

this mother earth." You've heard of "sexism" and "heterosexism"; well, Balasuriya speaks of the evil of "religionism," which he describes as "the claim of the church...to be able to mediate...salvation even after death," which is "an area which religion as an organized community cannot reach...."

Not surprisingly, he also embraces religious relativism, according to which no faith has a unique claim to truth. He has failed to explicitly acknowledge the divine sonship of Jesus. In other words, Jesus is on the same level as Buddha, Mohammed, Moses, or — presumably — Zeus. And in the words of the Vatican's *Notification*, Balasuriya "does not

recognize the supernatural, unique and irrepeatable character of the revelation of Jesus Christ...."

Balasuriya no longer believes in Catholicism. Many factors have gone into the Church's decision to excommunicate him. His supporters may defend his theology, but it is not the Church's theology. When someone doesn't believe even the most basic of the Church's doctrines, how can it be wrong to excommunicate that person?

Balasuriya's excommunication could be lifted if he changes his mind and professes the Catholic faith. Unfortunately, as of this writing it appears unlikely that he will do so. ■

EMERALD ISLE, EMBROWNED

vol 64 n. 3

THOMAS STORCK

CAN IRELAND BE SAVED?

Recently I sat in the bar of the Montrose Hotel in south Dublin, drinking Guinness and talking with Richard Greene, elected member of the Dublin County Council, and founder and leader of Ireland's newest political party, Muintir na hEireann, which means the People of Ireland.

I suspect that readers of NEW OXFORD REVIEW will be as excited as I was on seeing the statement of the party's principles and policies, which include the following:

Muintir na hEireann is a new political party representing Christian values, and not the hedonistic, materialistic and atheistic values of a secular society.

As a Nation, we have forgotten that the

purpose of life is the perfection of the Soul, and not the pursuit of power, pleasure and wealth....

The fact that there is a desire for...[legal] abortion and divorce shows that we have failed, in our educational system, to develop the human heart to love, to give, to care and to worship. The power of love has diminished rather than been enhanced in today's world, so that we no longer search for what is truly noble, beautiful and good.

The following points are taken from a more detailed statement of the party's aims:

2. To seek to protect the cultural heritage, language and religious traditions of the Irish people.

5. Muintir na hEireann supports small locally based industries and...greater use of our national resources such as our fisheries, forests, and agriculture in order to revitalise our country towns. We would intend that

Thomas Storck, *who is of German and English ancestry, is a librarian in Washington, D.C., and a Contributing Editor of the NOR.*

our policy would consolidate people on the land and encourage agriculture based industries in Ireland.

8. Muintir na hEireann has a modern environmental policy, which will include...the recycling of waste....

9. Muintir na hEireann respects human life from conception to natural death.

When I read this, and saw that the party is Catholic, prolife, agrarian, and environmentalist, I thought I had died and gone to Heaven. Well, at least to Ireland. So since I was already planning a trip there, I resolved to meet Richard Greene and discuss the Irish political and social situation with him. Thus it came about that we found ourselves sitting in a quiet corner in the hotel bar. Our conversation was wide-ranging and fast-moving.

Greene explained to me a bit of his background. He had been expelled from the Fianna Fail party, one of Ireland's two major political parties, for his profamily activities, and then was an independent for a time. After that he was a member of the Green party, and was first elected to the Dublin County Council as a Green in 1991. But although very much in sympathy with the Greens' environmental agenda, he could not approve of their growing opposition to the Christian family and Christian civilization, so he resigned from the Greens, and in 1994 founded Muintir na hEireann.

My first question concerned the matter of the necessary cultural, social, and religious support that a Christian political party needs. That is, it would be difficult in a materialistic culture to have Christian politics, because hardly anyone would support such efforts. If the culture thinks only or mainly of how to garner more material goods, political parties will promise to deliver more such goods to the electorate and present competing schemes on how to do it. This is what our Democratic and Republican parties do here in America. One remembers Clinton's "It's the economy, stupid!" and Reagan's question to the voters in 1980, "Are you better off than four years ago?" meaning: Are you better off economically? If the culture is not concerned with God and the things of God, then the voters will not support real Christian political activity.

Greene acknowledged that this is more or less true. He said that cultural and social decline in Ire-

land has accelerated in the last five years. No longer is there a real difference between the cultural world inhabited by young people in the west (the most traditional part) of Ireland and that inhabited by their contemporaries in the United States. Television is largely responsible for this. The Church is weak, and is not making an effective response to the crisis. Indeed, some priests are engaged in making things worse.

The unique role of television in undermining traditional societies needs to be both better understood and more widely known. Prof. John Murphy of University College, Cork, who is certainly not a traditional Catholic, wrote in his *Ireland in the Twentieth Century* that the Irish government was

reluctantly compelled to make a decision in 1960 to set up Telefis Eireann (Irish Television) to defend a crumbling Irish cultural distinctiveness against the growing popularity of British television in Dublin and along the east coast. The reluctance sprang partly from doubts about the economic feasibility of the project but also perhaps from a presentiment that such a service would have incalculable political and cultural consequences on Irish life and attitudes.

I suppose that no one back then had suggested the other obvious remedy, that is, to outlaw television sets so that no one could tune in to the BBC!

Greene also commented on other aspects of Irish society. Sexual morality has been under particular attack. *Playboy* magazine had been banned until a few years ago, but after it was allowed in, many other even worse publications followed. Dublin has become a homosexual holiday resort, the age of consent for homosexual activity has been lowered to 17 years, and open homosexuals are allowed in the Irish army.

I asked him about the new President of Ireland, Mary Robinson. Before her election, Robinson had worked for contraception, abortion, and the legitimization of homosexual conduct. She was, said Greene, the "biggest coup" the opponents of Catholic Ireland have pulled off — and a "watershed." Within a year of her election, homosexual activity was decriminalized. There has been an incredible promotion of Robinson by the media, Green said, and he called her the "media's President."

Greene had several interesting comments on the divorce referendum of the fall of 1995, which removed the prohibition of divorce from the Irish constitution. The election had been extremely close; only a few thousand votes determined the outcome. He said that the government's support of the pro-divorce position was an important factor, as well as the weather on the day of the referendum, which had been good in the Dublin area but bad in the west. But he pointed out that, during the centuries of English persecution, the Irish people had braved any sort of weather to attend Mass in the open air, but now many would not even travel by car to enter a building and cast a vote to save the institution of marriage in their country.

Although the government's active support of the prodivorce position had been ruled illegal by the courts a few weeks before the election date, the Irish Supreme Court later refused to invalidate the referendum results, despite the likelihood that without that support the vote would have been negative.

The current Irish constitution, which was adopted in 1937, is a notable Christian document. It begins thus:

In the Name of the Most Holy Trinity,
from Whom is all authority and to Whom,
as our final end, all actions both of men and
States must be referred,

We, the people of Eire, humbly acknowledge all our obligations to our Divine Lord Jesus Christ...do hereby adopt, and give to ourselves this Constitution.

Later articles include the following:

Article 6. All powers of government, legislative, executive and judicial, derive, under God, from the people....

Article 41. The State recognizes the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law.

In particular, the State recognizes that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

The State shall, therefore, endeavour

to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labor to the neglect of their duties in the home.

The State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded, and to protect it against attack.

Article 42. The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.

Parents shall be free to provide this education in their homes....

Article 44. The State acknowledges that the homage of public worship is due to Almighty God. It shall hold His Name in reverence, and shall respect and honour religion.

Article 45. The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the whole people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice and charity shall inform all the institutions of the national life.

The State shall, in particular, direct its policy toward securing....

That the ownership and control of the material resources of the community may be so distributed amongst private individuals and the various classes as best to subserve

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the common good.

That, especially, the operation of free competition shall not be allowed so to develop as to result in the concentration of the ownership or control of essential commodities in a few individuals to the common detriment.

That there may be established on the land in economic security as many families as in the circumstances shall be practicable.

I have long thought that this was a splendid constitution, one which should appeal more to Catholics than the U.S. constitution. When I asked Greene about the Irish constitution's role in current issues, he replied that there is a movement to write a new constitution, but in the meantime, judges and politicians are simply ignoring the present one.

In light of the decaying religious and cultural situation in Ireland, what is the strategy of Muintir na hEireann? Does it hope to capture the majority in the Dail, the lower house of the Irish parliament? No. It has a different plan: Greene said that until the Green party elected one or two members to the Dail, neither of the major Irish parties, Fianna Fail or Fine Gael, had shown any interest in environmentalism. But after that, for fear of losing votes to the Greens, they both suddenly developed an interest in preserving the environment. He is hoping for a similar development with Muintir na hEireann. He is planning to stand for the Dail at the next general election, and he hopes that if his party can get one or two members in parliament, then the major parties will pick up the profamily agenda of Muintir na hEireann, purely out of fear of losing voter support.

This may be the only tactic for profamily forces in Ireland, at least the only tactic with any hope of immediate political success. I have, however, two misgivings about it. The first is simply a question of whether the major parties would indeed adopt any of Muintir na hEireann's agenda, the way they did with the Greens' platform. The political elite in Ireland, as in all or most Western countries, is almost entirely secularist. There is nothing in environmentalism which any secularist need have any troubles of conscience with. But it is not the same with policies promoting a traditional Catholic way of life. Secularists commonly hate any vestiges of Christian civilization. Though it is true that secularist politicians can sometimes be brought by the fear of los-

ing elections to adopt profamily positions, as President Clinton sometimes does or at least pretends to do, one can wonder whether there is really any hope for success in this way. Although Clinton sometimes makes noises on behalf of profamily positions, he has done little or nothing to enact any into law. Given how easy it is to fool voters in our age of mass media, I can well imagine the major Irish parties *seemingly* to adopt Muintir na hEireann's policies, but in reality continuing to further the destruction of the Christian family and Irish Catholic life.

The second reason I question Muintir na hEireann's strategy is that it seems similar to the house built on sand that our Lord warned us about in the Gospels. Even if real profamily laws were passed simply out of fear of losing votes, can good laws stand without a good culture? Although, as Aristotle pointed out, law is a teacher, and thus *Roe v. Wade* is responsible not only for the death of millions, but for corrupting the thinking of many more millions, this Supreme Court decree came in the context of a culture that was already hedonistic and utterly confused in its thinking about life and death, right and wrong. In other words, *Roe v. Wade* helped strengthen the incipient culture of death that was already present and growing. In Ireland, what forces are trying to turn things around at either the cultural or religious levels? Is there an Irish NEW OXFORD REVIEW, for example? Irishmen need to be shown that the Catholic faith is exciting and attractive. Only in this way can a Catholic politics be built not on sand but on a rock, so that winds, rain, and storm cannot destroy it.

My first visit to Ireland was in 1983, and I have been back there three times since. Right away I liked Ireland for many reasons, but I had one reaction that surprised me. For many years I have felt an alienation from American culture, not just from its excesses and obvious flaws, but from the very notion of a contrived Enlightenment Republic which aims to create the New Man in the New Order of the Ages. One of my friends remarked that I am able to accept a greater degree of alienation than most people are, and I guess in a way I've been proud of that fact. But in Ireland I felt able to let my guard down and accept and identify even with indifferent aspects of the culture, because I saw them as parts of a fundamentally healthy whole. What came as a surprise for me was that my ability to do this lifted a psychological

strain I had previously hardly noticed because it was always present. I felt at ease and I liked it. Being alienated was not really a condition I enjoyed. But unfortunately, although I continue to love Ireland, on each subsequent trip I have felt less of this ease and more of the strain that comes with conscious and subconscious alienation. On this last trip I felt much as I do here in the States — that the culture is the enemy of Catholic life and I am a stranger in it. I hope that Muintir na hEireann can succeed in its political strategy. I hope even more that others will come

forward to aid that party on other fronts, particularly on the cultural, intellectual, and religious fronts. I urge readers to join in frequent prayer for Ireland, for perhaps then God will raise up those needed for the fight, and Ireland will once again be saved for the Faith.

(Readers wishing to contact Muintir na hEireann should write Cllr. Richard Greene, 58 The Palms, Roebuck Road, Dundrum, Dublin 14, Ireland. The party's Internet website address is: <http://aoife.indigo.ie/~muintir/>) ■

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Vol. 64 n. 3