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PROMOTING A NEW SYNTHESIS OF FAITH AND REASON

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Executive Editor c/o 106 Dixon Avenue, Glasgow G42 8ER, editor@faith.org.uk
Editorial Board Andrew Nash, Patrick Burke, Tim Finigan, Luiz Ruscillo, Andrea Fraile, Christina Read, Michael John Galbraith.
Book Reviews Andrew Nash, andrew.j.nash@gmail.com
Advertising Manager Scott Deeley, c/o Holy Cross, 11 Bangholm Loan, Edinburgh EH5 3AH, advertising@faith.org.uk
Subscriptions and Faith-Keyway Trust Publications Office Sr Roseann Reddy, 104 Albert Road, Glasgow G42 8DR, subscriptions@faith.org.uk
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Faith, Family and the Future of New Evangelisation *Editorial*

"There can be no love without justice. Love surpasses justice but, at the same time, it finds its verification in justice. … If justice is uncertain, love, too, runs a risk" *St John Paul II*

Towards the conclusion of his landmark book *After Virtue*, the Scottish philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre observes that the death rattle of the Roman Empire began when men and women of good will "turned aside from the task of shoring up the Roman imperium" which had become socially decadent and culturally diseased.

"What they set themselves to achieve instead – often not recognising fully what they were doing – was the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness."

For MacIntyre – a lapsed Marxist turned Catholic – the parallel with our contemporary Western society was both obvious and sobering: "This time, however, the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament. We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another – doubtless very different – St Benedict."

When another saintly Benedict did finally emerge, this time upon the Chair of Peter, his cultural analysis echoed that of MacIntyre: "I would say that normally it is the creative minorities that determine the future, and in this sense the Catholic Church must understand itself as a creative minority," suggested Pope Benedict XVI during an in-flight papal press conference in 2009.

Over the past five decades, the *Faith* movement has providentially emerged as an increasingly vital and vibrant "creative minority" within the Church. Its intellectually coherent vision of faith and reason has become alloyed with an increasing cultural credibility. This has been shaped – in large measure – by the generations of young people who seem attracted to *Faith*'s particular brand of optimistic, orthodox Catholicism. They do not believe themselves to be the faithful remnant of a fading Christian culture. Catholicism, for them, is not a reactionary, rear-guard action.

On the contrary, they possess a quiet, joyful, unshakeable confidence that they "have found the Messiah" and – just as an exhilarated Andrew ran to his brother Peter – they too want to share the reason for their hope with family and friends. They are also shorn of the false dichotomies that seem to trouble a much older generation of Catholics.

For them, there is no choice to be made between the pastoral and doctrinal. No contradiction between justice and mercy. Very often it is growing up in a broken culture and, increasingly, within a broken home that gives them a real-world confirmation of catechetical abstractions. They know there can be no love without justice. They know that the greatest compassion is the compassion of the truth. They know the alternative amounts to little more than hollow sentimentalities, sugar-coated falsehoods: sweet to taste, deadly to human happiness, fatal for the common good.

This rejection of bogus binarism is why young Catholics can readily embrace moral absolutism while seeing no contradiction in apostolically applying it with "pastoral gradualism" or – as they would perhaps call it – emotional intelligence.

Such was the way of Saint Francis of Assisi: "We know that the sickness of self-will is more deeply rooted in some and for these cauterising is needed. Not ointment. It is evident that for many it is more wholesome to be ruled with a rod of iron than to be stroked with the hand. But oil and wine, the rod and the staff, harshness and pity, burning and anointing, the prison and kindness, all these have their season."

Similarly, Saint John Vianney would recommend that priests should be tough in the pulpit but gentler in the confessional. Being pastoral is an art. It is not a science. That is why it can prove nigh impossible to distil it into a universal code of practice. Sometimes compassion necessitates a friendly but firm rebuke. Other times a warm hug will suffice.

Which brings us back to "creative minorities". Any visitor to a *Faith* conference is immediately struck by the number of young priests and deacons in attendance. Christ has, indeed, blessed the movement with a continuing abundance of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Less remarked upon, however, is the vastly greater number of young people who go on to pursue holiness in married life. As Cardinal Daniel DiNardo observed at last month's Synod on the Family in Rome, such authentic Catholic families are the "genuine leaven" in society. "If a loving and stable family can bring consolation and encouragement to just one other family, the effect on the Church and the world is tremendous," said the American prelate.

With the decline of the Roman Empire, it fell to a cheerful band of saintly scholars situated on the outer fringes of the British Isles to preserve Christianity in Europe. From there, they re-evangelised an entire continent. A similar task now awaits a new generation of Catholic husbands and wives. As the family goes, so goes the nation, and so goes the world.

Saint John Paul II, pope of the family, pray for us.

Islamic State's Deadly Threat to Arab Christianity *By Dr John Newton*

Keeping the Faith: Iraq's embattled Christian community.

With the forces of the so-called Islamic State continuing to make advances in the Middle East, Dr John Newton writes exclusively for *Faith* on why the future of Christianity in the troubled region is looking bleak.

More than half a million Christians have left Syria, fleeing to neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, and a similar number are believed to be displaced in Syria itself. In Iraq 120,000 Christians fled their homes between June and August 2014. Although this is a much lower figure than the number who fled in Syria, most estimates suggest there are only around a quarter of a million Christians left in Iraq, making the impact of the recent displacement there so much greater.

While the civil war between the government and rebel opposition has been the major factor in displacing Syrians of all religious beliefs, the simplified narrative predominating in most mainstream western news sources hides the complexities of the conflict. The media has been happy to paint the conflict in black and white, but the reality is closer to a spectrum of nuanced greys. Certainly, President Bashar Al-Assad's regime is responsible for imprisoning political opponents and even torturing and killing a number of those they held. But the opposition has never been the paragon of virtue committed to democratic principles that politicians and journalists have wanted it to be.

For a start, there has never been one single opposition: there have always been a number of different groups, and even from the beginning several of these, such as the Al-Nusra Front, harboured hardline Islamist objectives. Even the Syrian National Coalition, an umbrella group which several western governments have recognised as the legitimate representative body for Syria, includes the Muslim Brotherhood, whose recent treatment of the Christian minority under President Mohamed Morsi in Egypt is hardly encouraging.

Syria's Christians have reported being targeted by Islamist groups throughout the conflict. While accounts of rebel soldiers going door to door in the Christian quarter of Homs in March 2012 and driving them out of the city were initially met with scepticism, by the end of 2013 no one could doubt the intentional targeting of Christians, after three Christian men were shot dead for refusing to convert to Islam and a group of nuns were kidnapped after Maaloula fell to Islamist groups within the opposition.

There were always at least half a dozen militant Islamist opposition groups operating in Syria, including Isis (now calling itself the Islamic State). And, in the military struggle against the government, the clear lines of distinction that the West wants to see between the National Coalition-linked Free Syrian Army and the Islamist factions have been blurred several times. In September 2014 Bassel Idriss, the commander of an FSA-aligned rebel brigade, was one of several group leaders who admitted to working alongside Islamist groups in Syria, including Isis. Idriss confessed: "We are collaborating with the Islamic State and the Nusra Front by attacking the Syrian Army's gatherings in … Qalamoun".

With such practical arrangements in place, it is unsurprising that in 2014 the Islamic State has been able to consolidate its hold on areas in Syria and attempt to expand the territory of its declared caliphate. There were also attempts to extend the caliphate into Lebanon in August when the town of Arsal on the border was taken by Isis and Al-Nusra Front soldiers. Arsal was recaptured by the Lebanese Army, but if Lebanon's Bekaa Valley were to fall to jihadists it would mean disaster for thousands of refugees who have sought sanctuary there. However, the push to extend the caliphate into Syria's eastern neighbour Iraq poses the greatest threat to the continued presence of Christians in the region.

Iraq's Christians have been the subject of attacks by extremists since the aftermath of the US-led invasion. This has led to a haemorrhaging of Christians both to the north of Iraq and out of the country. The most significant post-invasion event was the 31 October 2010 siege of Our Lady of Succour Cathedral in Baghdad, which left 58 dead and more than 70 injured. Within six weeks more than 3,200 had fled their homes and, by the start of 2011, nearly 6,000 Christians had arrived in the north. But even after families fled to the north they were not safe. Speaking to Iraqi refugees in Lebanon during an Aid to the Church in Need

project trip this March, I was told how they had fled Mosul in 2013 because of continuing persecution by extremist Islamists. In one instance leaflets were distributed in a Christian neighbourhood calling for the faithful to leave or be killed. In hindsight it seems like a prelude to the exodus from Mosul this June when Isis seized the city.

> "Iraq's Christians have been the subject of attacks by extremists since the aftermath of the US-led invasion"

Yet while more than 70,000 Christians who fled the advance of Isis have found temporary shelter, of some sort, in the capital of the Kurdish region Erbil, the future of the Church in Iraq remains in the balance. While some have called for a safe haven to be created there, this would require material support which has been lacking throughout the refugee crisis. According to the Chaldean Archbishop Bashar Warda of Erbil, Iraq's national government in Baghdad has done nothing for displaced Christians. He said: "The reality is that Christians have received no support from the central government. They have done nothing for them, absolutely nothing…The government in Baghdad received a lot of help from the international community for the displaced people from Mosul and Nineveh but there has been no sign of it here."

According to one senior cleric in the Kurdish region, the central government withdrew all financial subsidies to the autonomous region in January 2014 after the Kurds started selling oil directly, without going through the Baghdad administration. Because of this the care of the displaced Christians in Erbil and Dohuk has been organised by the Church with support from Christian charities, such as Aid to the Church in Need.

Plans are under way to provide Portacabins in the Ankawa suburb of Erbil as temporary accommodation for displaced families. Those who are sleeping in public parks and other open spaces in the city will need additional protection as winter approaches and alternative accommodation will also be needed for families sheltering in schools, as the buildings are needed for teaching once the new academic year begins. In the absence of state funding, Aid to the Church in Need is again helping the Church in Iraq to provide shelter for those who had to abandon their homes as Isis advanced. Speaking about the project, after returning from a visit to Iraq in October, Aid to the Church in Need's John Pontifex said: "We need to give Christians a chance to find a future in Iraq."

The failure of outside aid to reach Christians has, unfortunately, been a recurrent theme in the region. When Christians fleeing Syria arrived in the neighbouring Bekaa Valley, in Lebanon, the vast majority avoided the semi-official refugee camps, instead turning to the Church for help. At the beginning of 2014 Melkite Greek-Catholic Archbishop John Darwish of Furzol, Zahle and the Bekaa said: "They are afraid… they worry that their names will be given either to the Syrian government or the rebels… I don't believe they have [any] real reason to be afraid, however, and we have tried to help matters by organising meetings between the families and representatives of the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency."

However, after initial attempts to register Christians for UN help, the UNHCR decided that with limited financial resources they would restrict aid to those in the camps. While most refugees in Zahle are looking for work to support their families, jobs are scarce. At best they can only find casual labour, and almost all of the refugees who are working still need the help of the Church to cover their bills. According to one analysis by the World Bank, Lebanon's unemployment rate could reach 20 per cent by the end of 2014 because of the impact of the Syrian conflict on the country's economy.

> "Christians have received no support from the central government. They have done nothing for them, absolutely nothing"

The future of the Christian presence in Iraq and Syria remains uncertain. But the security and safety of the faithful is closely related to the presence of Islamist extremist groups in the region. While well-organised, militarised groups are active on the ground, bent on driving out all those who do not agree with their vision of Islam, there will be no security for the region's Christians.

Dr John Newton, who works in the press and Information department of Aid to the Church in Need, visited Syrian and Iraqi refugees being helped by ACN-backed projects earlier this year.

The Choppy See of Peter

I suspect Paul VI will be the last Italian pope (if we discount the short reign of John Paul I). It strikes me that he had Italian virtues and vices, a touch of "Futurism", a bit too prone to trust those who would betray him and not a very good organiser.

St John Paul II was Polish philosopher. So Polish, in fact, that some suggest his encyclicals are in part only decipherable to someone with an understanding of his brand of philosophy. Benedict XVI was a German, a Bavarian, so anxious to avoid dictatorship that he appointed his enemies to key positions, to the point that his papacy fell apart. Francis is an Argentinian who has witnessed so much bad government he is conscious of the dangers and seems to want to avoid the failure of his predecessor with a neuralgic fervour.

I am sure this is a poor summary but my point is that the Catholic Church in the last 50 years has wobbled from one point to another reflecting the particular concerns of particular popes. Presumably when we have an African or an Asian pope it is going to wobble even more. Nowadays I meet priests who supported Pope Benedict's liturgical initiatives but now have no time for them. They were "Benedictines". Now they have become "Franciscans".

In a sense they are "loyal Catholics" but with each papacy they change, and will continue to change. Under Benedict they fought relativism. Under Francis they tolerate it. We see the same thing happening in parishes, where a change of priest often betokens a drastic change of direction. The result, however, is rarely growth and often serious confusion along with a loss of faith that results in lapsation.

> "If the Church of Rome becomes the source of innovation, can it also be the touchstone of unity?"

In the past the pope was a distant figure who had no impact on the lives of the faithful. But when the papacy is writ large – in fact huge – as this papacy seems to be, and if the next pope and the one after that are equally huge, and if the contrast between popes is so great, can merely being "in communion" with the pope be the guarantor of Catholicism? For some, already, being in communion with Francis means no longer being in communion with Benedict, or Pius or Leo.

The Petrine ministry belongs to the See of Peter, presumably, rather than to the individual who occupies that See. Teaching might not change but its presentation seems to be moving with revolutionary violence that risks shaking the Church to pieces. The most affected are those who could be termed "conservative Catholics". Trads hold on to tradition, liberals to liberalism, but when the tree is shaken so violently what do the conservatives hold on to? Or are they going to be swept away in the tsunami?

Even for liberals there is a problem. What holds them in the Church? Is it that the Church somehow does good? That it gives aid and education, produces an environment where "human flourishing", to use a catch phrase, takes place? Are we really talking about "cultural Catholics", united to the Church by "works" rather than faith in Jesus Christ and his teaching? That might work for a generation or two but in the Church there aren't many young liberals any more. They have all joined Greenpeace or become feminists or are campaigning against fracking or for LGBT rights. The cultural ties and folk memory that bound their grandparents to the Church do not bind them.

> "Presumably when we have an African or an Asian pope the Church is going to wobble even more"

I really am beginning to think that the papacy, which Vatican II saw as unitive, actually becomes self-destructive if it becomes innovative. The very purpose of the papacy is to conserve that which was handed on to it. In the first millennium the faith of the "City of the Two Apostles" stood still while the world revolved; its lack of innovation made it the touchstone of orthodoxy during the Arian and Iconoclastic crises and enabled it to be the memory of the Tradition of the whole Church.

If the Church of Rome becomes the source of innovation, can it also be the touchstone of unity? If not, where can we find that unity which, after all, was promised us by Christ? Can it exist outside of unity with Rome? The answer Orthodoxy and "ultra-Catholics" come up with is that it exists within the Tradition itself. Are ordinary Catholics in my parish and elsewhere going to come up with the same answer?

Father Ray Blake is the parish priest of St Mary Magdalen's Church in Brighton. You can read his blog at marymagdalen.blogspot.co.uk

Of Holiness and Housing

I live in a "post-1930 Lambeth Conference house": a large, detached house optimised for the idealised family of the birth-control era: Mum, Dad and two children (preferably a boy and a girl). It's a lovely house with glorious gardens, but its two single and two double bedrooms are ill-suited to our household of seven (plus menagerie), so with some sadness we are selling.

Searching for a new home has put the tension between the priorities of the housing market and the needs of a large family into stark relief. Just as many attractions consider a "family ticket" to mean two adults and two children, so houses have been built to accommodate the perceived norm of their time.

Contemporary houses in Britain are rarely built with large families in mind, yet it is not uncommon to find a new "executive" home with several reception rooms, a home cinema, a gym … but only three bedrooms (all en-suite). Even older properties originally intended for large households are frequently modified: a six-bedroom house becomes three bedrooms with four bathrooms. Why?

The UK birthrate is currently 1.64. The divorce rate is 42 per cent, and the unmarried relationship break-up rate even higher. The British are living in smaller households, and houses are being built – and altered – accordingly. "Large family homes" are being modified to suit smaller families. Ninety years ago the average new house had four bedrooms and was more than 1,600 square feet. Today it's two-thirds of that size and, in estate agency speak, "boasts" only three bedrooms.

In the south-east of England the average house costs £320,000 (£485,000 in London) and the average salary is £28,000 (£34,000 in London). While property is relatively more affordable in other parts of the country (six times the average salary in the North-east rather than 14 times in London) it's impossible to ignore that even in the most affordable areas house prices are geared towards two-earner families with two or fewer children.

A 2006 study found that houses with three or more bedrooms made up less than one-fifth of new houses built, compared with more than a third 10 years earlier. Another study estimated that 150,000 children are living in bedrooms created by DIY partitioning of another room (tip: they'd probably prefer the larder or airing cupboard).

Catholic families are disproportionately affected by the difficulties of the housing market, particularly those families with one working parent in a housing market where prices are geared towards a two-salary model. Faithful Catholic families, even more so those blessed with many children, are never average and do not fit into the average home. So what do they do?

The first thing is they pray. God provides. He opens our eyes to things that we, in our human frailty, didn't think were possible. Like what? Like location: the starting point isn't "where would we like to live", but rather criteria such as access to a good priest and, of course, enough space to maintain family harmony. I've met growing families who have moved from leafy streets to ex-council houses in "bad" areas in order to get more space, but who became happy, safe and knitted into their new community.

This isn't a call to move into sink estates, but a reminder that the same values that cause us to "think outside the box" when it comes to family size and lifestyle must also come into play when considering where to live. I've known families who have had to manage the incredulity of non-Catholic friends and family after "admitting" that the reason for a move to a less "highly sought after" area is to be closer to a good priest. Being open to God's call means rejecting post-code vanity.

"Catholic families are disproportionately affected by the difficulties of the housing market, particularly those families with only one working parent"

Then there are our perceptions of the space we "need". Triple bunk beds may be great when children are small, but once those sweet-smelling toddlers have become angular teenagers craving privacy, sharing a box room becomes difficult. Fortunately, children tend to be adaptable and often love quirky spaces, and families invent ingenious solutions – loft rooms up ladders, partition walls, caravans in gardens – to create extra space. The youngest son of one large family I know bedded down in a (former) large cupboard, not much bigger than a single mattress in floor space. When a departing elder sibling freed up a "proper" bedroom he refused to move: he loved his cubbyhole.

Time flies. Parents of large families in which older children have already moved on to adult life report a "squash and a squeeze" effect where each child's birth makes the house a little less bearable until breaking point is *almost* reached… then older children spend the day at school, then they're off to university and adult life, and slowly the house becomes almost unbearably large.

And so our search continues. It's difficult trying to balance our Catholic criteria in an environment where there's a plethora of houses that would be perfectly good for any normal (read: non-Catholic) families. We'll continue to pray to St Joseph, but we'll also continue to learn from other Catholic families going through the same challenge; it's not about buying the dream home, it's about doing the right thing.

Antonia Robinson is a home-educating mother of four and lives in London.

INTERVIEW

Sister Andrea Fraile: Campaign Life 2017

Andrea Fraile is a Sister of the Gospel of Life, a Glasgow-based religious community who describe their main apostolate as "the promotion of the dignity of the human being, particularly as regards the role of the family, the sanctity of motherhood, a renewed understanding of the complementarity of the sexes and catechesis". The Sisters operate the Cardinal Winning Pro-Life Initiative, which was founded in 1997 by the late Archbishop Thomas Winning of Glasgow. Next month they will launch Campaign Life 2017, a three-year initiative leading up to the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act.

Editor: So, Campaign Life 2017. Tell us a bit about it?

Sister Andrea: Campaign Life 2017 is designed to gather together and mobilise people in the cause of life, so that, by the time the 50th anniversary of the passing of the Abortion Act comes along on 27 October 2017, the pro-life movement in Scotland will have a more powerful voice than ever. The campaign will be launched on 22 November at the St Margaret Queen of Scots Ladies' Lunch, a gathering of around 120 women who, either explicitly or implicitly, live the pro-life message. Throughout the course of the sumptuous lunch there will be a series of short talks given by courageous women, as well as live entertainment, and the event will be an opportunity for women of all walks of life to come together and talk – something women are particularly good at.

The idea is that Campaign Life 2017 will hold an entire series of events over the following three years – on the feast of the Holy Innocents in December, for instance, or a day for men on the feast of St Joseph in March. There will also be information and training days for various groupings of people for whom the pro-life message is deeply relevant, like clerics and religious, teachers, medics, social workers. We invite people everywhere to commit themselves more fully to the great cause of life, through prayer, learning and action.

Editor: How will you judge the success of the campaign? And how confident are you of that success?

Sister Andrea: Success in the pro-life movement is, as you know, hard to quantify. Success, of course, would be an end to the practice of abortion full stop. This is, unashamedly, our aim and ambition. Do we think that particular success likely in the next three years? No, not really. But we are confident of smaller successes that will feed into the ultimate victory. The truth is, we think that a great many people in this country are basically pro-life, but lack the courage of their convictions either because they can't articulate their thoughts on the subject as they would like, or because they don't think they have the right to state their opinions in public. There is a groundswell of support, in other words, that just has to be unleashed. Success, for us, will be when young people consider being pro-life as natural to them as breathing; when teachers teach, and preachers preach, with courage and conviction; when medics no longer think that abortion is the solution to a woman's problems and work in an environment that allows for this. And when everyone makes the connection between truth and compassion. We're not in a numbers game, but we would certainly be happy with a cast of thousands rather than dozens at a pro-life march in 2017!

Editor: What would you say is more important for the pro-life movement at present: to change the culture or to change political opinion?

Sister Andrea: I would say it's far more important for the movement to change the culture. The abortion law could be repealed tomorrow, and to what end? As long as we live in a cultural milieu in which the unborn child is seen as something to be feared rather than welcomed, or a financial burden rather than a gift, political opinion will be secondary. In the end, I don't think the pro-life movement is about converting the masses in dramatic fashion, or in one fell sweep. If I touch the hearts and minds of two people, and they in turn do the same to another four people and so on, well, slowly but surely we'll convert the whole world. Never underestimate the power of the personal approach.

Editor: What, then, are the biggest cultural trends that undermine the pro-life cause?

Sister Andrea: Alas, there are many, but three loom largest, I think. First, secularism. It is a simple fact, reiterated by the Church time and time again, that when we lose sight of God, we lose sight of Man. If we insist on leaving God out of the picture, it is no wonder that life should become such a disposable commodity, free to be abused and manipulated at will; something to possess and not to cherish.

Sister Andrea Fraile: Campaign Life 2017
continued

The second trend, and this is related, is materialism: the idea that we don't have a soul and therefore, in the final analysis, that our lives have no intrinsic meaning or purpose. We see the consequences of this quite regularly at the Cardinal Winning Pro-Life Initiative when women in crisis pregnancies weigh up the benefits of keeping their unborn child with that of holding on to a second car or a Sky box.

Third, there's relativism. If ever a trend silenced the pro-life voice, it's that one. I repeat, many people are more pro-life than you think, but they say nothing because they no longer have the intellectual conviction (and logic) to say: "If this is true for me, it's true for you."

Editor: In terms of impending milestones, next year marks the 15th anniversary of the foundation of the Sisters of the Gospel of Life. How are things going?

Sister Andrea: All is well with the Sisters, though much of what goes on in religious life, apart from the fruits of the apostolate, belongs to the inner forum and is hard to relate. Let's just say that the life of the religious is never dull and never static; that the constant tussle with God, akin to that of Jacob, always brings with it a new joy, a new peace, a new vigour. Never a day goes by that we don't thank God for the life to which He has called us. We look forward very much to next year and the opportunity that the Year for Religious will give us to renew our commitment and refresh our spirits.

Editor: What's been your cherished moment or moments from the past 15 years?

Sister Andrea: A cherished moment for me would be an occasion early on in our religious life when Cardinal Winning, who started the Sisters along with Sr Roseann, came to our house. He offered Mass in our oratory and we ate together afterwards. It was a beautiful, intimate evening with the Cardinal in which he exhorted us in the words *Novo Millennio Ineunte* to "put out into the deep", and it was one which we came to cherish all the more since he died only a few short months later.

There have been plenty of other moments, though: simpler ones, like when someone approaches me in trust and openness with a genuine desire to encounter God in their lives. I cherish these moments above all else, because I know they approach me not because of who I am, but because of who I represent; and I wonder, yet again, at the privilege we have been given as religious. There can be no greater joy than seeing the faith flourish in those souls.

Editor: How do you balance the contemplative aspect of religious life with the activism of pro-life work?

Sister Andrea: We came to realise, after various trials and errors, that the best way to keep a sane balance between the contemplative and active is to get up early. Before we do anything else, the first few hours of the day are given over to prayer, reading and Mass. The rest of the day is punctuated by the Divine Office and Rosary, although sometimes, depending on what's going on at the Pro-Life Initiative, the timings vary. But the sheer peace and uninterruptedness of the morning is a fantastic balm that carries you throughout the rest of the day's work. A word of Scripture, for instance, that struck you at Exposition, accompanies you and lends contour to the encounters you have with others. The work has to flow from the prayer; there's no two ways about it.

"We came to realise, after various trials and errors, that the best way to keep a sane balance between the contemplative and active is to get up early"

Editor: Are you hopeful of more vocations in the years to come?

Sister Andrea: Yes, we are hopeful. Many people said to us when the Sisters were founded in 2000 that vocations would come by the truckload, but we never really believed that. For a start, there are fewer vocations in the West for reasons that are known and can't be gone into here; but for us personally, the lack of vocations up to this point makes sense, somehow, in the Providence of God.

We were both very raw when we started, and in need of a solid formation. This involves focusing on various aspects surrounding the spiritual, intellectual and social, but it also requires time and experience. It's good for us to persevere, and when God thinks we're good and ready for vocations, He'll surely send them.

Editor: What next for the Cardinal Winning Pro-Life initiative?

Sister Andrea: Apart from organising events and courses for Campaign Life 2017, I hope to develop the post-abortion work we have begun. So many women in Scotland are affected by abortion, broken by their experience, and I firmly believe Rachel's Vineyard retreats are a tremendous force for healing that very particular and painful wound. The retreats are firmly established in England – it's time to establish something more regular in Scotland.

For information on Campaign Life 2017:
Blog: campaignlife.wordpress.com
Email: campaignlife1010@googlemail.com
Tel: 0798 532 2648

For information on the Sisters of the Gospel of Life:
http://gospeloflifesisters.wordpress.com

For information on Rachel's Vineyard:
www.rachelsvineyard.org
See also Sr Andrea's article "Real Healing for Real Grief" in the September/October 2013 issue of *Faith* magazine (available online and in PDF format at www.faith.org.uk)

Saint Paul's Apostolic Zeal: Cardinal Newman's Perspective *By Fr Hermann Geissler FSO*

Nobody can truly be an apostle unless he has first been seized by the grace of God and thereby undergone a profound conversion. In an Anglican sermon, "St Paul's Conversion viewed in reference to his Office", Newman argues Saul's conversion constitutes the beginning of St Paul's ministry.

Pope Francis is calling for the Church "to embark upon a new chapter of evangelisation". Father Hermann Geissler of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith believes that Cardinal John Henry Newman's four sermons on the apostolic zeal of St Paul can help all Catholics rediscover their missionary vocation.

Saul was perhaps the leading persecutor of the Christians but at the gates of Damascus he was "struck down by a miracle, and converted to the faith he persecuted".[1] Above all, Paul's conversion is a demonstration of God's triumphant power: "To show His power, He put forth His hand into the very midst of the persecutors of His Son, and seized upon the most strenuous among them."[2] It is the grace of conversion that makes Paul the model Apostle whose appeal is undimmed by the passage of time. Paul experiences the extremes of sin and God's mercy, which so captivates him as to make him the spiritual father of the Gentiles: "In the history of his sin and its most gracious forgiveness, he exemplifies far more than his brother Apostles his own Gospel; that we are all guilty before God, and can be saved only by His free bounty."[3] All apostles are called, like Paul, to testify to God's mercy, first with their lives but also with their words.

Paul's past life made him a particularly apt instrument for God's designs for the gentile nations. While the spreading of the Gospel is primarily the work of God's grace, not of men, God nevertheless almost always uses human co-operation to realise his plans. Paul is, one might say, predestined for his mission to the pagans – not only because of his learning and his spiritual gifts, but because of the path of faith he followed and his conversion experience. This path had taught him not to be discouraged by the gravity of one's sins, to find the sparks of faith that are hidden in the hearts of men, to identify with those experiencing temptations, to carry humbly God's revelation and to use wisely his own experiences in bringing others to conversion. Thus Paul becomes a "comforter, help and guide of his brethren" because he "know[s] in some good measure the *hearts of men*".[4]

It is consoling to realise that God can use all our life experiences, both good and bad, to spread the Gospel. Newman does not imply that to become an apostle or a saint one must first sin. Paul was not a better Christian on account of his sins, but they "rendered him *more fitted for a particular purpose* in God's providence, more fitted, when converted, to reclaim others".[5]

Knowledge of Human Nature

Profound union with Christ, the fruit of an authentic conversion, leads St Paul to say: "It is no longer I, but Christ living in me. The life that I am now living, subject to the limitation of human nature, I am living in faith, faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

A select few saints become so filled with God's life that they seem to lose themselves entirely and appear to no longer possess a human nature. In his sermon "St Paul's Characteristic Gift", Newman shows St Paul is numbered among another group "in whom the supernatural combines with nature, instead of superseding it, invigorating it, elevating it, ennobling it; and who are not the less men, because they are saints".[6] Newman argues that the characteristic that sets the Apostle apart is that the fullness of the divine gifts do not destroy his humanity but rather elevate and perfect it.

For this reason, Paul understands man with all his strengths, weaknesses and temptations: "Human nature, the common nature of the whole race of Adam, spoke in him, acted in him, with an energetical presence, with a sort of bodily fullness, always under the sovereign command of divine grace, but losing none of its real freedom and power because of its subordination. And the consequence is that, having the nature of man so strong within him, he is able to enter into human nature, and to sympathise with it, with a gift peculiarly his own."[7]

Even if before his conversion the Apostle conducted his life with rigour, now, finding himself among the despised pagans, he speaks as if he were one of them, experiencing solidarity with those like himself, with all of Adam's descendents. He is conscious of his wounded nature with all its emotions and inclinations towards sin that are typical of man living in a fallen world. In this sense, Paul, following in the Lord's footsteps, carries the sins of all men and feels himself in full communion with them. He knows human nature intimately because he sees "in that nature of his which grace had

sanctified, what it was in its tendencies and results when deprived of grace".[8] A faithful missionary is always on the way of conversion and renewal in Christ. Such a missionary is able to enter into the differing circumstances of people's lives, their emotions, to understand their struggles and to share their joys and worries.

Newman explains Paul's modus operandi: "He was a true lover of souls. He loved poor human nature with a passionate love, and the literature of the Greeks was only its expression; and he hung over it tenderly and mournfully, wishing for its regeneration and salvation."[9] God's salvific plan embraces the Greeks and all humanity. Though "the heathen are in darkness, and in sin, and under the power of the Evil One, he will not allow that they are beyond the eye of Divine Mercy."[10] The Apostle never rejects anything authentically human. With his generous heart he is convinced God wants everyone to be saved.

Love for His People

Newman also speaks of Paul's love for Israel. If the Apostle felt bound to the whole of the human race, "what did he feel for his own nation! Oh what a special mixture, bitter and sweet, of generous pride (if I may so speak), but of piercing, overwhelming anguish, did the thought of the race of Israel inflict upon him!"[11]

> "To fulfil his designs God does not need heroes but hearts full of love"

Even after his conversion, Paul will not gainsay God's choice: Israel is God's Chosen People. This is particularly evident in the Letter to the Romans, in which he writes: "They are Israelites; it was they who were adopted as children … and out of them … came Christ who is above all, God, blessed forever. Amen" (Rom 9:4-5). With what gratitude does Paul look to Israel: "the highest of nations and the lowest, his own dear people, whose glories were before his imagination and in his affection from his childhood".[12]

Yet this pride is accompanied by sadness (cf Rom 9:2). It is precisely this people – a people that has waited centuries for the promised Messiah, that has prepared the way and announced his coming – that has rejected him. Paul could well understand Israel's obstinacy because he himself had shared the same thoughts and feelings about Jesus. Moved by compassion, Paul, like Moses before him, interceded for his people. He wished "that I myself might be accursed and cut off from Christ" (Rom 9:3).

Despite everything, Paul never loses hope. Though most Jews have rejected Christ, Paul is consoled to think that their obstinacy has become a blessing for the pagans, and he hopes in the prophecy of their future recovery. Similarly, every true apostle experiences the same feelings for his own family and people: gratitude for the good received, sincere readiness to intercede for those who don't know or have forgotten the Lord, and an unbreakable confidence in God's mercy.

Sympathy for the Faithful

In his sermon "St Paul's Gift of Sympathy",[13] Newman describes the Apostle's love for Christians and stresses that Paul is so full of love for others that "in the tenor of his daily thoughts, he almost loses sight of his gifts and privileges, his station and dignity, except he is called by duty to remember them, and he is to himself merely a frail man speaking to frail men, and he is tender towards the weak from a sense of his own weakness".[14] Paul knows that not only do others need God's mercy, but above all others he himself has need of it. Admitting his own weakness, he says: "But we hold this treasure in pots of earthenware, so that the immensity of the power is God's and not our own" (2 Cor 4:7). Precisely this awareness links him all the more intimately with his spiritual children, and he speaks of his weakness constantly (cf 2 Cor 7:5; 1 Cor 2:3ff; 2 Cor 12:7; 2 Cor 1:8).

Why does Paul speak so openly of his weakness and internal struggles? Newman explains: "A man who thus divests himself of his own greatness, and puts himself on the level of his brethren, and throws himself upon the sympathies of human nature, and speaks with such simplicity and such spontaneous outpouring of heart, is forthwith in a condition both to conceive great love of them, and to inspire great love towards himself."[15] Being an apostle should not be confused with worldly heroism or a perfectionist attitude. To fulfil his designs God does not need heroes but hearts full of love: hearts seized by the fire of his love and, thus purified and transformed, made capable of drawing others into intimacy and leading them lovingly to Christ.

Time and again, Newman stresses that the grace in Paul's heart does not repress his human nature; rather this nature is sanctified and ennobled. Though he loses what is sinful, Paul retains everything authentically human. He lives in communion with his beloved Lord but at the same time is sensitive to the feelings of those around him. Newman sees this as the essence of Paul's humanity. "Wonderful to say, he who had rest and peace in the love of Christ, was not satisfied without the love of man; he whose supreme reward was the approbation of God, looked out for the approval of his brethren. He who depended solely on the Creator, yet made himself dependent on the creature. Though he had that which was Infinite, he would not dispense with the finite.

"He loved his brethren, not only 'for Jesus' sake', to use his own expression, but for their own sake also. He lived in them; he felt with them and for them; he was anxious about them; he gave them help, and in turn he looked for comfort from them. His mind was like some instrument of music, harp or viol, the strings of which vibrate, though untouched, by the notes which other instruments give forth, and he was ever, according to his own precept, 'rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that wept'; and thus he was

the least magisterial of all teachers, and the gentlest and most amiable of all rulers."[16]

The link between Paul and his companions is particularly strong. He rejoices "that Stephanus and Fortunatus and Achaicus have arrived" (1 Cor 16:17) and writes: "I had no relief from anxiety, not finding my brother Titus" (2 Cor 2:13). He says that Epaphroditus has been "seriously ill and nearly died; but God took pity on him, and not only on him but also on me, to spare me one grief on top of another" (Phil 2:27). He laments: "All the others in Asia have deserted me" (2 Tim 1:15).

Newman is profoundly touched by the compassion and pain expressed in these words. "He, in a word, who is the special preacher of Divine Grace, is also the special friend and intimate of human nature. He who reveals to us the mystery of God's Sovereign Decrees, manifests at the same time the tenderest interest in the souls of individuals."[17] The true Christian is big-hearted, has a universal point of view and prays for everyone. At the same time, however, he turns with love to those around him because he recognises the dignity of the individual and the unique vocation of each person. His concern is the eternal salvation of every single person.

This love towards all is at the root of the Apostle's indignation when he discovers within the Christian community feelings of envy, jealousy and rivalry. He considers these attitudes shameful and unworthy, "not only as injurious to his Saviour, but as an offence against that common nature which gives us, one and all, a right to the title of men". To the community in Corinth whose loyalties are divided between Apollo, Peter and himself, he asks "has Christ been split up?" (1 Cor 1:13). Among those reborn through grace "there is no room for distinction between Greek and Jew. … There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything" (Col 3:11). The believer possessed of an apostolic heart therein nurtures the same aspirations as Jesus and repeats with him his prayer that *all may be one*.

The Good Fight and Trust in God

Newman's notes for a sermon titled "On St Paul the Type of the Church as Missionarising"[18] have survived. This homily stresses that Paul was above all a sower of the Word. He "sowed in all places", and he was a champion, not merely as David against Goliath but, rather, "against the world".[19] This activity, begun by Paul, will be continued in the Church throughout the world – not just in the sowing of the Word, but also in the struggle of, and fight for, the faith.

Paul is the model par excellence. He struggled in faith against the Jewish Zealots. It is enough to think of the 40 men who "held a secret meeting at which they made a vow not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul" (Acts 23:12). He had to fight against the pagan fanatics as well. This can be seen in the revolt of the silversmiths in Ephesus (cf Acts 19:21). He had to confront the indifferent, for example Festus the governor who declared him mad (cf Acts 26:24), or with the Greek philosophers who ridiculed him, but of whom some wished to hear him speak again of the resurrection (cf Acts 17:32).

Newman applied these examples to his own day: the Church in England in the 19th century had to fight with faith against evangelical zealots and face the indifference of politicians. The former called Rome the antichrist, the latter were only interested in political expediency. Most certainly this is also true of our own day: the hostility and indifference of today's culture make it difficult for many to receive the Good News and to bear witness to it.

> "The believer of apostolic heart repeats with Jesus his prayer that all may be one"

But Newman is no pessimist. On the contrary, he is full of faith, because in faith he sees the greatness and the unity of the Church of ages: "This awful unity of the Church is our consolation." This shows that "the Church comes from God" and "nothing comes strange and new to her".[20] This leads him to conclude that the vocation of every generation of Christians is "to sow and to fight, and to leave the rest to God".[21]

In his Pauline sermons, it is striking that Newman never describes a missionary strategy, nor does he emphasise the Apostle's extraordinary feats. Newman delineates the heart, the interior profile, of a true apostle and prizes the interior movements of the heart over external activity. These become a kind of spring welling over into Paul's thoughts, words and deeds, and they are as relevant today as ever.

Fr Hermann Geissler FSO is a priest of the spiritual family The Work. He is also the director of the International Centre of Newman Friends in Rome.

Notes

[1] John Henry Newman, *St Paul's Conversion viewed in reference to his Office*, in: id., *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. II, Christian Classics INC. Westminster, Md. 1966, p. 96.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 97.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 101.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 102.
Newman, *St Paul's Characteristic Gift*, p. 96-97.
[7] *Ibid*, p. 96.
[8] *Ibid.* p. 97.
[9] *Ibid*, p. 98.
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Ibid.* p. 99-100.
[13] John Henry Newman, *St Paul's Gift of Symptathy*. In: id., *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, Longmans, Green & Co., New York 1908, pp.?.
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 112-113.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 114.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 116.
[18] John Henry Newman, *On St Paul the Type of the Church as Missionarising*, in: id., *Sermon Notes*, Longmans, Green, and Co, London 1913, pp. 62-64.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 64.
[21] *Ibid.*

This United Kingdom: Life in the Wake of the Scottish Referendum

The Scottish independence referendum campaign grew in passion and determination towards 18 September. It culminated in a fraught day and evening of voting and counting in which the nationalists fell short of their dream.

It is surprising how people's perceptions and experiences of the campaign differed so widely. Experiences ranged from an exhilarating political adventure to an unpleasant period of hostility and intimidation. Certainly there was much emotion and energy and it is not surprising that this may have led to instances of ugliness and unpleasantness. It also led to excitement and euphoria which swept up many in the swelling numbers that just a week before the vote seemed to be on the verge of winning a Yes vote.

The heat of the election battle was not easily dissipated and considerable numbers of nationalist supporters have attempted to keep alive their campaign for what they see as freedom. The political momentum has prompted much talk that there has to be change and that new powers will be granted to the Scottish Parliament. This was given headwind by desperate promises from Westminster politicians who were panicked by last-minute polls showing that an independence vote was a possibility. We will see the first fruits of these discussions on 25 January, when the Smith Commission, set up to examine further devolution, reports.

> "Secular causes have taken advantage of the new Scottish Parliament, and the Scottish Secular Society said on its website that 'a Yes vote is the holy grail of secularism'"

The timetable certainly seems too hurried, but politics typically is reactive and rushed because of short-term pressures and challenges. Perhaps rather longer is needed to let the dust settle, analyse why people are so desirous of change and then identify any constitutional or political adjustments that may be required. But the political and media world has a life of its own, which will push on.

Alex Salmond and those who worked with him did a remarkable job to raise support for their cause but interestingly didn't seem to consider the possible damage to that cause from pushing through same-sex marriage in the face of strong opposition. With little more than a week to go the First Minister was still promising that "independence is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to embed and enhance LGBTI rights… in a written constitution".

Secular causes have certainly taken advantage of the new Scottish Parliament, and the Scottish Secular Society said on its website that "a Yes vote is the holy grail of secularism". The last 15 years of the Scottish Parliament must have encouraged secularists to think that the trajectory in this direction could be hastened. However, the personal instincts of Mr Salmond to support community groups left a dilemma for many. He has strongly spoken out for Catholic schools and he put considerable energy behind making the papal visit of 2010 a success.

Mr Salmond's approach did lead to inconsistencies and he allowed the cultural tide to resolve these. His departure from leadership leaves a question mark over how such issues will be dealt with in future. His appreciation of the Catholic Church in the history and life of the Scottish nation was genuine even if he did not fully understand why secularism was a threat to it. His departure is likely to mean the loss of a supportive voice.

The religious dimension was not ostensibly very evident save for inferred loyalties from the intervention of the Orange Order and from a group of independence supporters advertising their faith to encourage fellow Catholics to join their political cause. The bishops clearly understood the importance of ensuring that our faith is a source of unity and not an excuse for partisan politicking. They wisely avoided entwining the faith in a political campaign, as that could only have undermined the effectiveness of our evangelical role.

Assessing the future I can only attempt to identify some lessons that I think may continue to exert their influence on Scotland and the United Kingdom.

First, the display of raw emotion and the profound belief that a political cause can solve social problems must be harnessed and directed toward a deeper analysis. The use of emotivism for selling an idea is too prevalent in politics – as is the willingness to denigrate those with whom one disagrees, though whether any such vilification took place during the campaign was hotly contended. Much was at stake, and if football fans can turn passion into aggression it can be of little surprise that the same thing happens with regard to the constitutional future of one's country.

The era of Margaret Thatcher is iconic in Scottish politics. She was vilified as the cause of just about every social problem. As a result it is widely seen as an insult just to identify someone as a Tory. Poisoning the wells in this way could not have been foreseen as endangering the Union that Labour supports. Even on a practical level the party must know that without Scotland it could find itself in perpetual opposition. But co-operating with the Conservatives in defence of the Union made it possible for Labour to be at the wrong end of anti-Tory hostility – a hostility which Labour has fostered and from which it has previously benefited.

The referendum campaign also demonstrated the way politics has become an area of entertainment, in which ding-dong battles between protagonists heighten the drama. The world has enough problems without injecting unwarranted hostility into our own political system. Politics is about making prudential judgements, and an awareness that any such

"Strong debate is the lifeblood of democracy but it needs a unifying culture to hold it together. The Church is well placed to foster such a culture"

judgement has at least some chance of being wrong should add a bit of humility and understanding to political debate. Is it too much to ask that those working for the common good of our country or state should refrain from loathing each other? Strong debate is the lifeblood of democracy but it needs a unifying culture to hold it together. That is a demand which challenges the virtue of our politicians and the Church should be well placed to foster such a culture for the greater good of the country.

> "The bishops clearly understood the importance of ensuring that our faith is a source of unity and not an excuse for partisan politicking"

A feature of the referendum was dissatisfaction with the current state of society, and also of politics – partly, I believe, because we expect too much from it. Stronger communities with more participative citizens are vital to overcoming that attitude; they will also provide a better basis for genuine devolved governance, an area not explored greatly in the referendum debate.

It is to be hoped that the dramatic rise in SNP party membership from about 25,000 a year or so ago to around 77,000 signifies a grassroots willingness to get involved in politics that will spread to other parties. In this way parties will have a better chance of focusing on real issues, rather than the politically correct ones which have percolated into the political system in recent years through the influence of small interest groups.

The swell of numbers could, however, mean more than another push for independence. Radical socialist groups were a voluble element of the campaign for independence and could penetrate the SNP as Militant did with Labour in the 1980s. The SNP is a well-oiled machine that is streets ahead of Labour in Scotland; it could harness its new membership to achieve political dominance in once-unassailable Labour heartlands.

Labour has much to recover before the general election, yet whether it can fight a united campaign in 2015 is far from assured, and in socialist-minded Scotland the nationalists are seen as having surpassed Labour in their socialist rhetoric. The party will be hoping that the energy will dissipate from the ranks of its opponents. Perhaps simple changes in tone and style will be able to address the concerns of many prospective supporters.

Ensuring that the United Kingdom is not seen as synonymous with England may simply need a more tactful presentation of Scotland on the international scene. That Westminster is perceived to be more in touch with the four corners of the United Kingdom is widely recognised. The Scottish Parliament and Government try to reach all parts of Scotland by convening meetings in different parts of the country. Similar initiatives cannot be too difficult for the authorities at Westminster to instigate or expand. More determined efforts at collaboration between the UK and the Scottish government seem necessary to strengthen the bonds within a unified state, which is the option the Scottish electorate have chosen, albeit that democracy can never deliver the answer that everyone likes.

Giving Scottish ministers a role in European negotiations, or in cabinet meetings in Westminster, may help to foster co-operation; but whether any such offers would be accepted by those in power in Scotland remains to be seen. Strong commitments to working together may need to be sought as the Smith Commission prepares its roadmap for change in Scotland. The issue of independence has shaken the political establishment and the rise of the UK Independence Party promises further radical realignment.

John Deighan is the Parliamentary Officer for the Bishops Conference of Scotland.

OBITUARY

Jim Dobbin KSG KMCO *By Lord David Alton*

Member of Parliament & Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Pro-Life Group

Jim Dobbin, the Labour MP for Heywood and Middleton, has died aged 73. He chaired the All-Party Pro-Life Group in the Westminster Parliament.

Hs final speech in the House of Commons, just before his sudden death, was to urge caution over producing "three-parent designer babies" through the controversial mitochondrial replacement technique.

He said that Parliament was being railroaded into a decision with profound ethical and public safety implications, without adequate debate: "Denying Parliament the opportunity to examine these results seems difficult to defend. In effect, it would be asking the House to vote blind on the safety of techniques that the House might reject outright on the basis of the results. Let us be clear and honest about this: the results could not be published and peer-reviewed in time for the rumoured vote in the autumn."

Following his warnings, the influential *New Scientist* magazine has now joined the calls for greater scrutiny of the proposals.

Jim Dobbin put his experience and background as a microbiologist to good use in fighting against genetic manipulation, the destruction of human embryos and the cloning of animal-human hybrids, and in defending the sanctity of the life of the unborn child. His personal family experience of disability issues made him an avowed opponent of eugenics and of euthanasia. His belief in the inalienable right to life made him a staunch defender of the vulnerable and a fierce opponent of anyone who trampled on the weak. He spoke up in defence of marriage and the family.

His lifelong commitment to "the common good" and to defending the voiceless, the poor and the marginalised led him to champion unpopular causes at home and overseas.

In recent years he had served as my vice-chairman of the All-Party Group on North Korea and participated in the work of other all-party groups, such as the Parliamentary Working Group on Human Dignity. He attended the inaugural conference of the International Catholic Legislators Network, believing that Catholic parliamentarians and legislators should have a network within which they could develop friendships and ideas; and he was an active member of the British Chapter of the ICLN.

He was a supporter of several charities and each year took part in the annual fund-raising sponsored walk for Right to Life, always encouraging people to stand up and be counted for the unborn.

Jim came from a Scottish working-class background and was the son of devout Roman Catholic parents. He was born in Kincardine, in "the Kingdom of Fife", on the north shore of the Firth of Forth. His father, William, was a miner and his mother, Catherine (née McCabe), was a mill worker. As a result of their work his parents had suffered from chronic respiratory diseases such as pneumoconiosis, and this had led to them encouraging Jim to seek education as an exit route from the mines.

He worked for three decades in Britain's National Health Service and developed a passion for promoting public health. In addition to defending the rights of the unborn and those at the end of their lives, we had worked together in recent years to promote research into the asbestos-related disease mesothelioma. He saw all these issues through the same lens: that all people are made in the image of God and are, therefore, of infinite worth.

Jim went to St Columba's High School, Cowdenbeath, and St Andrew's High School, Kirkcaldy, before studying bacteriology and virology at Edinburgh's Napier College.

His working life then took him south of the border to live in the north of England, together with his redoubtable and devoted wife, Pat (née Russell), whom he married in 1964, and their two sons and two daughters. It was there, in the Borough of Rochdale, that, in 1983, he became involved in local government. In 1994 he was elected Leader of the Council and in 1997 he became one of the borough's two Members of Parliament.

As a local councillor he won a reputation for brave and steadfast decency. And in the House of Commons he quickly became respected on all sides as a principled man who stood up for his deeply held beliefs rather than blindly following the dog whistle of party politics.

Quietly determined and persistent, Jim earned a reputation as a man who would not easily be deflected. John Bercow, the Speaker of the House of Commons, attended his funeral in Manchester, rightly describing him as "a deeply principled and independent-minded parliamentarian".

In Parliament, Jim Dobbin campaigned for a reduction in the upper limit at which women may abort their unborn child, from 24 to 13 weeks. He highlighted the eugenic clause in British law which allows the abortion of babies with

"Jim's ideas were rooted in the Church's social teachings. Yet for all his devout Catcholicism, there was not a drop of sectarian blood in him"

Jim Dobbin (right) with Professor Lord Alton of Liverpool KCSG.

disabilities up to birth; and drew attention to "gendercide" – the abortion of little girls merely because of their gender.

His passion for the rights of disabled people was undoubtedly influenced by the disabilities experienced by two of his grandchildren – one of whom has just begun undergraduate studies at the University of Oxford. Jim was enormously proud of him.

Unsurprisingly, when the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecology called in 2006 for a debate on Dutch-style "mercy killing" of severely disabled babies, Jim compared the proposal to the eugenics policies of the Nazis and said: "This sends the message that only the perfect are acceptable and the disabled can be discarded."

Jim was proud of his Christian Socialism and his membership of the Co-operative Movement (which had its origins in the Rochdale Pioneers), and his ideas were rooted in the social teachings of the Catholic Church. These ideas had once been a bulwark against Marxism within the Labour Party and the Trades Union Movement. Jim was disturbed to see the emasculation of this tradition, particularly by virulent secularists who promoted a new form of sectarianism and anti-Catholic attitudes. These prompted him in 2008 to write to Gordon Brown, then Prime Minister and Labour Leader, warning that Labour must be wary of losing touch with its roots and alienating the country's six million Catholic voters.

Jim was a regular fixture at the Wednesday night Parliamentary Masses, and in recognition of his commitment to his faith and the Church he received a Papal Knighthood from Pope Benedict XVI and became a Knight of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of St George. Yet for all his devout Catcholicism, there was not a drop of sectarian blood in him. He was an active member of the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship and, in a sign of the esteem in which he was held by Christians from across both Houses, he was asked to act as chairman of the National Prayer Breakfast, held annually at Westminster.

Throughout his political life he was given unswerving support by Pat, who shared his causes and convictions with equal passion.

Their love and commitment to one another gave Jim great strength. Pat and their family will be devastated by Jim's sudden death, while in Poland on parliamentary business, and his friends will be holding them all in their thoughts and prayers.

Jim Dobbin, born 26 May 1941, died September 6 2014.
Requiescant in pace.

David Alton – Professor Lord Alton of Liverpool KCSG – was a friend and colleague of Jim Dobbin MP.

The Synod: In Search of Identity

What an extraordinary Extraordinary Synod of Bishops we are having. I write as the second half of this year's gathering gets under way. The theme of next year's phase of the Synod was announced 13 October, immediately after the reading of the Relatio Post-disceptationem, or mid-term report, which marked the end of the first half of this Synod.

The announcement made clear that the present Extraordinary Synod for the Family – to be held at the Vatican from 5 to 19 October 2015 – is just part of a two-year path. So this year's final document issued by the synodal fathers will be but a preparatory document for the next Synod. The topic will be slightly different: 2015's theme will be "Vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world". This year's has been "The family in the context of new evangelisation".

The pre-discussion Relatio, signed by Cardinal Peter Erdo, identified all the issues at stake. Far from dealing just with the issue of access to Holy Communion for those who are civilly remarried, the Relatio had much more to say, as we all now know! There seemed to be a desire to shape global norms for pastoral practice.

"It is particularly useful for the bishops of the local communities to be offered clear guidelines to help those living in difficult situations," since "it is unrealistic to expect that by themselves they will find the right solutions in conformity with the truth of Gospel and nearness to the individual in a particular situation," the document read. It did not, however, present new doctrine. That's worth remembering.

The Relatio read that "a missionary conversion is required". It is not enough to stop at an announcement "that is merely theoretic and has nothing to do with people's real problems", since "it must not be forgotten that the crisis of faith has led to a crisis in matrimony and the family and, as a result, the transmission of faith from parents to children has been interrupted".

The focus on a new way of communicating the Gospel was much in evidence during the discussion among the synodal fathers. During the first week of discussions, most of them have spoken about a change of paradigm in communications. That change was very noticeable in the post-discussion document.

This latter is one of the means by which news from this synod of bishops is disseminated. Usually, synodal fathers draft and vote on a series of propositions, to be delivered to the Pope, who in turn chooses whether to make the document public or not.

This synod did not vote on the propositions, but produced afinal document of synthesis. This will be the basis for the working document of next year's synod's on family.

It is easy to understand that Pope Francis will be wanting to publish the document, thus giving the Church a clear indication of the direction taken. For the first time, he appointed a group of six prelates to assist the general rapporteur and secretary of the synod, Cardinal Erdo and the Archbishop of Chieti-Vasto, Bruno Forte, in drafting the final document.

These six are the president and deputy of the Commission for the Message, Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture; Archbishop Victor Fernandez, rector of the Catholic University of Argentina; the general superior of the Congregation of Jesus, Fr Adolfo Nicolás; Archbishop Carlos Aguiar Retes, president of the Latin American Bishops Conference; Cardinal Donald Wuerl, archbishop of Washington; and the bishop of Cheju, South Korea, Peter Kang-U-il.

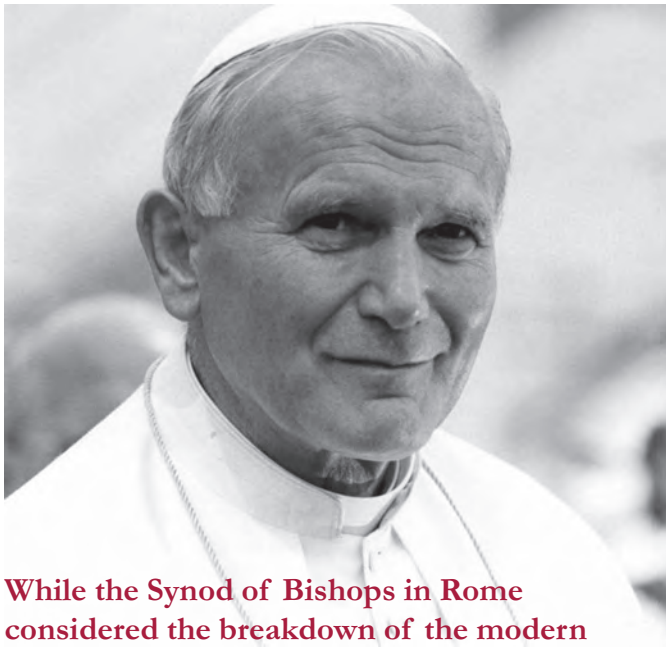
The group had been appointed "in order to give light to all the issues", and will be entrusted as "pastoral advisers" based on their pastoral experience, according to the Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin. Noteworthy is the absence among them of any representative from Africa, despite African bishops having been among those who had voiced some of the crucial concerns on family issues.

As well as a weakening of the natural family, African countries are now facing the pressure of multinational companies and international organisations to introduce legislation for same sex-marriages and gender-oriented laws, which they cannot accept.

Not by chance, one of the strongest and at the same time most sensitive stances on gay marriages came from Bishop Ignatius Kaigami of Davos. Questioned about homosexuality, he stressed that the Church has fought more than any other group in Africa to stop discrimination against homosexual people, and at the same time he clearly stressed that the family is formed from a man and a woman, open to procreation and following the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Andrea Gagliarducci is an Italian journalist. He is the Catholic News Agency's Vatican analyst.

Brokenness in Family Life: Insights from the Theology of the Body *By Peter Kahn*



While the Synod of Bishops in Rome considered the breakdown of the modern family, Peter Khan believes there are many insights and solutions to be offered by St Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body.

A great deal of attention has focused recently on the difficulties and brokenness that we experience in our most intimate relationships with each other. The Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family was convened in large part to consider how the Church should best exercise pastoral care in these matters. The canonical processes that are involved have received particular attention, as have the difficulties themselves. But it remains important to continue to explore the theological basis for pastoral responses. It is now quite widely accepted that Saint John Paul's theology of the body represents the most substantive development that the Church has seen in recent years in our understanding of human sexuality. This is a corpus of theology that warrants further exploration in relation to the specific challenges that the Synod has been facing.

In this article, I would like to draw inspiration from the theology of the body to consider human brokenness in family life. José Granados has pointed out in the journal *Communio* that the theology of the body has particular relevance for a theology of suffering.[1] He argues that St John Paul's earlier apostolic letter *Salvifici Doloris* highlights the need to consider the role of self-giving in any response to suffering, with clear links to the theology of the body. More specifically, Granados suggests that an entire chapter remains to be written in the Pope's theology of the body, namely "the transition between the fallen and redeemed states of mankind" (p540).[2] The recent Synod on the family has indeed partly focused its deliberations on this transition, particularly through the notion of the law of graduality. This law is taken to incorporate the idea that love and holiness may still be present even where one does not fully realise the ideal vision of the Christian family. The idea comes in part from St John Paul's apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, in which the pope indicated that as human persons we know, love and accomplish moral goodness in stages of growth. There may be a great deal to gain from considering this transition in relation to the theology of the body.

Granados notes that the transition begins in earnest with Abraham. However, it is also clear that many distinctive aspects of the original experience of Adam and Eve are only rediscovered by Abraham's descendants. This is especially the case with Jacob, who is synonymous with the people of Israel. I explore ways in which Jacob's work reflected life as it was in the beginning in my booklet *Work and the Christian Family*.[3] Here, though, we take as our starting point the text from the third chapter of Genesis that focuses on the entry of suffering into our family relationships. We then develop our understanding by considering specific biblical figures, where we see this transition occur from a fallen state to a redeemed state. This approach further follows the model that Saint John Paul adopted in his consideration of the relationship between Tobias and Sarah, a consideration that features in the theology of the body.[4] Are there ways in which we can see these biblical figures enter into life as God intended it in the beginning? If this is the case, we may be able to understand more deeply God's intentions with regard to human brokenness in today's world. My forthcoming booklet *Facing Difficulties in Christian Family Life*[5] also explores how families today are able to rediscover life as God intended in light of these biblical figures, but here we concentrate on drawing out the connections with the theology of the body itself.

To the Woman He Said

We start with the biblical text that announces the entry of suffering into the world: "To the woman he said: 'I will multiply your pains in childbearing; you shall give birth to your children in pain. Your yearning shall be for your husband, yet he will lord it over you'" (Gen 3:14). It is certainly the case that suffering can arise for us through children. Such suffering is not necessarily about the pain of childbirth in the first instance, a pain that in any case can now be ameliorated through epidural anaesthesia. After all, in listing the effects of the Fall on human nature, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* emphasises the spiritual shift that occurred, so that the body, for instance, is no longer subject to the soul's spiritual faculties (para 400). And Saint John Paul points out that the procreation of children is closely linked to the task of handing on a way of life to one's children.[6]

At the start of the Book of Samuel, we see that Hannah experienced great suffering through her infertility. Her sorrow prevented her from participating fully in the worship of God within the temple at Shiloh. But it was in pouring out her soul to God in prayer that she found consolation. She experienced a conversion of heart, and it was this that made the difference. She entered into heartfelt prayer, and made over to God any child that she might bear. It was in this way that

the burden of infertility was lifted, even before she conceived her son Samuel. Sorrows that are borne with the Spirit of God are no longer the burdens they might have been. Sarah's experience of the birth of Isaac is similarly noteworthy, as Granados comments in his discussion of Abraham's fatherhood.[7] Sarah saw the bearing of her child as an occasion for joy: "God has given me cause to laugh; all those who hear of it will laugh with me." Her child was evidently a gift from God, as Sarah had long left behind her child-bearing years. It was, again, the action of God that was central to this change from sorrow to joy.

We can contrast these experiences with the classic biblical story of children as a cause for sorrow, which follows immediately after Hannah's story. In 1 Samuel 2 the sons of the priest Eli go their own way, refusing to worship God under the direction of their father. Eli dies under the judgment of God as a result of his failure to discipline his sons. Death comes both to Eli and to his sons, just as it did to Adam and Eve.

> "Sorrows that are borne with the Spirit of God are no longer the burdens they might have been, as Hannah's story shows us"

St Paul's words to children and parents in Ephesians 6 are also instructive. They follow on from the text at the end of Ephesians 5 which Saint John Paul accorded a central place in his theology of the body. The Pope emphasised that St Paul's teaching means that a husband and wife are both obliged to give way to each other out of reverence for Christ. But St Paul goes on to ask parents to correct and guide children "as the Lord does" (Eph 6:4). Paul here is seeking to address the alienation that exists between parents and children, mirroring his teaching in relation to the alienation between husband and wife. Saint John Paul indicates that life lived in obedience to Christ forms a part of "the mystery hidden from eternity in God and revealed to mankind in Jesus".[8] We can say with St Paul, as he indicates earlier in the same letter: "We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it" (Eph 2:10).

Here Comes that Dreamer

One thing that makes pain especially hard to bear, though, is when it is deliberately inflicted on us by others. We see this in our starting text above from Genesis, in the phrase: "he will lord it over you". The Hebrew word *mashal* for the phrase "lord it" clearly includes the possibility that the husband will act as a tyrant over his wife. The word *mashal* is indeed often used in this sense in the Book of Isaiah. We see suffering of a comparable nature in the story of Joseph. Like Christ, Joseph suffered rejection at the hands of his brothers. They cast him into a pit and sold him into slavery, cutting him off from the life of his family. And as a slave he suffered persistent temptation and then imprisonment.

But we also see in this story inklings of a way to dispel our perplexity over suffering. For one thing, Joseph gained maturity through his suffering: he ends the story as the master of Egypt. On another count, it is only through Joseph's suffering that Jacob and his family escape from death by famine. Joseph himself was able to perceive that his own suffering had led to a great grace for his family, as he told his brothers: "Do not reproach yourselves for having sold me here, since God sent me before you to preserve your lives" (Gen 45:5). When Joseph looked at his suffering he did not see the evil of his brothers, but the action of God. Pope Benedict was wonderfully clear on this point in his own teaching: "God's initiative always precedes every human initiative and on our journey towards him it is he who first illuminates us, who directs and guides us, ever respecting our inner freedom."[9]

It is clear that Joseph is a member of the people of Israel, and that God reached out to him for the sake of this family. After all, the whole story began with Joseph's obedience to his father, who sent him to take food to his brothers. All the encounters that follow are extensions of this initial act of love, whether serving Potiphar, evading the attentions of Potiphar's wife, interpreting dreams or testing his brothers. Love bears all things. There are similarities, again, with the way that Jacob experienced his work. His seven years of labour paved the way for union with his beloved. Jacob worked for Rachel. We can call his work "nuptial" in a similar sense to that used by Pope John Paul in referring to the nuptial meaning of the body.[10]

We further see that Joseph possessed the Spirit. Joseph is the one who dreams and who interprets dreams, through the gift of God. Pharaoh himself says of Joseph: "Can we find any man like this who possesses the Spirit of God?" (Gen 41:38). St John Paul indicates of life after the Fall: "The body is not subordinated to the spirit as in the state of original innocence. It bears within it a constant centre of resistance to the spirit."[11] The Pope suggests that in Christ it is now possible reach a maturity whereby one's interior life is fully attuned to the prompting of the Spirit.[12] St John of the Cross, meanwhile, in the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* teaches us a specific path by which we might attain this inner mastery through self-denial and contemplative prayer. Indeed, on reaching the summit of union with God in this life, St John of the Cross teaches, all one's initial impulses emerge in accordance with the will of God.[13]

This transition reaches maturity in those who have achieved a transparent mastery of the spirit over the movements of the flesh. We can only exclaim with St John of the Cross: "O souls created for this and called to this, what are you doing?"[14] But St Teresa is equally aware that the ascent of Mount Carmel begins with conversion. After describing the horrific state of those in mortal sin, she pleads: "O souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ! Learn to understand yourself and take pity on yourselves! Surely if you understand

"For Hopkins the joy of spring is 'a strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning'. May God give us the grace to share that vision of creation"

your own natures, it is impossible that you will not strive to remove the pitch which blackens the crystal?"[15] For St Teresa, such self-knowledge is essential if one is to enter into the life of grace.

When Christ encountered the woman of Samaria, with her five husbands, he called her to conversion. If we are able to accept the difficult circumstances that we experience in our families as gifts from God for our conversion, then there is hope. As a Church, we need to find ways to meet those who have experienced the emptiness of sin and death, so that they too can encounter Christ. It is only in a union of love with God that we are able to experience for ourselves that creation is indeed good. Gerard Manley Hopkins speaks of the "juice" and "joy" that is present during the season of spring as "a strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning, in Eden garden".[16] May God grant us the grace to share in Hopkins' vision of creation.

Dr Peter Kahn writes regularly for the Catholic Truth Society and is the author of the CTS booklets "Passing on Faith to Your Children" and "Work and the Christian Family". He chairs of the academic council at the School of the Annunciation, the centre for the new evangelisation at Buckfast Abbey in Devon. He is also director of studies for the doctor of education programme in higher education at the University of Liverpool. Peter is married to Alison. They have seven sons.

Notes

[1]Granados, J (2006). Toward a theology of the suffering body, *Communio*, 33, pp540-563.
[2]Granados, J (2006). Toward a theology of the suffering body, *Communio*, 33, pp540-563.
[3]Kahn, PE (2010). *Work and the Christian Family*, Catholic Truth Society, London.
[4]The experience of Tobias and Sarah in this regard is considered further in the booklet Timpson, J (2012). *Sex Education: A guide for parents*, Catholic Truth Society, London.
[5]Kahn, PE (2015, forthcoming). *Facing Difficulties in Christian Family life*, Catholic Truth Society, London.
[6]Pope John Paul II (1981). *Familiaris Consortio*, Apostolic Exhortation, Vatican City, para 28.
[7]Granados, J (2006). Toward a theology of the suffering body, *Communio*, 33, pp540-563.
[8]Pope John Paul II (1997). *The Theology of the Body*, Pauline Books, Boston, p311.
[9]Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience, November 14, 2012.
[10]Pope John Paul II (1997). *The Theology of the Body*, Pauline Books, Boston, pp60-3.
[11]*Ibid*, p115.
[12]*Ibid*, pp171-3, p241.
[13]St John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, trans E Allison Peers, Westminster, Maryland, Newman Press, stanza 27.
[14]St John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, trans E Allison Peers, Westminster, Maryland, Newman Press, stanza 39.
[15]St Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, trans E Allison Peers, Burns and Oates, London, First Mansions, 2, p206.
[16]Hopkins, Gerard M (1918). 'Spring' [online, accessed 29 December 2011], www.bartleby.com/122/9.html.

The Marian Dimension of Advent

At the beginning and in the early part of Our Lord's life, we find Our Lady at significant moments. When she found Him in the Temple she saw the demonstration of divine wisdom made flesh as the learned men were astounded at his words. At the Presentation, when He was formally given the name of Jesus, Our Lady presented, in accord with the law, the sacrifice of the poor person. She who had no need of purification associated herself with her Son, who came not to abolish the law but to fulfil it. She knew even better than Simeon that here indeed was the light to enlighten all the nations, and she shared in his joy at being granted the grace of seeing Him with his own eyes before his death.

Fr Faber's beautiful Advent hymn "Like the dawning of the morning" tells of the expectation of Our Lady during her pregnancy, how she understood with overflowing joy the words of the psalms and of the prophets, which she knew to be fulfilled. The holy Oratorian founder anticipated by over a century St John Paul's affirmation that in the Rosary we contemplate with Mary the face of Christ:

Thou hast waited, Child of David,
And thy waiting now is o'er;
Thou hast seen Him, Blessed Mother,
And wilt see Him evermore!
Oh His Human Face and Features,
They were passing sweet to see;
Thou beholdest them this moment,
Mother, show them now to me.

Earlier, the hymn says,

On the mountains of Judea,
Like the chariot of the Lord,
Thou wert lifted in thy spirit
By the uncreated Word.

In the hill country of Judea, Our Lord was first recognised by others. St Elizabeth humbly asked why she should be granted the privilege that the Mother of the Lord should visit her; her son leapt in the womb, recognising Christ who was at that time an embryo of about five days. When we say the *Angelus* we can put ourselves in mind of the beginning of our salvation. At the moment that Our Lady consented to the vocation graciously communicated to her by the angel Gabriel, Christ was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. This was a pivotal moment in the history of the universe. God had become man.

In the ages before, the prophets foretold not only the Messiah but His mother, the Daughter of Sion, the Virgin who would conceive a Son. She was prefigured partially and in shadow, in Rebecca, Miriam, Deborah, Ruth, Judith, Esther and the mother of the Maccabees. She was symbolised in Ark of the Covenant, the gate of heaven, the rod of Aaron, which flowered without natural causes, and the tower of David. At the beginning of the human race, immediately after the first sin, the Lord God Himself spoke of the enmity between her and the serpent. Although many translations diverge from St Jerome's vulgate "*She* shall bruise your head", Blessed Pius IX in the bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, in which he defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, said that in this text, Christ's most Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, was prophetically indicated, and that she "most completely triumphed over [the serpent] and thus crushed his head with her immaculate foot".

Yet with the Blessed John Duns Scotus and the Franciscan tradition, we can go back even further, to the beginning of the universe and before, to the eternal plan of God in His eternal wisdom. God "chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4) and he "predestined us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto himself: according to the purpose of his will" (Eph 1:5).

Sin did not force the hand of God, who willed from all eternity that we should share in His divine life, feed on Him in the Eucharist and enjoy with Him the bliss of heaven. Therefore Our Lady was also a part of that plan of God. (Incidentally, we may see in this eternal plan the division of the sexes and our own identity as male and female according to God's design so that His Son might become incarnate.) She was needed as the Mother, who would be the vessel of honour and conceive by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, so that Jesus Christ would be truly God and truly man, one divine person with a human nature and a divine nature.

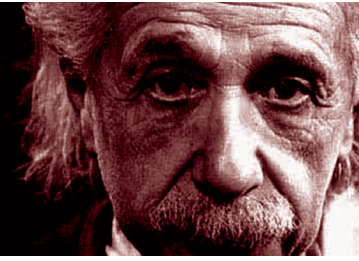
Our devotion to Our Lady, which we express with our hearts, our minds, our joy and our tears, is not an optional extra. Nor is it simply a question of human courtesy, as we might greet and respect a man's mother when we visit his home. Our devotion takes us to the beginning of all things, the provision of God in His infinite wisdom and love from before the foundation of the world. We find Our Lady there, and at every point in the history of our salvation. When we greet her, we do so with love and joy, but also knowing that her place is at the heart of our faith, not at the periphery; she is integral to everything that God does for us, hence she is also called "Mediatrix of all graces" and "Co-Redemptrix". God Himself chose her before all time to be the Immaculate Mother of His Son.

There was a time not so long ago when professional liturgists would try to exclude Marian themes from liturgical celebrations, and even devotions. They did not realise how truly Jansenistic this was. The noble simplicity of the Roman tradition has always made way for the noble tenderness of devotion to our Lady. The celebration of Advent is especially enriched by its Marian dimension.

Father Timothy Finigan is the Parish Priest of Saints Austin and Gregory with St Anne in Margate, Kent. He is also a visiting tutor in sacramental theology at St John's Seminary, Wonersh. You can read his blog at the-hermeneutic-of-continuity.blogspot.co.uk

Cutting Edge

Science and Religion News



By Dr Gregory Farrelly

Science and Philosophy

Carlo Rovelli, a physics professor at Université de la Méditerranée, Marseille, makes some thought-provoking comments about the philosophy involved in science.[1] As author of *The First Scientist: Anaximander and His Legacy*, Rovelli views Anaximander as a sort of scientific revolutionary. Anaximander stated that nature is ruled by "laws", just like human societies. He postulated that the indefinite (*apeiron*) was the source of all things, an attempt to describe all of physical reality, a conceptual abstraction typical of later Greek philosophy.

Anaximander stated that the Earth is a finite body that floats in space, without falling, and that the sky is not just over our head, but all around, ideas that were completely unfamiliar and must have seemed rather bizarre at the time. Rovelli points out that humans have always observed that the stars, the moon, the planets, etc, continually revolve around us, so it should follow that "below us" is nothing; in other words, the sky is not just over our head, it's also under our feet. However, nobody else arrived at this conclusion. We now "know" that gravity causes all things on and around the earth to fall towards its centre. Anaximander's view that just because things fall to the earth does not mean the that earth itself is falling frees us from a sort of "prejudice", an unexamined conceptual structure for thinking about space.

For Rovelli, this is a key part of theoretical physics: questioning the conceptual structure used in constructing the theory and interpreting the data. For example, Einstein did not reject either of the seemingly contradictory, well-established theories of electromagnetism and classical relativity but reconciled the theories by changing the concept of time, despite the radical nature of the change in thought structures involved, namely that time was no longer to be considered absolute but relative.

Loop quantum gravity, Rovelli's own specialism, is an attempt to take reconcile general relativity and quantum mechanics even if this means a theory where there is no fundamental time. The theory is both conservative, because it's based on previous knowledge, and radical, because it requires a major change in our way of thinking.

Rovelli views it as an error that scientists tend to spurn philosophy as redundant. Newton regarded himself as a philosopher, Galileo would never have done what he did without knowing Plato's ideas and Einstein would never have invented relativity without an appreciation of metaphysics. Rovelli states that science is about constructing a vision of the world, constructing new conceptual structures and challenging the a priori ideas that we have. In an statement that should resonate with *Faith* readers, he points out that scientists who say "I don't care about philosophy" ignore the fact that they themselves have a philosophy, a philosophy of science, yet they are generally unaware of its details, thus they fail to examine it, rendering their minds closed to new possibilities of thought, unlike Anaximander or Einstein:

"*There is narrow-mindedness, if I may say so, in many of my colleagues who don't want to learn what's being said in the philosophy of science. There is also a narrow-mindedness in a lot of areas of philosophy and the humanities, whose proponents don't want to learn about science.*"

Rovelli however, like most scientists, contrasts the scientist's requirement to question all a priori ideas with the "religious view" that there should be unquestionable dogmatic truths. This is often a question that young Catholic scientists grapple with and, unfortunately, the Church in this country has made few efforts to form a dialogue of philosophy and theology with scientists. It is most certainly not a question of the existence of "parallel magisteria". The author of the universe, God, is the author of all truth, including scientific truth. In Catholic dogma, however, the truths we possess are from divine revelation and therefore not susceptible to "experiment" or the sort of questioning involved in the physical sciences. This is not to say, however, that we cannot recast our philosophical understanding and the conceptual framework surrounding such dogmas. The *Faith* theology of what happens in the change of bread and wine at Mass into Christ's own Body and Blood involves a quite different philosophical framework from that of St Thomas Aquinas: *Faith* draws on a modern view of the co-relativity of all matter; Aquinas depends more on an Aristotelian system of form and matter.

The Evolution of Cancer

Researchers have discovered that hydra (coral-like polyps that emerged hundreds of millions of years ago) form tumours similar to those found in humans.[2] Thomas Bosch, at Kiel University, and Domazet-Lošo, from the Catholic University of Croatia in Zagreb unexpectedly discovered tumour-bearing polyps in two species of hydra.

For the first time they were able to show that the stem cells accumulate in large quantities and do not die like "normal" cells. They evade a process known as *apoptosis*, in which cells with genetic errors "commit suicide". Molecular analysis showed that there is a gene that becomes active in tumour tissue and prevents the programmed cell death, similar to the growth of human cancer cells. By sequencing the tumorous hydra's DNA, they discovered a gene that halts apoptosis.

A similar gene halts apoptosis in humans. The hydra tumour cells were shown to be invasive: if introduced into a healthy organism, they can trigger tumour growth there. This implies that cancer genes, and the mechanisms that allow tumour cells to evade apoptosis, "have deep evolutionary roots". It also probably means that cancer will never be completely eradicated.

Dr Gregory Farrelly is a physics teacher at Cambridge Tutors College, Croydon.

Notes

[1]http://www.creativitypost.com/science/science_is_not_about_certainty#sthash.ky81F56b.dpuf

[2]Thomas Bosch, *Nature Communications*, June 2014.

Welfare Reform as Moral Imperative

By Philip Booth

While many see the UK Government's welfare policies as an "attack upon the poor", Philip Booth argues that welfare reform can actually benefit the most vulnerable in our society.

Interventions by Christian clergy in welfare debates are commonplace. Indeed Cardinal Nichols argued this year in an interview for *The Daily Telegraph* that the welfare safety net had been torn apart. He was encouraged to speak out after listening to the experiences of his own priests. Not all concern with poverty expresses itself as a defence of Western-style welfare states, however. Pope Francis has spoken with great concern about poverty and inequality. He argues that this is a problem of justice that should not be solved by the permanent provision of welfare. Rather he would like all who can to have meaningful work so that they can provide for their families.

Nevertheless, in the Western world, the problem of poverty is generally seen by Catholic commentators through the prism of the welfare state. This is as true in the US as it is in the UK. Occasionally we hear Catholics recognise that there is a need for reform of the welfare state on the grounds of its unsustainable cost. However, we rarely hear an ethical critique of the whole principle of an all-embracing welfare state controlled by a government that spends nearly half of national income on it.

Yet the welfare state is a relatively modern institution and it is confined to perhaps 20 to 30 countries. In past times, the Church was the great provider of welfare. Substantial welfare states providing free healthcare, education, pensions, income transfers and often housing have only grown up in the last 60 years. The Church was often sceptical when welfare states were introduced and the social teaching of the Church certainly does not lead directly to the acceptance of the state as the main provider of welfare.

Indeed, there is a paradox at the heart of the welfare debate. Arguably, Catholic social teaching anticipated all the problems with state-provided welfare. However, as governments attempt reform, the Church is a continual critic from the sidelines. Perhaps the Church would play a more constructive role if it articulated and tried to bring to fruition its vision of a welfare society buttressed by the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity in the pursuit of human dignity and the common good. In doing so, the Church could ease the transition from all-embracing welfare states to something more human and more compatible with her social teaching.

Our National Religion

Possibly, the most intractable part of the welfare state is the National Health Service. Indeed, Nigel Lawson has described it as the nearest thing that the British have to a national religion. Should we treat it that way as Catholics?

There is a tendency to assume that, without the NHS, there would be no healthcare. But, in fact, it is the British model that is highly unusual. In Germany, for example, 51 per cent of hospitals are not government-owned: and this is not untypical of European countries. Ironically, the hospital celebrated in the 2012 Olympic ceremony – Great Ormond Street – was founded well before the NHS, as were most of our famous hospitals.

Although Catholic social teaching demands that all can access healthcare in order that human dignity and the common good are served, it does not demand a state monopoly. In 1947 we chose not to adopt healthcare systems similar to those in continental Europe, where the state assists organisations that develop organically within the community – including Church organisations. Instead, we chose a healthcare system in which the state is the sole supplier and financier. As well as questioning this from an economic perspective, we might also want to question whether we are comfortable with how the state uses its power within the system to impose its own values. Ethical boundaries are often crossed that should not be crossed.

Indeed, we should perhaps reflect on the fact that, when the NHS was formed, the then Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Bernard Griffin, fought for and obtained exemptions for the small number of Catholic hospitals arguing that it would be a "sad day for England when charity became the affair of the state".

Assisting the Poor – the Problems of Welfare

But the focus of welfare debates today tends to be that part of the welfare state that provides income transfers to the less-well-off. As we hear in the reading from the Acts of the Apostles on Divine Mercy Sunday, the communities that formed the early Church shared goods providing for all in need. In *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict describes how, in the first few centuries after the resurrection, the Church was known for its acts of charity. Today an observer of the Western Catholic Church would note that it is perhaps best known for its campaigning for the state to take money through taxation from one group of people and distribute it through large bureaucracies to other groups of people – an act which is very far from the love, concern, compassion and sacrifice that are the hallmarks of charity.

What are the main economic effects of the welfare system? Sadly, we have created a welfare state which could not be more effective in discouraging family formation and work if it were deliberately designed to do so.

In the UK, nearly 20 per cent of children grow up in workless households and nearly 30 per cent grow up in families in which nobody works full-time. The welfare system encourages individuals to work at least 16 hours a week – though it has become more complex recently – and there is a big group of people who work exactly 16 hours a week. The UK has the highest proportion of households with children in which nobody works, despite having one of the best-functioning labour markets in general in the EU. We also have the joint highest level of single-parenthood and by far the lowest level of employment among single parents. Astonishingly, workless households tend to have more children on average than households with an adult in work.

"We need a welfare policy that is pro-work, pro-family, pro-charity and pro-community. In particular, we need to reduce taxes on families"

Philip Booth: State provision as the norm should be lamented by Catholics.

These things matter. They matter very much. Two essential requirements for human flourishing are marriage and work. Solidarity begins in the family, in which we share goods and look after the sick, the young and the elderly. If family formation does not take place at the most basic level of parents marrying, where will the virtue of solidarity be nurtured?

The Welfare State and Marriage

The tax and benefit systems penalise marriage harshly. In a sense, the welfare state has tried to replace the traditional role of the male within families. The state will provide materially for the upbringing of children, instead of the father, while the mother looks after the children. In some cases the state provides the care for the children while the mother works to provide the income. Either way, one of the main functions of the family has, in effect, been nationalised. Indeed, making the male unnecessary was the explicit objective of many of the feminist supporters of our modern welfare state. Is it any wonder that so many young men seem aimless and have such short-term objectives in life?

The impact of these problems on poverty and human flourishing more generally is substantial. Only 2 per cent of households with children that have one adult working full-time and one part-time are in poverty – and that is despite the UK's extremely high housing costs caused by planning policies. On the other hand, the absence of an employed adult in the family increases the chances of a child growing up in poverty considerably.

To establish a welfare system that strongly penalises families has no moral basis and ignores human nature. The Church, on the other hand, does not ignore human nature in her social teaching. From *Rerum Novarum* to *Centesimus Annus*, the role of the state in supporting the family – normally in non-intrusive ways – is paramount. The Church has also stressed the importance of institutions of welfare arising from within the community itself rather than promoting huge government bureaucracies that consume nearly half of the national income as the dominant providers of welfare.

Indeed, our welfare state is radically individualistic despite being most strongly supported by socialists. The deal is quite simple. If you cannot provide for yourself by your own efforts, the state will provide you with sufficient income for you to stand on your own two feet – without support even from the father of your children. Family support, support from other families, support from within communities through charity and welfare institutions, and so on, are assumed away. We talk about charity being a last resort as if the provision of income, health and education from the state should be the norm. This should be lamented by Catholics.

The Legacy to our Young

A further problem is the inter-generational injustice of welfare states. We are bringing up a generation of children that will have huge debts. These comprise not just the debts regularly discussed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but also the unfunded health and pensions liabilities arising from the post-1940s settlement. Credible estimates of these are at least five times the official government debt. Our younger generation will struggle to pay the taxes to fund the welfare promises that have been made to the older generation. This problem is partly caused by a low birthrate, of course, but that low birthrate is itself encouraged by the welfare state.

A Secular Welfare State or a Christian Welfare Society?

Reform is both an economic and a moral imperative. Reforms that ensure that those who can work do work should be welcomed. Unconditional welfare is very difficult to justify from the Catholic perspective – all should have the opportunity to contribute to society through work. A life of worklessness has nothing to recommend it. Of course, we should be careful to ensure that reform is handled sensitively.

When it comes to marriage things have, if anything, got worse since the coalition government came to office. And it is depressing to hear Nick Clegg being so critical of small attempts at reforming the tax system to reduce slightly the bias against marriage in the tax and welfare system as a whole.

Overall, we need a welfare policy that is pro-work, pro-family, pro-charity and pro-community. In particular, we need to reduce taxes on families, something that can only happen if government spending is reduced. When *Rerum Novarum* warned of the weight of taxes on families, Pope Leo XIII could never have dreamed that the state would spend half of national income. As well as the great riches of that document, in *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul II warned that the crisis of welfare states was caused by the state taking functions that belong to society – an important distinction. In *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict explained how human needs cannot be met by remote bureaucracies but find their fulfilment in loving personal concern. And there were also many lessons for welfare reform from *Caritas in Veritate*. But one thing is clear. The current settlement cannot easily be defended from the Catholic perspective. Furthermore, when it comes to reform, this government is only scratching the surface.

Philip Booth is the editorial and programme director at the Institute of Economic Affairs and editor of 'Catholic Social Teaching and the Market Economy', the second edition of which was published in May 2014.

MICHAEL NAZIR-ALI

Forming Christian Minds in a Hostile Age

I write this from a gathering of young people, mainly fresh graduates or final-year students. They come from a variety of church backgrounds, from Pentecostal to Roman Catholic, and are studying different subjects at university or college.

How refreshing it is to meet with these youngsters! They are confident and outward-looking, eager to engage with the culture and all its challenges. They are serious about understanding the issues we face as Christians living in these times but they also like to party, to make a lot of noise, and they seem to have boundless energy. They are not afraid to be ambitious for Christ whether that is in promoting a culture of life, or in supporting the family as a basic building block of society, or in dialogue with people of other faiths or with secularists.

All of this is positive and a matter of thanksgiving but there is also a great deal of work to be done. Many have been brought up on a pietistic diet of rousing "choruses" and "songs". Nothing wrong with those but are they enough? Others have only had "sermonettes" in church or little more than a random "thought for the day". Most are aliturgical in their view of worship, even if they come from liturgical churches. This means there is very little memory of what it means to worship and even less of sacramental worship.

Although fully committed to Christ, they have, generally speaking, a tenuous grasp of the Great Tradition or the way in which the Apostolic Faith has been passed down the generations and across the cultures. This means that they often do not have the tools to deal with contemporary issues in the light of how Christians and the Church may have tackled similar matters in the past. An example of this is how the early Church's hostility to the exposure of (female) children in the pagan world affects the current debate about abortion at ever-later stages in pregnancy and the advocacy, by some, even of infanticide in cases of severe disability.

In addition to a world view, they need also to think in a Christian way about their specific subjects and the professions in which they may find themselves. So how does a Christian study the life sciences, for example? What view of evolution can we have, and how does it fit in with Christian teaching on purpose and destiny? Does the ferment in the physical sciences mean there is room for divine and human action after all?

What about the study of the mind? How can we challenge the reigning reductionism, which seeks to reduce the mind and mental events simply to their physical and chemical correlates? Can a personal and social sense of the transcendent be recognised by social scientists?

Professionally also, there are challenges: is conscience adequately recognised in the clinic and the hospital? Can teachers refuse to toe the line on politically correct but socially disastrous sex education? How is one to be moral in an allegedly amoral market? We can see that there is a lot to do. We must be able to put material in young people's hands which helps them to relate their faith to their area of study. In the past, this used to take the form of books of "the Christian and…" kind. They were very influential in forming young Christian minds. Now, of course, there are films, DVDs, the internet in its various forms. The variety of media now available should not, however, blind us to the need for providing appropriate content for students, young professionals and other young people.

Churches need to "up their ante". Parish clergy and other pastoral workers should be aware of the issues facing the young; they should research them and preach and teach about Christian approaches to such contemporary questions. First Communion and Confirmation classes, youth clubs and camps should explicitly set themselves to forming minds as well as warming hearts and moving spirits.

> "RE in schools should be consciously addressing the moral, metaphysical and spiritual questions raised in the study of history, biology or civic affairs"

In schools, particularly church schools, there is a widespread need to integrate assemblies and religious education with the wider curriculum. Instead of being about moral precepts and the exotica of the phenomenology of religion, assemblies and RE should be consciously addressing the moral, metaphysical and spiritual questions raised in the study of history, biology or civic affairs: indeed, the whole of the syllabus.

University chaplaincies, similarly, cannot just be about pastoral care, important as that is. They must be spiritual and intellectual power houses which enable Christian students not only to survive in university cultures but positively to flourish in them.

Three successive popes have now shown that it is possible to gather young people in large numbers around a central Christian theme. Such an effort cannot be left to large gatherings, however stimulating these may be. The willingness to gather, to learn and to act must be translated into a local idiom – in the parish, at school and on the campus.

I am excited and moved by the commitment of young people to Christ and to Christian living today. The Church and its leaders cannot let them down at such a crucial time in the world's history. They must become a centrepiece of the Church's missionary strategy today.

Michael Nazir-Ali is the emeritus Anglican bishop of Rochester. He is currently the director of the Oxford Centre for Training, Research, Advocacy and Dialogue.

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Book Reviews

Finding God in Community

Making Room for Others by Paul Graham, OSA, St Pauls, 125pp, £8.99

Father Paul Graham is an Augustinian friar and parish priest of St Monica's in Hoxton, London. As the title of this book suggests, his quest is to find a way through the ever-changing times with their complexities, emphases and ups and downs to help prepare the way for greater stability, renewal and enthusiasm among the Lord's disciples, especially within religious communities.

The book is a collection of some of the author's talks, retreats and published articles between 1988 and 2011 in the UK, US, Belgium, Japan, Malta, Italy and Australia. There are also a valuable preface and postscript. Father Paul hopes that despite repetitions, a development of thought can be detected in the book. This I can affirm; the book is informative and thought-provoking, with deep insights which are at times more than a little inspiring. We are mostly left to draw our own conclusions.

As one would expect from a member of this great missionary order with a profound admiration for St Augustine of Hippo (354-430), the author mentions many times the value of Christian communities. It is not so well known that Augustine encouraged mental prayer called wordless and ejaculatory prayer, sighing and groaning to God; he warned of the dangers of spiritual narcissism.

This great saint founded communities and wrote a rule for them. Father Paul, currently serving for a second time as provincial in Great Britain, mentions attempts by religious communities in recent years to live in smaller houses without religious dress.

Yet spiritual yearning remains for ever, wherever; we are reminded of Augustine's great dictum that the human heart never rests until it rests in God. Religious life becomes poor when the transcendent is obscured by attempts to widen the notion of what is religious and spiritual. To do this is to put religion and the spiritual into the realm of what is finite, with a corresponding lack of depth.

Father Paul observes that there remains a post-Vatican II opposition to structured communities. Yet the movement towards seeing the importance of the spiritual has not, by and large, so far been reflected by a revival in church attendance. Rather there is the tendency towards "believing without belonging".

We have sometimes put too much emphasis on the rational rather than on faith. Augustine combined faith and reason in a balanced way. Although in recent times there has been a decline in vocations to the long established orders and congregations, it is noticeable that the newly established movements like Focolare, the Neo-Catechumenate, Communion and Liberation, Youth 2000, Emmanuel Community, Sant'Egidio Community, Community of St John, Franciscan Friars of the Renewal and many others have been much more successful in attracting followers.

The immediate post-Vatican II responses have proved to be inadequate for meeting our need to embrace mystery with its strong and vibrant stability; yet Opus Dei survives well. The author emphasises that a good understanding between the religious message and the ways of the world is vital. We yearn for something beyond materialism. More recently the emphasis has been less on action and more on conversion.

Time and again, Father Paul returns to Augustine's great idea to find God in community. Here I am provocatively inspired; the Lord made a great summary of the Ten Commandments into two, with the second like the first. Yet of course the very vitality of that second commandment is utterly dependent on the first; there is no love of neighbour without personal movement towards our transcendent God.

I am further provoked to say that community is strong or weak according to the input and response of each member; without this, community has no meaning. Individualism vitally needs to have its good name restored. In itself it is in the heart of the call to renewal and repentance. Community can induce over-dependent laziness just as individualism can be selfishly independent. I recall Mahatma Ghandi's (surely divinely inspired) saying that if he sees a pathway that needs to be taken, he follows it. If others join him he is happy; if not, he walks alone. Sometimes it is like that.

Yet the more the focus is God-centred, the more unhappy we are not flying exactly with the flock we keep in full view and never far away. Such was surely the way of Saints Augustine, Benedict, Dominic and Francis, and Blessed Mother Teresa, to name but a few, and is surely the way of Pope Francis too.

As he lay dying, Augustine was surrounded by the loss of so many communities from the invasions of the Vandals and Alans. Yet he knew that through greater individual growth into God's intrinsically compelling, unitive grace, we unfailingly take the only pathway for the foundation of future communities. A similar truth is vital for marriage; it is the only way to make room for others.

Brian Storey

"It is not helpful to tell a woman shattered by pain and guilt that her abortion was the 'culmination of a lifetime of desensitisation to the sacredness and dignity of life' "

Understanding, Not Harshness

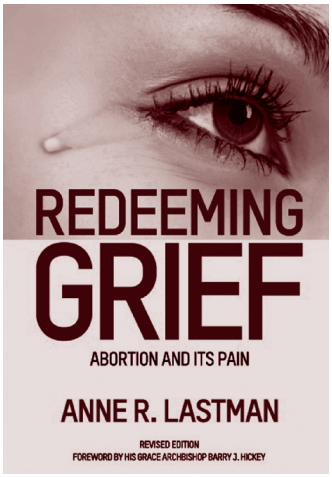
Redeeming Grief: Abortion and its pain by Anne R Lastman, Gracewing, 258pp, £12.99

Nobody likes to talk about abortion. At one level, it appears to be spoken about all the time – in the classroom, the debating chamber, the pub – but discussion seldom goes beyond platitudes, soundbites and emotionally charged rants. The core issues of abortion, like the very real pain it causes both men and women, and the effect on society of this daily, and legal, attack on human life, often remain untouched. That is why a sustained treatment of the subject is to be welcomed.

Redeeming Grief covers a phenomenally wide range of relevant aspects. It discusses the fear that can be in the driving seat in an abortion decision and looks at the suppression and denial that frequently follow such a decision, both symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder which, thankfully, is increasingly recognised. It looks at the sexual revolution, the rise of contraception and the type of feminism these have engendered, together with a confusion of the role of the sexes.

Men, too, have been wounded in their fatherhood, and parental authority has suffered from a lingering sense of guilt that causes us either to neglect or to worship our children. Lastman takes a brave look at the inner forum too: the violation of our conscience, the mental processing involved in making an abortion decision and the de-humanising language we often employ as a society to assuage our conscience. All of these topics, and more besides, are given pages.

Nevertheless, the book as a whole has some significant weaknesses. The foreword and introduction tell the reader that in this book they will find real hope in the aftermath of abortion, a sympathetic ear, the offer of real forgiveness and a barely hoped-for freedom of spirit. Lastman counsels the reader (the main target audience is



those who have had, or been affected by, an abortion) to hang on in there: the first few chapters are a tough read, but soon enough the consoling words will come through. There are consoling words for the wounded soul, for instance in the chapters that acknowledge that a woman decides for abortion under extremely straitened circumstances; that she often chooses it, not because she wants it but because she feels trapped into having it. And a chapter is dedicated to the beautiful words of Blessed John Paul II when he addresses suffering women in *Evangelium Vitae*. Another chapter speaks of regret as a positive force that can lead to energy and life and goodness and love. All of this is good!

And yet these sporadic chinks of light are couched in the context of heavy and unhelpful language in which abortion is variously referred to as an "abomination" (p87), "this moral leprosy", "this savage beast" (p175) or "a violent and soul-destroying act" (p218), to name but a few. From the outset, Lastman writes that "abortion is ultimately not about rights, or about career, or reputation, or want, or not want. It is about hatred, especially spiritual hatred. It is about the hatred Lucifer bears for God and his creation" (p12). Please, let us be clear about this. I am very well aware that the pro-life cause is, at its heart, a spiritual battle of cosmic proportions. The establishment of religious foundations here in Britain and elsewhere in the world that have the Gospel of Life as their principal charism is surely an external expression of this spiritual battle in which we are all, in some rank or other, enlisted. Satan is, beyond question, at the heart of every attack on life. All of that said, it is not helpful to tell a woman shattered by pain and guilt that "the actual abortion was the culmination of a lifetime of desensitisation to the sacredness and dignity of life" and that they have "a history in which the Word of God has been totally absent" (p13). This is neither helpful nor, I believe, accurate.

A great many women (as some of her own examples show in the moving testimonies peppered throughout the book) reveal the truth that most of us sin through weakness rather than wickedness. When in a crisis pregnancy a woman feels trapped by her circumstances and incredibly frightened (as Lastman herself argues), the crisis and its accompanying hormonal changes make rationalisation very difficult; she is more susceptible than ever to the emotions and reactions of those around her; she knows in her deepest heart that abortion is wrong, but what else can she do? Is that a sin? Yes. Does she bear some responsibility for that sin? Yes. Is she in league with the devil? I really don't think so. The words "abortion severs the permanent covenant imprinted in the human person" (p57) leave one with little room for hope. Suggesting that abortionists are no different from known terrorists (p218) leaves little room for conversion.

It is this inconsistency in her approach, in which she oscillates between profound understanding and a harshness that wonders periodically if it isn't all heralding the final apocalypse, that make this book, lamentably, not terribly recommendable. Perhaps if *Redeeming Grief* concentrated less on our sinful and misguided approach to God and more on God's desire to reach out to us with the blood of His beloved Son that "pleads more insistently than Abel's" (Heb 12:24), this desperately needed message would be heard all the more.

Sr Andrea Fraile

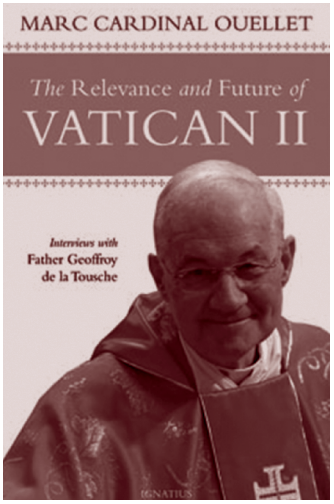
Back to the Source

The Relevance and Future of the Second Vatican Council by Marc Cardinal Oullet, Ignatius Press, 187pp, £12.99

In his election to the seat of St Peter, Pope John Paul II asked this question about Vatican II: "Indeed, is not that Universal Council a kind of milestone as it were, an event of the utmost importance in the almost two-thousand-year history of the Church, and consequently in the religious and cultural history of the world?" (To the Cardinals and the World, 17 October 1978). This book answers with a resounding and clear yes. It is an interview by Fr Geoffrey de la Tousche, a priest of the Diocese of Rouen, with Cardinal Marc Oullet. The cardinal is the prefect of the Congregation for Bishops and president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America. He is a priest of the Society of Saint-Sulpice and was Archbishop of Quebec.

The book's format starts with a biographical interview of the cardinal. It proceeds to look at a number of core Christian truths through the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. Many themes are addressed. Such vital realities as the People of God, the Church as sacrament, the Kingdom, the Resurrection and the Liturgy are discussed and probed. The discussion is deep and includes signposts to other ideas and explorations.

I was struck by two things reading this book. The first was that we sometimes hear about a "back to basics" approach. Certainly in the Catholic Church the Council itself sought a "return to the sources" (*ressourcement*). This work by Cardinal Oullet is a back-to-the-Source work, a work that seeks its centre in God and the mystery of the Trinity. It's wonderful to see a work that starts from the Ultimate Reality and seeks to understand the Council from this depth in which we live, move and have our being. "The theological vision that underlies them [the texts] and is explained in them is rooted in the Mystery. It is not a



question of a vision of a political or strategic type; it is truly a vision that seeks to renew, to rejuvenate the Church and each person in the Church…. This Trinitarian logic is at the heart of the texts of the Second Vatican Council" (pp41-2). It is so good to see here the faith expressed as the Mystery. This echoes back to the Pauline words regarding the Mystery of Christ, the Great Mystery, the Mystery of God (cf Rom 16:25, Eph 3:3,4, 5:32, Col 1:27, 2:2). And this Mystery is expressed so beautifully by St Paul as "this mystery of the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). How might our churches start to become transformed if this Mystery was preached and shared! After all, it is the purpose for which the Church exists.

Salvation is explained in this Trinitarian sense too. The Cardinal discusses how "salvation [is] understood not just a liberation from sin, not simply as human life that ends with heaven, but participation in the Trinitarian communion… Participation in the Trinitarian life is divinisation" (p73). This links to the energising insight that in discussing the Eucharist "we are not simply united with him [Christ/God], we are made one with him. This is really the mystery, because it is not a matter of 'adding up' God and ourselves. He is not just at our side, so that, with him, we are two. In the context of Communion, it is the gift of his substance that unifies so that all are now but one. It is the invitation to return to the mystery of the Trinity itself" (p44). We must experience and really know this in a life-transforming way. The cardinal says: "The Gospel is the living Christ, the encountered Christ.… We know that God is good, merciful, that he pardons our sins, but we must also experience this.… One must live out this wisdom that comes from God as an experience" (p20). Once again the words of St Paul come through: "Do you not realise that Jesus Christ is in you?" (1 Cor 13:5). The faith and the experience must flow from each other.

There is much more of this on a range of themes. On ecumenism, where both impatience and confusion easily occur, there are the wise words: "But each effort made for unity is stored up for the Kingdom of God. It was Father de Lubac who said that. In the ecumenical search, every act of charity helps build the Kingdom of God" (p76). This is a book rich in theology and thought. There may be things some readers won't agree with but there is much deep Christian exposition that will help our search and walk.

The second aspect of the book that affected me was the spirituality it shared. It made me think that this is not a book for reading. It is a book for meditation and spiritually pondering. Just reading this book is probably a waste as we will be likely to miss the deep spiritual treasures it contains. This is a book where we need to take a sentence or paragraph and let them unfold to us; to work with them in the silence of our hearts, where God is always present. We need time and silence for this book to work in us.

So this is a spiritual work. It offers an invitation to immerse oneself in the Mystery which is the Triune Glory. You will not be surprised, then, that I would heartily recommend this work to learn and spiritually grow, but not to just read. In these dual aspects of deep theology and spirituality lies the authentic relevance and future of the Second Vatican Council.

John Walsh

"It's wonderful to see a work that starts from the Ultimate Reality and seeks to understand the Council from this depth in which we live, move and have our being"

A FRANCISCAN ON HORSEBACK

The Galloping Nun by Sr Chiara Hatton-Hall, Paragon Publishing, 177pp, £14.99

This tells the story of Sister Chiara, the socialite who became a Franciscan nun. Born into a well-to-do military family (on the Feast of the Assumption, 15 August 1930), presented at court and married to an army officer, Chiara Hatton-Hall set up a riding school, in the idyllic Kentish countryside, for the international social elite. Her students included the young Princess Royal, Princess Anne, and Virginia Leng, the three-time eventing world champion.

In 1973, at the age of 42, after the premature death of her husband, Chiara found her vocation as a Franciscan nun and exchanged her riding breeches for a life of poverty, chastity and obedience. In 1984 she completed a postgraduate diploma in theology at Heythrop College, University of London, before being appointed an instructing judge on Southwark's diocesan marriage tribunal.

Then, at the suggestion of an imaginative superior, she took up the reins again – this time to work for Riding for the Disabled, travelling the world to teach riding instructors how to bring confidence, self-respect and joy to mentally and physically handicapped adults and children.

The book has several parallel themes threading its way through it: the author's childhood; her marriage to Nigel Hatton-Hall; her riding career; her travels; and her spiritual life. Religion had always played an important part in Chiara's life. Being a cradle Catholic she was given catechetical instruction from a young age and was diligent in her prayer life. She was sent to convent schools, while her brother went to Ampleforth.

When Chiara met Nigel Hatton-Hall, he was working as aide-de-camp to General Sir Alec Bishop, director of North Rhine Westphalia, and came to the Catholic faith through the influence of Lady Bishop. They were married according to the rites of the Catholic Church, and it was Chiara's faith that eventually led her to the convent.

With parents keen on horses, it was inevitable that Chiara was going to learn to ride from a young age. In 1948 her father opened the Benenden Riding Establishment at their home in Kent and in the same year, when Chiara was 18, she took her first riding exam from the recently established British Horse Society. It wasn't long before Chiara started to take part in equestrian events: cross-country, show jumping and dressage. After her marriage on the 28 May 1955, at Brompton Oratory in London, she and her husband settled down in Kent where she ran her own riding school. Later in life, it was her love of horses that made her so suitable for her work with Riding for the Disabled.

In her role training instructors Chiara showed herself to be a true Franciscan. St Francis is one of the best-loved saints, not only among Christians, but also among environmentalists and animal rights campaigners: he loved nature, animals and every human person. Yet, until relatively recently his own teachings and writings were ignored. There was an abundance of stories about him, but no sign of his own voice.

He was viewed as a holy man wandering the countryside, preaching to the birds and at one with nature, but his teachings had become lost in time. What we have subsequently discovered is that he lived and taught the non-appropriation of any goods, be they material, spiritual or intellectual: we are to store up nothing for ourselves, but we can and should freely and gratefully use God's gifts in a non-possessive way for the benefit of others.

This is what Chiara did, using her extensive knowledge and experience with horses, not for her own glorification, but for the benefit of the physically and mentally handicapped.

Similarly, in her earlier role as an instructing judge on Southwark's diocesan marriage tribunal Chiara was able to bring together theology and her own experience of marriage to help others in pain – those whose marriages had broken down. After all, Chiara and Nigel's marriage, like all marriages, had had its ups and downs.

This book is a fascinating account of a life of dramatic contrasts that were ultimately reconciled by embracing the spirit of St Francis. I highly recommend it, particularly for horse lovers and admirers of St Francis.

Edward Kendall

Emails to the Editor

Contact: editor@faith.org.uk

COSMIC SIN

Dear Editor,

Science informs us of the existence of both good and evil, within the Cosmos, long before the emergence of homo-sapiens, on planet Earth, who then committed Original Sin. Since truth cannot contradict truth, the aim of this letter is to also justify, in theological terms, the theory of a transcendental (as opposed to historical) Original Sin.

It is the nature of love for the lover to give himself unconditionally to the beloved. God is infinite love, so in the relationships between the three equal Divine Persons each one gives himself completely to the other two, and receives them in return. Each Person is as nothing and receives fullness of being from the others. The Father generates his Son, the Word, as his other Self – and the infinite dynamic of love between them is the Holy Spirit.

God, as the Three-in-One in the nature of love, gives of the fullness of the Trinity to the nothingness of creation.

The Word is the complete knowledge of the Father and has being as the Second Divine Person, always freely doing the Father's will in infinite love and wisdom. Creation also begins in God's eternity as aeviternity, above space-time, where change can happen.

The Word is the complete divine knowledge of the Father, but creation begins as non-divine images of the divine attributes, much less than the Word, but generated in the Word. This non-divine knowledge, like the Word, is alive and immortal, but must accept freely the divine will for its actualisation, in order to be sealed as true being. The non-divine knowledge is originally Adam and Eve, universal and personal humanity, male and female, intending that the whole Cosmos be one totally alive immortal body, in the unity Jesus prayed for at the Last Supper (Jn 17).

The whole idea rebelled, except the idea of the Word becoming incarnate and the idea of Mary, who accepted her "nothingness" (Magnificat) and so is "full of grace".

Angels, who are created as the images of the One God, also aeviternity, had a free choice in determining the nature of their being.

Humanity is created in the image of the relationships in the Trinity, and as man and woman in love reflects the union of the Father and Son in the love of the Holy Spirit. In order to image the Father, the idea of the person of Jesus, who generates all creation, must also have equality in Himself with what is generated. Thus the Word, the divine knowledge, is hypostatically united to the non-divine knowledge in the person of Jesus; in other words the equality between Jesus and humanity is flesh. So Jesus is the first-thought creation.

The evolutionary process is the unfolding again of the original idea of creation as it is actualised, so the fallen process is flawed by natural evil, from the very beginning. All that first exists is fallen matter-energy, universal fallen spiritual substance, which Karl Rahner describes as "frozen spirit", since it is in the image of the spiritual essence of the Trinity. It is frozen because it is constrained by the finite limitations of fallen space-time.

Eastern Orthodox scholars, such as Soloviev and Bulgakov, developed much of this thesis many years ago, but are almost entirely ignored by the Western Church. However, several experts at the Darwin Conference in Rome (2009) pointed out, in line with the thought of de Chardin, that in the history of evolution a historical Original Sin has no place. In his lecture J M Maldame OP argued that evolution is also a "history of the soul" and does not deal only with matter-energy. Everything in its true reality is always transcendental, God, angels and creation.

The Church has not developed a proper theology of matter-energy – and this is a major weakness, since modern science is used to promote materialism and atheism. In the field of knowledge a disastrous dichotomy has therefore emerged during the second millennium – and is now acute.

John J Rooney, emeritus professor of science, Queen's University, Belfast

RELIGIOUS ART

Dear Editor,

Would your magazine be interested in publishing a series on great religious painters?

This would cover the period from the Middle Ages to the present day and include major artists such as Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael, as well as many lesser-known figures.

Articles would be accompanied by suggested illustrations.

I look forward to hearing from you.

John Powell FRGS, Morden, Surrey

Ed: Thank you for the suggestion. Our next editorial meeting is later this month. We will discuss your idea.

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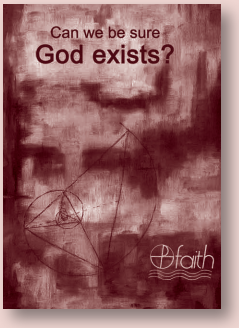

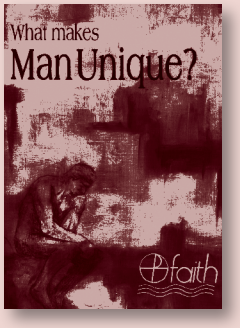

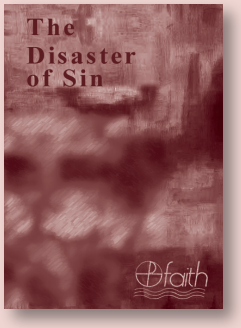

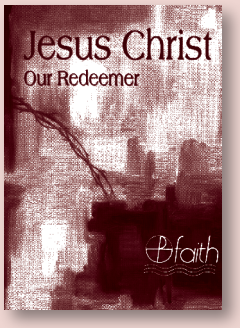

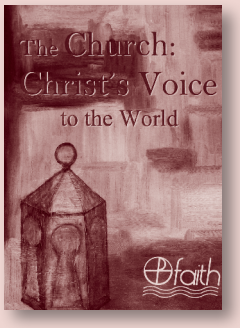

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