



We ask our readers to include John Ziegler and all our other deceased students and friends in their prayers.

Every one is of course eagerly awaiting the visit of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI in July 08. We now have the benefit of two marvellous encyclicals from his short pontificate, the first one on the theme of Charity and this latest one on that of Hope. No doubt the next one will be on Faith. We pray that God will grant him time to produce another encyclical and more for our benefit and also to complete his book on Jesus of Nazareth. We are truly blessed to have a pope so deeply learned yet of such simplicity of mind and warmth of heart as to be able to reach out to all.

The encyclical *Spe Salvi*, “On Christian Hope”, is a wonderful reflection on the centrality of hope to human life. No one can live without hope. But it is obviously important that what we place our hopes in are the right things (or, rather, persons). Christians put their hope in God where true human fulfilment and happiness can only be found. “Let us put it very simply: man needs God, otherwise he remains without hope.” (para.23) . Some put their faith, or hope, in the scientific idea of Evolution. But the Pope reminds us: “It is not the elemental spirits of the universe, the laws of matter, which ultimately govern the world and mankind, but a personal God governs the stars, that is, the universe; it is not the laws of matter and of evolution that have the final say, but reason, will, love—a Person.” (para. 5)

The Pope relates his topic to the course of modern history since the divorce of scientific reason from faith in the sixteenth century, when the whole civilised world turned to place all its hope in Science or Progress. But this, as we know to our cost, was a mistake. “Francis Bacon and those who followed in the intellectual current of modernity that he inspired were wrong to believe that man would be redeemed through science. Such an expectation asks too much of science; this kind of hope is deceptive. Science can contribute greatly to making the world and mankind more human. Yet it can also destroy mankind and the world unless it is steered by forces that lie outside it.” (para. 25)

His Holiness takes note of the new orientation of science in Bacon, from theory to praxis, from truth for its own sake to knowledge for the sake of production. “It is the new correlation of experiment and method that enables man to arrive at an interpretation of nature in conformity with its laws and thus finally to achieve “the triumph of art over nature” (*victoria*

*cursus artis super naturam*). The novelty—according to Bacon's vision—lies in a new correlation between science and praxis. This is also given a theological application: the new correlation between science and praxis would mean that the dominion over creation—given to man by God and lost through original sin—would be reestablished”.

In other places the Pope has noted the narrowing of the concept of reason itself to accommodate this new notion of science. This aspect of modern science and the scientific method is discussed in one of the articles of this issue of *Universitas* (see “The Second Way”).

This turn away from Christian Hope, and the putting of society's hope in Science, inevitably had repercussions on the social life of Christians. The new hope purported to substitute for the old. It could not therefore be just a shift to a new kind of knowledge but had to contend as well with the established promise of eternal happiness, so that it too sought the restoration of Paradise, but in this, not in another world. It is only this quasi-religious character of the modern worship of Progress that can account for the fervour with which many strove to convert others to this new “faith”.

It became, as it were, the new official religion. As the Pope notes with regard to this social phenomenon, “this “redemption”, the restoration of the lost “Paradise” is no longer expected from faith, but from the newly discovered link between science and praxis. It is not that faith is simply denied; rather it is displaced onto another level—that of purely private and other-worldly affairs—and at the same time it becomes somehow irrelevant for the world. This programmatic vision has determined the trajectory of modern times and it also shapes the present-day crisis of faith which is essentially a crisis of Christian hope.”

The challenges for the Faith, and Christian Hope, are therefore many, and not all are from without. The Pope is not afraid to challenge the biblical exegesis of recent times which had succumbed to some extent to a subjectivist interpretation of the Scriptures. Thus, he argues we need to restore objectivity to the notion of “substance” used by St. Paul in reference to faith as the substance of our hope.

The Encyclical deserves to be read and re-read with great care, for it contains a treasure-house of insights into all aspects of our lives today, from the most “global” to the most personal, and will benefit our understanding of our social and religious responsibilities in these turbulent times and our

prayerful contemplation of the meaning of our Redemption.

Along with the articles in this issue of *Universitas* we are also posting on the website a series of lecture notes given for the course in 2007 on Philosophy and Truth. These were issued to complement Dr. Woodbury's text of *Defensive Metaphysics*. Students of Dr. Woodbury will be aware that he wrote a full course on Metaphysics, which includes three parts, *Defensive Metaphysics*, *Ontology* and *Natural Theology*. The program for the coming year includes a course on *Ontology*. The full list of subjects appears on the front page of the website.

We trust that we will be able to resume regular publication of *Univeritas* in 2008 and beyond.