourselves to another is “metaphysically” prefigured in the very constitution of our being. Cf. also Marc Cardinal Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, translated by Philip Milligan and Linda M. Cicone, Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Cardinal Ouellet approaches the same subject but focuses more on the Priestly-Eucharist expression of how the reciprocal self-gift in marriage is also a self-gift in the context of the reciprocal self-giving of the Blessed Trinity which is, as it were, brought to fruition in the sacrament of

individual “substance” of the human person, be it parent or child, “entails” more and more a meditation on the *matrix of relationships* which are so natural to each one of us that, in reality, these relationships need to be taken up into a coherent vision that not only begins with the fact of their existence but proceeds to examine their psychological, social and theological significance.

Faith and reason, however, belong together, not just because it is a matter of ordering related things, which it is, but also because faith and reason are dynamically fruitful (cf. *Fides et Ratio*, 13): are like leaven and dough (cf. Mt 13: 33) and are intimately necessary for our salvation (cf. Jn 15: 1-11). In other words, in a certain sense, reason is and can “symbolise” all that exists *in potential* to our salvation but cannot actually bring it about; and faith, then, both is and “signifies” all that has been taken up into the history of salvation and is, therefore, *being gathered for an eternal harvest* (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 36-39).

Particular essays, then, that seem so diverse to one another, are to be found in an “open” synthesis that both brings together and, at the same time, acknowledges that revision and development is still possible although, in actual fact, where truth abides therein lies the axis common to all that can still be assimilated and developed. On the one hand, then, there is the psychological structure of “coming to oneself” through the articulation of sufferings “endemic” to human experience: in and through the heart; in and through marriage; and in and through the family and, more widely, the encounter with the “other”. On the other hand there is the social dynamic between the Vatican as a “dialogue” partner with the “world” concerning the good of marriage and the family. Now both of these “dimensions” actually have in common that “movement” of reason which constantly takes us out of ourselves in order to investigate a reality which is not just a reality “in common” but a reality through which we “naturally” experience a communion which transcends differences of time, place, culture, sex and position in society. In other words, reason and faith collaborate at the level of both illuminating what the depth and breadth of

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marriage. Neither of these approaches completely excludes the other and thus they both “overlap” and complement each other. Furthermore, there is an aspect of this explored in my own essay on conception; for, conception is ordinarily extraordinary in that there is both the reciprocal self-gift of the spouses and, at the same time, the *interpersonal gift of God giving the soul of the child conceived and giving it ensouled and thus as a person-gift* (cf. Chapter 12 of *Scripture: A Unique Word*, Cambridge Scholars Publications, 2014, and Chapters 3 and 4 of this volume of essays and Chapter 10, Part III, of Volume III: A Brief Exposition of the “Beginning of the Person”).

the real is and, at the same time, what is possible to realise in terms of the actual goods that man, male and female, can effect both for the their own salvation and the salvation of others. Thus the “common good” has, as it were, a metaphysical foundation which is both inseparably philosophical and theological, physical and personal, psychological and social; and, in so far as we engage with the fullest possible “acknowledgment” of reality as it is, letting it inform “us”, we open, too, to the multitude of meanings and possibilities for developing the variety of complementary goods that will enrich, benefit and transform us all.

In what follows, there is an overview of each part of this collection of essays and, at the same time, a general introduction to each essay; and, therefore, when you come upon each essay in the body of the collection you will find that these general introductions are repeated to help to orientate you through the work as a whole.

### **III. A Brief Account of Each Essay**

There are three long essays and a fourth, shorter essay, in this first volume of the collection; and, between them, they open up three “dimensions” of our subject: the “structure” of philosophy; the “history” of philosophy; and the articulation of a particular, philosophical account of how human being is “structured to be open to life”, implying an ethical integrity of person and action: both in the celebration of marriage and in the rational recognition of a ‘personal presence’ from conception. Each essay has “natural” points of contact between philosophy and Revelation; and, strikingly, it is those “convergent” lines of thought which point to the marvellous interrelationship of reason and faith. To put the matter another way, however, there is the question of the “intersection” of reason and faith; indeed, if creation is the work of one God, then there is the expectation, almost, that “everything” will be involved in an ultimate “harmony” of thought. Thus, although there is a “fundamental note”, namely the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, this “truth” resonates throughout everything under investigation and, as it were, multiplies the possibilities of how to express the reality to be investigated. Having said that, however, this volume contains predominantly philosophical essays which demonstrate, in their own way, the “innate” interrelatedness and intelligibility of “being”. In other words, an account of reality that “runs” so coherently in so many complementary directions can only, in a way, be a “witness” to the objective nature of that reality as “one work of one God”.

**General Introduction to Chapter 1: What is Philosophy? Thinking “Through” Reality.** In bringing this collection together, given that these essays span so many years, there emerged a question which is basic to the whole collection and, in a certain sense, to the human person, to each one of us, namely, what is philosophy? It is probably fortunate that this opening essay was not written until recently in that there are many areas of life that experience and thought touch upon prior to any systematic account of it; and, therefore, it is perhaps one of the providential gifts that this first essay is one of the last to be written. This “sketch” of a number of “areas” of philosophy is a bit like a “spinal” structure and indicates a number of possible interrelationships between the “one” activity of philosophising and the “natural variety” of sub-divisions within it.

This first essay, then, takes up the question of beginning with experience, already encountered in the third section of the *General Introduction* to this volume, goes on to look at experience in more detail, the more traditional roots of philosophy and, subsequently, to consider several elements of the structure of philosophy. Thus there is a general reflection about philosophy as it emerges from our experience of life and then a brief look at some of the principal branches of philosophical enquiry. What begins to emerge from all this is a sense in which philosophical ‘enquiry’ (*Fides et Ratio*, 4, but also 3-5) needs to be expressed more adequately as an enquiry of the whole person; indeed, there emerge cosmological and personalistic reasons which will, I hope, enhance our grasp of reason as it actually is in the lived activity of the person (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 11; *Veritatis Splendor*, 48).

The human person’s search for truth opens up truth as a “unifying” factor in an account of the person and creation. This also leads us to consider the possibility of a metaphysical unity-in-diversity between “fact and meaning” (cf. *Fides et Ratio*, 94). For if truth is a transcendental, a general characteristic of being, then it follows that ‘meaning’, in a sense, has an anchor in being itself; and, therefore, the fact of being is, as it were, the “existential existence of a good” that is *intrinsically meaningful*. Finally, this extended essay concludes with a consideration of how anthropology unfolds into ethics and politics; and, at the same time, we return to the question with which we began: the need for reality to inform our investigations. Imperatively, in view of the world’s problems, we need a common investigation of our common foundations if we are to proceed towards a “global” civilisation and act for the common good of humanity and planet-home.

**General Introduction to Chapter 2: The “Presence” of Being in the Present**<sup>24</sup>. Drawing on a few philosophers of being, what began as an almost “historical” discussion of being has turned out to be an investigation into the “present”. In other words, while apparently traversing the history of philosophy, the whole question of what exists and its characteristics is a completely contemporary question and, as such, is a “perennially” contemporary question. While, then, in the context of these volumes, I am concerned with the dialogue of faith and reason, it is clear that this is not an *ad extra* to the dialogue about being; rather it is fundamental to the convergence of pre-Christian and Christian philosophy, their interaction and, in the end, the ultimately mysterious goal of God being all in all (cf. 1 Cor 15: 28).

Incidentally, while pantheism seems to be a confusion of the legitimate distinction between God and His creation, such that God is confused with an evolving being of the created order<sup>25</sup>, the mystery of God being all in all raises another permutation to the meaning of pantheism. In other words, in view of the mystery of the Eucharist and the very transformation of the substance of the bread and wine into the very substance of the Body and Blood of Christ, it is almost as if pantheism could be redefined as *the goal of salvation history*. Just as, for example, the “material” of creation enters into the radical mystery of the Eucharist, just as the social nature of man enters into the radical nature of the Church (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 7-8), so it is possible that the whole of creation (cf. Rom 8: 19-24) is in some mysterious way going to be taken up into the eschatological outcome of salvation history. By contrast, then, to how pantheism normally confuses creation and the Creator, there could emerge out of salvation history a reality in which there would be the same clarity as to the true nature of the relationship between creation and the Creator as there is in the mystery of Christ: true man and true God. In other words while, at the outset, it

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<sup>24</sup> This essay began life as a “remedial project” in the history of philosophy, set by Dr Andrew Beards (at the time, Reader and Head of Philosophy at the Maryvale Institute, but now Academic Director of the School of the Annunciation). It was to consider both the constant of “being” and the significance to the question of “being” as we move from pre-Christian to Christian philosophy; however, as we shall see, this essay developed in the direction of the analysis of “being” assuming the dimension of a task which is always and inevitably, in a sense, about the reality of coming to know “being” in the present.

<sup>25</sup> Pantheism is defined as ‘the view that God is not a separate being, but is either the entire natural order or an aspect of the entire natural order’ (p. 198 of Cf. Richard Popkin *et al*, *Philosophy*, Oxford: Made Simple Books, second edition 1986).

seemed that the mystery of Christ was not so much central as relevant to this discussion, it has turned out that the mystery of Christ *is both central and relevant to the question of the nature of being: both Being and created being.*

**General Introduction to Chapter 3: Eternal and Natural Law as Embodied and Expressed in Human Personhood.** This chapter takes up an *anthropologically interior account of how human personhood is a “living” law.* Nevertheless, it begins with an account of what constitutes the diversity of human being; and, in the context of that diversity, identifies “law” as a unifying principle. Thus this chapter takes up a longer and more involved account of the interrelationship between the “natural structure” of the person and law: law as an expression of all created being; and, in a particular sense, the human person’s participation in law as an *ordering principle of being.*

The discussion of the regulation of fertility, entailing as it does an embodied attitude of being open to life, illustrates and expresses *how every part of the human person is both necessary and integrated in human being.* It is, then, through the very *integrity of bodily personhood* that it is possible to see that there is a certain “seamlessness” to human being and that, therefore, the “natural” articulation of *moral norms arises out of reflection on the whole of human reality.* In other words, there is not an “is-ought” distinction in human nature to be overcome so much as the human person is *the kind of being which naturally expresses and embodies moral norms.* These moral norms, then, do not reflect a “bridging” of the different parts of human being so much as that *the whole mystery of human personhood is transcendently expressed in the articulation of moral norms.*

Although there are numerous parts to this essay, the main thesis is how human personhood entails “conscience” being the “place” in which the eternal law’s “unconscious” regulation of all behaviour “becomes conscious” in natural law. There is an extended discussion on an erroneous conscience and, by implication, the whole process entailed in the genuine desire to know oneself; and, therefore, the desire to bring to light our hidden faults (cf. Ps 19: 12) is, as it were, inevitably intrinsic to the *progressive work of self-disclosure: a work which is of itself a work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 16: 7-11).*

**General Introduction to Chapter 4: St. John Paul II and the Proportionate use of Reason to Determine the Moment of Human Conception and the Right Response of Love.** Revisiting this essay for the purposes of this collection has made it clearer that, in certain parts of *Evangelium Vitae*, St. John Paul II has undertaken a particularly