

A-HA!

The Association of Heythrop Alumni

Edition Two

February 2007

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ELCOME TO THE SECOND EDITION OF THE A-HA! NEWSLETTER!

Since the last edition was published in June we have heard from many former students of Heythrop College and were delighted to welcome about 100 to a BBQ in the gardens behind the College for a re-launch of the Association in September. A delightful afternoon in the sun was enjoyed by all those who attended, and it was a good opportunity to meet former friends and renew contact with colleagues not seen for years. A Cheese

and Wine evening along similar lines is planned for late June, further details inside.

The Committee have planned a number of events over the coming months, and again further details can be found in this magazine, or by visiting the A-HA! website, at:

www.heythrop.ac.uk/alumni/association-of-heythrop-alumni.html

Here can be found the latest details of what's happening, including how to book for events (where necessary) and information about making contact with A-HA!

On March 22 the Association is holding its AGM, and it is hoped that some more former students will volunteer their time and talents to help A-HA! flourish. Listed opposite are the current Committee members, whose sterling efforts have helped transform the Heythrop Association into A-HA!, with a membership approaching 3,000.

As ever, if you have up-to-date contact details for yourself or friends from the College please pass them onto A-HA! so that we can keep our records accurate, and keep members informed of forthcoming events and news. Email addresses are especially welcome, and can be sent to alumni@heythrop.ac.uk.

For the third edition of this magazine we're hoping to venture forth into a larger format (8 pages) and in colour. If you have any news to share or articles of interest please send them into A-HA! at the above email, or to the College c/o A-HA! for inclusion. It has been good to receive feedback from the questionnaires sent out in the last magazine, and any further ideas from members are always welcome.

Looking forward to meeting you, or hearing from you soon,

Simon Gillespie
President, A-HA!

Feedback from Questionnaires

We received 209 completed responses to the A-HA! Questionnaire sent out with the last Newsletter. These will be useful to the Committee as we plan future activities.

Of those who replied, roughly half have addresses in London and the Home Counties and would find it relatively easy to attend meetings and events at College. 26 live outside the U.K. and would not be likely to join in activities but wish, nevertheless, to maintain contact with Heythrop. Several suggested arranging meetings and events outside London. Unfortunately, this is not a realistic option for a small organisation such as ours. However, we hope to be able to put members who live in the same area of the country in touch with one another when we have further developed our communication network.

The answers to the timing preferences questions were that 160 out of 209 said that they possibly or were likely or very likely to attend evening events and 178 out of 209 weekend events.

The most popular of the events suggested on the form were for guest speakers (174/209) and study days (159/209). More than half expressed a preference for retreats

and study weekends. There was sizeable to scant interest expressed in the various ideas for social and cultural gatherings.

Thirty responses included suggestions for events not given on the questionnaire. These the Committee will note. One request which was repeated several times was for graduate year reunions.

One comment which we have already taken to heart is that we should concentrate on events which are not offered elsewhere. Bearing this in mind, we will not, unfortunately, be thinking of organising retreats as there are many opportunities available for individuals to make their own arrangements. Rather, we will be looking to arrange academic sessions which enable members to build on their studies and continue to be in contact with the College Staff. We will also be arranging social events which will give us an opportunity to meet informally and strengthen the community of Heythrop Alumni.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who took the trouble to reply to the questionnaire.

Mary Black
MA (Philosophy of Religion), 2001

Principal's Points

I'm delighted that the Association is going so well and that there has been such a positive response from our graduates to this new development. It's become clear to me that Heythrop's whole picture of itself is changing rapidly and for the better. We can sometimes have a picture of ourselves which is quite different from the true one: so with an institution like Heythrop. We've tended to think of it as a small place, but it's now clear to me that Heythrop has developed into a major centre for theology and philosophy in the London area. And it's time we realised this. In terms of its impact on public life, the quality of education that it offers, the creativity at the heart of the College, Heythrop is a very big place.

Our undergraduate intake this September will be 140 and we expect our MA numbers to stay as high as they are this year. We have a new BA Abrahamic Religions starting in September which will be a major contribution to interfaith relations, the first undergraduate degree of its kind in the country, focusing on the Christian, Jewish and Moslem relationship. Our MA Christian Theology this year had an intake of 60 new students, and this coming year the fees will be kept low at a remarkable £600 for the whole degree. Our MA Christianity and Interreligious Relations will also remain discounted at half the normal rate because we want to promote interfaith relations as a major feature of the College's mission.

You'll see also with the magazine information about the Cardinal Hume lectures this year, given by Gerry O'Collins, formerly Dean of Theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, on the theme of 'God's Other Peoples: a Biblical Approach'. I hope you will join us for these lectures.

I hope you keep in touch with the College and that we can continue to be of service to you.

Dr John McDade, SJ
Principal

Eros, Agape & Pope Benedict

The Pope's first encyclical reveals an interesting new approach to dialogue with the world.

The Catholic Church has, in many quarters, a reputation for always talking and never listening. The danger of this is that she is seen to be answering questions which nobody is asking, with the result that she ceases to be a part of the main-stream of intellectual exchange and becomes a chattering and condemnatory sub-culture on the margins of contemporary society.

For many, the election of Cardinal Ratzinger seemed to announce the continuation of a contra mundum policy on the part of the Church, a determination to always stand against the false, evil and rough-spoken world, armed only with the sword of truth. Yet events soon showed that the former Prefect of the Congregation for the Faith who had faithfully and loyally followed orders for 20 years, now that he has himself been entrusted with ultimate command of the barque of Peter, has begun to tilt the rudder in a somewhat different direction than heretofore. Those who were fearful of what the new pontificate might bring are starting to wonder whether in fact something remarkable is happening in three areas.

Just as his predecessor, Benedict XV, at the beginning of the 20th century put a stop to the modernist witch-hunts, so a more eirenic approach to new thinking seems to be flowing from the Congregation for the Faith today. Of course this does not mean that catholic truth is likely to be put on hold, but it does seem to mean that a dialogue with the theologians who are her own children might now be as important to the Church, and conducted with the same respectful hearing, as dialogue with those on the outside. In the last few weeks it has become apparent that both Orthodoxy and Islam are showing an increased readiness to engage in dialogue with the new Pope. Ilaria Morali, a professor of theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome recently said of the Muslims that "they never imagined that there could be another way of dialoguing other than that of John Paul II" (Zenit.org, 29.11.06) whatever that may mean.

But it is in a fourth area that there are signs that a new approach is apparent taking into account the sort of questions that people are asking and from the standpoint where these questions are being asked, and this becomes clear from a reading of the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*. God is most certainly Love, and there are many Christian tomes to tell us so; many, alas, to quote the Pope himself: "detached from the vital relations fundamental to human existence ... admirable perhaps, but decisively cut off from the complex fabric of human life." (p.19)

So he actually starts his argument at the point where most people start with regard to Love, and that is the human dimension: "the vast semantic range of modern definitions" finds its epitome in a love "between man and woman where body and soul are inseparably joined and human beings glimpse an apparently irresistible promise of happiness" (p.10).

Eros up to now has been little better than a dirty word in the ecclesiastical dictionary and so it fair leaps out of the encyclical, where it is defined as a love which is neither planned nor willed, "a certain foretaste of the pinnacle of our existence, of that beatitude for which our whole being yearns" (p.13). Eros is somehow rooted in

man's very nature for Adam is a seeker who abandons his mother and father in order to find a woman and the two together become one flesh and represent complete humanity (p.29).

Nietzsche's point that Christianity had actually poisoned eros and turned it into a vice is met and discussed, not just condemned. Here the Pope is on rather soggy ground because he seems to be saying that eros in the ancient world ended up in temple prostitution (pp.12 & 24) which it doubtless did in some cases, but this was not the norm. He is on stronger ground when he goes on to say that eros as instinctual gratification alone is not enough to satisfy our longing because we are more than just bodies: "Man is truly himself when his body and soul are intimately united; the challenge of eros can be said to be truly overcome when this unification is achieved" (p.14) He then admits that there have been tendencies in Christianity to oppose the body but argues that the contemporary way of exalting the body alone is just as bad because it relegates the person to the level of object.

The Pope defines eros as a searching love and, in a most interesting use of language where he quotes Hosea and Ezekiel (p.24) as well as the early part of the Song of Songs (p.16) in support, seems to be saying that the love of God for the human race is erotic because God first seeks us out. This passionate - erotic God (p.26) of the Old Testament is completely different from the uncaring and capricious gods of the surrounding pagans as well as the god of the philosophers who lacks nothing and, although the object of love, does not and cannot love (p.24).

Of course none of this is new but what is most certainly new is finding it in the pages of a papal encyclical and here is a real attempt by Pope Benedict to engage in a treatise on love with actual people in a place where people actually start from, and with what people actually value and therefore an ongoing conversation can be initiated and continued. As one might expect, his line of thought does not end with eros alone: it has to be purified and lifted up, but it is not just condemned. True human love, like divine love, is not just a moment of intoxication but also a journey embracing the dimension of time; it involves healing (p.24) and forgiveness most of all. (p.25) "Biblical faith does not set up a parallel universe, or one opposed to that primordial human phenomenon which is love, but rather accepts the whole person" (p. 22). Logos becomes eros which is then transformed into agape which the Pope defines as "eros supremely ennobled and purified" (p. 26).

In the Pope's continuing analysis, the unique image of God in the Bible is matched by its image of the human being: Adam, the erotic seeker, finds woman and the two become one flesh. The searching Eros, rooted in our nature by a monotheistic God, leads towards monogamous marriage and so God's way of loving becomes our also (p.29).

He then passes on to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ who gives actual flesh and blood to these concepts and radically defines Christian Love by his death on the Cross which is given an enduring presence through the Eucharist which draws us into the "very dynamic of his self-giving". (p.30) This Eucharist has, of its nature, a social dimension: "I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will

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become, his own. Communion draws me out of myself towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians". (p.32) So love of neighbour is not just a matter of moral behaviour because, in the Eucharist, faith, love and ethical behaviour are interwoven into a single reality, and the sacrament includes the reality of being loved and loving others: this is why the ancient Church called the Eucharist agape -perfect love. "A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented" (p.33) and the parable of Jesus about the Last Judgement shows that "love becomes the criterion for the definitive decision about a human life's worth or lack thereof" (p.35).

The Pope concludes the first part of the encyclical by saying that the love of God which we experience in the Eucharist teaches us to understand what love is, and because we are God's friends then his friends - even people we do not like or know - become our friends. Thus, starting from eros, "rooted in our very nature" (p.29) he has laid in a logical progression the foundation for the second part of the encyclical which concerns "the practice of love by the Church defined as a Community of Love". It is surprisingly good, not at all stuffy, the whole thing well worth spending a bit of time reading.

Michael Murphy
MA (Contemporary Theology), 2000

Translation and page numbering is from the Libreria Editrice Vaticana edition.

Michael Murphy is Parish Priest in Streatham Hill, South London.

Thursday 8th February - 6.30pm - Faulkner Hall, Maria Assumpta Centre (Heythrop College)

"Interreligious Dialogue from our own Perspective"

A study evening given by

Mr Jonathan Gorsky & Dr Mohammad Shomali

Open to all, no bookings needed - just turn up on the night

Wednesday 14th March - Riverside Studios, Hammersmith

"Into Great Silence"

A showing of the highly acclaimed documentary about the life of a Carthusian community

The film runs for nearly three hours in near silence - a fascinating meditation on the life of

The Grand Chartreuse monastery in the French Alps

Price £7.00, to include the Film and a complimentary pre-screening glass of wine

Meeting in the Bar of the Riverside Cinema, time to be advised when the cinema have confirmed

Please contact alumni@heythrop.ac.uk by 23rd February to reserve a place

Thursday 22nd March - 6.30pm - Brinkman Room, Heythrop College

Annual General Meeting

followed by

Fr Brendan Callaghan speaking about his psychology work at Heythrop

Friday 29th June 2007 - 7.00pm - Heythrop College Gardens

"Summer Success"

A Cheese and Wine evening to celebrate the end of the academic year

Open to all A-HA! members for a small charge

and to all those just finishing their studies and so joining the Association for the first time (free of charge)

Please see the website: www.heythrop.ac.uk/alumni/association-of-heythrop-alumni.html
for further details; or email alumni@heythrop.ac.uk

Just War

The author writes of the difficulties of writing a philosophical dissertation on the just war theory whilst in a battle zone.

I didn't expect, when I signed up for my MA at Heythrop, either to write about war or to experience it. Over the following months, though, as elections approached in Iraq, my thoughts turned back there. I had briefly visited the country during the war. Prior to that, in Saddam's time, I had read about it and heard stories from others who had visited. It seemed then to be a place I would never visit, so holding the attraction of the inaccessible. My first Arabic teacher had been an Iraqi refugee and from him I knew Iraq as a country where religions and languages had survived though extinct in the rest of the world, and for it also to be place of great suffering. When there was an opportunity to go and live there, in the International Zone in Baghdad, I was drawn to the place again.

Meantime, of course, I had a commitment to complete my MA in Philosophy of Religion. I had been interested early in the course in the just war theory, and in particular in the ways in which the theory might have to change to reflect modern warfare. So I made the just war the focus of my dissertation though as time went by I realised that I would have to scale back the breadth of what it would cover. In the end I looked at the issue of whether a just war could be one waged for humanitarian motives rather than those of self-defence. I don't think it was a particularly distinguished essay; in fact it is probably only of interest for the circumstances in which it was written, which form the topic for this article.

In fact the essay - or rather the notes for it, stuffed in a manila envelope - sat forgotten for many months after I arrived in Baghdad. I was too busy adjusting to life in a cramped half-share of a caravan, one of several set in an underground car park. Even in this location

the caravan's air conditioner pumping out smelly cold air could barely contain the inhuman heat of the summer (the Baghdadis call August *ab al-lihab*, blazing August - when the temperature sometimes reaches fifty degrees). Six months later I was to move into a concrete one-room bunker that had TV and Internet and privacy, and I thought it was luxury.

Meantime, life was full of work, fish barbecues (called in Iraq *mazgouf*; the fish is taken from the river Euphrates), and Ramadan iftars. I vividly remember the guilt I felt, whilst working in an otherwise all-Iraqi office, when I furtively drank Seven-Up at midday during the Ramadan fast. It was an experience of total integration with my less religious Iraqi colleagues, who were doing exactly the same and with the same feelings of furtiveness and guilt! My days were also full of the reports of death, the human stories of the explosions whose noise I could hear day and night. Thankfully, other than a few bullets that would fall from the sky, and the occasional mortar, I was so well-protected that I felt myself pretty much safe. Oddly, also, my good memories greatly outweigh the bad. The Iraqis I knew were friendly, interesting, diverse, and committed to rebuilding their country. They had an infectious enthusiasm. So did many of my international colleagues. The manila envelope stayed in the cupboard: its details on the philosophical debate about war didn't compete with the conversation of people for whom war was a real experience.

It was actually (I say with shame) only several weeks after I moved to my new accommodation, with a June deadline bearing down on me, that I realised I would have to get a move on with my dissertation. Out came the manila envelope. The flow of thought had been broken, and also the excitement of the debate. Colleagues thought that a solitary intellectual pursuit like this would make an

ideal counterpart to the frenetic life I otherwise was leading. In some ways it did, but it needed a great deal more investment of time than I could give it. It had, anyway, irrevocably lost its grip on my imagination. I don't know if there's a profound moral to be read into this. Perhaps there are situations where we can sit back and reflect, deconstructing our sense of what is right and wrong; and there are other times when we are only comfortable doing what we feel is right without thinking too deeply about the matter. Perhaps the worst condition we could be in is when we cannot detach ourselves enough from what we are doing even to realise that we have a choice of what to do.

Anyway, I was now in a rush to complete the essay, coming back from meetings with militia leaders to sit late into the night trying to make sense of my old notes, and reflect on the morality and consequences of war. At meetings with clerics who would describe the need to prevent tyranny from returning to their country, I would have in my head the summaries of various articles from British journals on the morality or otherwise of launching a war on humanitarian grounds. I didn't often quote them. Not because they wouldn't be interested in discussing philosophy; in Iran, at least, the clerics I met always wanted to ask me about Bertrand Russell. I just didn't want to discuss intellectually an issue that was so emotive, and of which I was so much a distant spectator.

I will be proud, though, collecting my MA (yes, I got there in the end) to be able to say, it was made in Baghdad.

Gerard Russell
MA (Philosophy of Religion), 2006

Gerard Russell spent thirteen months in Baghdad leaving in August 2006. He is currently in the safer haven of Saudi Arabia.

Farewell to Heythrop Fellows

Peter Askonas

Ethicist and Catholic scholar

Working in his own family business led Peter Askonas to the ethical side of his profession and he became the co-founder, Chairman and later Honorary Vice-President of the Christian Association of Business Executives. For 16 years he was the association's Delegate to Uniapac (International Christian Union of Business Executives). He was subsequently appointed lecturer and researcher at St. John's Seminary, Womersley, and also as a lecturer and Fellow of Heythrop College, London University.

He was born in Vienna in 1919 in Vienna of Jewish parents. Leaving Austria in 1937, he came to England and studied at Nottingham University for a Diploma in Textiles and Management. In the early 1940s he emigrated to Canada, where his war job was in aircraft manufacture (production study), some innovative work in analysis of behaviour patterns and statistical forecasting.

From 1943 he undertook part-time studies in philosophy at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto. There he was specially influenced by Etienne Gilson, the distinguished medieval scholar and academic expert in ethics and Catholic social teaching, and Jaques Maritain. During this period he converted to Catholicism and, right to the end of his life, pursued an active interest in Catholic social teaching and its potential influence on public policy and business life, and always founded on the principles of Thomas Aquinas inherited from his two mentors.

He returned to England in 1947 and after the death of his father took over the senior executive of the family business Hellasco & Associated Companies, a medium group in textiles, with affiliated units in several European and East-Asian countries. This task occupied most of his working life until the business was taken over in the 1990s. Besides running the business and travelling frequently to the Far East, he continued with philosophy and theology studies.

Peter Askonas was introduced to Heythrop College by Fr Peter Hackett, SJ in 1991 and taught courses there from 1991 to 1998 on Theology of Society and Citizenship and initiated series of Inter-collegiate Colloquia in this area. He was elected into the College's Fellowship in 2001.

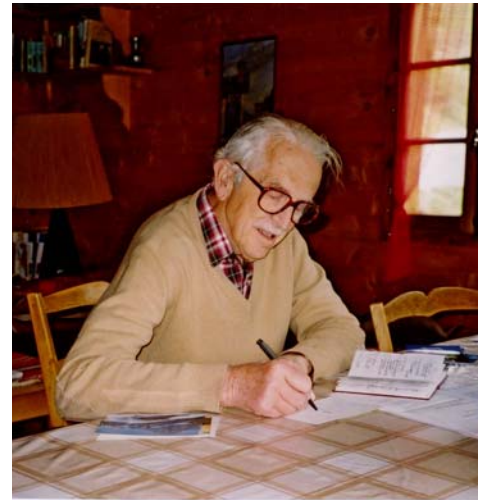
In the 1980s he cooperated with the Rev. Frank McHugh in setting up at St. John's Seminary, Womersley, in Surrey, the Christian Social Ethics Research Unit, which undertook research in Catholic social thought and public policy, with particular interest in finance ethics. This led to a number of joint publications on debt, morals and money. In 1990 this work moved to the Von Hügel Institute at St. Edmund's College, Cambridge.

Peter Askonas organised conferences and seminars all over the country, and was instrumental in initiating discussion groups among the laity in the Catholic Church. A book very close to his heart, which he co-edited with Professor Stephen F. Frowen and contributed to, was *Welfare and Values: challenging the culture of unconcern (1997)*. It was a follow-up of a conference held at St. George's House, Windsor Castle, in 1991 and deals with the ever-growing gap between escalating costs of welfare to meet a wide range of social needs and available resources.

A further book entitled *Social Inclusion: possibilities and tension* followed in 2000. Co-edited with Angus Stewart, it examines against the background of globalisation, risk and cultural pluralism the problem of social exclusion and its possible remedies.

Peter Askonas had many interests and passions. His great love was the mountains, and he conquered many of the 4,000m peaks in the Alps. He was a member of the Swiss Alpine Club, section Zermatt, for 50 years.

He was also a music lover and connoisseur and was close friends with the singers Hans Hotter, Sena Jurinac, Hermann Prey and others, whom he knew through his sister Lies Askonas, the impresario and founder in 1955 of the Lies Askonas agency, now Askonas Holt.



First published in The Independent

Stephen Frowen

Peter Askonas, businessman and ethicist: born Vienna 1 November 1919; Lecturer, Heythrop College, London University 1991-1998, Fellow December 2001; married 1981 Countess Sylvia Des Fours (one stepson); died Epsom, Surrey 8 January 2007.

Elizabeth Lord, SUSC

Elizabeth Lord, a sister of La Sainte Union, who began her career at Heythrop as a lowly Master's (MTh) student in 1975 and ended as a Fellow of the College appointed in 2000, died suddenly but not entirely unexpectedly of a heart attack at the end of November 2006. She was by then living in the residential home of Nazareth House in Hammersmith, dogged by increasing physical disabilities.

Her spirit was that of the Fen Country, of clear vistas of land and sky on the edge of which she was born. Cambridge became her home. She only met the Jesuits when she was nearly 50. Her rapid academic course through Heythrop, including a PhD (1982) on Yves Congar the great Dominican ecclesiologist, and appointment to the teaching staff as lecturer in theology (1983), was not surprising seeing that she had already had two previous

energetic and responsible careers in education within her own Congregation.

For 10 years she had been Head of the Convent High school in Southampton, the youngest head of an Independent Girls School in England at the time. This was followed by 10 years as lecturer, hostel warden, senior lecturer and Head of Department of Religious Studies in the long-established LSU College of Education on the same campus. It was then, when Vatican II was beginning to make an impact, and when Heythrop was moving to London University, that Elizabeth asked to do further study in a College within the Catholic tradition but in the main stream of British academic life.

Her rapport with her students throughout was remarkable, due to her own clarity of mind, enthusiasm and wit. But it was the inspiring theme of grace ever-present in the human which was the driving force of her theology and her life as a lecturer.

May she rest in peace.

Joseph Laishley SJ



Note

A Memorial Mass for Elizabeth Lord will take place at Farm Street Church, London W1K 3AH on Saturday 17 March at 12.00noon

Copy Date: 1st June 2007