

# THE Newman

THE JOURNAL OF THE NEWMAN ASSOCIATION

May 2017

Issue No. 101

£5.00

THE EAST LONDON MOSQUE

Damian Howard SJ

How Muslims will change Christianity in Europe

Werner G Jeanrond

Towards a Post-Clericalist Church

Nicholas King SJ

The Scandal of Christian Disunity

Frank Field MP

From Poverty to Life Chances

Policy proposals by the Newman Council  
Guide to the AGM in Birmingham

Spirituality Page  
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**Printing:** Silver Pines Services, Sevenoaks

**Articles, comments, etc.:** Should be sent to Barry Riley by email at [editor@newman.org.uk](mailto:editor@newman.org.uk) – items should be sent in Word format as an attachment or as an embedded text within the email. Hard-copy items may be sent by post to 17 Mount Pleasant Road, London W5 1SG. Tel: 020 8998 5829. Articles should not normally exceed 3,000 words.

**Copy Deadline:** for the next issue is **July 15th 2017**

**The Newman:** is published by the Newman Association, 20-22 Bedford Row, London WC1K 4JS. **Website:** <http://www.newman.org.uk>. Unless the Editor is informed in advance that contributors wish to refuse permission for online use of their material, The Newman Association may use on its website any article or other material contributed to *The Newman*. Unless the article has been previously published elsewhere with copyright assigned, copyright will reside with the author, The Newman and the Newman Association. In this case an author may republish his or her material elsewhere with the permission of the Association and printed acknowledgement of its prior appearance in *The Newman*.

**Email:** [info@newman.org.uk](mailto:info@newman.org.uk)

**British Library Reference Number:** ISSN-0951-5399

**Back numbers:** copies of a number of previous issues of *The Newman* are available from the editor - see contact details above.



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Cover picture: *Gallery of the minaret at the East London Mosque, Whitechapel*

# Comment

Next month will bring a celebration of the Newman Association's 75th birthday as members gather for the AGM at Birmingham Oratory where John Henry Newman spent most of the second half of his life. But the AGM will also mark a critical stage in the evolution of the Association as Council seeks preliminary approval for policy proposals which over the next year or two will lead to important changes in the way in which the Newman functions.

The history of the Association has included a previous big shift in emphasis. In its first twenty years, a period of rapid growth in membership, the Newman was to a large extent a centralised organisation. The London Circle at one stage in the 1950s accounted for over 40 per cent of the national membership; there were premises in Central London, first in Portman Square and then in Carlisle Street, and the Association's Council was highly focused on wider developments in the Church, especially the Second Vatican Council which sat from 1962 to 1965.

But after the publication of *Humanae Vitae* in 1968 membership, and revenues, declined sharply and in the troubled economic conditions of the 1970s there was a financial crisis for the Association. At one time publication of this journal, *The Newman*, was suspended, though it reappeared in the 1980s. With no physical headquarters after 1977, when Carlisle Street was closed, the Association became much more decentralised around the UK.

The remaining task of Council was essentially to pursue a national agenda: to build relationships with the hierarchy and, on occasion, to talk to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome; to connect with universities and the media; to co-operate with other Catholic organisations, both in the UK and overseas; to publish *The Newman* and, later, to operate a website; to organise national conferences and pilgrimages; to assist local circles with their programmes; and, of course, to seek ways of recruiting new members.

Some of the tensions generated are thoughtfully discussed in a letter entitled *Going Round in Circles* by Terry Egerton, printed elsewhere in this issue. How relevant is Council, and its activities, to the Cleveland Circle? He is too kind to say so bluntly, but the central Council has become increasingly inconsistent in delivering its part of the bargain. As the Association's membership has declined, Council has remained too big and expensive.

This is essentially why, as the Association comes under increasing financial pressure, the group of six appointed at the Council meeting on March 2nd has recommended that Council should be cut back to little more than a back office unit delivering basic services.

It is proposed that instead of a large Council with a President there will be a small Board with a chairman. There is managerial logic in this and perhaps there is financial necessity. The focus will be on financial, legal and educational skills. But members will want to know who will in future fulfil the constitutional responsibility for promoting the Christian mission and the objectives of the Blessed John Henry.

**Barry Riley**

# A New Structure for the Newman Association

The Newman Council has considered various ideas for improving the structure and governance of the Newman Association and has approved a Policy Proposal which is being circulated as a separate document inserted within this edition of *The Newman*. Council will ask members at the AGM to “discuss and note” the proposal, and to “contribute its views for further consideration” but not to vote on changes at this stage: the detailed resolutions will follow in a year’s time.

## A timeline of events

**October, 2015** A weekend Assembly was held at Hinsley Hall, Leeds, to discuss the Association’s challenges. It was titled **The Newman Association....Is It Worth Saving?** More than 40 members attended. It was subsequently agreed to set up four working groups to look at **finance, mission** (later retitled **development**), **communications** and **membership**.

**Early 2016** Reports were produced by the finance, development and communications groups. Unfortunately the membership group broke up in disagreement and failed to submit a report.

**October 1st, 2016** The Development Group’s report, called *A Strategic Plan for Growth 2017-20*, was discussed by Council and subsequently distributed to circles. Responses were received from 16 out of 24 circles and also from several individuals.

**March 2nd, 2017** Council commissioned a Way Forward Working Group of six to form proposals for discussion at the next AGM.

**April 29th, 2017** Council received the Working Group report and prepared a document for discussion at the AGM.

**June 10th, 2017** Annual General Meeting in Birmingham at which members will be invited to consider the document and give their views.

**June, 2018** At the 2018 AGM resolutions will be presented which will enable structural changes, including the replacement of Council by a six-member board of directors.



*The working group: from top left, clockwise, Anthony Baker, Peter Firth, John Sibbald, Brian Hamill, Michael Jameson and Kevin Ryan*



# Christians and Muslims in Tomorrow's Europe

Manchester Newman Lecture, April 3rd 2017

By Damian Howard SJ

It is not, of course, strictly accurate to speak of Islam as a new presence in modern Europe. There were isolated pockets of Muslims living in Europe long before the Second World War: think of the Balkan remnants of the Ottoman Empire, the Yemenis present in northern England from the 1860s or the oft-ignored Muslim Tatars of Poland who trace their origins all the way back to the fourteenth century. But post-war immigration, notably into the old colonial powers of France, Belgium, Britain and Holland, into Spain, close neighbour of North Africa that it is, and into the Germanophone lands, long-linked to the Turkish world, has created a highly diverse and substantial minority: Muslims and people of Muslim background now represent 7 per cent of the European population.

This proportion is likely, according to some forecasts, to rise to a quarter by the end of the century. Whilst hardly representing the kind of take-over repeatedly described in certain right-wing media outlets from across the Atlantic, this is nevertheless a substantial change in the religious landscape. What is surprising is how little interest is being taken by the Churches who should at this stage be wondering how European Christianity will be transformed by the presence of Islam.

## **Why Christians do not even want to think about Islam**

Perhaps we should not be so surprised by this. On the one hand, the Churches feel beleaguered and under attack; European Christianity in the early twenty-first century is manifestly a fragile thing. Islam's capacity to hold on to its young people (especially its males) and to demand respect for its beliefs shows up a disquieting crisis in the transmission of Christian faith. Better to ignore that stark disparity lest it crystallise a



troubling question.

On the other hand, Christian attitudes betray a deep-seated superiority complex; European Christians can give the impression of thinking they have resolved all the tensions involved in being religious in the modern world. To listen to some of their rhetoric, one would imagine they had long been blazing a trail that Muslims would be mad not to follow. How many times does one hear Catholics calling, without intended irony, for an Islamic Reformation (as if the turbulence and violence which afflict the Muslim world did not betoken an Islamic Reformation already well underway)?

This patronising disposition is built on the legacy of centuries of interreligious polemic. When Christians look at Islam, they have invariably done so in a downwards direction, through a lens shaped by assumptions it is surely now time to unlearn. The foundation stone, laid many centuries ago, was contempt for Muhammad. For centuries, he has been systematically portrayed as a false prophet and a knowing deceiver of his followers, a man who preached in bad faith. Islam itself was deemed early on to be a heretical form of Christianity and it came to be seen as a super-heresy combining all the accumulated errors of the past, from Arianism through Docetism to Pelagianism. One hears an echo of that logic in the complaints Christian commentators regularly make about Islam: that it lacks an analogue of the papacy, that its incorporation of reason into its juridical procedures is inadequate (the point of Pope Benedict XVI's Regensburg Lecture) or that it does not espouse a doctrine of justification by faith alone (a standard charge made by Protestant missionaries who object to what they see as Islam's commitment to a doctrine of salvation by works).

To overcome these obstacles, European Christians will need to learn three new habits: giving Muhammad, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the benefit of the doubt by assuming his sincerity and good faith; trying to understand Islam as Muslims understand it, which is to say in its own right, *in all its difference*; and weaning themselves off a regrettable assumption of superiority.

### **Learning from Muslims?**

With these moves made, it will rapidly dawn on the European Churches that having Muslims in large numbers as neighbours is bound to alter the questions that preoccupy them. Throughout modern times, Christian theology's principal interlocutor has been liberal secular modernity: it has grappled with the questions modernity provokes, trying to explain why God-talk is possible and meaningful, or how faith and science might not be mortal enemies. Within a few decades, Islam will, I suspect, have become an equal dialogue partner alongside secular modernity. It may even end up usurping its place.

Secular modernity has cauterised the Christian imagination; it bowdlerises religion, paring it down to the bare bones of ethics and "values" and sidelining dogma, ritual and practice. Enlightenment Christianity is a "respectable" kind of religion; its adherents are self-policing, knowing precisely what they may not say in public. Muslims, to posit a generalisation, are not so afflicted. They have no hesitation in affirming the reality of God, of angels and even of *jinn*, the fiery demons of Arabian mythology and who are mentioned in the Qur'an. Comparatively coy about the social utility of her faith, the European Church may well find herself liberated by the energy of unabashed Islamic theism to speak with a new confidence and simplicity about

God. Lived with discernment and sound theological reflection, this could only be a great gift.

The evidence suggests that once Christians become familiar with Islam, they feel *provoked* by it. I use the word after the example of the French Islamicist, Louis Massignon (1883-1962) who was himself so moved by the hospitality of Muslims that he was converted by it to a deep personal engagement with Catholicism. The word “provocation” has a nice ambiguity to it. Some Christians will have felt provoked to anger by Muslim attitudes towards their faith. A mimetic rivalry can also arise, as high profile court cases have shown: if Muslims are going to be given prayer facilities or be allowed to wear certain indicators of religious belonging, Christians must assert their right to the same treatment.

But provocation can also be constructive. There are Christians who have been provoked by the prayerfulness and religious commitment of Muslims and have returned, like Massignon, to their own tradition with renewed vigour. It is not unusual for young Christian students in British university campuses to feel drawn to the prayer, ritual and even the fasting practices of their own tradition, incited, as it were, by the example of their Muslim counterparts. The strength of intra-Islamic solidarity can show up the weak social bonds of the secular West and of the Church present in it. Might it not inspire new forms of community life? And at a time when the ecological crisis is said to demand a “bold cultural revolution”<sup>1</sup>, the resistance Muslims have put up to the more negative aspects of modernity might inspire Christians to reflect on what a more radical Christianity might look like.

### **A New Apologetics**

If Christians will find a certain solace in conversation with Muslims about the value of believing, they will also be challenged as to *what* they ought to believe. The prime bone of contention in religious terms between Islam and Christianity has always been the identity of Jesus Christ. Right from the outset, Islam has contested the Church’s central doctrinal claims, notably those pertaining to the incarnation and the Trinity. We can see just how early the Christological question came to the fore by examining the Qur’anic inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (691 A.D.) which explicitly reject the divine sonship of Jesus and assert the Muslim view of him as a prophet of God. Islam sees itself as a final reiteration of an original revelation from which Christian belief about Jesus has deviated.

The challenge of a committed Christian faith lived out in a religious environment shaped by Islam is, therefore, to find a way to express and make credible the tenets of that faith which Muslims call into question. Do today’s Christians know why the divinity of Jesus is so important to Christian faith? Can they readily articulate what Trinitarian theism involves without prematurely appealing to it as an unfathomable “mystery”? Decades of dialogue with secular modernity have weakened their sense of the importance or even rationality of such notions. European Islam will, I anticipate, provoke a desire to recover them and live radically by them. But it will require a solid theological and catechetical response from the Church first to prepare the faithful adequately.

Along with faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Redeemer of the world has gone a belief that there is something from which human beings require salvation in the first

place. Augustinian theology clarified the matter decisively for the western Church by formulating the doctrine of Original Sin. Consequently, for modern people, including some believers, Augustine has become a by-word for misanthropy, a bleak pessimism about the human condition. Christian theology has responded by stressing the value and goodness of human agency and the hope for humanity which comes in salvation through Christ.

The response of Muslims to Christianity's vision of the brokenness of God's image in the human has been, surprisingly, not dissimilar to that of secular modernity. Sin, for Islam, is rebellion against God; but God is merciful and instantly dispenses the repentant sinner from guilt, just as, according to the Qur'an, He did for Adam in Eden. There is no abiding structural flaw from which human beings need to be extricated and hence no saviour, no sacrifice on Calvary, no atonement. Ismail al-Faruqi, a Palestinian intellectual who died in 1986, would speak disparagingly of Christian "peccatism" and "saviourism", an obsession with human dysfunction which could only breed despair. Islam, by contrast, offered a wholesome and optimistic take on the human condition.



*Ismail al-Faruqi*

### **The shock of the "new"**

Islam has generally been marked by its conservatism and in modern times this tendency has intensified. It sees itself not as a new religion revealed to and spread by Muhammad but as the original monotheism taught by all the prophets since Adam. It is true that the Qur'an, the particular dispensation sent down to Muhammad in the Arabic language, has its own form and legal content but here too there is an absolute fidelity to its original data, the liturgy of the daily prayers, for instance, remaining unchanged in over 1400 years. Muslims look back to the years of the Prophet's activities as a golden age, a time when, as it were, the heavens were open and God's word was available in a direct way in which it is no longer. Muslims will think of Islam as divinely authored and therefore perfect.

True, there is an element of fallible human interpretation to be reckoned with. But the Qur'anic notion that Islam has been perfectly and totally revealed to the believers (Cf. Qur'an 5:3) goes deep; this is why Muslims flinch at the suggestion that Islam itself can be blamed for terrorism or other undesirable things. A strand of Islam dominant today instils a mistrust of anything "new" at all, any innovation which departs from the prophetic exemplar and the practice of the first three generations of Muslims; the Islamic philosophy and spirituality of previous ages find themselves harshly judged indeed.

Things look rather different to a Christian, whose point of departure is a "new covenant" and a "new creation" and whose central proclamation is a "secret hidden since the foundation of the world" (Matthew 13:35). This fundamental difference of stance leads inevitably to mutual incomprehension. The repeated insistence from some Christian quarters that Islam should update itself strikes many Muslims more as a sign of the problem inherent in Christianity than a solution for contemporary Islam.



A distinctly conservative brand of Christianity may well grow in influence, as it is already doing in some parts of Africa where Muslims and Christians live in close quarters.

### **The Sacred Page**

It is often said that Islam, unlike Christianity, is a religion of the book; in essence, it also understands original and authentic Christianity to be the same. Muslims believe that, just as the prophet Muhammad was given the *Qur'an*, so the prophet 'Isa (Jesus) was given the *injl*, a book revealed to him to guide human beings towards true religion and right conduct. Such bibliocentrism is almost matched by those Protestant fundamentalists whose estimation of the scriptural word comes close to a Muslim understanding of the *Qur'an*. But any valid Christian theology has to accord the book a status secondary to that of the revealed Word of God *par excellence* that is Jesus Christ. The book serves to mediate the One Who is the Word made flesh.



*Damian Howard SJ*

That said, one must concede that mainstream Catholicism does not always give the Bible its due. Study of the Bible by believers can be downplayed in favour of the teaching of the Magisterium and the reception of the sacraments. Liberal Protestantism has also found a way to distance itself from the power of the revealed text by stressing its historical contextualisation and so loosening its grip on the minds of the faithful.

In all the mainstream Churches, a vague affirmation of human reason prevails which leaves ordinary believers unsure as to why they should bother reading the Bible. It is very different for Muslims for whom every letter of the *Qur'an* matters greatly and for whom investigation of the possible human generation of the text is not an option. It is not hard to foresee this disjunction having consequences, not least through the attempts of Muslims to engage Christians in conversation on this topic with a view to inviting them to enter Islam. The Bible really is not like the *Qur'an* and trying to pretend that it is just misplaces a profoundly important theological emphasis.

### **Politics and Violence**

Muslims, it is often said, make no separation between Church and State. This statement is badly in need of considerable nuance, not least because Islam has no "Church". Christian commentators wax lyrical about how Islam's resistance to the secular state is a demonstration of its obscurantism and latent violence. Yet, the historical record shows that Muslims have not lived perpetually and exclusively under theocratic regimes. It is true that they tend to think that God's will is pertinent to every aspect of life. For this reason, they strongly resist the demand to cordon off the whole of common and public life from the purview of God's purposes, as secular modernity requires (and as not a few modern Christians seem to think the Gospel calls them to do).

None of which is to deny that Islam does also bear an in-built propensity for state enforcement of religious law which is problematic for Christians. But there is space also, surely, to re-examine today's allegedly Christian instinct for faith to be apolitical;

political non-engagement is a very strange position for an incarnational religion to take. If there is one area of deeply entrenched confusion in modern Christianity it surely lies in its haunting by the lingering spirit of a liberal Protestantism which prevents so many Christians from even contemplating the idea that their faith might call them to resist the ambient culture.

I think it likely that the encounter with Islam will encourage Christians to explore and commit themselves to a more politically engaged stance. In this regard, interest in Catholic Social Teaching is likely to gain in importance, but it might find itself challenged to explain itself vis-à-vis its indebtedness to scriptural and traditional sources, for Muslims expect religious guidance to have its roots in revealed truth and therefore to have direct scriptural warrant. They are less impressed with the authority claims of a magisterium made up of human beings nor with the speculative or empirical insights of this or that philosophical school.

European Muslims have suffered greatly the association fixed in people's minds between their religion and violence. Propagated by medieval Christian polemicists who sought to stress Islam's worldly as opposed to divine origins and reinforced by several decades of terrorist violence perpetrated in the name of Islam, this association has launched a thousand academic (and pseudo-academic) publications and created a new field of research, "religion and violence", so that now all believers have come to share in the opprobrium heaped on Muslims.

Some elucidation of the place of violence in Christian theology may be helpful in deconstructing this overly stark opposition. The most significant difference between Islam and Christianity in this regard is that the latter espouses an irenic vision of a Messianic era in which even the violence hard-wired into creation will be extinguished:

*In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion, and a little child will lead them all. (Isaiah 11:6)*

This vision has been made real in Jesus Christ and in the eschatological Kingdom of God which He announced, and which Christians believe to be even now breaking into an old creation marked by sin and violence. This anticipation of the eschatological Kingdom means that God's peace can be tasted in the here and now even though it has not yet been fully brought about.

### **Christians and pacifism**

This tension between the "already" and the "not yet" means that Christians have not generally embraced pacifism even if there is a palpable tug on their hearts in that direction. Instead, they have long recognised the need for the coercive power of the state to support the promotion of the social good, be it in the service of just warfare or the legitimate punishment of criminals. Notwithstanding, Jesus' non-violent career represents a certain ideal which serves to make Christians uncomfortable with coercive force. Augustine's theology of the two cities captures this ambivalence about state power which is shown up in all its mundane dreariness by the radiant light of the City of God<sup>3</sup>.

Muslim states have tended to deploy violence in broadly similar ways to western

governments, be they Church-backed or secular. They have used corporal and capital punishment for crimes which threaten the social order. They have unleashed jihad, armed state violence, against a foreign aggressor as a means of self-defence (sometimes, it must be admitted, so broadly construed that it has been positively aggressive itself). And there has been a strong tendency to assume that the enemies of Islam must also be the enemies of God, just as modern secular states see their foes as enemies of civilised liberalism.

Violence, in all this, is a deterrent, an expression of disapproval of certain crimes and a kind of restitution. It is an essential tool for the promotion of justice in a world in which some human beings and some states choose to exercise their freedom in flagrant disregard for the demands of justice. Those who insist, even with good intentions, that "Islam is a religion of peace" are rather missing the point; Islam sees itself as a religion of justice.

No-one can deny that there is a grave problem in our age with the use of violence by certain Muslims. What is in question is whether there is a gulf that separates Christianity from Islam in each religion's attitude to violence. There is a difference, to be sure, but it does not amount to an absolute opposition. Whatever the issues, be they *jihad* or capital punishment, and however serious they are, western Christian self-absolution in the name of a purported evangelical aversion to violence is sham. Christian citizens of western countries collude, by silence or disinterest, in the violence meted out by their governments, whether that is the capital punishment and mass incarceration of young black men practiced in the USA or drone warfare in Afghanistan.

One need not be a radical leftist to point out that in recent years western weapons have killed and maimed many, many times more people than have even terrorists operating under so-called Islamic inspiration. The West has a problem with violence; Christians, if their protest against other manifestations of religious terrorism are to be authentic, must face it and find a way to witness to their hope in true evangelical peace.

### **Changing places**

Interreligious conversion is one of the more hidden but nonetheless potent ways in which religions impact on each other. It is always a painful matter for those who continue to adhere to the religion being rejected, and dealing with the emotional fall-out of such episodes is bound to test the quality of relationships between communities. Conversion between Islam and Christianity in European countries is already taking place. One hears more about conversions to Islam in part because they can be spoken about publically without risk to life. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that it is probably because there simply are more conversions in that direction, though hard figures are not easy to come by. That said, conversions from Islam, especially among Turks and Iranians, seem to be on the rise. Such a conversion is only feasible if the individual concerned lives far from family and friends and so scandal and reprisals can be avoided. Among tight-knit communities, such as Pakistanis in Bradford or Algerians in Marseille, it is far less likely to occur.

Converts in general are usually known both for their enthusiasm for their new religion and their disparagement of the old. But this should not be exaggerated. Some of

the more dialogically minded Muslims in the UK and US are converts, familiar with western culture and ways of thinking. Muslims who convert to Christianity often do so because of what they experience as the oppressive ambiance brought on membership of an ethnic minority with a strong authority system. Turning to Christ can be a bid for a new kind of personal freedom.

## Epilogue

One would like to end by appealing to European Christians to give these matters some thought so as to prepare for a challenging future. The truth is that such pleas always fall on deaf ears. There may be wisdom in selective deafness. I have sketched a future pattern of interrelationships based to some extent on past experience of Christian-Muslim cohabitation and also on a perhaps rather formulaic grasp of how the two religions function as belief systems. Yet the European Churches' encounter with Islam is more likely to be a series of surprises. It is possible, one must admit, that the future will be surprisingly worse than I have suggested; as I write, reports are coming in of the death of a Catholic priest in Normandy at the hands of Muslim terrorists. No-one can hope that such atrocities will be anything other than isolated aberrations in a shared future. Were they to be otherwise then my speculations will strike a future reader as bizarrely naïve.

And yet, if you know where to look, surprises of a more positive order abound. I will leave you with one that has moved me greatly. On Sunday, October 18th, 2015 a Muslim intellectual, Navid Kermani, received the Peace Prize of the German Publishers' Association. He chose to frame a most remarkable acceptance speech by telling the story of two Christian priests whose witness had inspired him: Fathers Jacques Mourad and Paolo Dall'Oglio SJ. Fr Jacques is a Syriac-Catholic priest who was abducted in May 2015 from Qaryatayn, Syria by Islamic State terrorists; Fr Paolo is an Italian Jesuit who set up a monastery in Syria called Deir Mar Musa dedicated to Christian-Muslim friendship. Openly critical of the Syrian regime, Fr Paolo tried to mediate with ISIL in July 2013 but was kidnapped by the group and his fate remains uncertain. Kermani put his admiration for both men on record and invited Muslims to take heart from their generosity towards the faith of Muslims:



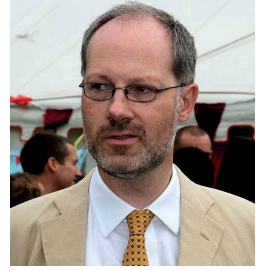
Navid Kermani

*A few days before his abduction, when the group that pretends to represent Islam and claims to apply the law of the Quran was already an immediate physical danger to him and his parish, Father Jacques still insisted that these terrorists were distorting the true face of Islam. I would take issue with any Muslim whose only response to the phenomenon of the Islamic State was the worn-out phrase that their violence has nothing to do with Islam. But a Christian, a Christian priest who could expect to be expelled, humiliated, abducted or killed by followers of another faith, yet still insisted on defending that faith – such a man of God displays a magnanimity that I have encountered nowhere else, except in the lives of the saints<sup>4</sup>.*

There is something in the magnanimity of Kermani himself from which European Christians might in turn take their cue. If Christians and Muslims are to find a way beyond the sterile and predictable dynamics of mimetic rivalry then we will need to find

something that interrupts them. Kermani offers a crucial insight:

*self-love [by which he means the love Muslims have for Islam] must be a struggling, doubting, constantly questioning love if it is to avoid falling prey to narcissism, self-praise, self-satisfaction. How true that is of Islam today! Any Muslim who does not struggle with it, does not doubt it and does not critically question it does not love Islam.*



An equivalent Christian “self-love”, it must be admitted, is no less prevalent and certainly no less in need of struggle and interrogation. Perhaps the disarming charity of these two holy priests, both of whom found themselves at the very heart of darkness, might shine a light to enlighten their brothers and sisters in the Old Continent.

*Damian Howard is a lecturer in Christian-Muslim studies at the University of London and a resident of the Hurtado Centre, a Jesuit social institution in East London.*

### References

1 *Laudato Si'* 114

2 Cf. Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, Second Edition, London: SCM, 2001

3 Augustine, *City of God*, abridged and translated by J.W.C. Wand, London: Oxford University Press, 1963.

4 Navid Kermani's speech at his reception of the *Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels* is available online at <http://www.friedenspreis-des-deutschen-buchhandels.de/1038404/>

**Thursday, September 14th**

**The Reformation Revisited:**

**Catholic and Protestant Approaches to Law**

A one-day conference at Heythrop College  
23, Kensington Square, London W8 5HN

**Registration 9.30, sessions from 10.00 to 5.00**

There will be lectures from Prof. Richard Helmholz, University of Chicago, and Prof. David McIlroy, SOAS, University of London, together with three panel presentations on **conscience, natural law** and **church & state**

*This conference is not aimed purely at lawyers and theologians. It should interest anyone wishing to learn more about different streams of Christian thought and some of the pressing issues facing society today.*

*Cost: £30, including lunch – applications and enquiries to:*

*Mrs Anne Duddington, Administrator, Edmund Plowden Trust, 6 Hanbury Park Road, Worcester WR2 4PB. Tel +44 (0) 1905 423131, email [editor@lawandjustice.org.uk](mailto:editor@lawandjustice.org.uk)*



# Towards a Post-Clericalist Church

by **Werner G. Jeanron**

What are we expecting of God? When reflecting on the future shape of the Church, it may be appropriate to ask ourselves a few questions. What do we expect of God at this point in our lives, in our Church, in our country, in Europe, in the world? How do we expect God's reign to manifest itself here and now and what is our role and the role of Christian community in this process? What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ today?

Imagine for a moment what tops the list of our expectations: salvation, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, justice, peace, love, renewal of the earth, heaven, being with God, being with our loved ones in paradise. We may also wish to ask ourselves: what does God expect from us? In what way are we to be God's arms, legs, mouth, hand, feet in this universe? What might top God's list of expectations?

It is important to identify and explore our expectations – and God's expectations – when approaching the question of how our Church ought to develop at this point in time. Moreover, it is crucial to consider how we think of God when analysing our potential role in God's evolving Church. Do we imagine God in terms of a monarchical super-power high above and beyond all worldly concerns, looking down on us from heaven and interfering at this or that moment in response to our wishes, prayers and protestations? How do we imagine God's presence in our lives, in the Church, in the world and in this universe at large? How do we imagine our co-operation with God in the Church?

## **Emerging Models of Church**

In the Roman Catholic Church we are witnessing massive changes at present. For many centuries the Catholic Church was understood to be on its way to becoming a perfect society, in and for the world, in accordance with what was assumed to be the will of God. Other Christian Churches were considered aberrations from this road map, not to speak of other religious movements. The Church was pictured as a triumphant institution aspiring to order the world with the help of a divinely-sanctioned hierarchy of popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, deacons (so far all male) and then supported by the religious and, finally, by the laity.

Pope Francis's image of the Church as a field hospital initiates a dramatically different model of Church<sup>1</sup>. During the Pope's recent visit to Lund in Sweden he remembered Martin Luther and the legacy of the Protestant Reformation; and his encounters with other world religions demonstrate his determination to lead the Church away from the model of the perfect society toward a model of a pilgrim Church. He understands the Roman Catholic Church in terms of a pilgrim movement beside other pilgrim movements.

For Christians, Jesus Christ has become the incarnation of God's twofold project in our midst. His ministry, the violent death and the surprising resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, together confirm God's creative will for this world and emphasise God's lasting commitment to and love of his creative project. Jesus showed us how to respond to God's creative and reconciling initiative in his love, his healing attention

to our human needs and, ultimately, in his self-sacrifice. The early disciples could not think any longer about God apart from recalling these significant and transformative experiences with Jesus Christ. God made himself known in Jesus Christ. Ultimately, the experience of the continued presence of Christ in history through the divine Spirit prompted the emergence of the concept of the Trinity. Confessing God as Trinity, therefore, amounts to a confirmation that God remains committed to his creative and reconciling presence in our midst. That is what is part and parcel of salvation.

Hence, salvation does not call for a departure from God's created and beloved world into some other place or anti-world. God is not gnostic! Rather, accepting God's salvation in Christ involves us in God's promise to make everything new – beginning here and now. Therefore, Pope Francis's image of the Church as a field hospital makes good sense if one wishes to be involved in God's ongoing project of creation and reconciliation. However, it makes no sense if one sees the Church in terms of an anti-world, hierarchically structured by ordained men to avoid change and development.

God desires community with us human beings. This is the mystery of God's creative and reconciling love – a mystery which invites us to participate ever more deeply in the divine-human network of interdependent love relationships: our love of God, our love of our fellow human beings, our love of God's creation, and our love of our own emerging selves<sup>2</sup>. Christian communities are called to become communities of love – and not models of some perfect society with a well-ordered male hierarchy.

It follows nowhere from the good news of Jesus Christ, from his death on the cross and his resurrection, that those who will be leading and organising Christian communities ought to be male. Where are there reliable, well-founded theological reasons to support an exclusively male (or for that matter an exclusively female) priesthood? Or indeed for a necessarily celibate clergy? The fact that for centuries

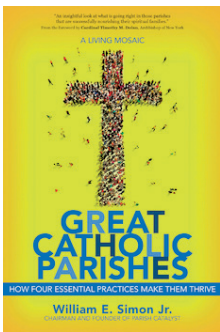


cultural forces have prioritised men to take on religious, social and political leadership in European societies is a result of a gender power game. But please let us not blame God for this patriarchal development and let us refrain from imposing such a patriarchal plot on God.

We live and work at the intersection of two competing models of Church: the Church as a well-ordered society and the Church as a dynamic community. The model of Church as society has favoured a clericalist understanding of Church leadership. Here, the guarantors of a functioning Church are the (male) clergy. This understanding is still about today. It reflects the efforts of past generations to erect a perfect society with the perfect and pure male leader on top of the social pyramid in a monarchical setting. Moreover, the image of the celibate holy man was a statement of power: God can be encountered perfectly only through male mediation. This is not to suggest that many priests that have emerged from this cultural, religious and monarchical model of patriarchal power have not been good people or have not done marvellous work in God's Church. However, I am arguing that, theologically, this model of clericalist leadership is neither necessary nor desirable for a Church that understands itself now in terms of a field hospital called by God to serve a wounded world in great need of healing.

Let us reflect in some more detail on how vibrant Catholic communities might look like today and what form of leadership they require in order to support Pope Francis's approach to Church and life today. Thus, rather than concentrating on the global picture, here I wish to reflect on the renewal of the *local* Church.

### Great Catholic parishes



In a book entitled *Great Catholic Parishes: How Four Essential Practices Make Them Thrive*, published last year, William E. Simon Jr and his friends in the Parish Catalyst movement set out to explore criteria for successful local Catholic parishes<sup>3</sup>. Even though this study reflects the current situation in the United States of America, important lessons can be learned even for our situation in the British Isles. Bill Simon and his team visited 244 parishes all over the 50 American states. There are more than 17,000 Catholic parishes in the United States (see p. 52 of the book). However, the 244 parishes highlighted are particularly vibrant and dynamic. Hence, they offer some insights into what makes a parish a great parish. In Bill Simon's words:

*"Our study revealed that great Catholic parishes (1) share leadership, (2) foster spiritual maturity and plan for discipleship, (3) excel on Sundays, and (4) evangelize in intentional, structured ways. There is nothing revolutionary about these four practices.*

*"In fact, at first glance they can appear deceptively simple. But these particular parishes are thriving in a time and climate when many people no longer find value in organised religion. These pastors, parish leadership teams, and parishioners have developed a clarity of vision.*

*"The common attributes apparent in these pastors and woven through these parish communities are collaborative, intentional, and joyful (p. 6)."*

If we have a closer look at the four practices characterising a great Catholic parish we immediately see that the model of pastoral leadership advocated and practised here differs sharply from the hierarchical approach to priestly leadership which supported the model of Church as perfect society. Of course, good pastoral leadership can come in different forms. However, leadership in great Catholic parishes always involves lay people in some way. In the tone of American Western expression Bill Simon sums up: "Lone rangers are no longer the norm in vibrant parishes" (p. 19).

Three styles of parish leadership have been identified by Simon and his team:

- Collaborative Leadership
- Delegated Leadership
- Consultative Leadership

All of these styles combine pastoral and lay leadership, recognise distinctive ministerial talents and gifts, and organise and develop the ministerial profile of a parish accordingly. Moreover, it is essential that, once the lay ministers are in place, "the pastor must be willing to trust that the responsibilities assigned to team members will be handled and will allow the laity to do their work. Only then can he devote himself to the elements of parish leadership exclusive to his role as the leader of leaders. Only then will he have the time, energy, and vision necessary to do these things well" (p. 29).

In a pilgrim Church, leadership represents neither status nor position but should be an activity which, with appropriate training and experience, anyone can practise anywhere at any time (cf. p. 45). Hence, references to the shortage of celibate priests can never be a good reason for closing down a parish or for amalgamating parishes. Leadership and ministry are practices not limited to the ordained clergy. However, as we have seen, ordination might well be a route to exercise new and more appropriate forms of collaborative, delegating and consultative leadership in and beyond the local Church. The primary task among ordained and lay leaders in the parish is to develop strategic thinking and planning about discipleship. Once it is agreed that spiritual maturity is a goal to be pursued in the parish and the respective resources (human and financial) are identified and allocated, programmes for the spiritual development of the parish membership can be implemented. The spiritual hunger is immense today and represents a wonderful call to parishes to prepare to meet it.

### **A word of caution**

At this point a word of caution is needed. It has been shown that "increased participation in church activities does not significantly contribute to an increasing love of God and others" (Cally Parkinson). Thus, involvement in a parish programme does not automatically guarantee the parishioners' deepened commitment to Christ (p. 61). This insight makes it necessary to concentrate on the overall goal of parish life, i.e., developing the network of interdependent loving relationships. The sense of belonging, therefore, must be a sense of belonging to God in Christ and each other rather than being a mere sense of belonging to a specific group in distinction of other possible groups. Hence, what needs deepening is not a feeling of belonging, as such, but the development of a strong sense of Christian community.

However, a parish must never be encouraged to be only inward-looking. A healthy

exchange and interaction with other parishes, other faith communities and the host of religious development programmes on offer is essential. And let's not forget that the Church is there to serve the world – critically and self-critically.

The Eucharist is the central experience of any Catholic parish, though not the only transformative experience. Prayer in its many different forms and occasions, Bible studies, meditation and contemplation groups, works of charity, concern groups for justice and peace, the different catechetical teams and the preparations for sacramental initiation and participation are co-essential for the development of a passion for faith, love and hope in the Christian community. Mass attendance, then, is important, but in itself is not yet a guarantee for moving forward on a dynamic journey of faith (p. 95). The Sunday experience, however, remains a crucial point of departure for all Christians in renewing and deepening their vocation and discipleship.

For the static model of Church as a perfect society, the Sunday experience meant: coming, receiving, and leaving (p. 100). For a pilgrim Church this will never suffice. Rather, it takes planning and work to create a culture of hospitality and reasons for people to stick around and connect after Mass – all part of what makes the Eucharistic experience meaningful (cf. 103). Moreover, the Eucharist needs adequate preparation – including the homily, the liturgical execution of the sacrament, and the accompanying music. “The confidence that a well-executed liturgy inspires in parishioners is critical to getting a Sunday experience off on the right foot (p. 105).”

Bill Simon offers six important insights into preparing for the Sunday experience:

- Vibrant, welcoming Sunday liturgies require thorough staff planning and a well-organised network of volunteer ministers.
- Attention to the needs of the children in the community is a critical success factor for vibrant parishes.
- Hospitality begins with a parish's online presence, which must be kept fresh and relevant to the expressed needs of both parishioners and newcomers.
- The physical plant's upkeep and suitability to meet the needs of the worshipping community are key factors in creating a vibrant worship experience.
- Flourishing parishes have pastors who love being present to their people and who are highly disciplined about setting aside long hours of time and attention for homily preparation.
- Music is central to the Sunday experience. Significant time, talent, equipment, and money must be budgeted in order to deliver great liturgical music (Cf. pp. 123-4).

Again, these important insights are accompanied by frustrating experiences of no-change attitudes by some priests and parishioners alike. It will always appear easier to remain in the old Church-as-society paradigm where everybody had their hierarchically-assigned place rather than embarking on a pilgrimage toward the unknown with loss of status, power, control, comfort and security. Too often, long-standing negative behaviours on a parish staff or in a volunteer position are permitted to continue. Too often, priests unable to move to the new paradigm block any change. There are times when a person needs to move on and let someone new minister, and there are times when ministerial roles should be restructured to make a parish professional or volunteer team more creative and productive (cf. p. 130).



In the old model of Church we left the light on for people who might come in. In the Church understood now as field hospital we must bring the light to the people. We must reach out and share what we have received; we are to evangelise (p. 139). In the old model, evangelisation was often accompanied by fire-and-brimstone sermons and undertaken by, at times, overzealous fanatics. Mission in all its forms and shapes – and its symbiosis with the British (or other forms of) Empire – has left a bitter taste in our mouths and we are embarrassed even to talk about it, let alone engage in it ourselves. What is required from a vibrant parish is simply a change of attitude: from being concerned merely with itself now to looking outside; from “mirror people” to “window people” – through the glass looking at others.

*“Evangelising people are the parishioners who see beyond their parish community and share their enthusiasm for their parish with outsiders, encouraging them to join in. They see the needs of the world and make room in their lives to provide for others (p. 141).”*

In other words, we need to move from maintenance to mission, from being content with what we see to inviting outsiders to come and see for themselves how we practice, enjoy and radiate discipleship. Such a culture of hospitality requires a conscious effort on the part both of the leadership of the parish and of all the parishioners<sup>4</sup>.

*“In the end, the purpose of evangelisation is not to ‘make converts’ or ‘fill the pews’ but is simply to open doors – to let others know the Good News that Catholic faith has made a positive difference in our lives and that God’s love is available to others as well (p. 146).”* Pope Francis never tires of inviting us to change towards becoming out-reach people. In the old model of Church we have been saving the saved; now we must reach out to those beyond (cf. p. 155). We must begin to develop new attitudes and methods of evangelisation – always beginning with ourselves.

### **Expectations reconsidered**

The crisis in our Church is not a crisis of faith, but the crisis of a particular paradigm of being Church. A good illustration can be found in the continuing debate on where the



Church is to be found: is the Church to be found where there is a priest or where there are people responding to God’s invitation in Christ to build up God’s reign? If the first scenario is true, the Church will come to an end when the last priest dies. If the second scenario is right, the Church flourishes wherever people gather around the good news of God’s ongoing project of creation and reconciliation.

The difficulty which we are facing today – not least in the British Isles – is that we are living in a transition period: between a dying model of Church and an emerging model of Church. Much of the clerical structure and the patriarchal and hierarchical organisation of our Church reflects the now dying model. However, few new structures are in place yet to nurture the emerging model. Nevertheless, as we have seen from the example of great Catholic parishes in America, new models of leadership and co-operation between pastors and laity are emerging.

Pope Francis has declared war on clericalism – not on clergy understood as serving the community. It remains a big challenge for us all, priests and laity alike, to get rid of clericalism in our heads while developing a healthy approach to the pastoral and leadership needs of the emerging model. Moreover, claims that the forms of clericalism associated with the old model of Church were in fact willed and revealed by God are meant to destroy any legitimate critique of outdated Church structures and to make it appear like sacrilege. We must free ourselves from this false guilt-trap: a no-longer-functioning model of Church does not get any better just because we blame God for it. Rather, God has empowered all of us to become active participants in God's emerging reign. It is time we recall the Vatican II reminder that we all share in the priesthood of all believers:

*"Though they differ essentially and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are none the less ordered one to another; each in its own proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ (Lumen Gentium II: 10)."*

Nobody in the Church – old and new – argues, as far as I know, that leadership was not necessary. Rather, what is necessary is a conversation on which kind of leadership best supports the gospel's call on developing Christian communities, which kind of priesthood is required to promote the Gospel in today's world, and which approach restores the community to its holy vocation of becoming afresh the salt of the earth.

In this period of transition toward the emerging model of a truly participatory Church we lay-people (literally "people-people"!) must be clear about our co-responsibility for the Church. We ought not to hide behind the ineffectiveness of the old model of Church and say that because we disagree with that model we cannot participate in the different levels of Church work – local, regional, national and global. There is no excuse for passivity if we truly love Christ and long to follow him to the fullness of God's creative and reconciling presence in our midst. The new model of Church cannot emerge and flourish if we are not actively contributing to it and thus promoting it.

All kinds of conflicts may appear on the road toward a better Church. All kinds of vested interests will show their often ugly heads when challenged. But in the present period of transition, we are invited to remain faithful to God's love command, so forcefully confirmed by Jesus Christ. Loving God, our neighbours and ourselves is at the heart of any faithful response to God's invitation to be part of her community. Hence, this love command applies also in any struggle within our Church.

However, to *love* does not mean to *like*. Nobody, not even God, can force us to like the misuse and neglect of power and responsibility in the Church. Rather, the necessary struggle to transform our communities towards becoming participatory communities must be a struggle of love. And that means that we should never deny that others – priests, bishops and lay people alike – are in principle also genuinely searching for true ways of being Church. What we must insist on – otherwise our love is not just – is that we all equally engage in an open-ended co-operation and in dialogue on all levels on what it means to be Church today and on which ministries and leadership functions are needed in the pilgrim Church. As a friend of mine recently put it to me, dialogue in the Church today is easier than before, since the Pope himself provides cover in that struggle.

It is true that not all priests and bishops have yet appreciated that the days of the old

Church model with its hierarchical order and authoritarian self-understanding are definitely over. We must help them to see the light. That help can take many forms: prayer, faithful resilience, loving critical support, acts of liberating priests and bishops from their often self-imposed and painful isolation, inviting them back into the life of vibrant communities.

Back to the beginning: what do we expect from God in our complex situation of transition? What does God expect from us? How strong is our desire to transform our world in love, beginning always with ourselves? How much faith do we have in God's love and guidance? Do we take the priesthood of all believers seriously and stop hiding behind the facades of a crumbling model of Church?

Finally, let's remind ourselves that we do not believe only in the Church, but *with* the Church – and at times even without it and at times even in spite of it – in the transformative presence of God in our midst. This faith will free us to liberate the Church and its structures for an ever-more-adequate service in God's emerging reign.

*Werner G. Jeanrond is Master of St Benet's Hall and Professor of Theology in the University of Oxford. He gave a talk based on this text to the Edinburgh Circle on February 15th 2017. A version of this text appeared in the February 2017 issue of Doctrine & Life, a publication by the Dominicans in Ireland.*

#### notes

- 1 Pope Francis has frequently referred to this image. Cf., for example, his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (2016), 291. "The Church must accompany with attention and care the weakest of her children, who show signs of a wounded and troubled love....let us not forget that the Church's task is often like that of a field hospital."
- 2 See Werner G Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love*, London/New York: T&T Clark, 2010.
- 3 William E. Simon Jr., *Great Catholic Parishes: a Living Mosaic: how Four Essential Practices Make Them Thrive*, Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2016, \$17.95 (paperback). Numbers in the text refer to pages of this book.
- 4 For a thoughtful and challenging reflection on hospitality see Mona Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam: Welcoming in God's Name*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2015.

### Advance notice

## St Albans Conference on the Reformation

A joint conference, with the Newman Association in partnership with St Albans Cathedral, is planned to commemorate Martin Luther's actions 500 years ago which are generally considered to have started the Reformation.

The title of the conference will be:

### **1517 and All That...The Relevance of the Reformation Today**

Speakers will include **Professor John Morrill**, **Bishop Martin Lind** and **The Revd Dr Charlotte Methuen**. This event will take place at

**St Columba's College, St Albans, on**

**Saturday, October 28th (10.30-4.00)**

The cost will be £30, including lunch Further details in the September Journal

# From Poverty to Life Chances

London Newman Lecture – March 2nd, 2017

by Frank Field, MP

I'm going to talk to you about from poverty to life chances – and back again, to destitution. And it is back again to part of my life experience, as I had ten years working for the Child Poverty Action Group. The journey that I want to describe to you tonight is from a society in which it was pre-ordained where we should be, and nothing much would change that, to the political campaigns and the institutional changes of the last century, and to what we now actually know about where and how life chances are actually determined.

It is partly, of course, about the movement from thinking that class determines people's life chances, and what we now know about the brain, and the very simple things the Church teaches about the nurturing of children, about the life chances which can actually develop from that activity, which is more powerful than the role that class or income play. In doing so, I am putting forward a view that probably all of you hold, and that is that schools are the key to determining life chances. You have all contributed, I am sure, massively to Catholic schools, and have thought that this support was going to change the life chances of Catholic pupils.

But although I do not wish you to cease contributing to Catholic schools, you must do it for other reasons. The research shows that life chances are determined *before* children come to school. Schools do not close the difference in life chances that can be measured against class. The report that I did for Prime Minister Cameron in 2010, when he was anxious to report within a matter of months, looked at whether there were forces greater than life chances in determining outcomes. Indeed, what the Prime



Frank Field addressing Newman members in the Loyola Hall, Heythrop College

Minister wanted me to do was to help him shock, and to enhance the traditional data on poverty, which is indeed inadequate. I refused, however, to do the report that he wanted. The report was published in 2010 on the children who had become poor adults and the conclusion was that if we really wanted to do something about that problem we had to start with the period when the child is nurtured in the womb until the time when the child actually goes to school.

It was very interesting, before I read the research, to find that all the reception teachers that I spoke to said that they could prophesy which girl was going to become head girl, and some were even brave enough to predict which girl would end up going to prison. They all knew that they could judge the life chances of their children in the very early stages of their school careers: who was in fact going to succeed, and who was not. That was the practical background, from the people who taught the children in their first year.

I then read one article in particular by a guy called Leon Feinstein in a magazine called *Economica*. He had looked at some 1970 data on all the babies born in a particular week of that year. He followed them through. What Leon was interested in was the data on the children as they entered school, and whether it was possible to work out from that data where children finally arrived in the labour market. This approach is based on what I call the foundation years.

In some ways this article gave the intellectual grist to what many people were able to predict: that while one could try to improve the standards of the individual children you couldn't widen the gap much once they were in school. In fact the data showed that, far from narrowing, the gap in attainment *widened* in school. That is not to say that schools are not good for all sorts of social reasons but they don't achieve the objectives of widening the life chances. Perhaps if we ever get a critical number of very, very good schools we will find that schools can be powerful enough to begin to make



a difference after the age of five; but we have yet actually to see that.

*The report to the Prime Minister, though, looked at why the first year in the womb is the key one: is it simply a question of social class, or are there other drivers which are more important than class itself? We asked Bristol University to look at whether there could be various correlations, and whether from a whole range of correlations*

*one could actually show that, by holding various aspects of the data constant, there were drivers? And were there drivers that we could intervene in?*

*There were three factors that were crucially important in influencing the life chances of the very poorest in this country. Firstly, we would be massively concerned with the*



mental health of the mother – because of her relationship with herself, but also because of her relationship with her baby. Because the second driving force is bonding, how well the mother bonds with the child. The stronger that bond is, the more important it is in denying the role of class in determining the outcome of the child's life. And thirdly, to use a middle class, Guardian-type phrase, there is the learning environment: I think all of us all know the importance of reading to children and, in the same way, developing their skills in cognitive and social aspects.

Also, we asked Cambridge University to work with reception teachers and heads in Wirral in working out how we could measure life chances: who is going to do well and who's not, and at what point can we actually intervene? How can we intervene, to affect what we know is going to be a terrible outcome? And they went with a whole list of measurements from largely – but not totally – Birkenhead-dominated teachers' groups. It was questions about infants being potty-trained, knowing their own names, not having a dummy, being able to sit down and be still, not using a pencil to stab but knowing it can actually be used for drawing. These are very basic things, but basically in this country a very large group is falling out of love with being parents, and the skills of parenting are being lost. If you have been dragged up by a mother and somehow survived, how on earth should you know what the process is for good parenting? They built up a score of indicators in the reception class which worked out who were raising toddlers successfully. One of the interesting things for me, though, was that we wanted to see whether the same sets of indicators worked where there were black British as well as white British – and in Northern Ireland, too. The outcome was that the indicators worked as well whatever the circumstances were.

But we found, firstly in Birkenhead, but then elsewhere, that there was, however, a group of children who on many of these indicators entered school in the most disadvantaged group yet were actually reported to be on a par with the richest children. When Cambridge dug down into these data we found that practically all these children reported having fun. So in place of the home-learning environment children were telling us about having fun in the home.

Now it may be that these were the children who – partly because of the nature of the fun that they had – were able to describe it, whereas other children had fun but were unable to describe it. We are chasing that analysis to see where it leads. But it did leave us in the position that here was a real opportunity in 2010 with David Cameron; we were not asking for more money, but for an understanding of what we were spending on children in the womb and up to their first day in reception class – we should get on with it, but of course he never did. Then in the final weeks he began to worry about his legacy and I am sorry to say that Mrs May is not as interested as Cameron on two occasions said he was. So where this will go I do not know.

**But there has been, in the last ten years, the beginning of a trend which is so much more remarkable and that is the problem of hunger. I still believe in spending money on life chances but I also believe that we need to run at the same time a campaign for money and resources and skills. I can provide witness in my own constituency of people being hungry. The food bank movement was at the great beginning of all this but it cannot be the end. Going into a food bank, which will be largely staffed by Christians, is a deeply depressing experience and if I was**

hungry and I had to go into a food bank it would add to my pain in my head rather than alleviating it, even though it might alleviate pains in my stomach.

It's not just a matter of culture, and the difficulty of paying big bills like heating and rent, and food. But it's now a question in my constituency of people who are actually suffering destitution. It's a most extraordinary indictment of our society that food is actually being wasted and only 2 per cent of surplus food which is being burnt or goes to landfill is being used to feed people who are hungry. We have to work out what should follow the food bank to make the whole system more effective and, above all, what increases the dignity of people using the service rather than adding to their misery. Food banks are only a temporary move and ought to be seen as such.

We ought to be looking at the longer-term issues because we haven't only got hunger, and destitution, in this country. It's now becoming prevalent in all Western economies. So something terrible has happened in the postwar period: once the weakest underbelly of society was protected in various ways but that underbelly is no longer protected. So while I have offered the Newman Association a lecture on *From poverty to life chances* we are now talking about going back again to destitution.

#### References

*Inequality in the Early Cognitive Development of British Children in the 1970 Cohort*, by Leon Feinstein, 2003 (Economica).

*The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults*, by Frank Field, 2010. Published by HM Government.

### Frank Field on Newman and Manning

*I remember going to Newman's Birmingham church, where he had his Order, and in those days I was allowed alone into his room. I remember looking into his wardrobe, opening his doors, seeing his cardinal's robe there, as though he would be expected back at any moment. In the 19th century there were two Anglicans who became Cardinals, Newman and Manning. And I know it is a mistake to play one off against the other, and that one should celebrate both of them; but if I had to choose one person of the two that I would wish to meet it would be – although this is perhaps not very appropriate for this evening – Manning: he built schools before he allowed churches to be built.*

*As for Newman, in my twenties I began to take an interest in the Tractarians and the power of this man's pen was extraordinary. It was a characteristic of this group that they could all write beautiful English. And Newman has grown in importance in different parts of the Church and I am so pleased that you continue to keep this memory alive of this quite extraordinary person, with real power with the pen in writing the most sublime English. When I was left alone in his room, with his books there, it was indeed an extraordinary experience.*



# The Scandal of Christian Disunion

A biblical interpretation by **Nicholas King SJ**

I have called it *The Scandal of Christian Disunion, a Way Ahead?* We are living in a darkened world, which desperately needs to hear the Gospel and cannot. That is because people look at Christians and note how they all hate one another so other people have no need to listen to them. We are creating a scandal by our divisions.

This talk originates in some lectures I gave in South Africa a year or so ago, and out of that has come a book, published just this week, called *The Scandal of Christian Disunity*<sup>1</sup>. I taught for many years in universities and seminaries in South Africa and since then I was teaching most of the time in Oxford. Sitting down for most of the time with my students – some of whom were atheists, many others being in different Christian denominations – I discovered a real closeness of readings of the New Testament, which didn't have anything to do with denomination. Also, I could feel in them a real sense of the life that is in the New Testament. I think we have a precious asset. What I am going to say tonight is only a very small part of what is in the book.

## **The mystery of anti-ecumenism**

Point one is what I have called the mystery of anti-ecumenism. When you start to talk about ecumenical relations various reactions can be experienced. One is that you can notice real sense of anger: people say, do you want us to surrender all our hard-won insights? I have experienced that both on the Catholic side and the Reform side. You can also get a cold indifference. Who cares, what does it matter? These people say: I'm not interested, I know what I believe and I'm going to carry on with that. And then you can trigger a kind of counter-reaction, a real disappointment. Michael Hurley, the great Jesuit ecumenist, talked about "a great chaos of lovelessness" and he was talking there about the relationship between the Catholic and the Orthodox churches. It was a very, very sad thing to say; it's a mystery to me.

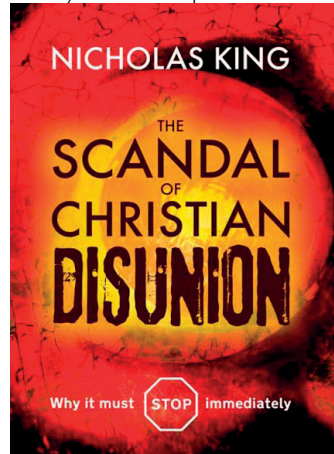
And that brings me to the second point, which is the beguilement of easy solutions. It's very easy – for example, for Catholics – to say, well, it's all *your* fault, you lot abandoned the Church which Christ founded. Or, in the words of John Calvin, Rome corrupted word and sacraments, so it was Rome that unchurched itself by drifting away from the truth of the Gospel. But I don't want to go for any of those easy solutions; I want to peer dimly through the fronds of the jungle and see if there is a way ahead.

Thirdly, there is the role of recent popes. Certainly, more than we often recognise, recent Popes have given Catholics a very strong lead in ecumenism. This obviously applied to John XXIII, whom you would generally categorise as something of a conservative, though a very *open* conservative: he simply said to us that the Catholic Church considered it her *duty* to work towards reunification. He conceived the Second Vatican Council as an opening-out to other Christians.

Paul VI had a different approach to theology – he never went to a seminary and he studied at home. That was both an advantage and a disadvantage. He saw dialogue between Christian movements as an exchange of gifts. And he said something different about the office of the Pope: it was not, he said, a supreme authority puffed up with spiritual pride but a primacy of service and a ministration of love. He also said: "The

Pope, as we well know, is arguably the greatest obstacle in the path of ecumenism.” Then there was John-Paul II: “Ecumenism is an organic part of the Church’s life and work,” he said, and he spoke of the need for the *Pope* to be converted. That’s very strong. And Benedict XVI, in his inaugural address to the Cardinals, said: “The fostering of the unity of Christians will be at the pinnacle of my ministry”. He also spoke of the *absolute importance* of Jesus.

As for his successor Francis, his gift is one of gestures, of bowing his head and receiving a blessing from the Eastern Orthodox Patriarch, and his visit, for example, to a Pentecostal Church: no other Pope would have dreamt of doing that. He has said the following things: “We are all at fault” (and it is something to hear the Bishop of Rome saying that); “Our divisions must not be accepted with resignation”; and “Unity comes about in journeying”. He has also said: “Our divisions represent a major obstacle to our witness to the Gospel in the world,” and “Signs of division between Christians in countries ravaged by violence add further causes of conflict on the part of those who should instead be a leaven of peace.”



My fourth point is that there are other obstacles to ecumenical dialogue. It seems to me that those who are least at ease in their own religious tradition are those who are *most* inclined to resist ecumenical outgoing. Just a faint *insecurity* forces us to hug on to our *security*. Then there are those who think that they have got nothing to learn. Here’s an example from St Mark’s Gospel: “There he rose up and went off to the regions of Tyre. He went into a house and he couldn’t remain secret. Jesus couldn’t pass unnoticed. And immediately a woman saw him and she had a daughter with an unclean spirit who fell at his feet. She asked him to expel the demon from her little daughter. He replied, because of your word, off you go, the demon has come out of your daughter. So it was quite clear that Jesus saw his as a reform movement within Judaism: “Go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” he says in Matthew 10. But Jesus recognised that he had something to learn.

Thirdly, there are those who are determined to hold on to hard-won insights. I was brought up in recusant Catholicism – the blood of the martyrs runs in my veins – but that doesn’t mean that we should cling to everything that they stood for. In Jeremiah 7, Jeremiah is warning them that “it’s all your fault” and the temple is going to fall. The spirit might be trying to warn you that it is time to move on. Then there are those who rush ahead too far. This could include those who try to link the Gospel with social justice.

Here is a slightly different example from Acts 8. The Angel of the Lord speaks to Philip and they appoint eight deacons, who all have impeccably Greek names, and we only ever hear of two of them again. One is Stephen, who is preaching so brilliantly that they stone him to death for it, and the other is Philip, who rushes around preaching, and does it under the influence of the spirit.

So the Angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying he should journey to the south, going

down from Jerusalem to Gaza. And he came across a eunuch, the powerful servant of the Queen Candace; he was in charge of all her treasury. He was sitting in his chariot reading the prophet Isaiah out loud. Philip said, do you know what you're reading and the eunuch replied<sup>2</sup>, "no, how can I unless someone guides me?" He invited Philip to get up and sit down next to him, and the item of scripture was from Isaiah 53, about a lamb being led to the slaughter, and the eunuch asked "about whom was the prophet saying this?" Was it about himself or about someone else?

Philip then gospelled him about Jesus, and as they were journeying they came to some water and the eunuch said "what's stopping me from being baptised?" They both went down into the water and Philip baptised the eunuch. When they came out of the water the spirit of the Lord drew Philip away and the eunuch went on alone. That's another thing that can go wrong if we go rushing ahead of the spirit; we have to listen to the spirit but sometimes the spirit isn't taking us quite as far as we tend to want it to.

So that is another difficulty with ecumenical dialogue. Here's yet another one. *Odeum theologicum*; how these Christians hate one another. In John, 8:48, the Judeans replied to Jesus, aren't we right in saying you're a Samaritan? And you've got a demon? (simply because he is proclaiming God as Father). I've seen quoted a high-ranking prelate speaking about Pope Francis and the Synod on the Family, and saying "Isn't this a bit Protestant?" That is *odium theologicum*.

Another problem is those who refuse to consider what the Spirit is saying. An example of that is Acts 15, right in the middle of the Acts of the Apostles. There was trouble which could have ripped the Church apart in those early days, because what we would now consider as conservatives quite correctly said that the Bible gave instructions about things like eating kosher food, circumcising males and observing festivals. It said so in the Bible. If you were denying that you were wrong. So some people came down from Judea and they started teaching the Brethren that unless they were circumcised in the manner of Moses they could not be saved. There was quite a lot of unrest and argument with Paul and Barnabas: Paul, of course, would never be backward in coming forward with these matters.



Acts 15 relates that they go to Jerusalem, and all the apostles and the elders get together to talk about this problem. There is a great deal of argument, and then Peter stands up; he makes an unexpected speech saying "Don't put burdens on these people" so you can feel the issue changing. But notice, technically, as a Biblical matter, Peter is wrong, because it says in the Bible you've got to be circumcised. But he says God gave the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles just as to us, and made no difference, cleansing their hearts by Faith. So why do you tempt God, putting a yoke on the neck of disciples such as neither our ancestors nor we were able to bear. But through the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we believe that they can be saved just like us. Then the whole group was silent.

Then Jacob (James) the leader of the Church in Jerusalem, said: "Men, brothers, listen to me." Simeon has explained how God has visited to take a people for his name from the Gentiles." And so Jacob, this conservative, leads them towards a solution. They



all agree, and they cheer, and a letter is sent to the Gentiles. There is an example of people being prepared to listen to the Holy Spirit. That's a model for us today. We've got one or two really neuralgic issues in the Church and our task is simply to say, what's the Holy Spirit saying? If we listen to that all is going to be well.

And then, a final obstacle is our lack of love. Here's a moment, in Mark, when Jesus lives this out. It comes just after a series of battles between Jesus and various religious authorities. He has just thrown the moneychangers out of the temple in Chapter 11, so the elders and the Pharisees come along and say: "By what authority do you do these things?" He throws to them a question about John the Baptist, and then delivers the parable of the vineyard, which he is clearly aiming at his interlocutors.

In addition he is faced with the Pharisees and the Herodians who put to him the dangerous question about whether tax should be paid to Caesar; and then – not such a dangerous question, but a silly one – the Sadducees ask him about the story of the woman who had seven husbands, and Jesus effortlessly dismisses it using Exodus (which, of course, is in the five books of the Bible that they recognise). It's a brilliant, brilliant *tour de force* by Jesus. So you can feel the tension rising.

After the Sadducees, another question, from a scribe and we know what is going to happen if a scribe asks a question. This is another dangerous question: what is the number one commandment? But Jesus doesn't hesitate for a second: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your understanding and all your strength. And then he gives a bonus offer: number two! You will love your neighbour as yourself. This time he is quoting not from Deuteronomy but from Leviticus, but it is just as good.

This should have been enough. But then something else happens. The scribe says to him, beautifully spoken, Teacher, you have told the truth. And Jesus, seeing him, that he has answered intelligently, says to him: "You are not far from the Kingdom of God". And no-one any longer dares to ask him any questions. There you have love, unexpectedly burgeoning out of a lot of hostile stories.

I think there are huge signs of hope, and among Church leaders I see it today. On all sides, Church leaders have done great work in this respect, and there is a real openness to other traditions.

Then South Africa. I worked for many years in South Africa, for something like 13 years. When I arrived and went to biblical conferences the Dutch Reformed ministers would call the Catholics the "Roman Menace" and I really felt a certain distance when I turned up. A decade and more later something had changed, and I noticed that by then they had a real interest in Catholicism: there were two aspects in particular, the *sacramentality* of Catholicism was starting to appeal to them, and the *spirituality*, the openness to prayer and the Spirit. And we were learning from them about reading the Bible attentively.

Out of that, there were the people who met each other in prison; they knew they were opposed to apartheid because they were Christian, and in prison these people



from different Christian denominations would hear each other singing hymns, and they would say: "We sing that hymn too!" And then they would discover they were in prison for the same reason; maybe their Christianities weren't as separate as they thought they were. So it is no accident that the great Truth and Reconciliation Commission owed a lot of inspiration and leadership to not only Desmond Tutu but to a lot of other Christians involved in that TRC. Bible-reading convinced Christians who because of that thought that was the way ahead. A real change of attitudes took place. And suddenly, sixteenth-century divisions imported from Europe didn't seem to matter all that much.

A third sign of hope is coming out of Durham University's Catholic theology faculty, with receptive ecumenism. Receptive ecumenism means that we listen to what the other Christian group is saying. We are trying to find language that makes sense.

So finally, what about the way ahead? I am offering three ways ahead. Before we get to those, basically what we have to do is listen out for God's word, to keep our eyes on Jesus and to follow the leading of the Spirit. My book, apart from the first and last chapters, is a look at each of the twenty-seven volumes of the New Testament, every one of which shows awareness of the problems of division within the Church and observing how the different faiths handle it; roughly speaking, the answer always is, keep your eyes on God, watch Jesus, listen to the Spirit. It's as simple as that.

### **Three consequences**

There are three consequences that result if we take each other seriously. One is, Christians often find themselves working with one another on local ecumenical projects. And secondly, as an inevitable consequence of working together on these good projects, they find themselves *praying* together. And then, thirdly – and this is the tricky stage, but it's really important – they then say, we believe this about the eucharist or about authority, or whatever it may be, what do you believe? And then you try and articulate what you *really* believe. And then you try receptive ecumenism, you try and listen to each other, and try to make sense of this other person. I don't think, if we continue on the ecumenical journey, that we are going to be forced to surrender what is precious to us – our hard-won doctrinal insights – that in history we have really battled for. What we *will* have to do is surrender our lovelessness, our instinct to hate. We do react very badly at times, and the point is that love trumps doctrine.

And here's a question: how do you deal with division? In 1 Corinthians Paul has a whole series of strategies. They are fighting in Corinth like rats in a sack and he has a whole series of strategies for coping with the fighting. And here's the last and, alas, unsuccessful one. You know it by heart, because it's been read at every wedding you've been to, but do you mind if I read it once more? It's clearly written by Paul, it's clearly aimed at Corinth and it doesn't belong quite where it is between chapter 12 and chapter 14.

But this is how it goes. I'm still going to show you a more excellent way. If I speak with the tongues of human beings and of angels but I don't have love I become an echoing cymbal. Just outside Corinth there was a particular kind of bronze that was mined that was particularly good for making cymbals. This business about prophecy, they were prophesying like anything. And Paul said, I can prophesy too but I don't boast about it. And if I have all the faith to move mountains (he's quoting from the Gospel

there, of course) and if I “have no love, I am nothing”. That’s what they were not doing in Corinth. And then he goes into a portrait of his beloved Jesus and it’s not at all a portrait of those crazy Corinthians.

### **Love isn’t jealous**

Love is long-suffering, love is kindly (and the Greek word for kindly is *chrestos*, it sounds like Christ); love, said Paul, isn’t jealous, unlike you Corinthians who are as jealous as anything. Love doesn’t bear a grudge, love isn’t puffed-up, love doesn’t behave indecently – unlike some of you in Corinth – doesn’t calculate evil, doesn’t rejoice at injustice but rejoices with the truth. Jesus bears everything, believes everything, hopes everything, endures everything; love never fails. As for knowledge, which you are claiming I don’t have, that will be abrogated, because we know only in part and we prophesy only in part. We look now through a mirror, a distorting mirror. Think of those funny mirrors that we used to see at funfairs, the ones that make you look fat or thin. They would take the bronze they mined just outside Corinth and they would rub it up and polish it and you would see a sort of dim picture. That’s what you’ve got to understand Paul is talking about there.

So we see through a mirror, but then you can see a dim picture. That is what Paul is talking about. Now there remain faith, hope and love, these three things, and the greatest of these is love. And that’s the answer to the divisions they had. But, sadly, they wouldn’t listen. The last words of the Corinthian correspondence, very, very sad words, you know it by heart: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you”. That’s the very end of the Second Letter to the Corinthians, when he knows he has failed to get them back on track. It was very, very sad because 50 years later Pope Clement I went from Rome to Corinth quoting Paul to them and saying, you’re still fighting<sup>3</sup>.



*This is a transcript of a talk given by Fr Nicholas King SJ to the Ealing Circle on January 27, 2017.*

### Notes

- 1 The Scandal of Christian Disunity is published by Kevin Mayhew, £17.99
- 2 Biblical quotes in this article come from Nicholas King’s own translation, published by Kevin Mayhew in 2013, £49.99 (paperback edition, £39.99)
- 3 The First Letter of Clement, addressed to “The Church of God which sojourneth in Corinth”, is not in the Bible. “Ye therefore, who laid the foundation of this sedition, submit yourselves to the presbyters, and receive correction so as to repent, bending the knees of your hearts. Learn to be subject, laying aside the proud and arrogant self-confidence of your tongue.”

# AGM at Birmingham Oratory – Saturday, June 10th

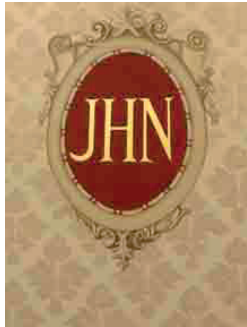
The Newman Council has decided to visit Birmingham Oratory for the 75th Annual General Meeting of the Association. The Blessed John Henry Newman considered joining one or two Orders after becoming a Catholic priest in 1846, including the Dominicans, but he decided he preferred the greater freedom offered by the Oratorians.

He founded the Oratory in Edgbaston in 1849 and remained there, apart from a short spell in Ireland, until he died in 1890. He had tried to found an Oratory in Oxford but was unsuccessful (though one was eventually founded there in 1993). In 1852 other members of his Order founded the Brompton Oratory in London but Newman himself was content to remain in Birmingham for the rest of his life.



In fact it was in Birmingham that an AGM

of the University Catholic Federation was held in April 1942; at that meeting the Newman Association was formed as the graduate division of the UCF.



Newman members attending this 2017 AGM who were on the Pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi in 2012 may be interested in the small chapel attached to the Italian baroque Oratory church. This chapel is a near-replica of the Chapel of St Philip Neri, founder of the Oratorians in 1556, in the Chiesa Nuovo in Rome; this was the chapel where our Chaplain Fr Fabian celebrated Mass for the Newman pilgrims.

The 2017 AGM will be held at 11.00 a.m. on June 10th. It will be followed by Mass. Then a 75th anniversary celebration lunch will be held at the adjacent Plough & Harrow Hotel (price £24, including wine, see the form accompanying this issue of *The Newman*). There will then follow a talk by David McLaughlin, of Birmingham's Newman University, entitled: ***"The Challenge of Pope Francis' teaching and practice to Newman's "intelligent, well-instructed laity"***.

Timetable for June 10th	
11.00	Opening of annual general meeting
12.30	Lunch at the Plough & Harrow Hotel
14.30	Talk by David McLaughlin
16.00	Mass
17.00	Tea and departure



*Birmingham Oratory Church, consecrated in 1920*

The Oratory's address is 141 Hagley Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B16 8UE. There is a large car park at the rear, although from Hagley Road there is no access to the one-way Plough and Harrow Road next to the Oratory and an extended detour has to be negotiated along Francis Road, Duchess Road and Beaufort Road. Alternatively, further west access can be gained along Monument Road, with a right turn into Plough and Harrow Road.

For travellers by train, the Oratory is about 2½ miles from Birmingham New Street Station, from where it can be reached by bus route 126 (direction Wolverhampton) which stops near the Plough & Harrow. Five Ways Station is closer than New Street.





# Letters to the Editor

## Going round in Circles

*A reflection on the balance between Centrifugal and Centripetal Forces in the Newman.*

### Balancing the centre and the periphery

Dear Sir,

In any organisation there can be tension, hopefully creative, between the centre and the periphery. Large organisations, be they multinational chemical companies, nationalised transport organisations or the Catholic Church, provide many examples. Does a single national rail company waste funds on overambitious projects, e.g. tilting trains, or is it the only way to avoid ticketing confusion? Is the Central Research and Development Department of an international chemical corporation really the source of the next generation of new products or is it merely a costly talking shop, out of touch with the practical problems of the production sites?

Do we believe that there is One Church of which individual communions are merely accidental manifestations or do we believe that "The Church" is the sum total of the communities in Corinth and Thessalonica, as well as Rome, in Jarrow and Whitby, as well as Westminster? Recently tensions between the centre and the periphery have become prominent in international politics (Brexit or Remain; Make America Great Again) and even in the Newman Association. Does the Association exist for its Circles or do the Circles exist to support the National Association personified in its Council?

Perhaps there is no right or wrong answer to such questions and "the devil is in the detail". This detail includes such factors as the maturity and size of the organization, the quality of its leadership and membership, and the environment in which it works. These factors determine whether the specific aims of the organisation are realistic: whether it can carry out the good works to which its mission leads it.

### The nature of the Newman Association

Is the Newman Association best described as "mature" or "ageing"? Its age distribution and activities do not attract those with children of school age. The organisation is not rich, although its members are not poor. Its circles are mainly located north of the M4. It does not have a high profile in the average parish and few English Clergy have any idea of what it is or does. Membership peaked in the mid-1960s but by the end of January 2016 there were 766 members of whom 674 were attached to circles.

Most Newman members are aware of the Catenian Association and the Catholic Women's League. Do most of their members know about the Newman? The Association is not primarily concerned with middle class social life (The Catenian Association), with political influence (The Catholic Union), with the role of women (CWL), action in the third world (CAFOD) or young adults (YCW). Few Newman members are natural entrepreneurs, instead their joy is in ideas and learning. They regard theological literacy as a desirable goal, not as an occasion of sin; they share Newman's dream of an educated laity.

### My Newman roots

I have been a Newman member for almost 50 years and have been active in the



Cleveland Circle for almost 40 years. This Circle, one of the oldest in the Association, has, during my membership of it, provided two National Presidents and, currently, the National Treasurer in addition to Council members. It has recently received significant financial help from Council to carry it over a short-term financial difficulty. Despite this, my emotional ties are to the Circle, not to the centre. In my years as a member I have attended two or three National AGMs, a handful of Conferences and one or two Circle Representative days. So, why do I have this disconnect? How can I encourage Circle visitors to dip into their pockets for the subscription to the Association?

### **How does the centre work?**

It is surely right for a prospective member to ask where their subscription goes. The recycling, to Circles, of subscriptions, which have come from them, has increased from 35.5% to 41.4% of income between 2014 and 2016; I welcome this. Over the same period, "The Newman" journal costs have increased from 25.5% to 30.1% of operational income. I suspect that most regard this as appropriate. But the amount spent on Central Admin (AGM, Council Meetings, Website and Publicity) which has increased from 19.5% to 24.8%, is less easy for me to justify.

A Council member said there were 21 people at a recent council meeting – yet in January 2016 there were only 766 members! (Is it only the Royal Navy that has more admirals than ships?) When I am asked what the average member gets for the subscriptions to *Andante*, *Pax Romana* and *NBCW*, I flounder.

### **A possible way forward**

I have often reflected on a conversation in which I questioned the value of the Association's subscription to *Andante*, in which I was gently reminded of John F. Kennedy's exhortation to think of what I could do for the country rather than what it could do for me. My thoughts have led me to conclude that, because there are so many possible good activities, it is important that they should be prioritised. It may be tempting to think that the Association should seek to influence the hierarchy through organizations such as *NBCW*. However, I doubt the efficacy of such conduits. Perhaps such influence is more effectively exerted by individuals?

I believe that the main role of the Newman should be to facilitate the learning of lay Catholics – to be a sort of U3A. This development happens principally in the Circles with significant stimulus being provided also by larger scale meetings. Because the Newman is neither large nor rich it is practical to collaborate with other organisations with similar aims – e.g. the meetings at the Durham Centre of Catholic Studies for which the Newman has provided support. Perhaps the Newman should focus on collaborating with other groups to facilitate adult Christian learning? Of course, the challenge in such collaborations is to *do* things, rather than to *talk about* the ideal world which we would like.

**Terry Egerton**

Note: See the proposal for the future structure of the Newman Association inserted as a separate leaflet into this issue of *The Newman*. There will be a discussion at the Newman AGM in Birmingham on June 10th (see also page 30 of this issue).

## The Forgotten Population Explosion

Dear Sir,

Those of us who are in our nineties will remember that period from the late 1940s to the early 1970s when population increase was, in the words of Pope Paul VI, "A problem which everyone talks about" (*The Times*, June 24th 1964).

In 1967 Pope Paul expressed his own view about this in his Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, paragraph 37: "There is no denying that the accelerated rate of population growth brings many added difficulties to the problems of development where the size of the population grows more rapidly than the quantity of available resources..." "There is no doubt public authorities can intervene in this matter, within the bounds of their competence. They can instruct citizens on this subject and adopt appropriate measures"... "Finally, it is for parents to take a thorough look at the matter and decide upon the number of their children. This is an obligation they take upon themselves, before their children already born, and before the community to which they belong..." (Pope Paul adds various provisos, which we all know about, to this summary, but the need to control population growth remains the most important message.

Unfortunately, this insight has been lost and in the Middle East and Africa dozens of countries double their populations every 25 -30 years. Using United Nations 2015 revision figures and projections we find that the approximate increase in a sample of these countries is as follows:

**Iraq** 1952 6 million; 1976 12 million; 2001 24 million; 2025 48 million.

**Yemen** 1950 4 million; 1980 8 million; 1996 16 million; 2023 32 million.

**DR Congo** 1950 12 million, 1977 24 million, 2000 48 million, 2023 96 million.

**Nigeria** 1953 40 million, 1983 80 million, 2010 160 million, 2039 320 million.

**Malawi** 1951 3 million, 1979 6 million, 2003 12 million, 2028 24 million.

**Uganda** 1950 5 million, 1972 10 million, 1994 20 million, 2016 40 million.

**Zambia** 1959 3 million; 1980 6 million; 2005 12 million; 2029 24 million.

This population growth will bring such extreme poverty, hunger, water shortage, and conflict that reports will come to us from Africa and the Middle East that will make us wish that Pope Paul's teaching in *Populorum Progressio* had been publicised more effectively across the world.

**Gerald Danaher**  
Leicestershire

### Vacancies

**Membership Secretary** After sixteen years, the present Membership Secretary would now like to relinquish the position as soon as a successor can be appointed. The duties are not onerous and a full job description is available.

**Webmaster** As from the end of July, we will need a new person to keep the information on the web up to date. Full guidance on how to do this will be given.

Any volunteers should contact the Association secretary, Brian Hamill, at [secretary@newman.org.uk](mailto:secretary@newman.org.uk).

“Girls and boys come out to PRAY.....”

## Men and Women in today's church

**Sr Gemma Simmonds CJ** will lead a day-school of “Living Theology” at the Bar Convent, York on Saturday July 15th, 2017. This will be a great opportunity to listen to an acknowledged theological expert and to join in discussions on topics of major interest in the modern church.

The day will start at 10am with registration, and will finish with 5pm Mass in the Chapel. The total cost, including lunch and refreshments, will be just £20 (students £10). **Booking is essential.**



**For more details, see the [website www.living-theology.uk](http://www.living-theology.uk). You can email queries to Brenda on [fazikasbrenda@btinternet.com](mailto:fazikasbrenda@btinternet.com), or phone Patricia on 01642-645732.**

If you live within striking distance of York, or feel like planning a day trip to that city – or even a weekend break – do join us on July 15th at the Bar Convent. All are welcome, men and women!

## Concerning Circles

### New Members

We can welcome the following new members who have recently joined the Association. They are attached to Circles as shown:

Mr J. & Dr I. Armstrong (Glasgow), Canon G. Lyall (Worcester), Miss M. T. McDonald (Glasgow), Mrs M. Richards (North Glos.), Mrs J. A. Roche (Hertfordshire), Dr M. von der Ruhr (Swansea University).

### New Circle

Mario von der Ruhr is organising a Newman Circle at Swansea University. Members of the Llanelli and District Circle and Unattached members living in the area would be welcome to attend meetings of the new Circle. For further details Mario can be contacted at [m.v.d.ruhr@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:m.v.d.ruhr@swansea.ac.uk).

### Requiescant in Pace

Your prayers are asked for the following members who have died recently:

Mr M. D. E. Newstead (Unattached), Mr E. Byrne (Wimbledon).

Bill White

# Spirituality Page

## Carers and Caring

The opening of Chapter 3 of the Acts of the Apostles tells of the story of how Peter cured a man who was lame:

*Once, when Peter and John were going up to the Temple for the prayers at the ninth hour, it happened that there was a man being carried along. He was a cripple from birth; and they used to put him down every day near the Temple entrance called the Beautiful Gate so that he could beg from people going in.*

The story is familiar but the words then spoken by Peter – “I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!” – could not have been said, and the miracle could not have been performed, had not the blind man actually been at the Gate. How did he get there? Note the words “being carried along” and “they used to put him”. Who did this? Who were they? The answer, of course, is his carers. Such carers appear many times in the Bible.

Take this passage, from Matthew 4: 23-24.

*He went round the whole of Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing all kinds of disease and illness among the people. His fame spread throughout Syria, and those who were suffering from diseases and painful complaints of one kind or another, the possessed, epileptics, the paralysed, were all brought to him, and he cured them.*

Again we see miracles performed and we notice the person performing it, Jesus or Peter, and the persons on whom the miracle is performed. We do not notice the indispensable people in the middle who enable the miracle to be performed. They are anonymous. Caring relationships are like this, because when one cares it becomes difficult to separate out the interests of individuals.

It is not so much that our individuality is lost, but our identity, well-being and value becomes mixed up with others. To value a vulnerable person is to value her carer; to harm that person is to harm the carer. Many of us are carers often without realising it. Perhaps we care for a person who lives with us; now, with modern transport and communications, caring can be long range with occasional direct contact. Above all, though, it is in that forgetfulness of self in caring that we can come near to Christ.

None of this is to hold up some sanitised version of carers and caring: caring can be utterly draining and exhausting; it can try us to our limits. So now is an appropriate time to reflect on carers and caring and the support that carers need especially as June 12th-18th June 2017 is **Carers Week** with the theme of “Building Carer-Friendly Communities”. See [www.carersweek.org/about-us](http://www.carersweek.org/about-us).

Are you one of the UK's 6.5 million Carers of any age who provides unpaid support to family and friends who could not manage without this help? This could be a relative, partner, a child or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or who has mental health or substance misuse problems.

How does your Church community support and value unpaid Carers?

**Anne and John Duddington**

# Circle Programmes

## Aberdeen

Contact: Margaret Smith, 01224 314566

8 May AGM, followed by Cheese and Wine

## All Circles

10 June 2017 AGM This will be the 75th anniversary of the Newman Association

## Birmingham

Contact: Winifred Flanagan, winifredflanagan@gmail.com

6 May Ramble in the Lickey Hills followed by afternoon tea at Winnie's

20 May Newman reading Group

3 July Local Circle Mass & Circle AGM

## Cleveland

Contact: Judith Brown, 01642 814977, browns01@globalnet.co.uk

17 May AGM and supper

3 June Visit to Mount Grace Priory and pub lunch

## Coventry

Contact: Colin Roberts cjroberts08@talktalk.net

23 May National Ecumenical Office/Catholic Bishops' Conference

*Canon John O'Toole*

13 June Mass and AGM

4 July Circle Ramble

## Croydon

Contact: Arthur Hughes, arthur.hughes116@gmail.com

18 May Dementia Friends

1 July Circle AGM and party

## Ealing

Contact: Kevin Clarke Kevin.Clarke@keme.co.uk

## Eastbourne & Bexhill

Contact: John Carmody, 01323 726334, johnmh22@outlook.com

May Wine & cheese social with accompanying talk

22 June Christianity and the countryside

*Revd Peter Owen Jones*

## Edinburgh

Contact: Lyn Cronin, lyncronin@btinternet.com

17 May Music, Modernity, the continual search for the Sacred, and the place that Elgar's Dream of Gerontius has in it

*Sir James MacMillan*

14 June Circle AGM and Party

## Glasgow

Contact: Arthur McLay, mclay@btinternet.com

25 May Panel Discussion - The Attainment Gap: Moral Imperatives and Practical Solutions

## Hertfordshire

Contact: Maggy Swift, 01582 792136, maggy.swift@btinternet.com

20 May Troubled Times - Life of a German Catholic 1906-1945 *Adelheid Smith*

17 June Greek Orthodox Icons - a visit to Twelve Apostles Greek Orthodox

Church, Brookman's Park

2 July Garden Party

## Hull & East Riding

Contact: Andrew Carrick, 01482 500181

6 May Lecture

*Fr Storey*

21 June Title TBC

*Rev. D Grant*

July Visit to Holy Trinity and St Mary's Lowgate, Hull or SS Mary and Joseph and St Augustine's Hedon

**LLanelli** Contact: M. Noot, 01554 774309, marianoot@hotmail.co.uk

**London** Contact: Patricia, 0208 504 2017

**Manchester & N. Cheshire** Contact: Chris Quirke, 0161 941 1707 dcq@mac.com

8 May Religion, the Law and Politics: a case of conflict or of working together for the common good? *John Duddington*

5 June One person's Ecumenical journey *Reverend Geoffrey Barnard*

3 July Circle AGM followed by talk: Gay and Catholic *Mark Dowd*

12 July Day of Recollection *Fr Brendan Thomas OSB*

**North Gloucestershire** Contact: Stephanie Jamison, 01242 539810, sjamison@irlen-sw.com

2 May AGM folowed by talk: Contradictions in the Bible? *John Huntriss*

**North Merseyside** Contact: John Potts, john\_potts41@hotmail.com

11 May AGM, followed by light supper

**North Staffordshire** Contact: Vincent Owen, 01782 619698

**Rainham** Contact: Marie Casey, bmc Casey@btinternet.com

**London & SE Circles**

**Surrey Hills** Contact: Gerald Williams, guillaume30@btinternet.com

**Tyneside** Contact: Ann Dunn, jadnew@btinternet.com

**Wimbledon** Contact: Bill Russell, 0208 946 4265, william\_russell@talktalk.net

23 May The Mercy of God in Scripture and Art *Fr Geoffrey Wheaton, SJ*

**Worcester** Contact: Heather Down, 01905 21535, hcdown@gmail.com

18 May Music in the Post-Conciliar Liturgy *Alan Smith*

**Wrexham** Contact: Maureen Thomas, maureenthomas@uwclub.net

26 May Living and Dying in the Middle Ages *Peter Firth*

30 June The Liberation of the Laity *Elaine Graham*

July/ August Circle AGM and Summer Social

**York** Contact: Judith Smeaton, 01904 704525, judith.smeaton@btinternet.com

15 May Augustine and original sin *Joe Fitzpatrick*

19 June AGM followed by talk on 'The English Bishops and Humanae Vitae' *Fr. Peter Phillips*