Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

In his concluding reflections, 'Remembrance of Things Past Sociological Ken', to the recent issue of *New Blackfriars* devoted to consideration of his work, *The Enchantment of Sociology*, Dr Kieran Flanagan made a remark about the Faculty of Divinity at Cambridge which was (unwittingly, I am sure) so seriously misleading as to call for comment.

According to Flanagan, 'English Catholicism has no access to the academic culture that coins such strange ideas from the disparate studies of gender in the secular university' (p. 150). In illustration of this predicament, he offered: 'Thus, Cambridge University has a Centre for Advanced Religious and Theological Studies where a range of issues are given price tags, so that Gender and Religion as a topic is deemed worth raising £250,000 for research. But conspicuous by its absence is any reference to Catholic studies'. (I shall return to 'price tags' later on.)

Greatly to simplify matters, I suggest that 'studies' may be 'Catholic' in several ways, two of which we might label the 'formal' and 'material' mode. Where the formal mode is concerned, the disinterested observer might suppose that a Faculty of theology a quarter of whose teaching officers were Catholics would be one the academic practices of which were shaped, in part, by the ethos or 'spirituality' of Catholicism. The disinterested observer would, in my opinion, be correct. (Nor would it be my opinion alone: one of my Protestant colleagues recently joked that we were on the way to being the best department of Catholic theology in the English-speaking world.)

Without (so far as I know) any first-hand experience of what goes on in the Cambridge Faculty, Flanagan simply assumes that, 'within a secular university', 'issues of faith and spirituality are precluded in terms of practice and accountability'. I can assure him that I and my Catholic colleagues take both our faith and our responsibilities to the Catholic Church very seriously indeed. There are other patterns of accountability than merely juridical ones.

Where the material mode of Catholic studies is concerned, I might mention, by way of random illustration, that I give an annual course of lectures on certain texts of Thomas Aquinas and Karl Rahner, that for many years I gave a course on 'Modern Roman Catholic theology', that Eamon Duffy offers a course on the history of the papacy, and so on, and so on. (To say nothing of the benefit to Catholic studies which will undoubtedly accrue from the imminent publication, dear Editor, of your Stanton Lectures!)

In a word: we need endowment to support research in Gender and Religion because we lack expertise in a new and rapidly developing field.

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We do not need money to undertake research in 'Catholic studies' because such work is already woven into the warp and woof of our activity.

And so to 'price tags'. Dr Flanagan tells us that 'The evaluation of ideas is increasingly ... subjected to monetary value and this has an unfortunate effect of confusing the significant with the insignificant'. How true.

He has been invited to take part in a seminar at Duke University in June 1997. He supposes this to be because Duke is 'puzzled' by the 'absence of Catholic studies within the secular academy in the U.S.A'. I think not. Duke has recently been offered a very considerable benefaction to establish a post or posts in 'Roman Catholic Studies' in their Department of Religion. As someone who has been engaged in conversation with them about this for well over a year, and who recently visited the university to discuss the matter, I can assure Dr Flanagan that the convening of this seminar is simply evidence of the care and prudence with which the Department of Religion at Duke are making the decision as to how best to spend the money. It is, I fear, 'price tags' which will take Dr Flanagan to North Carolina in June.

Yours sincerely,

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Reviews

DEADLY INNOCENCE: FEMINISM AND THE MYTHOLOGY OF SIN, by Angela West, *Mowbray*, 1995, 218 pp.

Essentially this book is an attack on the radical feminists. But it differs from other critiques in its biographical nature: the story of one woman's experience from *within* the feminist community, of their struggles against nuclear weapons at Greenham Common in the 1980s, and the effect this process had on her own understanding of feminism.

The radical feminists have argued that a grave miscarriage of justice has taken place against women. In the person of Eve, they claim that women have taken the blame for our fallen condition. Men have framed them. Women are the perfect scapegoat. And of course the men knew they could take it. The radical feminist analyses of Mary Daly and Daphne Hampson set forth their alternative: it was men and not women who are the archetypal sinners. *They* violated the purity of relations by introducing

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