



Faith

Promoting a new synthesis of faith and reason

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The Need for Renewed Teaching

The dialogue initiating the Incarnation has a liturgical quality. The greatest event in human history began with a spoken word, opening a dialogue with Mary, who went on to listen and to make a verbal response.

There is something here of a nuptial imagery, an invitation and a response... and this goes right back to the Old Covenant and God speaking to Israel.

And the Word was made flesh, and came to dwell among us, under the beating heart of the young woman who made that response.

The Word continues to be made flesh on the altars of our churches. It is a voice, speaking the words of Christ, that brings Christ into our presence in the Eucharistic sacrifice. And we make a response. The Mass is not silent. It is a dialogue – word and response. It is a sacrifice, the ancient Temple rites renewed. It is God in dialogue with his people, Christ uniting with his Bride, the Church.

God's dialogue with his creatures was and is central to his plan for our salvation.

In the Old Covenant, he spoke again and again to his Chosen People. Sometimes they responded well, sometimes not. Mary, the Maid of Israel, made the complete and perfect response, at the point where the Old and the New Testaments met. "Be it unto me according to your Word."

Nuptial meaning

St John Paul spoke of the "nuptial meaning" of the Eucharist. There is much to ponder

in that. A marriage involves words – solemn vows exchanged – and then these words are lived out in the flesh, bringing new life into time and eternity. Without the words, it is not a valid marriage – without the coming together, it is not valid either.

Liturgy fuses word and action: "He took bread." Christ really did take bread in his hands, and then spoke over it, with those present hearing it: "*Do this...*" Word and deed – we are not a "religion of the Book" but God's holy people, who belong to him and listen to his voice and do what he asks us to do.

St Francis of Assisi probably *didn't* say "Preach always – and, sometimes, use words." He certainly encouraged his Friars to speak, and to preach – and to call people to repentance. The priests among them were also to make themselves available as confessors. Again, the use of human speech – again a dialogue, to state sins and to speak the words of absolution.

A while back, a Bishop of a busy diocese visiting Rome for a conference, was asked by some colleagues if he intended to stay on for a further day or two but responded "No I must get back to my wife" – meaning his diocese. The Bishop was Jorge Bergoglio of Buenos Aires – now Pope Francis – and his answer offered insight into the Church's authentic understanding of episcopacy, and the nuptial message that is written into the life of the Church.

Male priesthood

As Pope, Francis has had to deal with the question that – even though it is a settled matter – continues to be asked: “Why can’t women be priests, or at least deacons?” He has reaffirmed the male-only priesthood and done so with some emphasis. But he needs support. He has emphasised “On the ordination of women in the Catholic Church, the final word is clear, it was said by St. John Paul II and this remains.” Earlier this year he affirmed the authentic teaching about the threefold ordained ministry of bishop, priest and deacon, emphasising, for example that being a lector is something quite different and “fundamentally distinct from the ordained ministry that is received through the Sacrament of Holy Orders.”

Pope Francis rightly sees the confusion about priesthood as being part of a wider confusion over the whole question of sexual identity.

He rightly sees the confusion about priesthood as being part of a wider confusion over the whole question of sexual identity. He has spoken out with some passion against the “gender ideology” that seeks to claim there are no differences between men and women, calling it “demonic.” In *Amoris Laetitia* he emphasised: “The

young need to be helped to accept their own body as it was created... Sex education should help young people to accept their own bodies.”

Responsum from the CDF

And then there is the question of the present Western preoccupation with same-sex marriage. Thank God – we mean that literally – for the new *Responsum*, with the full authority of the Pope, from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which gives a clear Negative to the question of the Church ever blessing such unions.

“It is not licit to impart a blessing on relationships, or partnerships, even stable, that involve sexual activity outside of marriage (i.e., outside the indissoluble union of a man and a woman open in itself to the transmission of life), as is the case of the unions between persons of the same sex. The presence in such relationships of positive elements, which are in themselves to be valued and appreciated, cannot justify these relationships and render them legitimate objects of an ecclesial blessing, since the positive elements exist within the context of a union not ordered to the Creator’s plan.”

“Furthermore, since blessings on persons are in relationship with the sacraments, the blessing of homosexual unions cannot be considered licit. This is because they would constitute a certain imitation or analogue of the nuptial blessing invoked on the man and woman united in the sacrament of Matrimony, while in fact ‘there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar, or even remotely analogous, to God’s plan for marriage and family’.”



That last statement is a quote from *Amoris Laetitia* 25. The *Responsum* specifically footnotes Genesis: "In fact, the nuptial blessing refers back to the creation account, in which God's blessing on man and woman is related to their fruitful union (cf. Gen 1:28) and their complementarity (cf. Gen 2:18-24)."

Full significance

With the current confusion about human identity in Western culture – "are men and women different?" "Can we 'transition' from one sex to another?" and so on - there is an urgent need to teach the truth about human beings. Archbishop Karol Wojtyla prophetically at the Second Vatican Council described modern man as "a puzzle to himself and others", and later, as Pope John Paul II, devoted much of his pontificate to helping untie the knots in that puzzle. We are male and female, and that has been God's plan from the beginning.

We have not grasped the full significance of this. We are a sign – and are reminded of this at every wedding service – of Christ and his Church. And the fullness of this needs

St John Paul's *Theology of the Body* pointed the way, but authentic development of doctrine requires that others take up the subject too.

to be taught: Bridegroom and Bride - a male priesthood, united to the Church. Every Mass has a nuptial significance.

There is a tension today about whether or not it is morally right

to discuss biological truth if there is a risk that someone might be offended. There is a growing idea that it is important to side-line or downplay facts and to emphasise instead an ideology of "gender" with penalties for those who challenge it. And all of this is against a background of a

deeply wounded Western humanity: many young people have grown up with a mix of parental and semi-parental partners, have experienced the breaking up of their own and their friends' families, have learned the need to buttress themselves against being hurt, and genuinely believe that being challenged in any discussion denies them their sense of worth.



Bridegroom and Bride

All of this points to the need for renewed teaching on this issue of Bridegroom and Bride, male and female. St John Paul's *Theology of the Body* pointed the way, but authentic development of doctrine requires that others take up the subject too. There is a deep truth rooted in us, written into our bodies, as male and female, echoing God's plan from "the beginning". The Faith Movement has long taught this, and thus has a special role to play.

Pope Francis has emphasised that grim damage is being done by the "gender ideology" that seeks to deny the truth that we are created as male and female. He has rightly highlighted the damage this is doing to marriage and to human society. More now needs to be done to expand and explore the Church's response to what he has so rightly deplored. And in tackling this, we will see something more – an authentic development of doctrine, seeing new importance in long-taught truths.

What can we Learn from the Pachamama Incident?

Luiz Ruscillo looks at inculturation possibilities and risks.

Much has already been written and discussed about events that took place at the 2019 Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region, in particular the apparent veneration of wooden statues said to represent the feminine figure of Pachamama, an earth mother (or more literally 'world mother') goddess common to several Andean cultures.

Defenders of what happened argue that although Pachamama was originally the name of a fertility goddess invoked by Quechua and Inca peoples, it has simply become a cultural symbol that stands for the goods of creation, maternity and the sacredness of life without any of the specific pagan religious implications.

On the other hand, critics such as Cardinal Müller could not have been clearer about what was at stake: "... they have no right to introduce pagan or non-Catholic rites into the Church's liturgy ... bringing the idols into the Church was a grave sin, a crime against the divine law" (Interview in *"The World Over"* with Raymond Arroyo, October 24, 2019).

In the context of this article, however, I do not want to rake over the coals of the heated controversy provoked by those incidents, but rather to consider some of the wider questions about evangelisation and inculturation that arise from it.

Not a New Question

These are not really new questions for the Church. They confronted the apostolic generation right from the start. Preaching to the House of Israel was a matter of proclaiming that the longed-for Christ had come, and

showing that all the prophecies were fulfilled in him. But preaching to the Gentiles was an altogether different challenge.

Jesus is indeed "the Light to enlighten the Gentiles", but is the pagan world a realm of utter darkness or are there glimmers of grace and truth which evangelisers can appeal to and amplify? St. Paul famously preached to the Athenians by pointing out an altar to "the unknown god" and quoting a Cretan poet to the effect that "we are all his offspring" (Acts 17:28). The original poem actually referred to the Greek god Zeus, but St. Paul transferred the insight onto the one true Creator in whom "we live and move and have our being".

He then went on to preach the full Gospel of God the Son who became flesh, was crucified for our sins and is now risen bodily from the dead. This stroke of evangelical genius came not only from St. Paul's pastoral skill and missionary zeal, but also from the synthetic power of the cosmic vision of Christ he had received on the road to Damascus. At the same time, however, Paul was always clear that conversion to Christ entailed a clean break, not just from all forms of sin but from any participation in the worship of the old 'gods', no matter whether they be thought of as real (possibly demonic) or as mere mythical fantasies (1 Corinthians 8:1-11).

Historical Examples

In the next generation, St. Justin Martyr thought that classical philosophers who had sought the divine Logos were feeling their way towards the Lord, although he also thought pagan myths were diabolical counterfeits



designed to distract from the truths of revelation (*Apologia Prima*, 1 & 14). Tertullian wrote that there were “naturally Christian souls” (*Apologeticus*, 17.6) among the pagans. And St. Bede records how St. Gregory the Great instructed St. Augustine of Canterbury to convert Anglo-Saxon shrines to Christian usage, although the idols within should be destroyed and the places exorcised and consecrated (*Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 30).

Later still, the Chinese mission of Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) provoked controversy over whether Confucian rites for honouring ancestors were cultural traditions which converts could retain or pagan rituals incompatible with the faith. Clement XI eventually forbade Catholics to follow them, but centuries later Pius XII relaxed that rule as long as they were just seen as civil gestures.

Purification and Transformation

The Church has always, therefore, steered a course between two extremes. On the one hand, we cannot simply view everything outside the Church as diabolical. That would fit with the Calvinist doctrine of the total depravity of fallen human nature, but it is not authentically Catholic. Such a perspective implies that there can be no connection between faith and culture, so the Gospel will always be an add-on or superstructure to the life of a community, instead of being truly redemptive and transformative.

On the other hand, we cannot simply adopt pagan elements unchanged into Catholic culture. That way lies the betrayal of the Gospel through syncretism and idolatry. In a 2019 sermon on the very topic of Pachamama at the Synod, Bishop Voderholzer of Regensburg pointed out that:

“St. Boniface, the apostle of Germany ... did not dance around ... the cult tree of the Germanic world of gods, and he did not embrace it, but he felled it and made a cross out of its wood and built a chapel dedicated to Saint Peter. This is a wonderful image for the implantation of the novelty of the Gospel in continuity and discontinuity with the previous one! ... Without a certain break with the past, the novelty of Christ cannot be won” (St. Emmeram’s Abbey, Regensburg, 31.10.19).

Because of the profound wounding of original sin, cultural traditions must be purified and transformed in order to be adopted into the life of the Church.

St. John Paul II on ‘Mama Pacha’

Understood and implemented correctly, therefore, the concept of “inculturation” does have an authentic meaning. In 1982 St. John Paul II remarked that: “Faith that does not become culture is not

The Church has always, therefore, steered a course between two extremes.



fully accepted, nor entirely reflected upon, or faithfully experienced" (Speech to *Movimento Ecclesiale di Impegno Culturale*, 16 January 1982). And during his 1985 visitation to South America he acknowledged some positive aspects of the local perceptions of "Pachamama":

"The Church, in effect, welcomes the cultures of all peoples. In them there are always the traces and seeds of the Word of God. Thus your ancestors, when paying tribute to the land (Mama Pacha), did nothing but acknowledge the goodness of God and his benefactor presence, which gave them food through the land they cultivated."

But he was also careful to point out that:

"... [while] respecting the culture of your peoples and promoting all that is good... [missionaries and catechists must always]... try to complete it with the light of the Gospel. With this you do not destroy their culture, but you bring it to perfection, as Jesus Christ perfected the ancient law in the Sermon on the Mount, in the well-known paragraphs in which he repeats: 'You have been told before... but I tell you'... Therefore, it is necessary to present to the faithful all the Christian novelty in the doctrinal and moral field" (John Paul II, *Homilies*, 1985).

Neo-pagan and New Age Movements

Some of the positive features of "Pachamama" have already been assimilated into the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially through devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe. But this does not mean that we can carry on invoking the name Pachamama or introduce such images into Catholic devotions and liturgies. Those who promoted this at the Synod may have simply intended

it to evoke a sense of caring for the environment and for indigenous communities who are threatened by global business interests. However, the risk of confusion and scandal is still very great. There is a resurgent and assertively pagan Pachamama cult observed across the Andean and Amazonian region, even with a specific feast day in August (St. Justin Martyr might have suggested that this is a diabolical attempt to subvert and distract from the Feast of The Assumption), which is regarded a sacred month to 'the goddess'.

What is more, the name has also been adopted by an increasingly influential NGO called *The Pachamama Alliance*, whose American founders claim that "... the spirit of Mother Earth, what the indigenous people call Pachamama" summoned them to the region and that this spirit informs their worldwide programs which are aimed at "changing the dream of our society's addiction to consumption and acquisition that is at the root of so many of the global crises facing humanity today". While this is not an ignoble dream, it is also clear that their blend of "indigenous wisdom (and) modern knowledge" translates to fashionable New Age neo-pagan beliefs and pantheistic spirituality. www.pachamama.org

Querida Amazonia: A Welcome Intervention

Without clear magisterial guidance, the authentic sense of inculturation risks being lost in a blur of woolly thinking and erroneous practice. Happily, the 2020 Post-Synodal Exhortation *Querida Amazonia* (QA), without discussing particular events at the synod, does address the key issues raised by it all and aims to reaffirm the balance of orthodox thinking about them. It is an interesting and thought-provoking document, and a welcome one. Nonetheless, we might respectfully suggest some further clarifications and developments which would support the theological foundations of that balance.

Querida Amazonia clearly specifies that all peoples:

"... have a right to hear the Gospel... which proclaims a God who infinitely loves every man and woman and has revealed this love fully in Jesus Christ, crucified for us and risen in our lives" (QA 64).

While also pointing out that:

"It is possible to take up an indigenous symbol in some way, without necessarily considering it as idolatry. A myth charged with spiritual meaning can be used to advantage and not always considered a pagan error" (QA 79).

This must be done, however, in ways that lead people to the fullness rather than obscuring it. For example, we can and should be able to affirm all that is good in human cultures, but without compromising faith in a personal and transcendent God or compromising the first commandment of the decalogue.

"Certainly, we should esteem the indigenous mysticism that sees the interconnection and interdependence of the whole of creation, the mysticism of gratuitousness that loves life as a gift, the mysticism of a sacred wonder before nature and all its forms of life. At the same time, though, we are called to turn this relationship with God present in the cosmos into an increasingly personal relationship with a 'Thou' ..." (QA 73).

A Much-Needed Vision

In Faith Movement we also emphasise the evangelical and catechetical importance of re-vindicating the existence of God from the profound interconnectedness of creation, not merely as a philosophical and academic argument, but as an integral part of presenting the full mystery of God's purpose in Christ — just as it was for St. Paul. It is very welcome

to see that *Querida Amazonia* emphasises this same Christ-centred vision of creation as vital to evangelisation and inculturation:

"... a relationship with Jesus Christ, true God and true man, liberator and redeemer, is not inimical to the markedly cosmic worldview that characterizes the indigenous peoples, since he is also the Risen Lord who permeates all things. In Christian experience, all the creatures of the material universe find their true meaning in the incarnate Word, for the Son of God has incorporated in his person part of the material world, planting in it a seed of definitive transformation. He is present in a glorious and mysterious way in the river, the trees, the fish and the wind, as the Lord who reigns in creation without ever losing his transfigured wounds, while in the Eucharist he takes up the elements of this world and confers on all things the meaning of the paschal gift" (QA 74).

We gladly recognise that there is one coherent purpose of God that is manifested in the dynamic development of the material cosmos which leads to the creation of man, and the revelation of the Word which culminates in the incarnation of the Word and economy of salvation and redemption that flows from him. But we do not accept the widely espoused philosophy and theology of Teilhard de Chardin which subverts this beautiful and much needed vision and so easily chimes with prevalent New Age and modernist errors.

Theological Dangers of Teilhard And Rahner

For Teilhard — and in the presumption of many who have not necessarily read him — matter and spirit are one essential energy, so that the spiritual is immanent within and emergent from the material. The consequent confusion of the transcendent and the immanent means that the whole

evolving cosmos is tending to become 'Christ' or rather a 'Christosphere', of which the person of Jesus is just the fullest expression and manifestation: the 'Omega Point'.

But Jesus Christ is the *Alpha* as well as the Omega. He is the eternal and transcendent Mind of God who encompasses the whole of creation. So rather than saying that Christ is "present in all things", although that is true when understood correctly, it would be clearer to say that all things — even the river and trees — are present in Christ, because it is all made through him and for him; and even the laws of matter from the very outset of creation are framed and aligned upon his coming in the flesh.

We also affirm, along with the great fathers and doctors of the Church, that man is made for union with God in Christ and we have no other end. But we reject the even more pervasive Rahnerian view which suggests that grace is somehow existential within human being and therefore within human consciousness and culture, simply waiting to be realised through explicit proclamation and culturally appropriate celebration. We are made for God alone in Christ, and fulfilled uniquely through him, but that fulness of life and light still comes to us as a transcendent gift of divine charity and mercy, all the more so now that it must be a gift of radical redemption through his death and resurrection.

The Cultural Priority of Salvation History

Evangelisation rightly looks to make connections with existing ideas and traditions, but the Gospel also brings 'good news' that is truly new. It reveals a mystery that fulfils the deepest human longings in a way that is beyond the unaided grasp of the creaturely intellect or imagination, and beyond the hope or expectations of the created spirit. "Christ brought all novelty by bringing himself" (St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, Bk.4 c.34). This is the true meaning of 'the God of surprises'.

When we speak of 'inculturation', therefore, we must be careful not to suggest that there is a simple equality of value between local traditions and the Apostolic Tradition.

When we speak of 'inculturation', therefore, we must be careful not to suggest that there is a simple equality of value between local traditions and the Apostolic Tradition. 'Revelation and 'incarnation' are not generic to all times, places and cultures. Salvation history is specific to a particular timeline and to a particular locus. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity was born of a Virgin in Bethlehem, suffered under Pontius Pilate and rose from the dead in Jerusalem. These facts can be portrayed through many artistic expressions, for he was born for all, but he is not an abstraction in either his divine Person or his sacred humanity. He adopts, redeems and transfigures human nature through the particular historical realities and relationships of his incarnation.

By the same token we must be careful with our understanding of the sacraments. *Querida Amazonia* says that they:

“... unite the divine and the cosmic, grace and creation ... They ‘are a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life’. They are the fulfilment of creation, in which nature is elevated to become a locus and instrument of grace, enabling us “to embrace the world on a different plane” (QA 81).

Again, this is true and welcome, but we must be careful not to imply that the sacraments can simply co-opt any aspect of creation to communicate spiritual gifts. That may be so with ‘sacramentals’ to a certain extent, but the sacraments themselves are also rooted in the specific narrative and events of revelation and salvation history. They cannot be reimagined or reinvented in their essential matter and form according to the perceptions of every human culture. Although the social and familial traditions which surround them can and indeed should take on appropriate local expressions of joyful celebration.

Authentic, Christ-centred Inculturation

Querida Amazonia points out that inculturation is a two-way process (QA 68). In the devotional life, artistic expression, and what might be called folk or familial religion, there is a legitimate diversity and there will inevitably be areas where boundaries between faith and superstition seem a little blurred. *Querida Amazonia* rightly calls for a certain prudent pastoral patience and discernment with these (QA 78).

But when it comes to the sacred liturgy there must be great caution and vigilance. Human culture must learn deeply from and be shaped by the Church’s sacramental liturgy before the liturgy can be appropriate-

ly enhanced with cultural expressions. That organic development which produced the glories of the ancient Catholic liturgical Rites — Latin, Greek, Maronite, Syro-Malabar, Armenian etc. — took shape organically over centuries and with many dangers from heresy. We cannot allow new evangelisation and inculturation to be subverted by today’s heresies.

The Gospel redeems and sanctifies different cultures in much the same way as it does different personalities. Grace builds on nature, but also purifies and transforms it into the likeness of Christ. There is an ever-growing diversity of saints, but the essential characteristics of their faith and their holiness is always the same and always recognisable. Similarly, *Querida Amazonia* says that:

“Everything that the Church has to offer must become incarnate in a distinctive way in each part of the world, so that the Bride of Christ can take on a variety of faces that better manifest the inexhaustible riches of God’s grace” (QA 6).

This is not untrue, but perhaps it would be better to say that the one face of Christ is manifest in the many faces of humanity.

We do need an authentic vision of evangelisation and inculturation which connects the spiritual and the material, the transcendent and the immanent “...at a deeper level... [which can] ...reveal the true beauty of the Gospel, which fully humanizes, integrally dignifies persons and peoples, and brings fulfilment to every heart and the whole of life” (QA 76). At the same time, we cannot allow that urgent need to be subverted by flawed theologies which undermine the essential and unchanging proclamation of Jesus Christ as the unique Way, Truth and Life for all mankind.

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Can we teach Christianity in our State Schools?

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali makes the case for Christianity in the curriculum.

One of the features of our educational system is the near invisibility of Christianity in the syllabi of our State schools. Given its centrality in the recorded history of the nation and its role in the development of our laws, values and, indeed, the language itself, this is most remarkable.

Some attention is given to Europe's classical heritage and this is understandable, but there is scarcely any mention of the fact that much of what is valuable in it - Greek Philosophy or Roman Law, for instance - was mediated through Christian redaction and use - the 'purified Hellenism' of Pope Benedict. Nor do we hear about the evils of classical civilisation, such as cruelty for entertainment, female infanticide or slavery, which were eradicated largely because of Christian influence.



Cultural Marxism?

We could, of course, ask about the reasons for this neglect. Has it to do with the dominance of cultural Marxism, which seeks to undermine (for the sake of the 'Revolution') all 'bourgeois' social institutions, including the Church, in our higher educational and training institutions? Or has it to do with the increasing rejection of cultural norms like lifelong monogamy and family structures which are based on Christianity? Whatever the reasons, we may be reminded of GK Chesterton's dictum that 'Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and not tried'.

Great Issues

We should, of course, learn about the dark side of our history whether that is the exploitation of the poor in this country or slavery abroad. Why, though, can we not also teach what the historian William Lecky called 'the perfectly virtuous pages of our history' and the role of Christianity and of Christians in the promotion of *Magna Carta*, or the campaigns against the slave trade, or the amelioration of the working conditions of men, women and children, or, indeed, the introduction of

Why can we not teach what the historian William Lecky called 'the perfectly virtuous pages of our history' and the role of Christianity and of Christians?

universal education? Without engagement with the wide Christian tradition, how are pupils to engage with the great moral issues of our day, having to do with the integrity and protection of the person from the beginning to the end of life, respect for conscience, the equality of persons (though not necessarily every kind of lifestyle or behaviour), freedom of thought and expression? If all they imbibe is the nihilism of being random and meaningless products of a random and meaningless universe, how will this equip them to be responsible citizens, engaged parents and compassionate human beings?

Teachers

In short, we can say that awareness of the contribution of Christianity bears on almost every subject that is taught and is not limited to 'God-slot' subjects like Religious Education or Collective Worship in

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schools. Coming to these, however, we can note that the recent report of the Commission on Religious Education sponsored by the Religious Education Council notes the sorry state of RE in

schools, with less than half of our schools being judged to be delivering RE effectively. The reasons for this are various: teachers may not feel equipped to teach RE, there may be a dearth of suitable materials, it may be difficult to find a place in the timetable now that RE is not regarded as a 'core' subject, even if its teaching is compulsory. It may also be that some heads and teachers are hostile to the teaching of religion, however objective and diverse such teaching is found to be.

Legal Requirements

It is worthwhile, therefore, to rehearse exactly what the legal requirements are for the teaching of RE and for Collective Worship in schools.

We need to go back to the 1944 Settlement, in which Archbishop William Temple played such a notable part. This provided for the teaching of RE based on Christianity, while not neglecting other religious traditions. The landmark Education Reform Act of 1988 recognised the continuing importance of the 1944 Settlement. It required that RE, in maintained schools that were not denominational, must *'reflect that the Religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.'* Collective Worship, similarly, should be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character and is required daily. Allowance was made, however, for schools where the majority of pupils were from another religious tradition. These could seek a 'determination' which exempted them from the requirement that Collective Worship should be wholly or mainly Christian. Subsequent Education Acts have made similar requirements.



Duty

Where schools with a religious foundation are concerned, they are to provide for RE and Collective Worship in accordance with their trust deeds or the beliefs on which they have been founded. Denominational boards of education have the duty to ensure that RE and Collective Worship is being delivered in accordance with the Law and in consonance with the tenets of the denomination or faith concerned.

Non-religious schools must provide RE according to an agreed syllabus. Every such syllabus must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of other traditions present here. Such syllabi are produced by Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASCs), convened by local authorities for schools in their area. The ASC's are structured in such a way as to give all stakeholders a voice in the agreeing of a syllabus, but Christian churches have a presence which can prevent the agreeing of a syllabus which does not provide for sufficient teaching of Christianity. In addition to these ASCs, there are also the Standing Advisory Councils on RE (or SACRE's) whose task is to advise and support local authorities and schools in delivering on their statutory obligations regarding RE and Collective Worship. It is open for Christians to get involved locally in one or other (or both!) of these bodies and thus play a part in shaping the direction and implementation of RE and Collective Worship in their area.

It is true that the Academies and Free Schools established by the Coalition Government are not bound by the ASCs and the SACREs. However, some of them do follow their advice, because they are required to deliver on RE and Collective Worship like other schools.

Dire Straits

Given such a strong statutory and advisory framework, why are RE and Collective

Worship in such dire straits in many schools and what can be done to address this critical situation?

The recommendation of the Commission on Religious Education that adequate time and resources should be provided for the initial training of teachers and also for continuing professional development is well taken and parents, churches and other bodies should press the Department of Education to make such provision without delay.

Some other recommendations of the report, however, need to be considered more carefully. For instance, the suggested change from RE to 'Religion and World-views' would detract from the study of concrete religious traditions, their devotional practices, values and moral attitudes and concentrate too much on philosophical discussion about the nature of belief, religious or non-religious language and its function etc. In an age where, in most parts of the world, religion is of increasing significance, this would be disastrous in equipping pupils to engage with actual situations in which they may find themselves.

The recommendation, similarly, that the setting of the syllabus should be done centrally would deprive local religious communities of meaningful participation in deciding the contents and balance of what children, in a given area, should be taught. This will negate the good practice of involving local communities in course development and delivery which has developed over many years. The role of the ASCs and SACRE's should rather be developed within a common framework which allows for local variation, as circumstances require.

Religious Belief and Practice

Non-religious worldviews are, no doubt, worthy of study but this should not be confused with RE. Religious belief and practice is not just about ideas but about worship, ritual, celebration, mourning, relationships

and much else besides. It may be that non-religious worldviews can be taught in the context of the history of ideas or of political, scientific and moral thought but their association with religion will further dilute the teaching of religious traditions which are in the main Christian, as well as of other traditions which pupils will need to know, if they are to be good global citizens. If this recommendation is also enforced on faith-based schools, it will have the effect of watering down their teaching of RE in accordance with the tenets of belief on which a particular school is founded.

In addition to their involvement in ASCs and SACRE's, churches and their boards of education should be actively engaged in producing resources not only for schools affiliated to them but for the whole sector. An example of this is the Church of England's resource *Understanding Christianity* which aims to support pupils in developing their understanding of the Christian Faith. Although produced by one denomination, it has been developed in such a way that it can be used in all schools. The Anglican Oxford Schools Chaplaincy produces resources, developed alongside teachers, to assist in understanding the significance of various festivals and how they are celebrated. The ecumenical *Schools Bible Project* helps pupils study the life and message of Christ in the New Testament. *Students Exploring Marriage* helps older pupils with thinking about stable and life-giving relationships and respecting the dignity of those with whom they form a relationship.

Worship

Schools sometimes lack resources and willing hands to lead a daily act of worship, as the law requires. This is where offers of help from churches and organisations can be accepted with alacrity! Clergy and other church workers are often welcomed into non-religious schools not only to help with worship but to lead discussion groups on important issues of the day such as mental and spiritual

well-being, ethics at the workplace, fidelity in relationships and the sanctity of persons. Churches should be prepared to take these opportunities when they arise, indeed, to actively seek for them. It is good also to invite pupils and teachers into church buildings, especially at times of festivals, anniversaries and rites of passage. Crossing that all-important threshold into a church building and getting used to its arrangements during school days will stand pupils in good stead later in life. It should be remembered that an act of worship in such schools has to be of a wholly or broadly Christian character but it also has to be non-denominational. Where there are significant numbers of pupils belonging to other faiths, there will have to be sensitivity without compromising the essentials of the faith.

Resistance and obstacles

Although there is resistance and there are obstacles, there are many opportunities still available for a meaningful Christian contribution to the spiritual and moral life of our schools. They should be seized with both hands. It is important to discuss the Christian influence in our history and in the development of subjects like the arts, archaeology, law, literature and even in a scientific mindset. Concerned Christian organisations could conduct a review of the syllabi to identify where such influence has occurred and whether it is being sufficiently recognised. On the basis of such a review, there can then be representations to the Department of Education and campaigning by parents, teachers and educationalists for the Christian contribution to be duly recognised.

I chair a representative and inter-denominational coalition of those involved in education. If anyone wants to be in touch with any of these organisations, please contact me via the Oxford Centre for Training, Research, Advocacy and Dialogue: website michaelnazirali.com

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali is Anglican Bishop Emeritus of Rochester



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New Approaches to Education

Louise Kirk finds a lifeline for a culture in danger.



Last year, the BBC website carried an article under the heading “Fertility rate: ‘jaw dropping’ global crash in children being born” (15 July 2020).

It cites research from the University of Washington published in the *Lancet* which suggests that by the end of the century most countries in the world are likely to have shrinking populations. Lead researcher Professor Christopher Murray's states: “it's incredibly hard to think this through and recognise how big a thing this is; it's extraordinary, we'll have to reorganise societies.”

LGBT trends only affect the behaviour of a small minority of people, but the feminism which is behind this worrying decline in population affects all of us, not only in our own country but throughout the world. So deeply is feminist ideology engrained that Murray, while clearly disturbed by his own figures, goes on to “warn against undoing the progress on women's education and access to contraception.” Philip Collins picked the report up in *The Times* a couple of days later (17 July) and agreed that “a fertility rate has to be compatible with the right of women to run their own lives, the availability of contraception and abundant opportunities for women in the labour market.” The rest of his article pushes the case for more government-funded childcare.

Networks



It is easier to dismiss demographic problems in writing than in real life. True, the picture is much more varied than bald figures assume, and it is easy to be unaware of their full import. Those who come from thriving intact families and move in like circles create their own supportive networks. It is those who come from broken homes, who have failed to settle into permanent relationships and who have no children with whom they are in touch, for whom life and old age look bleak. In addition, in the UK and right across Europe, approaching 40-50% of families who *do* have children now have only one (Eurostat, *Household Composition: Statistics Explained*, May 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/29071.pdf>). We are creating a future where single adults have no siblings, aunts, uncles, or cousins. The mind boggles at how the state is going to pick up the caring role for all these loose adults. It is not only the money. In the UK, we are already running out of staff for both nurseries and care homes and Covid has shown that there are medical as well as societal dangers in having staff moving from one place to the next.

The picture in the rest of the world is also more varied than may at first appear. A headteacher from Zambia, for instance, told me that in her country the fertility rate among professional people is similar to the West: it is only the poor and country people who are still breeding. In India, while the overall fertility rate is currently above replacement, in 13 of its 28 states and in 8 Union territories it is below (Marcus Roberts, "India's Fertility Rate is Falling," *mercatornet.com*, July 16 2020). It may not be long before poorer countries wish to retain their work forces and richer countries will be fighting for immigrants.

Education

At the World Congress of Families in Verona in 2019, there were calls from international delegates for women to be given the freedom to choose to concentrate on a career or to concentrate on family life, or to combine the two. This must be right. Catholic education should keep this balance as the lodestar towards which girls are directed so that they are truly prepared for both roles and thus better able to make free and wise decisions.

André Gushurst-Moore's book on Benedictine education has got me thinking. *Glory in All Things: Saint Benedict and Catholic Education Today* is an inspiring read which I recommend to anyone involved in Catholic education. It is also opportune, having been published just before the Covid outbreak and the many questions people are now asking about how best to school the young.

Gushurst-Morre writes of the education of "the mind and heart, of the body and the soul." Boys and girls both need to understand their specific callings if they are to be given an "integrated vision of who man is and who he is called to be", open to the "goodness, truth, and beauty of reality, such that a life in the Gospel is possible." Getting this education right for girls is, however, especially important not least because, in

many less developed countries, the fight is still on to open up opportunities for women. It would be a shame for poorer and more vulnerable people to pass through the mistakes that we have seen in the West.

Break the trend?

The reality is that in the UK today it is difficult for girls to break the trend and to marry and have children within their most fertile years. In 2017, Professor Adam Balen, as chairman of the British Fertility Society, was sufficiently worried to bring together a conference on the subject, including educators, doctors and government representatives. He cautioned that 20% of UK women would never have a child, up from 10% a generation ago. He further warned that women "do not have the control over their fertility that access to contraception might make them believe" and urged that young people be taught at school that the best time to think of starting a family is in their 20's or early 30's. He recognised that this would demand a major societal change but said that "the facts are too urgent to ignore."

Presently, the position of Catholics in this is (sadly) hardly distinguishable from their secular counterparts and, even among Mass goers, many are more concerned for the environment than family. In his sermon at the 2020 Mass for Marriage, my own Bishop, Mark Davies, lamented that "we have strangely neglected the human ecology, so bound-up with the well-being of marriage" and have also seen "an undervaluing of celibacy which stands in support of the true and faithful love of marriage."

The young

Gushurst-Moore describes how in earlier dark times St. Benedict's vision helped to create our Christian culture and how it has continued to influence society until our present age. He draws on an impressive variety of sources to argue his case, but at its heart is St Benedict's own Rule whose

wisdom continues to guide monks and laypeople alike. It proves to be a powerful tool in conveying to the young the truth, beauty, and goodness of vocation in Christ. *Glory in All Things* is beautifully crafted and a pleasure to read, but as I reached the end it occurred to me that there was something missing, and that was the subject of how to prepare girls for their specific role as women in the family and likewise boys in their specific role as men. The two are different from each other. The omission can be understood in that the *Rule of St Benedict* was devised for a male community of monks, but most Catholic schools today are mixed sex and most young people find their vocations within family life. It is not that Gushurst-Moore ignores marriage as a vocation – his last full chapter is on “Living” and speaks compellingly of its importance. Instead, I think it reflects a long-standing absence in Catholic education, where a post-Pill update of Edith Stein’s work *On Woman* is urgently called for (partnered, as she said it needed, by an equivalent for men). As it is, a vacuum of clear teaching about sexual roles has allowed all manner of harmful ideologies to slip in, almost unchallenged. The LGBTQ+ ideology stands out as the most influential, but I wonder if it is the most harmful.

Making the change

How does one make the change? Girls at leading Catholic schools expect to go on to university or other studies. They are just as talented as the boys alongside whom they work and are naturally drawn onto the long tramline of a professional qualification followed by a demanding career. The costs of housing can appear prohibitive, and young couples find themselves relying on dual incomes with every inducement to wait that little bit longer before taking the plunge into marriage and children. Richer, more educated couples are still marrying at some point: it is low earners at the bottom of society who are suffering the brunt of relationship and family breakdown with middle

earners now following suit (Harry Benson, Marriage Foundation Blog, www.marriage-foundation.org.uk, 11 January 2019).

As secular researchers admit, delayed marriage has come about because of contraception. Without it, life would assume a different profile. In 2019, at a conference for the Association of Catholic Women, I argued that a prime way to reverse the trend is through making use of Relationships and Sex Education to educate the young in the truth and beauty of their fertility and so encourage them away from contraception and towards respect for chastity and natural methods of family planning. I continue to think this vital.

Tension

However, the compulsion towards earning a living and keeping pace in the modern world is so strong I think we need to go further than this.

The reason why girls face a particular tension in their career paths which boys do not face is because God has also given most the desire for an occupation of another kind: giving birth, caring for children and looking after their families and homes. Many will argue that women have always also worked on non-domestic tasks, and so they have. This creates arguments about home versus career, about the opportunities that women should have in the wider world, about equality and rights. Why should men not take an equal part in the caring roles of the home?

The argument falls because of biology and what Mary Harrington in a visceral article for *Unherd* calls “the physical reality of being, not a parent, but specifically a mother” (Mary Harrington, “How motherhood put an end to my liberalism”, *Unherd*, unherd.com, 9 October 2019). Her article echoes an extensive survey into what European mothers want, carried out by the *Mouvement de Mères Mondial* in 2011 (“What Matters to Mothers in Europe”, <https://makemothersmatter.org>,

2011). Over 11,000 mothers responded and a repeated complaint was that nobody had warned them of how their priorities would change as soon as they had a child. Erika Bachiochi takes this argument further in her talk at Steubenville “On Vulnerability in the Mother-Child Dyad” (“On Vulnerability in the Mother-Child Dyad”, youtube.com, 19 June 2015). She claims that it is not men but Mother Nature which lays the heaviest burden of sex on women. She further explains that girls are not less capable of looking after themselves than boys, but in order to care for their dependent young, they are asked to sacrifice their autonomy, becoming themselves dependent on a protector and provider, the role given to men. This is, she argues, God’s design for family, in which interdependence and self-sacrifice fulfil the human desire for love. She points out that, in one way or another, autonomy is an illusion, and we are all dependent for most of our lives. She also makes the pertinent comment that our androgynous society tends to rate the masculine characteristics of competitiveness, assertiveness and autonomy over their feminine counterparts of nurturing, caretaking and selflessness, even though it is the latter that are especially prized in Christianity.

Vulnerability

Most cultures have recognised the vulnerability of women to sex and have sought to protect unmarried girls. This is now considered old fashioned and unnecessary: “consent classes” take the place of segregated accommodation at colleges, and these have only been introduced because of the numbers of young women crying foul. Received wisdom is that the Pill has equalised the playing field and any girl worth her salt should know how to use assertiveness to protect herself. Such “wisdom” ignores the many failures of contraception, the fact that girls are the more susceptible to STDs and to psychological damage from casual sex, and that their bodies are asked to bear the brunt

of contraception. More than ever boys and girls need to be taught how to understand themselves and each other before they leave school. This is not only for protection but so that they can enjoy full social lives together, make many friends and be ready for healthy permanent commitment when their turn comes.

The consequence of skewed priorities falls not only on women, but even more on children. Abortion rates continue to be shocking in our country with a growing number among older women who have already had children but who presumably do not want to burden their lives and delay their work with further births. It deprives the children that are born of the brothers and sisters whom God designs as playmates and lasting friends. It also deprives children of the nurture which science tells us is critical to their physical and emotional health, especially in the first three years of life. In her book *Being There*, the psychoanalyst Erica Komisar describes how nature has given mothers an exceptional role in the early years which cannot be fully taken by anybody else. Perhaps the mental health of UK children is deteriorating partly because they lack this maternal care? Komisar further comments that her US clients can struggle to rely on their husband’s money because they find it demeaning.

Care

The fact is that care of our fellow human beings takes up a lot of time, and it is work of a type that can rarely be hurried. As a result, it will never be fully covered in the paid economy. Richer families can pay for help, but the crunch comes for the poor. How are they to divide themselves between paid jobs and their personal family responsibilities? Given that many of those who take on caring roles are women themselves, one is also faced with the ridiculous position whereby it is “a career” to look after somebody else’s child or grandmother, but “a waste of resources” looking after one’s own.

God must be telling us something in arranging society in this way. I have a hunch that, apart from binding families together, it includes strengthening us against the temptation to trust in Mammon. We often connect the desire for wealth with luxuries, but the greater desire is for security, to feel self-reliant, respected and in charge. By arranging family life so that much of our daily activity is carried out for love, God puts a check on us, helping us to keep material possessions in their place, as he does also by instructing us to rest from work and keep the Sabbath holy.

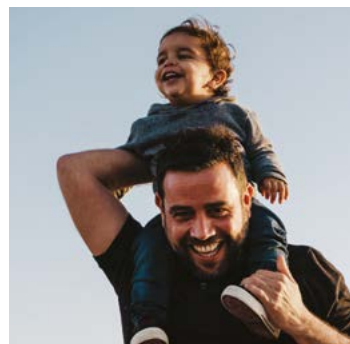
Here Gushurst-Moore's book is very helpful. All the way through, he speaks of the importance of teaching the young that life is about much more than passing exams and making money. He describes what he calls the co-curriculum in which the hard work and enthusiasms of teachers and pupils can be harnessed for no reward other than satisfaction. Subjects include sport and the arts, but they also include unpaid service within the community. It would be easy to link this idea with what St Josemaría Escrivá, founder of *Opus Dei*, used to say about adult work more generally. Professionalism has nothing to do with pay. You can be as professional in your works of charity, or in your caring roles in the home, as you are in your paid job. We all need money to live, and it is honourable to earn a decent living to serve our families and society, but our worth as a person should never be rated by how much we earn. There are many phases in the course of a lifetime during which both men and women will work for free. Giving young people this sense of balance, and that all their labours are first and foremost offerings to God, would do much to ease the tension between career and family life.

Dignity

It is family which is both the first cell of society and God's intended model for all societal relationships. Within the family, the masculine and the feminine are most clearly revealed.

Each family member shares a like dignity and importance, but in a unique and irreplaceable way. You would not dream of giving a toddler the same rights and responsibilities as the father, or as the 7-year-old, the 13-year-old or the 21-year-old who has left for university. The demands parents make of one child will be unsuited to the character of another, while we all enjoy the differences between boys and girls from the moment they are born. Transferring the idea of family to society as a whole comes naturally to Benedictine education, and it is here that I think Gushurst-Moore's book has riches to offer. In his chapter on "Leadership", which is based on the role of abbot as laid out in *The Rule*, he points out that the very word Abbot comes from Abba "Father" or more accurately "Daddy". To run a family well takes skills of leadership but it is a leadership of self-sacrifice and service, the same skills that are needed to run a business well, or an association, or a country or a society of any kind. The skills forged in the home and in the Catholic school can then be transferred to of any sort of establishment, big or small, but always with the same demands of love, discipline and humility that should be the hallmark of Christian discipleship.

Whole societies are going to see marked changes in the years to come. This is the time to prepare for those changes, and for Catholic schools to take a confident lead at the vanguard of education.



Louise Kirk is working on a UK edition of Infant School resources for *Alive to the World*, alivetotheworld.org. She is also the author of "Sexuality Explained: a Guide for Parents and Children".

View from the Pew: Preaching

Greg Watts makes a plea about homilies.



What's the difference between an *Easyjet* pilot and a priest delivering a homily? One knows how to take off and land, and the other doesn't.

The homily at Mass is an opportunity for the priest to unpack the scriptural meaning of one of the readings, usually the Gospel, and inspire, uplift, or even challenge the congregation.

Yet if you ask most Catholics after Mass what they thought of the homily, you are likely to be met with a shrug or a nonplussed shake of the head. Many would have switched off within the first minute, and their thoughts turned to what they were going to have for lunch, whether they turned the washing machine on before leaving the house, or the peculiar hairstyle of that woman sitting a few rows ahead.

A well delivered homily requires a good take off, a smooth journey through the Bible, and a good landing. Or to put it another way, a beginning, a middle, and an end, something small children grasp when it comes to bedtime stories.

Of course, there are some priests who know how to preach effectively and engage the congregation, and they put time and effort in during the week to achieve this. However, in my experience, they are as rare as a hot dog stall at a vegan festival!

Giving the Congregation a Lettuce

Frequently, a priest will begin a homily by recounting the Gospel story he's just read - and will often end by presenting the congregation with a 'lettuce'. Let us ask... Let us think about... Let us try...

I remember a priest beginning a homily on the Feast of the Guardian Angels by saying, 'We don't know much about angels', and then talking about them for twenty minutes. I don't think anyone was any the wiser when he'd finished.

Use Language People Understand

Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013, (E.G.), dedicates 18 pages to the preparation and delivery of the Sunday homily. He says, "Preachers often use words learned during their studies and in specialized settings which are not part of the ordinary language of their hearers. These are words that are suitable in theology or catechesis, but whose meaning is incomprehensible

The greatest risk for a preacher is that he becomes so accustomed to his own language that he thinks that everyone else naturally understands and uses it.

to the majority of Christians. The greatest risk for a preacher is that he becomes so accustomed to his own language that he thinks that everyone else naturally understands and uses it."

The 2008 Synod of Bishops on the Bible recommended that homilies be improved. In 2014 the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments produced what it called a "Homiletics Directory". It is 120 pages of 'Vaticanese', and I can't imagine many clergy have read it, or that it would provide any concrete help in what it calls "the art of communication."

Poor preaching, though, is not just a problem in the Catholic Church. You find it in the Church of England as well. Alan Bennett brilliantly satirised this in his sketch "Take a Pew", where he played a vicar giving a sermon. "Life's like a tin of sardines. All of us are looking for the key."

Sure, preaching isn't easy. You have a congregation of mixed age, education and background, and each person is at a different stage in their relationship with God. But the reason you undergo training and education is to learn how to do something. If you spend, on average, six years training to preach the Word of God and you can't do it effectively, that's like someone training to be a plumber and being unable to fit a washer on a tap.

What is a Good Homily?

The key to a good homily, Pope Francis says, is simplicity and clarity.

"Our language may be simple but our preaching not very clear. It can end up being incomprehensible because it is disorganized, lacks logical progression or tries to deal with too many things at one time. We need to ensure, then, that the homily has thematic unity, clear order and correlation between sentences, so that people can follow the preacher easily and grasp his line of argument" (E.G., 158).

I would add that repetition can also be a valuable tool, as any teacher knows. About ten years ago, I attended Mass at English Martyrs church in Walworth, and I can still remember the message of the homily. The priest, a young Indian, was preaching on the story of the cure of the paralytic in Luke's Gospel, where some men, because of the crowd, lower a paralysed man on a stretcher through the roof and place him in front of Jesus. Jesus forgives his sins and then tells him to get up, pick up his



stretcher and go home. In the course of his homily, the priest repeated the phrase, "Get up, have faith, move on" six times. That's why I still remember it.

When I've led communications workshops in seminaries, I've used the *Easyjet* analogy, explaining that a good take off grabs the attention of the congregation, so they are more likely to listen to what you have to say, and a good landing will leave them with something to think about. Among the tips I've given seminarians are:

- **What do you want to say? Sum it up in a sentence – if you can't do this, then you aren't clear about it**
- **Don't try to make too many points – just make one**
- **Avoid lots of abstract nouns – keep your homily concrete**
- **Illustrate your point by using examples or images**
- **Avoid clichés or 'Churchspeak' – speak in plain English**

So why is the quality of preaching among priests so poor? My theory is that the root of this can be traced back to the Reformation when an over emphasis was placed on the sacraments as a way of countering the "Scripture alone" Christianity promoted by the Protestants.

Are poor homilies driving Catholics away?

Only around ten percent of the 5.2 million Catholics in England and Wales attend Mass on a regular basis.

Could this decline in Mass attendance have anything to do with poor preaching? Bishop Robert Barron, an auxiliary in Los Angeles, certainly thinks so. He said in a 2015 Word on Fire podcast, "A major concern that can and should be addressed in the Church is that of bad preaching.

Again, and again, people said that they left the Church because homilies were 'boring, irrelevant, poorly prepared,' or 'delivered in an impenetrable accent.'

Speaking as someone who is called upon to give sermons all the time, I realize how terribly difficult it is to preach, how it involves skill in public speaking, attention to the culture, expertise in biblical interpretation, and sensitivity to the needs and interests of an incredibly diverse audience."

The You Tube priest

If you're looking for an example of someone who knows not only how to preach but also to utilise modern tools of communication to evangelise, then you need look no further than Bishop Barron. He is an eloquent, engaging and confident communicator. One of his aims is to present the ideas and insights of great thinkers such as Augustine, Aquinas, and Newman in a language and way a secular culture can understand, which is why he was invited to give talks at the headquarters of both Google and Amazon. His You Tube channel has over 360,000 subscribers. He is also the presenter of the acclaimed and imaginative 10-part TV series *Catholicism: A Journey to the Heart of the Faith*, which was filmed in 15 countries and shows how great art, architecture, literature, and music have been used to illustrate the teachings of the Church.

Bishop Barron understands that the majority of Catholics are not to be found in church on a Sunday. (There's a joke that goes, what's the largest group of Christians in the USA? Catholics. What's the second largest? Ex-Catholics). So, if you want to try and reach the lapsed (or resting), then you have to go to where they are. You have to use social media.

Time for a change

If you take yourself back to attending Mass as a child and compare the experience to today, you will discover that when it comes to homilies little has changed. Some people might think this is a good thing. I don't. I'm not talking about Church teaching; I'm talking about how the Church communicates its teaching.

Teachers are regularly assessed by other teachers on the quality of their teaching when they undergo classroom observations, for which they are graded. (If a priest complains about having to give three homilies over a weekend, he should try teaching seven hours of classes back-to-back). If their grade is poor, they are given support to improve. Many businesses carry out annual staff reviews. It's all about maintaining professional standards.

Preaching, like teaching, is a skill that has to be learned.

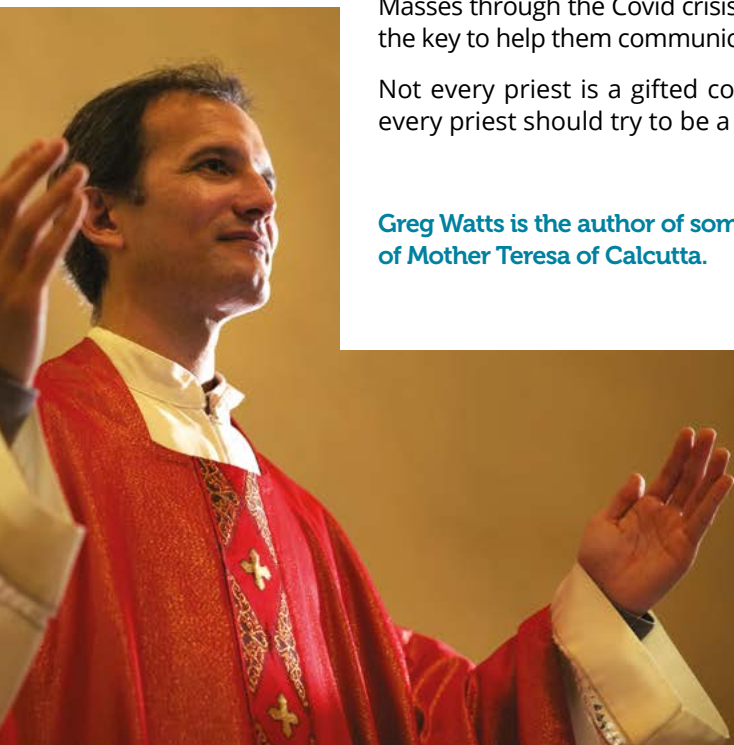
Are priests ever assessed on their quality of preaching? Once they are ordained, they are pretty much left to their own devices. I'd like

to see each bishop or religious provincial carry out annual assessments of the preaching of all his clergy. It could be done along the lines of a mystery worshipper, where a suitably qualified person would sit in the congregation and give the homily marks out of ten for the effectiveness of the PA system, content, clarity, delivery, and duration. This information could then be used by the bishop or provincial to organise communication training sessions for clergy.

And why not film priests preaching and then let them watch it afterwards to see where they can improve? For most, I suspect, it would be a painful and embarrassing experience (as those who've live-streamed Masses through the Covid crisis may have discovered), but it might be the key to help them communicate better with their congregation.

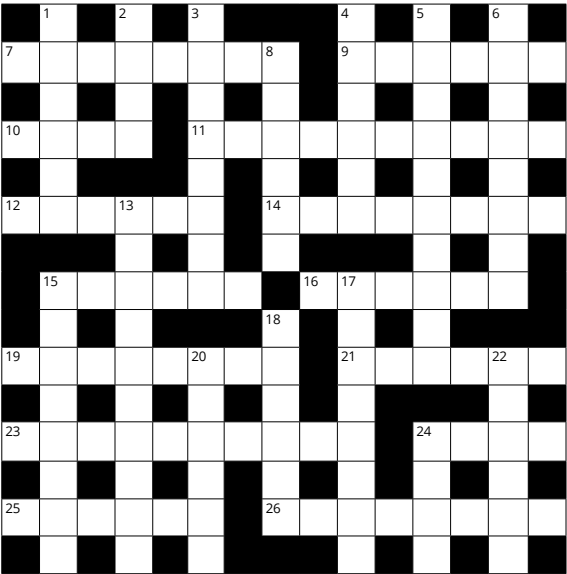
Not every priest is a gifted communicator, like Bishop Barron, but every priest should try to be a good communicator.

Greg Watts is the author of some twenty books including a biography of Mother Teresa of Calcutta.



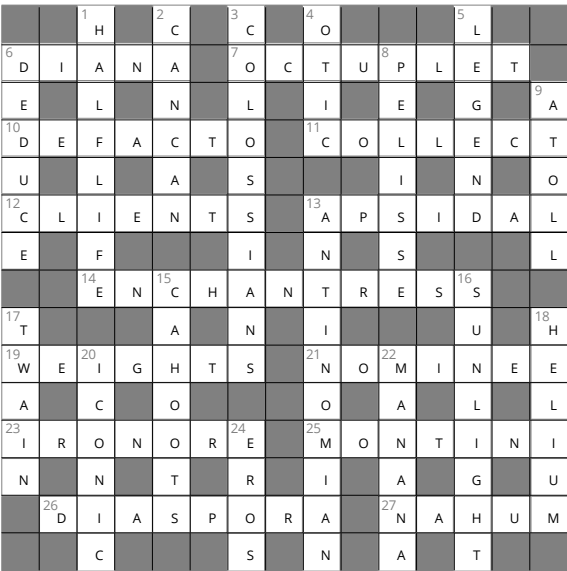
Crossword 28
by Aurora Borealis

We invite you to complete this crossword.
The clues in bold involve general religious knowledge.
The others are cryptic clues with secular answers.



A prize will go to the sender of the first correct solution opened by June 1st 2021. Entries may be the original page or a photocopy. Entries should be sent to 45 East St. Helen Street, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 5EE. Please include your full postal address.

The winner of Crossword 27 was S.W. of Didcot.



Solution Crossword 27

Across

- 7. Harry, say, in a muddle, takes cognitive therapy to neighbourhood (8)
- 9. Sounds like you raced one adult who inspired us to look at the stars (6)
- 10. The second theological virtue (4)**
- 11. Rosemary, perhaps, has piano keys (one missing) for vegetarians (10)
- 12. If he has earache, rub inside to get a pretty child (6)
- 14. Teach it with student in a mess, fit and healthy (8)
- 15. Daily global energy cost (6)
- 16. Might North East, close to Seahouses, really be in the south of France? (6)
- 19. Pretty healthy, I admit it (4,4)
- 21. First bishop of Mercia (2,4)**
- 23. Believer in one God (10)**
- 24. Oven which nearly makes toast (4)
- 25. European Union has means of inheriting man (6)
- 26. Flower confuses yacht in entrance to Hellespont (8)

Down

- 1. Ornament loves to go in British Rail Community Hospital (6)
- 2. A creek encircles area (4)
- 3. Contents of sack are guaranteed (2,3,3)
- 4. Old Testament heroine, slayer of Holofernes (6)**
- 5. North American and European on international committee make imperial code (10)
- 6. First pope not to be venerated as a saint in the Roman Rite (8)**
- 8. North Reading produces cotton (6)
- 13. Study unknown capital to earn cash in hand (5,5)
- 15. Ave regina (8)**
- 17. Natalia's a funny dog (8)
- 18. The Spanish cod, for example, can be made fairy-like (6)
- 20. They'll come back to you if you shout loud enough (6)
- 22. Idiot alien has origin of sun's resources (6)
- 24. No very intelligent development leads to poet (4)



Edward Holloway

Holloway on...

God the Real: Can we Know and Love Him?

Part 1

The theme of this article is undertaken, with a sense of hopelessness given its magnitude, through the constant nagging of students, both lay and clerical, who in hallowed halls or Oxbridge cloister are weary of being told that they cannot really know God, even if (which not all their teachers concede) they can demonstrate his existence.

It unsettles their souls, runs counter to their own experience, and in the case of some of their friends, it shatters vocations to the priesthood, and sometimes the life of regular, practising Catholic faith. Even St. Thomas Aquinas, they are told, confessed to the *utter nescience* of our grasp of God. This must be so they say, because we cannot comprehend the nature of God, and the nature of God is All-Simple; just the One-Thing. You know it or you don't: no half measures. If they were right, it would follow that St. Thomas must have taught that we cannot love God either, in any personal sense: there is a Thomist cliché *nil volitum nisi praecognitum* - nothing is wanted, or loved, unless

first it is known. So, if you don't know God, but only know *at* Him, you don't love Him in any warm, personal sense, but only love *at* Him. This Aquinas certainly did not teach. Moreover, the whole of the Bible, Old Testament and the 'Good News' of Christ, would be totally irrational from what we read in the text, if this position were true.

Problems of 'nature' and 'grace'

There is an academic problem about knowing God, given that we cannot know his nature as it is in itself. There is only one perfect name for God. The one He himself taught: I AM WHO AM. To penetrate *it in possession*, as we would know and love a dear friend, is not possible for basic, unaided human nature. God is the incomprehensible, the one beyond the finite limits of our nature, or even of an angel's nature. From the powers of human nature unaided and alone, concedes St. Thomas, we can only say what God is, by applying to Him superlatively and eminently the spiritual attributes we find

in ourselves, and by denying of God all the limitations which proceed first from matter, and then from the contingency, or nature limits of even the spiritual creature. The First Vatican Council, when it defines the power of unaided human reason to know God 'from the things that are made' does both these things and mixes the attribution of *eminence* and the *negation* of creaturely limits, when for example it says of God (DS. 3001): 'the Life, the Truth, the Good, the creator, the omnipotent, the eternal, the infinite, the incomprehensible, the blessed in itself, the All-High beyond the words and concepts of man...'

According to 'purely natural powers', Aquinas, and we think the whole of Christian theology with him, and probably before him, held that you could know God by the projection into Him of all that our nature has, at its most noble, and 'thrill' to its fulness predicated without created limitations. Likewise, you could love in God, from the very nature of your soul to love such a Thing, the goodness and blessedness of God, source of all created good... but from that alone, you did not enter into a personal communion with Him. You did, in the end, know *at* God and love *at* God, rather as an athletic teenager, member of a good running club, might, present at the Olympics, know, thrill, and love at the person and achievement of the 'gold' winner whom he 'adored'. But it is not *personal* fulfilment in the real.

When you read either the Scholastics, who wrote 'scientifically', or the Greek Fathers of the Church who, with the exception of St. John Damascene, certainly did not, you do have one large complication. The discussion of the powers of pure, unaided human nature, in its relationship to God is so very, very academic. Because *at no time whatever*, in original justice, after the fall, or since the Redemption of Christ, has humankind ever existed in a 'state of pure nature'. We have always been in the state of 'supernature' - of the call, vocation, and gift in the order of grace, to be made 'co-sharers of the divine

nature' (Aquinas, Knowledge of God: 1. QQ 6 to 13 inc).

Infiltration of inadequate philosophies

We are never going to find anyone in a 'state of unaided nature' to work from. Even before the birth of Christ, even when the pagans were outside the law of Moses, it was still true that: 'And God made of one all mankind to dwell upon the whole face of the earth... that they should seek God, and it might be, touch and find Him; though indeed *'he is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live, and move, and have our being. Some of your own poets have said "we are his offspring" ... and as for the times of ignorance, God has overlooked them, etc.'* (Acts 17:26, 30). God has always gone before the 'natural desire' of fallen men to know Him. He has always prompted us to seek after Him, that perchance we may find Him! Yet, even in the order of grace, directed to the possession of God in the beatific vision, we do not know and possess God *as He is* in his own nature. Through grace, however, we do know him in faith and wisdom, we do love Him, we 'home in' on Him really and for real. Our intellect thrills to Him, seeks in wonder more of Him, loves Him in a partial, but real possession, and is *on its way*, in a straight line, unless we deliberately care to lose this relationship, to the complete knowing and loving of God, as He is (1 John 3:1-3).

The full reasons behind the present heavy emphasis upon our *nescience* (inevitable ignorance) of God from the limitations of our nature are too complex for this article, at least if any room is to be left for saying anything positive, and perhaps useful, about acquiring an actual love of God. It derives mostly from theories of knowledge, dating say from Occam through Kant and Hegel, to Wittgenstein (except maybe in his last years) some of which are called *Nominalism*, others empirical Pragmatism. These systems deny any knowledge of an Absolute, or of anything

in its inner self, from the fact that our knowledge comes through sense impressions, is limited through them, and is valid only of the sensory impression and the categories into which our mind processes it. The student must look it all up. Anyone who has access to a complete set of the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, would, with cross-references, find enough work to fill out an industrious sabbatical year. The follow up of the references to philosophers and the Fathers of the Church will, starting young, require a generous lifetime. Many people now teaching have never pursued either an adequate or a sympathetic course in Thomism or the Scholastics in general. They found Aquinas 'out' in the mid-sixties. They think and argue in terms of a deficient theory of knowledge. It is no fault of theirs, but Nominalism and its later developments lead, as in Hume, Locke, and Kant, to a paralysed denial of our power to form true concepts about reality, and about God.



The etiquette of St. Thomas' deference

In the medieval period, all the Scholastics suffered from undue deference to the writings of one now known as the *pseudo-Areopagite* because he was mis-identified with the 'Dionysius' who was converted by St. Paul in his famous address to the men of Athens recently quoted. The pseudo-Dionysius is a writer of genius, insight, and for the most part of truth, though he does exaggerate, and in matters of the heavenly life of the angelic hierarchy he romanticizes as well. St. Thomas would not perhaps have twisted himself so much in knots to agree with or 'interpret' the said Dionysius, if he had known that he was in fact a disciple of the late Platonist thinker Proclus and can be dated as certainly no earlier than about 450 AD. Nobody in those humble and pious days, before theologians thought so much about their 'fulfilment' and 'identity', liked to disagree with a saint who walked, as they thought, with St. Paul the apostle (*The Divine Names*: 1, Q 13). In much the same way, Aquinas will contort himself at times to agree with St. Augustine of Hippo, when it would have been better to say 'I don't think we quite agree' because, while their broad outlook and philosophy is the same, their systems differ in important detail. In the analysis of the knowledge of God by grace, your humble servant much prefers the general approach and thought of Augustine and the Franciscan school, to that of St. Thomas - a comment which is neither here nor there! The pseudo-Denis, as he is called, is a mystic in thought and in writing. He emphasizes too heavily our 'nescience' of God, even in the order of grace, but he does not deny that somehow or other we do truly know Him, and love Him for real. As for St. Thomas, however polite he may be in making revered authorities agree with him, he is himself the clearest of teachers.' Most rarely is there any doubt about what he means to say.

By their fruits you shall know men

If anyone has a doubt of the actual opinion of St. Thomas concerning whether God can be truly known and loved for real, and as person,

let them read him on 'love' and 'delight in the loved' (*dilectio*), and on our relationship to God in contemplation, and the contemplative state (*The Loving of God*. 2.2. QQ 24 and 28). Let them read the Mass of Corpus Christi, most of which he composed, and if available the magnificent readings for the suppressed octave of that feast. Then there are his hymns, noblest of all perhaps the '*Lauda Sion Salvatorem*'. Men don't, as a matter of psychology, write like that, unless they have experienced the majesty, love and joy which inspires their muse as *Him*, not as 'something way up there'.

Theology is not a science, not in a primary sense; theology is the knowledge of God in the communion of true wisdom and the possession of God in the love that cleaves to the good. A condition of this love, but not the experience itself, lies in Christ's admonition 'he that loves me, keeps my commandments' (John 14:23). That is why one is so fond of St. Augustine (*The Confessions; De Trinitate; In Joannem tract.* 13). The Confessions are the easily available title of his search for God in love, and his finding of him, but it breathes in comments and asides in all his works. For him, greatest doctor of the Western Church, his theology of Christ is so obviously a relationship learned as person from person.

The 'analogy of being'

The most important principle in scholastic and especially in St. Thomas' philosophy is that of the *analogia entis*, that reality or being is recognised and spoken, not in a univocal meaning, nor in an equivocal meaning, but in an analogous (more correctly an analogical) meaning. If 'being' has exactly the same sense and meaning whenever we use the word, we end up at pantheism. We are all self-conscious expressions of God, and God in us and in the creation is still 'becoming' and formalising himself. No clear knowledge of such a Godly 'nature' is possible. If being or 'the real' is an equivocal notion, then there is no relation between what it

means in us and God. The gap is too great to bridge. To this position we come if we accept too literally the statement that 'God is the totally other'. The concept of the analogy of 'being' or existence, recognises that there are *degrees of being*, of reality, in itself. Even when we say the word 'being' or 'thing' and apply it to an atom, a stone, a worm, an ape, a man, an angel, to GOD, we recognise differing degrees of proportion, and differing degrees of intrinsic greatness in existence of all these things. All that is made by God is one 'family' if you like.

The most magnificent expression of this teaching is in St. Paul to the Colossians (Col 15-20) in which he names Christ as holding the primacy in all the degrees of being and over all the works of God and of man, and in which he states that in Christ, *God and Man, all things do cohere together*. In this recognition, all things have come out from a transcendent and personal God, and all go back to Him, in differing degrees of recognition and of service, according to their different and intrinsic degrees of likeness to the Divine Being, through which their own is known and conceived.' That 'divine being' or nature is God in the Person of *The Eternal Word*: all things were made by Him, through Him, and for Him. The purely material creation can respond to God not by personal knowing and loving in possession, but only by the very process of being what they are, and in the round of their sinless, material life, in which they witness to the reality of God, and the ordered wisdom of God, and of which they are the most humble manifestation. It is written in the wisdom of Solomon: '*The Spirit of the Lord has filled the orb of the earth, and that (earth) which contains all things, has knowledge of His voice*' (Wisdom. 1:7). Here too, is the basis for that notion of a Unity-Law of Control and Direction, in all the works of God. It is the recognition that in God all degrees of creation and being do 'cohere together' in the communion of one harmonious whole.

Personal and public revelation of God

In the spiritual creation, that of angels and men, this recognition of the analogy or similitude in the natures of beings means that there is between us and God, a real, an intrinsic link. We are really and formally made 'in his image and likeness', we are indeed 'his offspring', and we can, if He wills it, know Him as He is, and in his own nature. It means that here on earth, we can know him in possession. We call the knowledge 'faith': it has an external aspect in public revelation, and an *internal* aspect in which it relates to a degree of 'understanding' of the nature of God, and of the truth and right expression of his works. In this sense it is the virtue of wisdom, the interior savouring, in the intellect enlightened by grace, of both the mind of God, and the coherence or 'orthodoxy' of divine truth. The relationship to God, in the real, historic order in which we men have *always* been related to him, means that faith, savoured as wisdom, prompts in us through the will, the love of God in truth and in possession. This is love of God as *person*, real love and experience. The very first degree of it is a most basic sense of peace in the meaning of life, and the certainty of purpose in human existence. It means a lot more than a basic peace of conscience. In the sense in which Christ used it to the apostles, 'My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives do I give unto you ...' (John 14.27), the Hebrew expression and its meaning conveys also love with joy, and joy in belonging. It can grow into the love of God which spills over from the experience of the soul into a strange effect upon the body - the ecstasies of the saints, the stigmata of St. Francis and, one thinks, of Padre Pio.

I believe or 'one does feel?'

When St. Thomas Aquinas insists that the concept 'being' or 'the real' is spoken and thought in degrees of depth of nature, but always with an intrinsic proportion and linkage one degree to another, all the way

up to GOD, who is known as HE WHO IS, the saint is certainly right from the evidence of all history (Aquinas, *Analogy of Being*, 1, Q13, art 5; *De Veritate*, Q1, art 1; *De Potentia*, Q 7 art 7; Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Bonaventure* ch.7). GOD has dominated history as the principle of ultimate truth, goodness, moral harmony and sheer beauty. It is the *temple* which has been the centre of beauty and the expression of the wonderful in human social life and belonging. It is the *divine* which has inspired the most noble in art, literature, music and drama. In this respect *liturgy* is, and should be in all its aspects, the most beautiful and sacral representation of the communion between the human and the divine. It is, especially in the Mass, the highest form of *drama* in the communion of the divine and the human. Can we always say that it is so? Even in children's Masses and in youth Masses it should be Christ-centred, and not 'us' centred; can we say it always is so?

If St. Thomas were not right in his teaching that *being* differs by intrinsic proportions of depth, and also is linked by the same proportionality to each other and to God, then demonstrating the existence of God would depend in us, not on the intelligence, but only on the inner feeling, on a merely subjective 'faith' or fideism. This approach is very popular today. Religious teaching in schools presumes 'The Father'; it does not prove first that He exists. This subjectivism has ruined Catholic catechetics for a quarter of a century now. It comes about when soul and body are identified as one energy, or one process, as by Teilhard de Chardin, and this writer would say, also Karl Rahner. This approach inevitably leads to agnosticism, and whatever qualifications are made, in the end, to quote the late Mgr Ronnie Knox, we 'have changed the *I believe* to *One does feel*.'

Fr Edward Holloway was the Editor of FAITH for 22 years. This is a slightly abridged version of the first part of the Editorial for the July/August 1989 issue. It will be concluded in our next issue.

From Across the Pond...

Fr Peter Stravinskaskas with reflections from the USA



Classical ecclesiology distinguishes between the Church's relations within her bosom and those from without: The former, *ad intra*; the latter, *ad extra*. I think those categories might be useful for our monthly reflections.

Ad extra

Perhaps some readers of *Faith* thought I exaggerated potential problems for the Church in the United States, vis a vis, the new President. Well, it gives me no pleasure to be able to say, "I told you so," but I told you so! Within days of Joseph Biden's inauguration as the forty-sixth president, his now famous (or better infamous) executive orders took aim at numerous issues of great concern to the Catholic community.

Recognizing the imminent difficulties, Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, in his capacity as president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, took the unprecedented step of firing a shot across the bow at the very hour of Biden's inauguration on January 20. It should be noted that Archbishop Gomez is not known as a warrior of any stripe, so that this action of his (at the behest of the leadership of the USCCB) takes on even greater significance. While expressing hope for a cordial relationship between the new Administration on areas of mutual agreement, Gomez proceeded to delineate areas of serious possible areas of conflict. His sally began thus:

As pastors, the nation's bishops are given the duty of proclaiming the Gospel in all its truth and power, in season and out of season, even when that teaching is inconvenient or when the Gospel's truths run contrary to the directions of the wider society and cultures. So, I must point out that our new President has pledged to pursue certain policies that would advance moral evils and threaten human life and dignity, most seriously in the areas of abortion, contraception, marriage, and gender. Of deep concern is the liberty of the Church and the freedom of believers to live according to their consciences.

Further:

For the nation's bishops, the continued injustice of abortion remains the "preeminent priority." Preeminent does not mean "only." We have deep concerns about many threats to human life and dignity in our society. But as Pope Francis teaches, we cannot stay silent when nearly a million unborn lives are being cast aside in our country year after year through abortion.

Gómez concluded his statement, hoping that "the new President and his administration will work with the Church and others of good will," in order to "address the complicated cultural and economic factors that are driving abortion" and to "put in place a coherent family policy," in "full respect for the Church's religious freedom."

This document must have sent shock waves through the Vatican's Secretariat of State since it is such a departure from the bland and innocuous pulp of "diplomacy." Even the veteran "Vaticanista," Sandro Magister, devoted an entire column to the "Gomez Intervention" (as I am calling it) on his *Settimo Cielo* blog of January 26.

Sadly, the image of episcopal unity could not be allowed to stand as two of our cardinals (predictably, unfortunately) took exception to the Gomez Intervention: Blase Cupich of Chicago and Joseph Tobin of Newark. The former went on a rather unseemly rant against the document and claimed (incorrectly) that its issuance violated Conference rules. Interestingly, if one's only source of information about things Catholic on the world scene were *L'Osservatore Romano*, one would never know any of this had happened!

January 22, 1973 lives in infamy in the minds and hearts of those who take seriously the right to life of the unborn as it was on that date that the United States Supreme Court struck down any and all state laws prohibiting abortion. The very next year (and every year thereafter – except for a "virtual" version this year due to the "pandemic") witnessed tens of thousands of people converge on Washington, D.C. to protest that horrendous decision, which was not only an attack on the sanctity of life but also an exercise of raw judicial power. The gathering is populated largely by young people (most coming from our Catholic schools) as participants brave what is often a frigid day in the Northeast. Thankfully, with the passing years, Catholic opposition has been augmented by the presence of Evangelical Protestants, Eastern Orthodox Christians, and Orthodox Jews. Every Republican President has "participated" by way of an audio or video message of support; President Donald Trump stunned everyone by personally appearing at the outset of the March last year.

No Democrat President has ever acknowledged the event. The Biden-Harris Administration, however, went a step beyond by celebrating *Roe v. Wade* and pledging ongoing support for the right to abort one's child in the womb. This brought an immediate response from Archbishop Joseph Naumann

of Kansas City, in his capacity as chairman of the Pro-Life Committee of the USCCB:

It is deeply disturbing and tragic that any President would praise and commit to codifying a Supreme Court ruling that denies unborn children their most basic human and civil right, the right to life, under the euphemistic disguise of a health service...We strongly urge the President to reject abortion and promote life-affirming aid to women and communities in need.

"Gender" issues have also taken on prominence as Biden's executive order of January 20 even went beyond the Supreme Court's *Bostock* decision (which ruled that the 1964 Civil Rights Act encompassed "gender discrimination"). This caused five USCCB committee chairmen to issue a joint statement in response:

Wednesday's executive order on 'sex' discrimination exceeds the Court's decision. It threatens to infringe the rights of people who recognize the truth of sexual difference or who uphold the institution of lifelong marriage between one man and one woman...We share the goal of ending unjust discrimination and supporting the dignity of every human, and we therefore regret the misguided approach of Wednesday's order addressing Bostock.

That executive order has broad implications for the Church's apostolates of Catholic schools, health care and Catholic Charities. It may surprise some to learn that the Catholic Church is the largest non-governmental provider of such services in the nation.

We strongly urge the President to reject abortion and promote life-affirming aid to women and communities in need.

Biden's assault on the unborn continued on January 28 as he rescinded a policy that prevented non-governmental organizations receiving U.S. funding from promoting abortion overseas. This policy, known as the "Mexico City" policy,

began with President Ronald Reagan in 1984. Hence, yet another statement came forth from the USCCB through Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann as chairman of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities, and Bishop David J. Malloy of Rockford, Illinois, chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace. The bishops called the presidential action "grievous" as it "actively promotes the destruction of human lives in developing nations." They went on to assert that it "is antithetical to reason, violates human dignity, and is incompatible with Catholic teaching. We and our brother bishops strongly oppose this action. We urge the president to use his office for good, prioritizing the most vulnerable, including unborn children."

The bishops concluded:

As the largest non-government health care provider in the world, the Catholic Church stands ready to work with him

[Biden] and his administration to promote global women's health in a manner that furthers integral human development, safeguarding innate human rights and the dignity of every human life, beginning in the womb.

Also weighing in on the matter was Jeanne Mancini, president of the March for Life Defense and Education Fund, calling it “a deeply disturbing move, especially when the president says he wants national unity.” She then highlighted an oft-overlooked element in the debate, namely, that Biden’s action “goes against the wishes of an overwhelming majority of Americans – in fact, consistent polling shows that 77 percent of Americans oppose taxpayer funding for abortion overseas.” She went on: “The government should never force taxpayers to fund abortions, either here or abroad, but should work to protect the inherent dignity of all persons, born and unborn.”

We hear an echo of Mancini in remarks of Representative Chris Smith (R-New Jersey), co-chairman of the Congressional Pro-life Caucus: “U.S. foreign policy – and the foreign entities we fund with billions of dollars in grant money – should consistently affirm, care for, and tangibly assist women and children – including unborn baby girls and boys,” Congressman Smith is an indomitable pro-life legislator, a devout Catholic. He wrote a letter signed by at least 118 members of Congress calling on Biden to reconsider and reverse his decision on the Mexico City policy. Signers included Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy of California, Republican Whip Steve Scalise of Louisiana and Republican Conference Chair Liz Cheney of Wyoming (the first two are also committed Catholics).

Catholic hospitals would be required to perform abortions since our refusal would be classified as “pregnancy discrimination

In point of fact, however, Biden has also said he wants to end the long-standing Hyde Amendment (in place since 1976), which prohibits its federal tax dollars from directly funding abortion in the United States, except in cases of rape, incest or when the life of the woman is endangered.



Yet another assault on Catholic principles – and common sense – is the Biden Administration’s push for the so-called “Equality Act,” designed to do two things: amend the 1964 Civil Rights Act to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the definition of sex and to override the existing Religious Freedom Restoration Act (which protects conscience rights for individuals and institutions). Catholic hospitals would be required to perform abortions since our refusal would be classified as “pregnancy discrimination.” Catholic schools would be faced with the absurdity of having to allow biological males to play on female teams and to have access to female bathrooms, showers and locker rooms.

All of the men I spoke with expressed a sincere fidelity to the Holy Father. Many praised his efforts to reshape the Roman Curia toward a more supportive, service-oriented posture in dealing with local bishops.

Ad intra

A fascinating article appeared in *First Things* on 2nd February, *Somebody Needs to Be Dad* (on the bishops as our “fathers in God”). Francis X. Maier (Special Assistant to Archbishop Charles Chaput) shares with readers some intriguing data culled from a major research project he is “pursuing in cultural and Church renewal with the Constitutional Studies program at the University of Notre Dame.” The project’s purpose? “If the Church seeks to be an agent of renewal in

the life of a nation and its culture, then she herself must also be renewed.” In this first phase of the study, Mr. Maier interviewed bishops (33 were contacted, 31 from the U.S., and two from other Anglophone countries).

Firstly, the bishops indicated that “on average, Covid has done less immediate financial damage to many American dioceses than expected.” However, “Most bishops project between a 25 percent and 40 percent permanent fall-off in Mass attendance and parish engagement even after the virus is history.” I do not agree with that pessimistic prognostication. My own anecdotal data suggest that as parishes have re-opened to full capacity, attendance is very close to normal.

On the Church-State front, he reports:

Relations with civil authorities vary. One bishop, moved by Rome from an eastern diocese to one in the Midwest, compared the belligerence of his former state’s governor with the personal warmth and support of the governor in his new state. Overall though, “we’re generals without armies, and the civil authorities know it” was a common theme. Worry about the negative spirit and potential damage of the Biden administration was unanimous.

Regarding episcopal nominations, the bishops expressed general satisfaction with the consultation and vetting process. In this instance, we see how all too many bishops live in a bubble since very few priests share their sentiments, let alone laity. It is worth mentioning that unofficial information emanating from the Nunciature suggests that as many as one-third of potential candidates for a miter now turn down the invitation (reasons vary, from a lack of desire to work in a Francis pontificate, to lack of desire to clean up messes created by bishops going back forty and fifty years, to a fear that some disgruntled soul with a vindictive spirit could fabricate stories about one’s priestly ministry). The bishops did share one “worry”: “a recurrent theme – about interference with the selection process at the Roman congregation level. This typically involved an implied, and sometimes quite explicit, distrust of a particular American cardinal who will remain unnamed” (Blase Cupich of Chicago).

He also notes: "Several [bishops] voiced irritation with Washington's Cardinal Wilton Gregory for undercutting conference leadership on the issue of Communion and President Biden's problematic sacramental status."

What do the U.S. bishops think of Pope Francis?

The most sensitive matter in my various interviews involved bishops' attitudes toward Pope Francis. All of the men I spoke with expressed a sincere fidelity to the Holy Father. Many praised his efforts to reshape the Roman Curia toward a more supportive, service-oriented posture in dealing with local bishops. But many also voiced an equally vigorous frustration with what they see as his ambiguous comments and behavior, which too often feed confusion among the faithful, encourage conflict, and undermine bishops' ability to teach and lead. Francis's perceived dislike of the United States doesn't help. In the words of one baffled west-of-the-Mississippi bishop, "It's as if he enjoys poking us in the eye."



This assessment coincides with what I have heard from every bishop of my acquaintance. The American bishops, as a group, are not on the same wave-length as Papa Francesco. That was made clear as he publicly castigated them during his pastoral visit to these shores in 2015. Many quipped that Francis seemed more comfortable with Obama than he did with them. Given the changes to the American hierarchy since the mid-1980s and the "John Paul II Generation of Priests," our Church is essentially "conservative," which just means we are a very "Catholic" community.

Which brings us to the next topic. What about our seminarians? Mr. Maier reports, with no comment, the following: "When pressed, none of the bishops I queried could report a single diocesan seminarian

Every bishop I interviewed was both vividly alert to the challenges he faces and simultaneously at peace.

inspired to pursue priestly life by the current pope. None took any pleasure in acknowledging this." Again, this parallels my own experience from lectures and retreats I have given to numerous seminarians. Perhaps most surprising is that seminarians of my acquaintance, many of whom had barely made their First Holy Communion in the waning years of the John Paul years, name him as their model for priestly life and ministry; Benedict is likewise highly valued by our seminarians.

Maier concludes his essay thus:

I asked each of the bishops I interviewed a concluding question: At the end of the day, what worries and what encourages you the most? In case after case, a bishop gave the same answer to each question – young people. The greatest pain is

the number of young persons exiting the Church. The greatest source of hope is the zeal and character of the young people who remain faithful and love Jesus Christ. And this is why, at some mysterious level, every bishop I interviewed was both vividly alert to the challenges he faces and simultaneously at peace.

The concern about youth and the Church is warranted, but it is a self-inflicted wound. When I was a boy, two out of every three Catholic children in our country attended a Catholic school. That figure has now dwindled to about one in four. Due to nonfeasance and malfeasance for over forty years on the part of bishops (who constantly assure all that they are totally behind our Catholic schools), the largest and most impressive Catholic school system in the history of the Universal Church has been reduced to a shell of its former self.

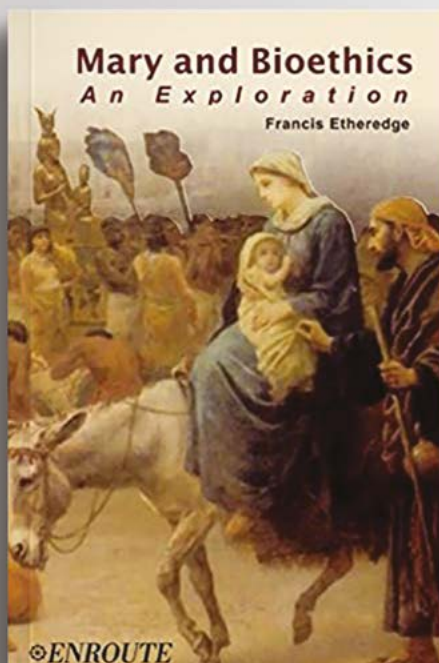
During the 1970s, all too many bishops were cowed into supporting the ridiculous alternative of religious education classes outside our own school structure; for the most part, bishops failed to build schools in the suburbs where the Catholic population was moving; even today, bishops have not taken account of the spiritual danger into which Catholic children are exposed by being subjected to the government schools' program of secularism and immorality. These are also the very bishops who wring their hands about the drying up of the vocation well – even though all the data show that the primary source of priestly vocations has been – and still is – the Catholic school. Dioceses that have maintained their schools and have even built new ones, have no problems with priestly vocations or with the next generation of committed lay believers.



The good news in all this is that our hierarchy is, in the main, rather good and rather focused. My European friends observe, wistfully, that they cannot imagine any European conference of bishops taking the bold, even confrontational, stands against an anti-culture and an oppressive political regime. The U.S. bishops are far from perfect, but they are exponentially better than those I remember from my seminarian days. We ought not make the perfect the enemy of the good. That doesn't prevent me from praying that more of them would show greater courage *ad intra* and *ad extra*.

Fr Peter Stravinskis is the President of the Catholic Education Foundation, Editor of *The Catholic Response* and publisher of Newman House Press.

***Mary and Bioethics:
An Exploration***
by Francis Etheredge



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Marian bioethics

Review by Pia Matthews

This book is intriguing. Intriguing because it takes two very different paths of reflection that at first sight appear to be incongruous. Etheredge has invited nine contributors, notable in their own areas of expertise, to give short introductions to the beginning and end word of the book and to each of his chapters. His contributors raise important issues in bioethics, sometimes from their own personal experience, and explore these issues in the light of Church teaching. Etheredge then draws on his considerable theological knowledge to link these issues into the mysteries belonging to Marian doctrine.

In each case, this becomes not only an exploration of doctrine but also a profound reflection on the very personal aspect of Mary, Mother of God and our mother. In part, this book is an apologetic for Christian and specifically Marian doctrine. However, more significantly, the book explores real human experience, notably the experience of suffering, as experience flows out through the reality of the history of salvation. Etheredge situates this book within what he sees as a climate where only the masculine principle counts. In contrast, Etheredge offers a different approach, one which takes account of the feminine principle, where, as in pregnancy, creativity and patient waiting for the action of God is privileged.

Marxism vs. compassion

Etheredge starts from the argument put forward by Shulamith Firestone, a Marxist feminist writing in the 1970s. Firestone argues that the biological family is the bringer of all things destructive from exploitation of women and children, to entrenching the psychology of power, to the cause of psychological pain. According to Firestone the tyranny of the biological family needs to be broken and replaced by unobstructed pan sexuality. Etheredge notes that many of the so-called advances in bioethics, such as experimentation on embryos and the production of human beings through technology, are in a sense a playing out of this breaking up of the biological family. Etheredge persuasively argues that reflection on compassion as 'being with', focussing on the compassionate figure of Mary, can draw our pain into the reality of being loved by God. Mary, who accepted the gift of life, has a natural affinity with bioethics, the ethics of human life. Moreover, Mary is the antithesis to a falsification of woman and a pointer to a real lived hope, founded on the help of God.

Joseph and Mary

In the first chapter Etheredge returns the family to its origins in the sacredness of the covenant of marriage found in Judaism and lived out in the marriages of biblical characters, in particular Joseph and Mary. In her introduction to this chapter Mary Anne Urlakis draws on her own family experience and the marriage and lives of her parents to show how bioethical themes are the stuff of life, from difficulties in having children to diseases like Alzheimer's and cancer, and how faith sustains in all situations.

In her introduction to chapter two Maria McFadden Maffucci tells about the chal-

lenges she faced with bringing up her son James who was diagnosed with autism. The way in which Etheredge highlights the significance of Mary as the one who welcomed Life holds great resonance for those who welcome the gift of children, however unexpected or surprising that gift might be. Reflecting on Mary as the concrete choice of God in her reality as a woman, enables us to move beyond any mere biological notion of procreation. Mary's own suffering becomes a response to the difficulties of life such as abortion, euthanasia and embryo experimentation. The significance of Mary leads Etheredge into one of his more speculative areas of reflection – whether there should be a new dogmatic statement on the mystery of Mary. Notably, for Etheredge the need for a new feminism may indeed point in this direction.

Mary as a ladder

Laura Elm's introduction to chapter three speaks frankly of infertility and especially of the waste and destruction of human life through assisted reproductive technologies. Etheredge points out that Mary offers hope even when hope seems impossible and all is lost.

The introduction to chapter four is by Edmund Adamus who reflects on the image of Mary as a ladder to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He relates this to his own experience of God's mercy, forgiveness and healing in his relationship with his parents and the still birth of his first son. Etheredge speaks about Mary as consolation in the opening up the heart to the depths of human suffering, especially for those who remain unheard by others. He observes that certain moments in life can be like beads on a rosary representing a person's relationship to prayer. Being open to life is a part of the conversion that is rooted in prayer.

Michal Pruski's introduction to chapter five, reflecting on the conception of new life, engages with Etheredge's exploration of the Immaculate Conception and Mary's own ensoulment. This in turn leads Etheredge to ask whether there needs to be a more precise definition of human conception in Church documents.

Relationality

Chapter six begins with an introduction from Moira McQueen on human beings as beings in relationship and what that might mean for bioethics. McQueen notes the view that bioethics is there to fix difficulties, when in fact much cannot be fixed; that having reverence for the gift of the body is increasingly being challenged in the face of gender ideology. Etheredge explores Mary's relationality as a way of answering some of the questions that are raised by contemporary understandings in anthropology and the complementarity found in male and female, as well as the danger in thinking that human beings need to be freed from this complementarity since it is merely a form of biological conditioning.

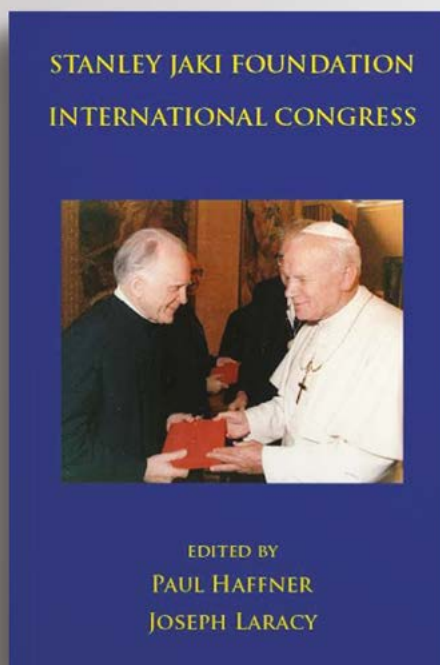
Leah Palmer explores the question of infertility, surrogacy and assisted procreation in the light of Church teaching on responsible parenthood. Etheredge considers how scripture can illuminate some of the real sufferings that people undergo that cannot be solved by easy or appealing fixes.

Dependence on God

Undoubtedly one message of the book is that a contemporary rejection of the family, relationships, life as a gift not a product, patience in suffering, theological anthropology, and a real spirituality rooted in God has led to a bioethical viewpoint dominated by a psychology of power where suffering, love and even personhood has lost their meaning. In this world of the manufacture of children and lessening of relationships those the world considers to be weak always suffer. However, Etheredge argues that with a return to Mary, her humility and dependence on God, there is still hope for conversion. A rich and insightful book, Etheredge and his contributors give their readers much on which to reflect.

Dr Pia Matthews lectures at St Mary's University, Twickenham, and St John's Seminary, Womersley. Her latest book is *Discerning Persons - Profound Disability, the Early Church Fathers, and the Concept of the Person in Bioethics*.

***Acts of the Stanley
Jaki Foundation
International
Congress 2015***
ed. by P. Haffner
and J. Laracy



Gracewing
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Overblown claims

Review by Fr Conor McDonough

This is a curious book. It contains papers delivered at a 2015 conference at Seton Hall University on the thought of Fr Stanley Jaki OSB, the Hungarian physicist and theologian who published over five decades an immense range of original and provocative works on the nature of the natural sciences and their relationship with Christian faith. It is worth pointing out though, that this conference seems to have been focussed more on the propagation than the assessment of Fr Jaki's ideas. For example, all bar two of the contributors are identified on the website of the Stanley Jaki Foundation as members of the "Stanley Brigade", close friends, even fans, of the late Fr Jaki. Their commitment to the furthering of his great intellectual project is an admirable sign of their devotion, but it leads to a book lacking, for the most part, the genuinely critical engagement Jaki's thought deserves.

Dishing out criticism

Jaki himself was well capable of dishing out criticism of ideas he regarded as problematic, as the third chapter of this book, by Msgr Richard Liddy, observes. Liddy, a longstanding colleague of Jaki at

Seton Hall University, was certainly not a member of the “Stanley Brigade”. Although they worked together, and dined in the same room, Liddy explains that they never really got to know one another:

Although I encountered him numerous times, I never really had a substantive conversation with him [...]. The chief reason for [this] was that he was something of a curmudgeon who among other things, made it abundantly clear that he did not share my enthusiasm for the work of my teacher, the Jesuit philosopher-theologian, Bernard Lonergan [...]. So I was not inclined to seek Jaki out for conversation, a conversation laced with attacks in numerous directions: scientists in general, scientism in particular, modern culture, post-Vatican II theologians, etc. One could say he was an equal-opportunity controversialist. The list of his opponents was quite extensive (p. 76).

Even in chapters written by his friends, this abrasiveness and dismissiveness is mentioned. Stacy Trasancos recounts a story Jaki told himself of a graduate student in Rome who came to discuss his doctoral research at the end of one of Jaki's lectures in the Angelicum. In reply, Jaki told the student to “give up his subject”, in a tone, Jaki later explained in his autobiography, that meant, “Would you, please, drop dead” (p.130). Such anecdotes are quite astonishing, but what emerges from them is an image of Jaki as a somewhat self-isolated figure, intelligent and prolific, but perhaps lacking in a collegial spirit that makes possible searching dialogue between peers.

Science and Christian Civilisation

Jaki's central idea, outlined in this volume in three separate chapters which overlap to a large extent (Chapter 2 by Fr Joseph Laracy, Chapter 5 by Dr Stacy Trasancos, and Chapter 6 by Fr Paul Haffner), is the

claim, not only that Christian civilisation was hospitable to science, but that it was *uniquely* hospitable. Anyone familiar with the medieval history of science could agree with the more limited claim that the institutions and minds of Christian Europe were consistently favourable to the study of the natural world, especially from the twelfth century on, with the newly available writings of Aristotle providing both impetus and framework. One might even agree with Jaki and his disciples that the Christian understanding of God, creation, and salvation history provides an *especially* hospitable environment for the serious, methodical study of the natural world, more hospitable certainly than an animist worldview.

But this is not all that Jaki, or his disciples, want to say. They make the far stronger claim that in every other civilisation where science made a beginning, an inevitable “stillbirth” followed, precisely because of the lack of supporting ideas made known only by divine revelation (pp. 29-38, 138-140).

In order to make this claim, Jaki described supposedly scientific civilisations – Egypt, China, India, Babylon, Greece, and Arabia (sic) – as being fatally affected by “pantheism”, and therefore incapable of sustaining the scientific enterprise. I'm not at all qualified to speak on Egypt, China, India, or Babylon, but Jaki's treatment of Greek and Arab thought, at least as outlined in this volume, seemed to me extraordinarily reductive, painting with broad brush-strokes in order to yield a picture that fitted Jaki's central idea. To take just one example among many, Fr Joseph Laracy includes the Islamic world among the “pagan” civilisations who habitually “appeal to the capricious gods and goddesses, beset by very human passions for power and pleasure, to explain the natural world” (p. 65). I couldn't help thinking that the 2010 publication, *Creation and the God of Abraham* (ed. Burrell, Soscice, Cogliati, Stoeger), with its detailed

and nuanced treatment of medieval Christian, Jewish, and Islamic thought on God and creation, should be required reading for anyone seeking to assess Jaki's claims, rather than merely to repeat them.

Historical claims

Apart from these philosophical claims, there is also the question of the historical claims involved in Jaki's thesis that science was born of Christianity, and Christianity alone. Is it really true that science was stillborn in the Greek world, for example? What of the successive generations of late-antique Greek-speakers, pagan and Christian, who read and reacted to the works of Aristotle, yielding important figures like Ptolemy, Galen, and John Philoponus?

And is it true to say that science was stillborn in the Islamic world? One story about science and Islam, still popular among Catholic apologists, tells us that science flourished in Baghdad and Damascus towards the end of the first millennium, but that it did so *in spite of Islam*, and that the reassertion of the Quran's superiority over philosophy by al-Ghazali and others in the eleventh century led to quick decline in Islamic science. Recent decades of research, however, have shown that this story simply is not true, and that considerable scientific advances continued to be made in various contexts in the Islamic world up to the sixteenth century. Howard Turner's book, *Science in Medieval Islam*, published in 1995, demonstrates this dispassionately and shows how absurd is Jaki's claim, repeated by Dr Stacy Trasancos in this volume, that in the Islamic world, "science [did not] become a self-sustaining enterprise" (p. 138).

Not just philosophy and theology

Finally, Jaki's thesis, it seems to me, overestimates the role that philosophical and theological ideas play in history. Of course ideas matter, but so do institutions, and patronage, and the availability of texts. In spite of its access to theological truths about creation and history, the scientific enterprise remained very modest in the Christian West throughout the early Middle Ages, largely because it had lost contact with Aristotle's framework and example. That changed when the Greek texts and methods long known in the Islamic world became available in Latin. Then the Latins found themselves joining a tradition of reading and thinking about nature that included generations of Greeks and Arabs, a tradition they were happy to honour with abundant citation (Albert the Great, for example, in his commentary on the natural works of Aristotle, refers often to Galen and to Avicenna, among many others). If this tradition ultimately flourished in the Christian West, being codified as the scientific method, while it died out in the Islamic world, this is surely largely to do with the institutional innovation of the network of universities, stable thanks to papal backing, which marked Europe out from the rest of the world.

Non-Christians can do science too

Jaki's thesis, as outlined in this volume, is all about ideas: only Christians escape from pantheism, so only Christians can do science. This claim, however, is eminently controvertible, and it is a shame that this volume of studies failed to raise a substantial challenge to Jaki's central idea.

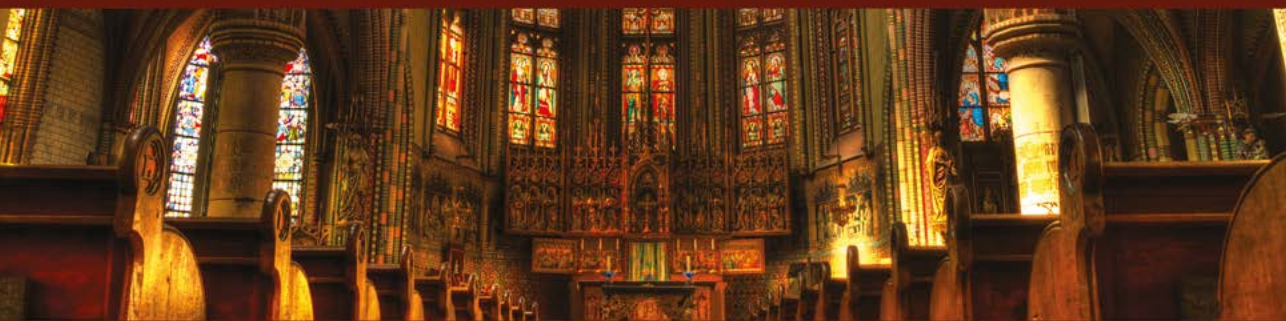
Stanley Jaki was, without doubt, pioneering and indefatigable in his propagation of the great tradition of science in the light of the Gospel. As we take up his torch, and continue to make known the harmony between Christian faith and the natural sciences, we should be careful, I think, to take note of recent scholarship, and to avoid making overblown claims that undermine our case by undervaluing the contributions

of non-Christians. The example of Jesuit astronomers is a good one to follow: when Grimaldi and Riccioli mapped the moon, they had the opportunity to name every peak and crater, but rather than honouring Christians alone, they included among the lunar placenames "Aristotle", "Erasthenes", "Ptolemy", "al-Bitruji", "al-Battani", "al-Zarqali", and many more from beyond the Christian world. Thus they indicated and honoured a community of scientific reason, distinct from the community of faith. We Catholics who emphasise the congruity of reason and faith would do well to mark this distinction too.

Fr Conor McDonough OP teaches dogmatic theology at the Dominican House of Studies, Dublin.

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***Philip Howard,
Cardinal Protector
of England*** by
Godfrey Anstruther,
OP (edited by
Gerard Skinner)



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A Forgotten Cardinal

Review by Fr Nicholas Schofield

Fr Godfrey Anstruther OP will be a familiar name to aficionados of English Catholic history, having produced a number of magisterial studies which are still used by scholars, including the four-volume biographical dictionary of the secular clergy between 1558 and 1850, *The Seminary Priests* (1968-77). Now, over three decades after his death, a new title can be added to his impressive bibliography: a biography of the seventeenth century Dominican cardinal, Philip Howard, for which he unaccountably failed to find a publisher in his lifetime. For some years following his death, the manuscript was feared lost but it has subsequently been found, and we can be grateful to Fr Gerard Skinner for editing it and bringing it to publication.

Chapels and calendars

Philip Howard is today a largely forgotten figure. He was the great-grandson of the martyr, St Philip Howard, and a grandson of the 'Collector Earl' of Arundel. As a young man, despite much family opposition, he entered the Dominicans in Rome and founded a small priory at Bornem, in what is now Belgium. After Charles II's marriage to the Catholic Catherine of Braganza in 1662, Howard returned to London to serve as the queen's Grand Almoner.

There are fascinating descriptions of Catholic life in the capital, where some of the splendour of continental Catholicism could be found at Court and the foreign embassies. These chapels were not always in tune with each other: the embassies, in line with much of Europe, followed the Gregorian calendar, while the queen's chapel followed the English calendar, which had refused to accept Pope Gregory XIII's reforms of 1582, removing ten days to catch up with the solar cycle. Thus, 'a man might have gone to Mass at St James in 1664 and found the chapel draped in purple for Palm Sunday while his wife was listening to the organ pealing forth the joys of Easter in the chapel of the French ambassador' (p.63).

Forgetting their English

Indeed, the book is full of intriguing vignettes and extracts from original documents. How many know that Dunkirk was occupied by the English between 1658 and 1662, and that it was suggested that an English bishop could be appointed there: he could be a 'real diocesan' on English territory, exercising jurisdiction over Catholics across the Channel but without trespassing on any existing English See (p.35)? Or that the custom of students at the Venerable English College in Rome speaking in Latin (except at recreation) was abolished for fear they were 'beginning to forget their mother tongue' (p.189)? Or that one of the sons of the poet John Dryden became a Dominican friar (p.275)?

Clergy squabbles

Anstruther notes that Howard lived as 'the afterglow of the Elizabethan age had faded.' For Catholics, the era of Campion and Persons had passed and, despite the bravery of many, 'there is scarcely a name that is generally known, and nobody who showed outstanding gifts of leadership when a leader was desperate-

ly needed' (pp.1-2). Many of the details of this book reveal the less edifying aspects of ecclesiastical history. Alongside the heroic martyrs and confessors are the squabbles among the clergy, the constant jockeying for positions at Court, the demands for a English Catholic bishop and the search of the Chapter (founded by the first Vicar Apostolic of England in 1623) for formal recognition. We hear of Howard's bete noire, the Benedictine Edward Sheldon, and the rivalry between Archbishop Talbot of Dublin and the sainted Archbishop Plunkett of Armagh. Yes, then and now, the Church is both human and divine.

Foundations

Despite such tensions and the failure of many of his projects, Howard has long been worthy of a new biography. He not only helped lay the foundations for the English Dominican Province but was highly influential as Protector of England and the only English-born Cardinal between Reginald Pole and Thomas Weld (even though he never became an English diocesan). He was a prime mover behind the appointment of John Leyburn as Vicar Apostolic of England on the accession of James II in 1685. Three years later the country was divided into four Districts, a system of government which continued until the mid-nineteenth century.

Anstruther writes in a highly accessible way and has produced a biography that is made doubly impressive by the fact that Howard spent the last six months of his life burning his personal papers. *Philip Howard* is a timely and important contribution to our understanding of seventeenth century English Catholicism and its influence on the politics of the time.

Fr Nicholas Schofield is Parish Priest of Uxbridge and Westminster Diocesan Archivist.

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