

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

REDISCOVERING CATHOLICISM

The False Gospel of Atheists

Cameron Thompson

New billboards have popped up in two locations in the Twin Cities. The message: the saving power of atheism. They read, "Please don't indoctrinate me with religion. Teach me to think for myself," and "We are all born without belief in gods. Learn how to be a born-again atheist." this is missionary atheist evangelization loud and clear.

Did I just say atheist evangelization? Yes I did. These billboards proclaim the "gospel" of atheism. By 'gospel' I mean a proclamation that announces liberation to a world held captive in the darkness of evil & ignorance. Great, so the atheists agree with the Church that there is a problem with humanity; we just differ on the solution.

As to the content of the messages: The Church does teach you to think for yourself. She recognizes that we were created to use both faith and reason to arrive at Truth. To try to use one without the other is bound to keep you in the clutches of ignorance. Are we really born without belief in gods and so should become born again atheists? Sure! If by atheist you mean not believing in (let alone worshipping) some petty deity or fairytale grandfather in the sky who just does things for you and makes you feel good Catholics neither believe in, nor worship, such a thing. Our God is not a thing – He is bigger than "thing-ness." He is not a sort of being, He is Being itself. Everything else that exists only does so because it participates in His existence. *Cont'd on the next page*



Feedback and Free Coffee

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A Catholic in the Walker Art Gallery

Allison Hendrickson

"Where is all the *art*?" I turned to the angry man who directed this question at me, my mouth slightly agape, momentarily, speechless. We were standing in the middle of an art museum. "The *art*. Where is it?"

I work at the Walker Art Center. I am used to a certain degree of frustration and head shaking as people confront the Walker's collection. Contemporary art isn't easy. The meaning of each work isn't always obvious—if there is a meaning, which sometimes there isn't. Often, there is controversy, either through the subject matter or the medium used in the work. I used to be in the camp that looked at the Walker and thought, "I must be missing something, because I don't see it."

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"Will You be my Valentine?": What Real Love is All About

Kari Elsen

"Love, to be real, must cost—it must hurt—it must empty us of self." Bl. Mother Theresa

In my office, I have this Blessed Mother Theresa quote taped to the wall behind my. If this quote had eyes, it would stare at me every day; however, I wouldn't say that I stare at this quote every day. Sometimes, I glance up to see if this quote is still looking at me, and quickly look away, hoping it didn't notice. This quote isn't a "make me feel good, I'm having a bad day" quote, it's a quote that makes me scratch my head and think—actually sometimes it's a huge slap in the face, reminding me what I'm *not* doing. At first glance, this quote has the ability to agitate you, or even make you a little defensive. We also know that Blessed Mother Theresa didn't have a tendency to sugar-coat things, and I think she would have wanted me to share her words with you as well. Considering this is the month of "love and romance," let's look at love from an angle that is often forgotten.

Love is "what can I do for you?" not "what are you doing for me?" We applaud President Kennedy when he addressed Americans in 1961 with this same mentality regarding our country, however when we are asked to sacrifice our own happiness for our relationships and for those that we love, all of a sudden it becomes really personal, and somewhat uncomfortable. In his Letter to the Ephesians (chapter 5, verse 25), Saint Paul asks husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the Church. It's a mistake to breeze past that paragraph. Just like Blessed Mother Theresa's example of emptying one's self for love, Saint Paul suggests that husbands should do the same—Christ died for His beloved Church. I don't know what empties us more of selfishness, other than laying your life down for someone. Let us not forget, Ladies, Saint Paul also asks wives to submit themselves to their husbands as they would to the Lord. This doesn't mean you are controlled, but instead directs you to love with a servant's heart; again, something Jesus did for us. He is the perfect example of love because He *is* love.

Because of all these things, I keep that quote taped to my wall. It reminds me that love is not chocolates, flowers or even a diamond ring. It's not a feeling. It's the willingness to put another before you . . . that is romance.

Turning our Gaze in the Right Direction

Terence Sweeney

I suppose most religions have their oddities. Catholics certainly have theirs, like giving up fish on Fridays, carrying a string of beads around, or asking St Anthony for help when we lose something. One particularly strange thing Catholics do is staring at a small piece of bread for hours. Every day in the Twin Cities and beyond people gather in small chapels or churches to look at what appears to be a round piece of unleavened flour. In fact, chapels are set aside to do this 24 hours a day. So when I am leaving Bryant Lake Bowl at 2 am, there are people not too far away, gazing at . . . what exactly?

Well, I am being a little coy here; it is not just some piece of bread. In fact it is not bread at all. I am not going to get into Eucharistic theology but basically, it is Jesus. Body, blood, soul, divinity. Some of you may have learned this in CCD and it is all true. Don't ask me to prove it. I can't and why should I? That would be like a man proving the woman he loves is beautiful; she is and trying to prove it takes something away from her beauty.

So, why stare at the Eucharist? Sunday mass at the Basilica makes sense, but why hang out in Nativity with the Eucharist? Why not just go to the Groveland Tap for a Surly (you can do both, it is just a matter of getting the order right)? I think T. S. Eliot got it right; part of the mission of the saint is to "apprehend the intersection of the timeless / with time." That seems like pretty heady stuff but isn't that what we are all looking for? We live in this world but we are looking for something more, something that transcends, a way to meet the timeless (God) in time (the chapel).

Maybe Simone Weil had it right, she explains "sin is not distance; it is a turning of our gaze in the wrong direction." I go to adoration to start looking in the right direction, to look upon the God who is Love, to see my King who humbled Himself even to the point of being as small as bread, and to learn how my neighbor as Jesus loves all of us. I think there is one last reason I go to Eucharist adoration. It has to do with love. When I fall in love, I cannot help but look at the woman I love. Adoration is the time to look at *our* Beloved. As John Vianney said of adoration, "I look at Him; and He looks at me." So try it out, give Him a look, and fall in love. You can get a Surly afterwards.

Website with Adoration Times and Locations in the state of Minnesota: <http://www.therealpresence.org/states/minn2.htm>

Cont'd from **The False Gospel of Atheists**

We agree with atheists that humanity is captive to evil and ignorance. This is the gospel that the Church proclaims: God became man (Jesus) to conquer evil and ignorance, and advance the kingdom of love by allowing humankind to share in his Divinity. That man and woman can be "born again" (the sacred rite of baptism) to be made sons and daughters of God, is the fullest human dignity possible.

Actually, there is nothing "born-again" about atheism at all. Atheism is the narrowing of the universe to fit into a narrow mind. Atheists think all that exists is less than what can be conceived in the human mind. They only acknowledge what fallible human sense organs tell them; this is the darkness of ignorance. Catholicism recognizes that there are more things in heaven and on earth than can be dreamed of in our minds. Freedom from evil and ignorance comes from the liberating power of God. Christ's mission on Earth was to be teacher and Savior. This is real enlightenment. This is real healing for a wounded humanity.



Cont'd from **A Catholic at the Walker**

The "it" that I refer to is that kernel of truth we hope to find in art. Consider any number of classical paintings and sculpture—works that have drawn people in for centuries. They persist not only because of the artist's skill, but also because they help turn our hearts and minds to God. In doing so, these great works proclaim a theological aesthetic—a message through the medium of art that is good, true, and beautiful. Must the theological aesthetic of the work be so obvious as to contain a Biblical or religious story? Must the work portray only people or nature? Does it have to be displayed in large print for all to see and none to dispute?

I spend every day in the Walker galleries. I must confront the works of art placed before me and, with time, many pieces have affected me deeply. If modern art's most basic fault is that it requires time and attention, then I understand why the man was angry. He wanted something that he could understand quickly. Yet that which is good, true, and beautiful is rarely quick and easy.

This became plain to me on the day I found a woman weeping in that same gallery the angry man dismissed. She told me she spent her days tending to her son, severely injured in an assault. She looked around the gallery and said, "Today is the first day in months where I feel like I can breathe. All this beauty is overwhelming me."

Contemporary art achieves a beauty when the viewer approaches with a willing receptivity. Much like in our relationship with God, receptivity takes time to develop. We can seek truth and beauty and goodness our whole lives, but if we only look in the same place again and again, how much are we missing?