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The Humanist Chance in Ulster

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The *Sun* is an accurate newspaper-sometimes. Its headline writer was, for instance, accurate on 10 last November when composing a caption for that story about how the Pope ordered three Catholic judges to rush through the dissolution of the two-year marriage of Princess Caroline Monaco. The caption read: "Pope orders a Quickie Divorce for Caroline".

Underneath, the story wrung our hearts by reciting the Pope's reason for this unseemly haste: compassion for Caroline's dead mother Princess Grace. "It is believed" said the report "to be the first time John Paul-who strongly condemns divorce-has acted to hurry along an annulment".

The death of truth is always sad-and John Paul seems a nice guy. If you strongly condemn divorce but, as supreme pontiff, wish to facilitate it-easy, call it something else. When the parties are royal, and can pay (or even if they are not royal, and can pay) call divorce, which is forbidden, by another name. It doesn't matter if the other name really means something quite different. That something different may help put the deception across if it arouses sympathy. Genuine annulment is for inadequates who never succeeded in getting themselves married in the first place.

What, it may be asked, has this to do with Ulster? Well, what has anything to do with Ulster? But there is a connection. God, *ex hypothesi*, is perfect. If in any respect He is found to be not perfect then, *ex hypothesi*, He is not God. This business of Princess Caroline's "annulment" illustrates yet again that if God exists at all He is not the God worshipped by Pope John Paul. Nor, he may plausibly suppose, is He the God worshipped by the Rev Ian Paisley.

We see that the Ulster problem is not about true religion. It is about a group of people who elect to don the apparel of one type of pseudo-religion and then declare war on a group who elect to don the apparel of another type. It is a matter of the apparel, one kind green and the other orange. No more concerned with religious truth than if it were openly a quarrel about the clothes people choose to put on.

Now you can climb out of a suit easily enough, and drop into one of another colour. What is the humanist colour? Humanists are too sensible to have a colour, but let's suppose it were *magenta*. Suppose further that, in their thousands, *the people of Ulster started climbing into magenta suits*. . .

Postscript

The above was written before the appearance of Bob Humphries' article, "*Another Voice from Ulster*" (November). It is good to learn from him that the Belfast Humanist Group has re-formed. The final words of his article surely state a profound truth. The only end to sectarian bigotry and strife in Ulster is for both sides to drop the demonstrably false beliefs they are warring over and remember their common humanity.